

Akshaya: An Exploratory Study

Project Report

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Table of Contents	
1	Introduction 3
1.1	Institutional Arrangement 4
1.2	Objectives of the study 5
2	Methodology 5
2.1	Indepth Interviews 6
2.2	Participant Observation 6
2.3	Sampling 6
3	The Akshaya Project: Kozhikode District 7
3.1	Current Status of the Akshaya Centres in Kozhikode 7
3.2	Strategic Framework of the Program 8
4	Structuring and Functioning of the Akshaya Project 11
4.1	Setting up the Location, Centre and the Entrepreneur 11
4.2	Finance and Funding 12
4.3	Training and Support 13
4.4	Course Curriculum and Other Services 14
5	Findings and Analysis 17
6	Summary and Conclusion 18
7	Annexure 19
7.1	Questionnaire 19
7.2	Graphical Representation of the Findings and Analysis 20
7.3	Aruna Sundararjan on Akshaya 26

1 Introduction

The previous half decade has witnessed a mushrooming of information communication technology (ICT) centered development projects in several developing countries with the intentions of spurring rapid social and economic growth through an attempt to bridge the digital divide. Several innovative projects have taken emerged in India over this period; either initiated solely by the government or as part of a CSR initiative by large companies or research organizations. Both these stand alone models were handicapped by their respective drawbacks, and newer models of partnerships such as Public – Private Partnerships (PPP) and



Multi Stakeholder Initiatives have since emerged. The Akshaya project is one such instance of a PPP with the two main actors involved being the State and the private entrepreneur.

The Akshaya project initiated in November 2002 in Trivandrum, Kerala was officially started with the introduction of rural e kiosks or technology centers in the districts of Thiruvanthpuram and Malappuram in May, 2003. This public private initiative was undertaken keeping four ambitious targets in mind:

- To provide basic functional skills (e – literacy) to at least one member of every family in the state
- To ensure universal access to various ICT tools and other technologies
- To provide relevant content to the local population in the native language
- To establish community access centres, which could be eventually developed as centres to provide integrated e – governance services

At a more macro level, one could delineate an attempt to integrate two larger goals through the project, namely mass socio – economic development through increased computer and internet access while simultaneously ensuring financial viability via market driven entrepreneurship.

The pilot project was started in Malappuram which has an area of 3.372 square kilometres and a population of 3.7 million. The district is divided into 137 villages, 14 blocks and 6 ta-

lukas, with approximately 600,000 families spread over this region. They are the intended beneficiaries of this programme. There were two primary factors why the Kerala State IT Mission chose Malappuram as the pilot site. First, Malappuram has one of the lowest rates across the state with reference to education and health reform. Secondly, this district also has the highest population of Muslims (over 70% of the population here are Muslims) as well as NRI's, most of whom work as labourers in the Middle East and Gulf countries. The rationale therefore was, that this project could help not only promote the local economy but also assist enterprising individuals to attain jobs abroad..

1.1 Institutional Arrangement

The initial plan was to create Community Technology Centers (CTCs) throughout the Malappuram district and equip them with telephone connections and electricity. Each CTC was to provide services to 1000 families within a 2 km radius. The first step was to train interested rural youth in ICTs at a budgeted cost of Rs. 6 million. These CTCs or kiosks were established using the PPP model. Post training, the entrepreneurs set up CTCs in their own homes or other rented spaces and invested their own money on computers, equipment and furniture. Each centre was to house 10 computers at an estimated total cost of Rs. 383,000 of which Rs. 200,000 was to be provided by the commercial or rural cooperative banks (without the necessary collateral). The government on its behalf gave Rs. 120 per person/ client who came to learn, as a contribution towards promoting e literacy, developing training material and local content. The learner himself/herself pays Rs.20 to the CTC owner post completion of the course.

