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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN IT INDUSTRY: A STUDY

Dr. Shaik Kamruddin
Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Maulana Azad National Urdu University
(A Central University),Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana State.

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ABSTRACT :

In the recent past, organizations and researchers have turned their attention to knowledge management (KM). Many disciplines have contributed to the growth and evolution of knowledge management. Consequently, KM has become a rich field of inquiry, and many disparate approaches and strategies have been suggested for managing knowledge. However, the effect of different KM strategies on organizational performance (OP) is not known. Knowledge which is an intellectual capital is also assumed as value creator and knowledge management is seen as a competitive tool for value creation and addition. Knowledge is formalizing and also systematically organizing the experience and expertise that create new capabilities, enable superior performance, encourage innovation, and enhance customer value. The three fourth of world's corporate market value resides today in assets such as intellectual property, customer data, financial records, strategies and trade secrets. These assets are all knowledge based.

The growth of knowledge management practices in India has been limited mainly in the service industries like IT, Consultancy, and some of the electronics and communication industries where innovation and redesigning of business processes are frequently practiced to gain competitive advantage. Customer satisfaction, retaining crucial talents, developing new modes of services is some major reasons of launching knowledge management programme. Collecting, storing and sharing are some important steps of handling ideas whereas creating and innovating new ideas of doing business are crucial to meet complex challenges.

The main objective of this study is to provide an overview on knowledge management practices in IT industry confining on three parameters as awareness level of KM among IT employees, organizational approach towards KM and application of IT tools in implementing knowledge management.

KEYWORDS : *organizations and researchers , electronics and communication industries.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of knowledge management has become a buzzword in many competitive organizations and the interest on managing knowledge has grown rapidly.

Knowledge management is an orderly process for generating, obtaining, producing, learning, allocating and using knowledge and understanding to achieve organizational goals. An appropriate flow of information is indispensable for the development of every organization. Knowledge management will be playing a vital role, and those organizations that use it early will have an edge [Charity Ezigbo, 2013].

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Knowledge management is not just a technology or tool. It is more about finest practices and actions rather than pure technology. Therefore, it requires support from knowledge workers and actual use can happen only when all of them are energetically involved.

A famous management thinker, Peter Drucker, commented that the shift from commodity economies to knowledge-based economies has given knowledge the power to create a new society; and a knowledge society is structured on the basis of knowledge (Drucker, 1993). According to Drucker, the traditional resources of production - land, labour, and capital - have not disappeared, but they have become less important than knowledge; they can be obtained easily provided that there is knowledge. Drucker gave early identification of the trend towards "knowledge workers". Treating knowledge as the fourth essential resource of value adding processes has led to major changes in economic and management theories. This new definition of knowledge treats knowledge as a utility and the means to obtain social and economic results in a knowledge economy. Today's society is structured on the basis of knowledge being specialized and of knowledgeable people being specialists; the society empowers knowledgeable people (Drucker, 1993).

As access to information becomes easier and less expensive, the way in which we use the knowledge and what skills are being developed based on this knowledge become noteworthy. While working on a particular problem we need two types of knowledge. One is codified knowledge which is more or less like a tool.

The Other type of knowledge is tacit knowledge which tells us how to use the tool. Moreover the trend these days in knowledge is being more towards recognizing relevant information patterns of information and its interpretation.

To understand what is restricting the growth of knowledge network, we should know how to use it in an optimum way to enable the growth of world economy and should train people through this to make them were the holy challenges of the future. In order to do so we have to look at the current flows and identify the loopholes of the system.

2. KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY:

The knowledge economy is the use of knowledge to generate tangible and intangible values. Technology and in particular knowledge technology help to transform a part of human knowledge to machines. This knowledge can be used by decision support systems in various fields and generate economic values. Knowledge economy is also possible without technology.

The Indian information scenario has been greatly changed with the emergence of knowledge economy since early 1990 when India embarked on liberalized economic reforms. There has been a structural change in the area of information infrastructure. Corporate organizations exploit knowledge resources for profit making and public institutions start generating knowledge for development of the economy and society at large.

