



Entrepreneurship Development through Akshaya Project *with Special Reference to Malappuram District.*

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Abstract: Information and Communication Technology(ICT) has permeated almost every sphere of human endeavour. In fact, many countries are benchmarking the success of their e-governance initiatives in terms of the resultant increase in the competitiveness of the country apart from the R&D and information infrastructure initiatives. Akshaya Project, the e-Governance project of Kerala Government is implemented as a Public-Private Participation project piloted in Malappuram district., one of the industrially backward districts in Kerala. Akshaya project also contributes entrepreneurship development. The present study is an attempt to study the role of Akshaya Project in its entrepreneurship generation aspect.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, Akshaya Kendra, Urban Area, Rural area

The industrial growth and economic development of developing countries are deterred by the lack of certain factors like efficient entrepreneurs , industrial environment, technical knowledge, resources, unhealthy competition and absence of domestic market. In fact, the presence of entrepreneurs who act as change agents heralding the growth of industries is of great importance. The slow growth of industries in the developing countries as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America has noted is due to the absence of qualified entrepreneurial class prepared to take initiatives and assume risk to an inadequate economic policy on the part of the government. Therefore, a nation like India, which aims to achieve a rapid and regionally balanced economic growth through industrialization, emergence of a large number of

entrepreneurs is a vital necessity. In the face of massive employment, poverty and backwardness in the country, the small entrepreneurs have a special role to play. The liberalization policy of the government, which received boost after 1991, has thrown open a vast area of the country for private entrepreneurship. Under such circumstances, the need for entrepreneurship development is more keenly felt.

Significance of the Study

Malappuram is declared as an industrially backward district in the State. Adequate entrepreneurs have not emerged in the District. Akshaya Project has been implemented in the District as a pilot project with the participation of private entrepreneurs. No study has been made in the area of entrepreneurship development of this project. Hence, a study in this area seems to be relevant as well as significant.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives have been identified for the purpose of carrying out this study :-

1. To examine the entrepreneurship development in Malappuram District through Akshaya Project. and
2. To identify the problems being faced by Akshaya entrepreneur in operating the centres.

Methodology and Sample Design

Data collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected mainly through structured questionnaire method from sample entrepreneurs. Discussions were made with the District Coordinator of Akshaya Project and District Industries Centre to obtain necessary information.

Secondary data have been gathered from records and files of Akshaya Project office, books, journals, brochures, magazines, websites of Kerala IT Mission, Akshaya, STEP, Kerala Planning Board etc.

Sample Design

Samples are drawn on the basis of Stratified random sampling method. The District was divided into six Taluks and four taluks were selected to draw samples on a random basis. The sample is selected randomly from the list of entrepreneurs' list provided by Coordinator's office from these four Taluks. A sample of 100 entrepreneurs was collected. But complete data obtained from 74 respondents only. The time constraint of the study restricted the researcher to take further effort to get the complete data from the non-respondents.

Limitations of the Study

Some respondents hesitated in giving accurate information regarding their units. Limited time and smallness of sample were other limitations of the study.

Definitions of Terms.

1. Akshaya units/centres: These are multipurpose information and communication centres operated by private entrepreneurs under the title "Akshaya Kendram."

2. Urban Area : - Urban Area in the present study refers to area of municipalities, towns, cities, and area having high schools, colleges and university.
3. Rural Area : - Rural area in the present study refers to remote rural areas.

Akshaya Project

Akshaya Project, State Government's e-literacy programme, is piloted in Malappuram District with the help of 634 private entrepreneurs and is declared as successful by the government. On seeing the success the Government extended this project to all districts. There are two phases for the implementation of this Project. The first phase imparted the required e-literacy to common people in the district covering families. This phase was implemented with the financial and technical support of Government. However. In the second phase the government support is not provided and is expected to operate as self reliant project.

Sustained entrepreneurship development is focused through the Akshaya. Entrepreneurs are offered a variety of services and activities that can be operated profitably if initiative and commitment from the part of the entrepreneurs are ensured. Financial and technical incentives are provided by the government with the support of banks, STED, KELTRON, etc. For providing an awareness about the Project, an EOP of two days has also been provided. To increase the confidence and motivation level, EDP of two days was also offered to Akshaya entrepreneurs.

Evaluation of the Performance of Akshaya Entrepreneurs

The performance evaluation was under taken on the basis of amount of profit generated, volume of services rendered and also identifying the problems faced by them while operating the units by entrepreneurs.

Profit Earned by Entrepreneurs.

The performance of an entrepreneur can be measured on the basis of the profit earned by his unit. The entrepreneurs were asked to indicate the average monthly profit earned by them . The quantum of profit earned by entrepreneurs under study is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Average Monthly profit	Rural			Urban			Total	
	Experienced	Not Experienced	Total	Experienced	Not Experienced	Total	No	Percentage
No Profit	-	-	16	-	4	4	20	27
Below Rs.5000	4	16	19	6	9	15	34	46
Rs.5000-10000	2	15	10	5	3	8	18	24.30
Above Rs.10000	-	8	-	2	-	2	2	2.70
Total	6	39	45	13	16	29	74	100.00

Source : Survey data

Profits earned by entrepreneurs were measured on the basis of location and experience. The table shows that experienced entrepreneurs perform well as compared to those lacking

experience and entrepreneurs belonging to urban areas perform well as against entrepreneurs operating in rural areas.

Problems Faced by Entrepreneurs

The course of managing an industrial or business unit, it is inevitable that a few problems may crop up. In the present study an attempt was made to highlight problems being encountered by the entrepreneurs and were asked to rank them in the order of their relevance. Accordingly the entrepreneurs ranked these problems as shown in the following table.No.2

Nature of Problem	Rank
Financial Problem	I
Working capital shortage	II
Technical Problems	III
Lack of Public awareness	I
Lack of support from local bodies and Govt.	IV
Lack of motivation	VI
Lack of support from banks and financial institutions	V
Lack of skilled workers	VI
Other Problems	NIL

The above table shows that the major twin problems faced by Akshaya entrepreneurs are financial problem and lack of public awareness followed by working capital shortage.

Conclusion.

Akshaya project piloted in Malappuram District has contributed towards entrepreneurship development to a great extent. The present study reveals that 70.19 percent of the units in the district are operating profitably. However, these entrepreneurs are facing numerous problems such as financial problems, lack of publicity,

technical problems and lack of support from the government and other agencies. A coordinated effort from the Government, municipalities/panchayaths and other agencies and entrepreneurs will eliminate these problems and make the project a viable one in the coming phases also.

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