The Akshaya rural kiosk project has since been introduced in nine other districts, including Calicut/Kohzicode where this exploratory study was conducted. Keeping in mind that the State IT Mission intends to introduce this throughout the state, the foremost concern will be in regard to the financial sustainability of this project. It is to ensure this that the two primary actors, the state and the private entrepreneur or kiosk owner have entered into a joint partnership. The state mainly contributes by:

- Subsidizing the e literacy training
- Provide training to the entrepreneur to encourage economic sustainability
- Facilitate soft loans for entrepreneurs (through commercial and cooperative rural banks)

- Establish network and connectivity
- Develop appropriate content and learning software
- Oversee functioning and logistics

However, the onus of generating revenue while increasing e literacy and computer access is with the individual kiosk owners. The private entrepreneurs are entrusted with the responsibility of attracting customers, creating e literacy awareness and providing services (basic computer courses and e services), all of which will determine the success or failure of a particular kiosk.

1.2 Objectives of the study

Hence the objective of was:

- To study the structure and functioning of an Akshaya E-Kiosk
- To look at User as well Kiosk owner perspectives through the use of qualitative research tools
- To get an idea of the funding, financing and thereby financial sustainability of the project.

2 Methodology

As the objective of our study was deal with aspect of financial sustainability with reference to the presence of implementing agencies and methods of revenue generation by the kiosk operators, user perspectives through household interviews and organizational structure, the nature of the study was mainly qualitative. The interaction with the community was initiated through in depth interviews, which was coupled with participant observation to gather information on specific topics in line with the specific objectives. The interviews were carried out through questionnaires to probe into the usage, of the kiosks and their usefulness with regards to the same. These interviews were conducted within a sample chosen, based on the proximity and distance of the community from the kiosks.

2.1 Indepth Interviews

In-depth interviews are carried out with only one person and sometimes two at a time. The format remains unstructured, the interview is generally conducted by a researcher, and projective techniques may also be used. In-depth interviews are ideal for investigating personal, sensitive, or confidential information which is unsuitable to cover in a group format. They are also the best method for advertising pre-testing, where we are seeking individual interpretations and responses.

2.2 Participant Observation

Participant Observation as a technique of qualitative research is the most personally demanding and analytically difficult method of social research to undertake. It requires researchers to spend a great deal of time in surrounding within which researchers may not be familiar (e.g., factory floor or bank office); to secure and maintain relationships with people with who they have little personal affinity and to take a lot of notes on what appears to be everyday mundane happenings It is one of those methods which, yields fascinating insights into people's social lives and relationships (e.g., the social world of factory workers or gang members).

2.3 Sampling

The sample size was taken as approximately 33% of the number of households in the sub centre. Each subcenter has around 30-40 households. Hence the number of households taken for this particular study was 14 households. The sampling method used was Cluster Analysis. Clustering is the partitioning of a data set into subsets (clusters), so that the data in each subset (ideally) share some common trait - often proximity according to some defined distance measure.

3 The Akshaya Project: Kozhikode District

The Akshaya Program was officially launched in Kozhikode District with the setting up of a centre or an Akshaya E-Kiosk at a Panchayat named Ullery on 16th December 2005. The Project's aim was to implement the IT Mission of Government of Kerala's vision of making at least one individual in the family PC literate. Kozhikode district consists of 78 panchayats, 2 Municipalities (Badgara and Koyilandy) and a Corporation. According to the Kozhikode District Planning Officer *"Akshaya is a prestigious project implemented by the IT Mission of Government of Kerala with an aim to bridge the digital divide with an additional goal of bringing Information Communication Technologies to the general public for better awareness of E- Governance and to be a part of Governmental activities"*.