As a result of the 1998/99 World Development Report on Knowledge for Development, the topic of the knowledge economy gained prominence with policymakers worldwide. In 2001, the K4D (Knowledge for Development) program held a high-level policy forum to share knowledge strategies among key stakeholders from Brazil, India and China—potential knowledge superpowers representing 45 percent of the world's population. The timing of the event was nearly perfect. The Indian government was already working on a strategy to transform the country into a knowledge superpower and was keen to cooperate and explore a set of issues that coincided with its own reform agenda. India had gradually been building a knowledge economy, having made great strides in pharmaceuticals, medical sciences, and information technology. This led to increased interest on the part of the government and private sector to look for ways to raise the country's growth rate.

India has witnessed Knowledge Management (KM) in practice by some companies. Good lass Nerolac, paint-maker, embraced Knowledge Management in March 2003 because a need was felt to capture knowledge from purchase patterns of customers and dealer insights. Along with money paid for the product,

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customers also provide a lot of information as their perception of the product and similar substitute products. The strategic challenge lies in designing an interface which will permit easy trapping of customer information. Know Net – the knowledge management portal of Larson & Toubro (a construction company) was set up to solve problems occurring at project sites. It uses KM to roll out real world construction projects at lower costs. Each employee in the organization has accumulated experience over the years and has unknowingly used it for problem solving or creating strategies.

3.IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE:

Knowledge management is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual capital and knowledge-based assets. Usually, the value is obtained by finding what employees, partners and customers know, and sharing information with employees, departments and even with other companies, in order to find best practices. For companies is the most important to understand 'what they know'. This knowledge is contained in databases, research and development activities, competent staff and quality products that are supplied in the market.

The realization of the value of knowledge assets is essential for business executives. Today's businesses must position themselves within these new economic realities; and leveraging brainpower through KM is one way to start the process of change (Bassi& Van Buren, 2000; Wah, 1999a). The business environment has become increasingly uncertain in recent years because of economic downturn, wars, and unfamiliar diseases; therefore, the ability to anticipate problems and to solve problems becomes valuable. A successful firm is one that can live with uncertainties and incorporate them with knowledge resided within the organization in the decision-making process. All firms make strategic decisions, but smart decision-making lies at the heart of organizational knowledge and its management.

4. KM TOOLS &TECHNOLOGIES:

Knowledge management (KM) Tools & Technology can be divided into the following general categories:

4.1.Groupware : Groupware refers to technologies that facilitate collaboration and sharing of organizational information. One of the earliest very successful products in this category was Lotus Notes. Notes provided tools for threaded discussions, sharing of documents, organization wide uniform email, etc.

4.2.Expert systems: An expert system is regarded as the embodiment within a computer of a knowledge-based component from an expert skill in such a form that the system can offer intelligent advice or make an intelligent decision about a processing function. Expert systems are computer-based programs which are designed to record human expertise (knowledge) and then apply this knowledge to applications in a certain domain.

4.3. Workflow : Workflow tools allow the representation of processes associated with the creation, use, and maintenance of organizational knowledge. For example the process to create and utilize forms and documents within an organization. For example, a workflow system can do things such as send notifications to appropriate supervisors when a new document has been produced and is waiting their approval.

4.4.Help desk technology : Help desk technology is primarily concerned with routing requests for help from information seeker to the right technical resolution person within an organization Intranets Intranets -- intra-corporation networks that use the Internet's IP (Internet Protocol) standard -- not only permit sharing of information, but they also view the organization's information (including structured resources like relational databases as well as unstructured text) through Web browsers like Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator

4.5.Content/Document Management : Content/Document Management systems are systems designed to automate the process of creating web content and/or documents within an organization. The various roles required such as editors, graphic designers, writers, and producers can be explicitly modelled along with the various tasks in the process and validation criteria for moving from one step to another. All this information can be used to automate and control the process. Commercial vendors of these tools started to start either as tools to primarily support documents (e.g., Documentum) or as tools designed to support web content

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(e.g., Interwoven) but as the Internet grew these functions merged and most vendors now perform both functions, management of web content and of documents. As Internet standards became adopted within most organization Intranets and Extranets the distinction between the two essentially went away.