3.1 Current Status of the Akshaya Centres in Kozhikode

As of November 24, 2007, there are a total of 168 working Akshaya centers in the District out of the 177 centers originally set up. According to the latest information provided by the Kozhikode District Planning Office, these 168 centers are located at an average of 2 centers per panchayats along with 10 centers in the Kozhikode Corporation area and 7 and 5 centers in Koyilandy and Badgara municipalities respectively. In addition to these centers there are about 400 temporary sub centers which was set up to minimize the difficulty of access around the main centers. Each centre was initially set up to cater to an average of 2,500 households but in the recent months it has been increased to cater to 3500 households. One e-kiosk owner claimed that his centre alone caters to about 9500 households. According to the latest survey and feedback from the Akshaya monitoring agency/ Kerala IT Mission, the total number of PC literate in the District is about 314,582 from a total number of 609,834 households with an additional 146,733 individuals being PC literate through other sources. Thus this brings the total pc literacy rate to 76% in the District. Accordingly 13 panchayats in the district have already declared themselves as 100% PC literate with 5 more scheduled to join them in a few months. In such a scenario, it won't be long before Kozhikode district declares itself 100 PC literate and that too at a much faster rate than Malappuram. In this regard one can say that the Akshaya Project has been implemented in the state with a clear strategy of interdepartmental cooperation, development of social entrepreneurship, capitalizing the resources of the grassroots level, local body support and by ensuring community involvement

and development in all the stages of implementation. Evidences of such cooperation can be seen within the structure and functioning of the centres.

3.2 Strategic Framework of the Program

Under the Panchayathi Raj Act, Kerala has a three tier local body setup. The state has 14 District Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats and 991 Grama Panchayats. Kerala also has 54 Municipalities, which are the local self governments for the urban areas. Most of the planned funds are spent through these three tier local body institutions, under the People's Planning Program. Involvement of local bodies was considered to be necessary for the smooth and successful implementation of the project and to ensure grassroots level community involvement. Local bodies also contributed financially for the implementation of the project. Out of the Rs. 120 fees payable to entrepreneurs, Local bodies shared Rs.80 and Rs. 40 was collected from the beneficiaries. Out of the Rs. 80, Rs. 60 was the share of Grama Panchayats. Block Panchayats and District Panchayat shared Rs.10 each towards this contribution. Local bodies were also involved in spearheading the e-literacy campaign and monitoring the e-literacy training to ensure proper training was delivered to the citizens.

3.2.1 Role of Local Bodies in Akshaya

- Location of centers are identified by Grama Panchayats/ Municipalities with the help of Town and Country Planning Department, based on parameters like Availability of Electricity/ Telephone/ Transportation facilities, place of natural gathering of the public etc
- Selection of beneficiaries to the centers
- Block Coordinators to be selected by the recommendations of Block Panchayats
- Selection of Akshaya Champions, Akshaya Nodal Officers, Social Animators for the smooth implementation of the campaign
- Selection of entrepreneurs- Interview committee consists of Local Body President as Chairman/ Members of the three tier local bodies as members of selection committee
- Allotting Rs.60 by Grama Panchayat, Rs.10 by Block Panchayat, Rs.10 by District Panchayat, Allotting the funds to the DPC account maintained by District Collector in the statewide roll out

- Monitoring e-literacy with the activities like Formation of squads, Verification of Registers, Approving the e-literacy applications- letter from Local Bodies, reporting misappropriations, if any.
- Fund Disbursement to entrepreneurs is also based on the recommendation of Local Bodies after checking the e-literacy registers by Social Animators/ Ward Members/ Grama Panchayat Presidents
- Heading the campaign activities.

3.2.2 Social Entrepreneurship Model

Positioning of the Social Entrepreneur to establish Akshaya Centers could be said to be one of the strategic and important decisions in the Project. Constant and regular efforts were initiated to empower them to understand each and every development in the sector. Setting up 5000 ICT centers, managing them, and updating the situations would have been very difficult for the State Government primarily because of the constraints in the resources. It was therefore decided to start the centers with the help of local entrepreneurs. The huge unemployment percentage of the educated youths in the State also prompted the State Government to take this decision.

According to the views held by the District Planning Officer, the concept of social entrepreneurship was brought in here, because of two reasons; one ICT for Development in the rural areas is a new concept, people had not adopted ICT in their lives, except for the fact that some services like railway reservation are used without recognizing it as an intervention by Technology. But to prompt the people to use Internet instead of telephone calls or online payment system to pay their bills is not an easy job, because of the hesitation to use technology. A Social entrepreneur, who is a native of that place, commands some social esteem, well versed in social activities, and ready to experiment, would be able to define the information, communication, and education needs of the common people around him/her, and to convert the need to a service with the help of government. The Entrepreneur in Akshaya clearly understands the fact that service delivery through his/her centre is an essential component for creating his/her business and maintaining the customer base. The entrepreneur for each centre is selected by interviews conducted by a Panel consisting of Local bodies, Social Animators and representatives of the Akshaya Project. Preference is usually given to individuals who are already PC literate/already owning an Internet centre/ and who have Plus Two qualification..

3.2.3 Role of Government in Akshaya

Government Departments would be able to use the Akshaya network for the delivery of a variety of services. The Departments would be able to identify the services that can be routed through Akshaya network, structuring the programmes, enabling delivery mechanisms etc. The role of Government is primarily that of a facilitator, and in sourcing funding, providing training content, statutory clearances, implementing a mechanism for remunerating the entrepreneurs for the hired computer time for learning, organizing platforms for operations etc..

3.2.4 Social Animator

Social Animator or the Local Body Level Coordinator is identified as critical for the success of the project. The concept of Social Animator is included in the project for establishing a linkage between Local Bodies, entrepreneurs, General Public etc. Social Animator is a person who is responsible for the smooth functioning of the project in the grassroots level. He reports to the Local Body and to the Akshaya Project Office, helping the entrepreneur to work towards reaching the programme to every household, conducting surveys, local level campaigns, arranging events, review meetings by Local Bodies and the project office. The Social Animator is given hands on training for a week before induction into the post; he is imparted with skills to operate computers, and to give lectures for the benefits of using technology to improve the lives of the people.

Selecting Social Animators is the responsibility of Local Bodies. Identity Cards are given to Social Animators. Minimum Education Qualification for Social Animator is fixed as SSLC / High School education. He/She must have a minimum of two years of experience in Mass Movements, like, Literacy, People's Planning, Kudumbashree, Jananidhi, IKM etc. Age limit can be 18 to 55, must be a native of the Grama Panchayat, computer knowledge is desirable. Social animators are given a small honorarium for the roles carried out.

4 Structuring and Functioning of the Akshaya Project

4.1 Setting up the Location, Centre and the Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurs are invited to set up Akshaya centers through advertisements in regional newspapers. Other methods of campaigning include enlisting the help of Local NGOs and Residential Committee members. Applications can also be given to the Municipal Corporation Office as well as can be submitted online on the Akshaya website (www.askhaya.org). The selected individuals are then screened in an interview by a panel consisting of Social



animators, members from Local Bodies and representatives of the Akshaya Project. Individuals are selected and given the license to run centers on the basis of this interview. Individuals who are 12th pass and are already computer literate have an edge over those who are not and it is more often the case if not the rule that such people are selected to become the Social entrepreneur or the owner of

an Akshaya E-Kiosk. As mentioned before the location of the Akshaya centre is chosen in consultation with Local Bodies and NGOs and is more or less according to the population density of that area. The project as of now envisages that 1 Panchayat should be covered by 2 centers and in the corporation area; a centre should cover at least 3500-5500 households. Once the location and individual is selected which is usually one week after the receipt of application, the individual has the right to set up the centre and run it under the Akshaya Project. Initial investment of the equipment and shop space (which on an average comes to 3 lakh per centre) has to be borne by the entrepreneur himself. This is usually recovered after the First Phase of the Akshaya Project. The centre would usually consists of 5 or more PCs with backup for each PC in case of a power shutdown, one printer and a broadband connection in the case of an urban center and dial up connection in the case of a rural centre. The Akshaya project as mentioned consists of different phases with the First phase comprising of the Basic Computer course regarding awareness of the components and applications used in the PC. For the owner of the centre to get any kind of funding and support from the government, he/she has to show the Monitoring authority that there are at least 250 students/members registered under that centre. Once that magical figure is reached, the owner