4.6.Enterprise Portals : Enterprise Portals are web sites that aggregate information across the entire organization or for groups within the organization such as project teams.

4.7. Metadata: Metadata is simply information added to a document (or a smaller unit of information) that makes it easier to access and re-use that content. It's also referred to as simply "data about data." You'll find metadata in many different forms, including key words in a software help system, the document profile information attached to documents in a document management system, and the classification information in a library card catalog.

4.8.E Learning: e Learning technology enables organizations to create customized training and education software. This can include lesson plans, monitoring progress against learning goals, online classes, etc. eLearning technology enables organizations to significantly reduce the cost of training and educating their members. As with most KM technology in the business world this was most useful for companies that employ knowledge workers; highly trained staff with areas of deep expertise such as the staff of a consulting firm. Such firms spend a significant amount on the continuing education of their employees and even have their own internal full-time schools and internal education staff.

4.9.Information modeling: Information modeling is concerned with precise specification of the meaning in a text and in making relationships of meaning explicit -- often with the objective of rapid and accurate development of new software applications for business requirements. Some of the essence of information modeling is expressed in the following definition "The process of eliciting requirements from domain experts, formulating a complete and precise specification understandable to both domain experts and developers, and refining it using existing (or possible) implementation mechanisms."

4.10.Scheduling and planning: Scheduling and planning tools automate the creation and maintenance of an organization's schedule: scheduling meetings, notifying people of a meeting, etc. An example of a well known scheduling tool is Microsoft Outlook. The planning aspect can integrate with project management tools such as Microsoft Project. Some of the earliest successful uses of KM technology in the business world were the development of the following types of tools: online versions of corporate "yellow pages" with listing of contact info, relevant knowledge, and work history.

4.11. Tele presence: Tele presence technology enables individuals to have virtual meetings rather than having to be in the same place. Videoconferencing is the most obvious example.

4.12. Web search Engine: A web search engine is a software system that is designed to search for information on the World Wide Web. The search results are generally presented in a line of results often referred to as search engine results pages (SERPs). The information may be a mix of web pages, images, and other types of files. Some search engines also mine data available in databases or open directories. Unlike web directories, which are maintained only by human editors, search engines also maintain real-time information by running an algorithm on a web crawler.

4.13. Web 2.0: Web 2.0 is also (perhaps most) often described as a group of people-riven tools that allow collaboration. These include blogs, tags, mash-ups and, wikis.
The concept of Web 2.0 is often referred to as an umbrella term, used to explicitly express the framework of ideas and technology it creates. An essential part of the Web 2.0 is user contributed content and knowledge

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creation. The user contributed content is collaboratively annotated (e.g. by tags), shared in social network platforms and collaboratively improved (e.g. in wikis) harnessing the collective intelligence of the individual users and leveraging network effects. The knowledge managed within Web 2.0 applications lies in content contributed by the users. This knowledge is published, enriched, shared, communicated and combined.

5. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

Growth of any industry in any country indicates the growth of that country's economy. According to survey of NASSCOM, there is potential of exponential growth of IT industry in India. To remain the pace of growth there must be unique strategy and practice should be adopted by IT industries in India. IT industries are most knowledge sensitive than any industry; therefore they must encourage best practice of knowledge management.

Fortune 500 companies lose roughly "$31.5 billion a year by failing to share knowledge", actively managing knowledge can help companies increase their chances of success by facilitating decision-making, building learning environments by making learning routine, and stimulating cultural change and innovation.

The Knowledge Management is one of the fastest growing area in India and most widely used in IT industry globally and Hyderabad is the IT hub of the country and its IT competitiveness continues to grow. Hyderabad's IT exports reached US$ 7 billion in 2014, and 22% of the NASSCOM's total membership is from Hyderabad.

Knowledge management is an audit of "intellectual assets" that highlights unique sources, critical functions and potential bottlenecks, which hinder knowledge flows to the point of use. It protects intellectual assets from decay, seeks opportunities to enhance decisions, services and products through adding intelligence, increasing value and providing flexibility. KM complements and enhances other organizational initiatives such as total quality management (TQM), business process re-engineering (BPR) and organizational learning, providing a new and urgent focus to sustain competitive position.

This research will be of immense importance to all the existing small, medium and large scale IT companies. It may help them to empower their employees and to use knowledge by all employees and team at work and in the market place.

The findings of the study may provide insight into the effective utilization of knowledge management initiatives by all strata of knowledge workers of the IT sector.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

1. To Study the Knowledge management Practices Prevailing in IT sector in Hyderabad.
2. To examine the perception of employees of the sample organization towards knowledge management.
3. To study the perception of the respondents on organizational approach towards KM in the responding organizations.
4. To examine the perception of employees of the sample organization towards application of IT tools in KM practices.

7. HYPOTHESES:

H0-1: There is no significance difference in the opinion of employees of TCS and Infosys towards knowledge management awareness.

H0-2: There is no significant difference in knowledge management strategy implementation in TCS and Infosys.

H0 -3: There is no significance difference in Application of IT tools in the sample organisation for KM practices.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In pursuit of above mentioned objectives the following methodology is adopted.

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8.1. Data Collection :

8.1.1.Primary Data:A well structured questionnaire has been used in the study. The structured questions take a form of questionnaire where the respondents were asked to fill out a form on how they perceived various aspects of knowledge Management initiatives in the selected companies. This comprised primary data

8.1.2. Secondary Data: The secondary data will mainly be based on articles from journals, Dissertations & Theses, books, as well as previous research studies on Knowledge Management, websites and other published resources of the organization.

8.2. Sample Design and Size:

8.2.1.Sample Unit: Sample unit consist of the employees of TCS and Infosys working as system engineer, software developer, data analyst, Business analyst and in others technical profiles in Hyderabad.
8.2.2. Sample Size: The Size of the sample will be 400 IT employees from the companies under study.
8.2.3.Sampling method: Convenience Sampling will be used to collect the data from the respondents.

8.3. Select Areas for the Study

This study encompasses to understand the knowledge management concept and its Practices in IT sector. For this study, two IT companies that are TCS and Infosys have been selected on logical basis with features stated below.

8.3.1.Tata Consultancy Services (TCS): TCS is the largest IT Company in India. In 1999 KM Pilot was launched and implemented. TCS was renowned for its 'Web of Participation' structure which combined industry practices with service practices. The KM initiatives of TCS were appreciated by Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises (MAKE) survey, which placed the company among Asia's most admired knowledge enterprises.

8.3.2. Infosys: Infosys is the second-largest India-based IT services company. Infosys is an IT consulting and software services organization headquartered in Bangalore, India. Founded in 1981.Infosys (NASDAQ: INFY) defines, designs and delivers IT-enabled business solutions that help Global 2000 companies win in a Flat World. These solutions focus on providing strategic differentiation and operational superiority to clients. Infosys has over 1, 00,000 employees in over 50 offices worldwide. Infosys is part of the NASDAQ-100 Index and The Global Dow.

Infosys has always been recognized for its KM initiative and efforts at world level. Adding a feather in its cap, Infosys has been recognized amongst the top 16 Asian companies to be listed in the prestigious Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises (MAKE) study, 2009. Infosys is an 11 times MAKE winners maximum by any Indian company.

8.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The study is aimed at measuring the level of KM awareness and KM practices in IT companies. An attempt is made to find out Application of IT tools and its effectiveness in practicing KM. The study is conducted in the Hyderabad city by selecting 400 respondents. Convenience sampling method is employed to collect the information. The data thus, collected is subdued into suitable tabular forms for drawing inferences. Quantitative techniques like average, percentage, chi-square tests, are applied as and when found necessary.

Testing the Hypothesis:

H0-1: There in no significance difference in the opinion of the respondents of the sample organization towards knowledge management practices.