can then avail of the subsidy that the government pays for the Basic course which is Rs 80/- out of the Rs 120/ fees. For example one of the centers visited had 3500 members registered under the basic course. Then the funding the owner would have got would be Rs 80 x 3500 = Rs2, 80,000. The centers are usually located within a radius of 5 kms to each other. However to make the distance even shorter and to increase the ease of access to this course, Sub-centers are being set up close to the Main centers. These sub-centers are temporary and cater



to 35 to 50 households in that area. The owner of the main center sets his equipment (usually two computers and an ups backup) in one of the household in that area (mostly households of committee members or members of SHG groups living in that area is chosen). The main center owner pays the bill for the power being used and employs an instructor (mostly 12th passed unemployed girls/women) from that area itself to guide the registered students in the basic computer

literacy course. It is generally the case that owners of the centers generally find in the local NGOS and other Local Bodies, allies who can gently persuade their members to join this basic course and hence they use the local NGOS like Kudumbshree for which a stipulated commission is paid

4.2 Finance and Funding

As mentioned in the earlier section, once the centre has crossed the 250 mark, it can then pass on this information along with the details and attendance of registered students to the IT mission Dept in Trivandrum. A copy is also given to the Akshaya District Planning Office. Once the nod of approval comes from the State capital in the form of a FORM (b) annexure, it is then approved and passed by (1) the Block Coordinator (2) Social Animator/Facilitator after which it is finally approved by the Secretary of the Corporation Office and the fund is then deposited in the form of a Treasury cheque in the center owner's bank. The owner receives Rs 80 for the Rs 120 course from the state government and is broken up in this fashion – 60:10:10 i.e. Grama Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat respectively. The fund is usually passed within 10 days of the information being sent to the Main Office in Trivandrum

4.3 Training and Support

Training is given to the owner of each center as to how the instruction of the curriculum has to proceed, teaching methods, and usage of different applications and services in the center. Among the existing owners in the district, 4 or 5 individuals are chosen who are already pc literate and/or who have a diploma/degree certificate in computer applications. These 4/5 individuals are then rigorously trained in the State capital under the state's expense and they in turn train the remaining Center owners of their district. They are called the Master Trainers and they are usually people who have a degree in computer applications. These trainers are also responsible to teach the Advanced Computer course being offered in the second stage of the project. Other Training programmes imparted to the Entrepreneurs include:

1. Intel Teachers Training Programme - 50 entrepreneurs were trained as the part of the Intel Teachers Training Programme. Training was intended to provide training skills to Akshaya Entrepreneurs.
2. Connectivity Training - Training to understand the basic concepts of wireless connectivity was imparted to Akshaya entrepreneurs. This was arranged as a two day training programme.
3. DTP Training - Training to do Malayalam DTP works were given to 260 Akshaya Centres. This four day training camp was arranged with the help of IT Kerala Mission.
4. Training on Internet- A four day training programme was also organised to use effectively the communication techniques of Internet. Mailing, Chatting, and other communication techniques like Internet Telephony were covered under this programme.
5. Business Tie ups- More than 100 meetings and training sessions were organised as the part of business development of Akshaya Centres.
6. Many training programmes were also organised to improve the behavioral aspects of Akshaya Entrepreneurs. Training programmes on Positive Thinking, Confidence Building etc were also organised.
7. Many refresher programmes were also organised for Trainers of Akshaya Centres, Panchayat Coordinators etc

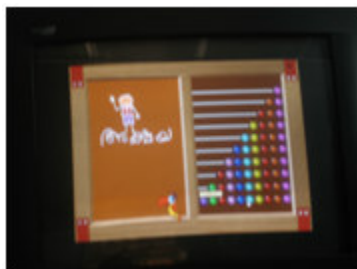
In the case of technical support for the systems and equipments, the centre owners have to

bear the responsibility and cost of a fully functional machine and its maintenance