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Table 1

Sl No	Statement	Pearson Chi-Square Value	P value	Null
1	your own level of experience and familiarity with KM	17.067	0.0001<0.05	Reject
2	How often do you update your information and knowledge	10.319	0.016<0.05	Reject
3	Your Organization has a Knowledge Management Policy or Strategy for acquiring and sharing Knowledge!	3.43	0.64>0.05	Accept
4	How do you measure the effectiveness of KM practices in your Organization	2.265	0.519>0.05	Accept
5	What would motivate your Organization to increase KM practices	6.287	0.098>0.05	Accept
6	Knowledge management Increases our knowledge sharing horizontally and vertically (across departments, functions etc.)	0.834	0.841>0.05	Accept
7	There is hardly any duplication of effort being made in the organisation.	11.095	0.026<0.05	Reject
8	Any knowledge sharing would improve work processes in the organisation	0.257	0.612>0.05	Accept
9	Response to key business issues is faster with the help of Knowledge management	5.47	0.057>0.05	Accept

The analysis reveals that respondents from both sample organizations have a positive opinion towards knowledge management and its practices in their respective organization. The opinions of the respondents of Infosys and TCS over the above said statement are likely to be similar and proved to be correct. Further it can be substantiated by the insignificant chi-square values.

So **Null hypothesis is being retained**.

Testing the hypothesis:

H0-2: There is no significant difference in the opinion of respondents of the sample organization towards organizational approach with respect to Knowledge management.

Table 2

Sl NO	Statement	Pearson Chi-Square Value	P value	Null
1	Knowledge acquisition and dissemination is not restricted to hierarchies (Top Management accepts the inputs from the employees)	4.701	0.195>0.05	Accept
2	Organisation recognize Knowledge as part of their assets base	0.711	0.701>0.05	Accept
3	Organisation Has Value system or culture to promote knowledge sharing	0.891	0.891>0.05	Accept
4	There is a program of active participation in business conferences and other discussion forums to share and learn ideas and experiences	0.591	0.898>0.05	Accept
5	The information gained through team meetings is properly updated in the knowledge base.	17.131	0.001<0.05	Reject
6	Employees are given liberty to create their own KM elements e.g. Process improvements in the knowledge base.	20.402	0.00<0.05	Reject

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7	Employee exchange information for solving problems is encouraged in the organisation	11.858	0.001<0.05	Reject
8	when a team completes a task they distils and document what they have learnt	12.091	0.017<0.05	Reject
9	Failure is taken up as a learning opportunity to augment learning culture.	4.049	0.256>0.05	Accept
10	Face to face interactions are used to transfer difficult to articulate tacit knowledge	1.102	0.576>0.05	Accept
11	Knowledge base is always accessible round the clock (BD*7) through various channels (helpline, mail, interactive voice response, mobile, wireless hand held devices etc.)	5.47	0.140>0.05	Accept

The analysis reveals that respondents from both sample organizations have a positive opinion on organizational approach towards Knowledge management in their respective organization. The opinions of the respondents of Infosys and TCS over the above said statement are likely to be similar and proved to be correct. There are seven strong opinions of the respondents out of ten. Further it can be substantiated by the insignificant chi-square values.

So **Null hypothesis is being retained.**

H0: There is no significance difference in Application of IT tools in the sample organization for KM practices.

SI NO	Statement	Pearson Chi-Square Value	P value	Null
1	Software used in Organization for KM practice is updated as on when required	2.656	0.265>0.05	Accept
2	Knowledge repository is available for getting and giving information (one drive/ share Drive	11.232	0.001<0.05	Reject
3	ERP packages are used to collect, store, manage and interpret data from many business activities.	11.638	0.009<0.05	Reject
4	Web share, Video Conference, Virtual White Board are frequently being used in Transferring and explaining project related issues.	9.415	0.009<0.05	Reject
5	Training and mentoring are effective in implementation of new tools and technologies.	5.36	0.069>0.05	Accept
6	Microsoft SharePoint is used as a Collaboration tool for knowledge sharing and Content management	2.949	0.229<0.05	Accept
7	Cloud Service models IaaS, PaaS, SaaS, are used for Data storage and other Business related Solutions.	9.854	0.020<0.05	Reject
8	Groupware is used as Collaborative software for Communication, conferencing and Coordination.	9.645	0.024<0.05	Reject
9	E learning and E portal are Extensively being used as a knowledge management tool	9.571	0.008<0.05	Reject
10	Brain storming application are used to generate and share ideas and knowledge	21.687	0.000>0.05	Reject
11	E mails communication are used as channel to transfer and share knowledge	1.444	0.687>0.05	Accept

The analysis reveals after collecting responses from both the organization which shows that Infosys employees are more familiar in using IT tools for practicing KM compare to TCS employees and there is significant difference in the opinion of employees of the two organisations. There are seven significance differences in opinion of the respondents of the two organisations.

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So null hypothesis is being rejected and **Alternate Hypothesis is being selected** which says that There is significance difference in Application of IT tools in the sample organization for KM practices.

9. FINDINGS :

The study is conducted in the Hyderabad city by selecting 400 respondents. Convenience sampling method is employed to collect the information. The data thus, collected is subdued into suitable tabular forms for drawing inferences. Chi-square test has been applied to test the hypothesis.

1. It was found that Respondents from both the organisation under study are very well aware of KM policy and its Practices.
2. Respondents who belong to Infosys are more familiar to knowledge management compare to TCS respondents.
3. Majority of the Respondents agrees that their organisation has Knowledge Management Policy for acquiring and sharing Knowledge.
4. Majority of the Respondents from both the organization agrees that Knowledge acquisition and dissemination is not restricted to hierarchies and Top Management accepts the inputs from the employees.
5. Respondents from the both organization agree that their organization have a Value System or Culture to promote Knowledge Sharing.
6. Infosys employees are given more liberty to create their own KM elements e.g. Process improvements in the knowledge base compare to TCS employees. The Chi Square test there is significance difference in the opinion of the respondents of the two organisations.
7. Majority of Infosys employees agrees that teams distils and document what they learn after completion of a task compare to TCS. The Chi Square test shows there is significance difference in the opinion of the respondents of the two organisations.
8. Respondents from the both organization` agrees that Software used in Organization for KM practice is updated as on when required.
9. Majority of Infosys employees agrees that ERP packages used to collect, store, manage and interpret data are helpful compare to TCS. The Chi -Square test shows there is significance difference in the opinion of the respondents of the two organisations.
10. In both the organisation E- mails communication are extensively being used as channel to transfer and share knowledge.

10.CONCLUSION

The power of knowledge is a valuable strategic resource in the knowledge economy. Knowledge management has therefore become widely recognized as essential for the   success or failure of organizations. Hence, an increasing number of organizations are integrating knowledge management into their business practices. The present study was designed to evaluate the state of knowledge management implementation in two IT organizations and assess the awareness levels of knowledge management as well as degree of acceptance in these organizations.

Knowledge is considered to be the key organizational resource to stay ahead in the dynamic IT industry and if properly managed aids to be the core competent among the industry. Hence for the Decision Makers and Managers at all levels, need to adjust to meet the fast changing time and business have been pushed and pulled to use the practices of Knowledge Management.

Thus it can be concluded that both the companies i.e. Infosys and TCS have recognized the importance of proper Knowledge Management System and implemented using proper strategies suitable for their environment.

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To effectively practice the Knowledge Management activities, three organizational factors were most influential. Those factors were identified and proved (Awareness and familiarity with knowledge management, Organization Culture/ approach and Information Technology Tools).

From the survey results it is evident that almost all employees of the both organization have understood the value of KM to the organization and they are very much aware of Knowledge Management. Improving competitiveness in the market place proved to be major motivation for the organization to practice KM. Both the organization has value system and culture to promote and share knowledge. Both the organization has knowledge base accessible for their employees round the clock and response to key business is faster with the help of Knowledge management.

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Dr. Shaik Kamruddin
Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Maulana Azad National Urdu University (A Central University),Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana State.

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