4.4 Course Curriculum and Other Services

The Akshaya Project is divided into different phases with the present implementation stage consisting of Two Phases. In Phase I, a basic computer literacy course is provided which consists of a 4CD Pack given to each of the center owners containing the Akshaya e-literacy software. The duration of the basic course is for 15 hours, with users sparing 1.5 hours a day for 10 days to cover 10 chapters. At least one member of a family is eligible for this e-literacy training. As mentioned before the beneficiary has to pay only Rs 40 out of the Rs 120 for the course. The balance amount is incurred by the State and Local Bodies. There are no fees charged for the SC/ST and people living in BPL conditions.

4.4.1 The Basic Computer Literacy Course (Phase I)



The Basic computer course gives information and awareness regarding the different components of a PC and exercises involving Mouse coordination and control, drag and drop operations, folder creation and basic application usage like MS WordPad and Paint. The lessons are arranged chapter wise in the form of an abacus with 1st bead representing the 1st chapter and the ten beans in the last line representing the 10th and the last chapter. Each chapter contains five subtopics with video clips and interactive games that make the lessons easy and fun filled. This also makes it easy for the owner to complete one lesson in one day, thus effectively finishing the course for the current batch in 10 days flat. The software is flash based and is set in the regional language. The tenth Chapter gives a general overview of what the course has taught the user, along with a summary of the previous chapters. There are also tests and exercises conducted by which the owner as well as the user can determine whether he/she has truly mastered the course. The course is self administrative in nature through the use of a vernacular based voice instruction system and an instructor is rarely required.

4.4.2 Advanced Computer Course (Phase II)



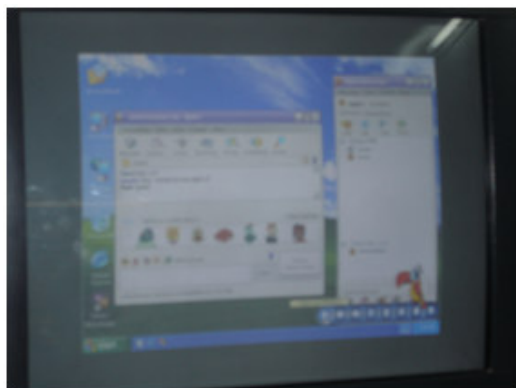
The advanced computer course or the E-Vidya course as it has come to be called is a certificate course offered under the aegis of the Kerala IT Mission with the mission to provide employment to the youth. In addition to these, English learning courses, Arabic typing Tutor, DTP course, Internet learning course, e tuition etc are also provided in this Phase. The fees structure is regulated and controlled by the IT Mission Kerala and the course fee for the E- Vidya course is Rs 450/-. Subsidies

are still being planned out for BPL as well as regular users.

Other Services:

1. **Information Kiosk:** Akshaya is envisaged as a one stop information centre. All kinds of information will be made available through the centers. Content has been already generated in five core areas -Health, Agriculture, Career, Education and Laws and regulations. The government has also digitized all the applications forms, government schemes and deliver them through Akshaya network. Encouragement for digitizing and updating locally relevant content is also given to Akshaya Centres.
2. **E-transaction Centre:** Extension of Friends Services through Akshaya centres is implemented through this initiative called the E- Pay Service. Presently KSEB and BSNL bills are collected through this package. Entrepreneurs can collect Rs.5 per bill per customer for offering this service. This facility is now operational in about 3-4 centers in the Kozhikode corporation area and is implemented in centers where Phase II is being implemented.
3. **E-governance Cell:** The Government already had taken decisions to covert Akshaya Centers as the last mile units for e-governance delivery. Akshaya Centre can be used for delivering various e-governance services to the public, which include, Public Grievances Redressal System, Decision Support systems, Online processing of applications, information dissemination services, digital extension of various campaign/awareness programmes, telemedicine, agriculture intervention etc. Many initiatives like e-parathi (District Collector's Public Grievance Redressal Mechanism), e-krishi, etc have been introduced

4. **Communication Hub:** Akshaya Centers will also be developed as a Communication hub, which will have all ICT based communication facilities to the common man. In



Kozhikode all the 10 Akshaya Centers are connected to the internet with the help of a broadband connection (Cost Rs 250/- per month for 256 kbps connection) which enable the centers for various connectivity based services. Intranet based services are also initi-

ated through the network. This initiative is very important in Kerala as Kerala has lot of population living outside the country and a majority of the users do use internet telephony to call their relatives living abroad.

5. **Multimedia, Animation and Designing Centre:** Some of the Akshaya Centers are very good in offering Multimedia based services. This includes offering multimedia course programmes, website designing, marriage album preparation, animation works etc. Special training packages on Multimedia of CDIT and Keltron are offered through these centres. Designing marriage album,etc are helping the centres in earning revenue.
6. **Health Care:** One of the major areas of intervention in the future would be Health Care. Akshaya Centres offer various health based services like Health Mapping, as many of the Akshaya Centres have equipments like Digital BP Apparatus, Glucometre etc to map the health indices of people. A project to offer telemedicine services is also envisaged through the Akshaya Centres specializing in the health sector.

5 Findings and Analysis

The average size of the sampled household is 4.21 members. At least one person in all the interviewed households has a working knowledge of computers (Fig 1.1). Around 86% of the interviewed households have an understanding about the courses or services offered under Akshaya project (Fig 1.3).¹

The same percentages (86%) of people have done the basic course offered in the Akshaya centre. The remaining percentages (14%) have completed the advanced course (Fig 1.4).

All the respondents who have done either of the two courses reported it to be useful. All these people use computer and internet services either at Akshaya centre or private cybercafés. 14% of the respondents use computer and internet facility for e-mailing only. Majority of the respondents (71%) use it for chatting and voice telephony and the remaining 14% use it for paying online bills, in addition to the aforementioned services (Fig 1.6). As far as their satisfaction level of return from courses and services offered by Akshaya is concerned, they ranked it at a mean value of 7.93 on a scale of 1-10 (Fig 1.11).

However once a person has completed his/her course at an Akshaya centre/sub-centre 57% of people visit it occasionally for accessing services. A significant proportion of respondents (29%) never visit the centre/sub-centre after their course completion. Only 14% of the respondents reported that they visit the centre/sub-centre very often (Fig 1.7). This information however cannot be generalized to all the centres as the viability of the kiosks are also environment specific and each location comes with its own challenges. The user fee for accessing internet ranges from INR 20 to INR 25 and the users find this to be fair for the kind of services offered.

The courses offered by Akshaya helped around 14% of those who completed the course to find jobs which include DTP and data entry.

¹ Please refer Annexure 6.2 for all graphs

6 Summary and Conclusion

As stated in the objectives, this exploratory study is aimed at studying the structure and functioning of these Kiosk centres as well as the issue of financial sustainability. The pilot project in Malappuram was hindered by several drawbacks. Some of the notable ones were the reluctance to accept such an initiative by the largely conservative populis, and more importantly the over-proliferation of centers that led to financial loss.

As could be seen from the findings, the structure of the centres and the issue of financial sustainability are interlinked. The Akshaya Kozhikode project realised this and accordingly reduced the centres in each panchayats. Additionally to reach out to more people, the idea of mobile subcentres was instrumental in this effort. A normal sub centre that was visited had an out reach of 30- 40 families, at times stretching to even 75 households depending on the density of the region. This seems to suggest at least at a preliminary level that this maybe one of the keys to the future sustainability of the Akshaya initiative in Kozhikode. Another important point to remember is that Kozhikode seems to be a more favourable location than the pilot site as it is a semi urban area with a significant business class and therefore will have a higher interest in gaining e- literacy. This again points to the context sensivity of such projects.

With regard to the future direction of the project in Kozhikode, plans for the implementation of Phase II will start in January 2008 in around 50 centers which would mean that 50 centers would have attained 100 % e-literacy by then.

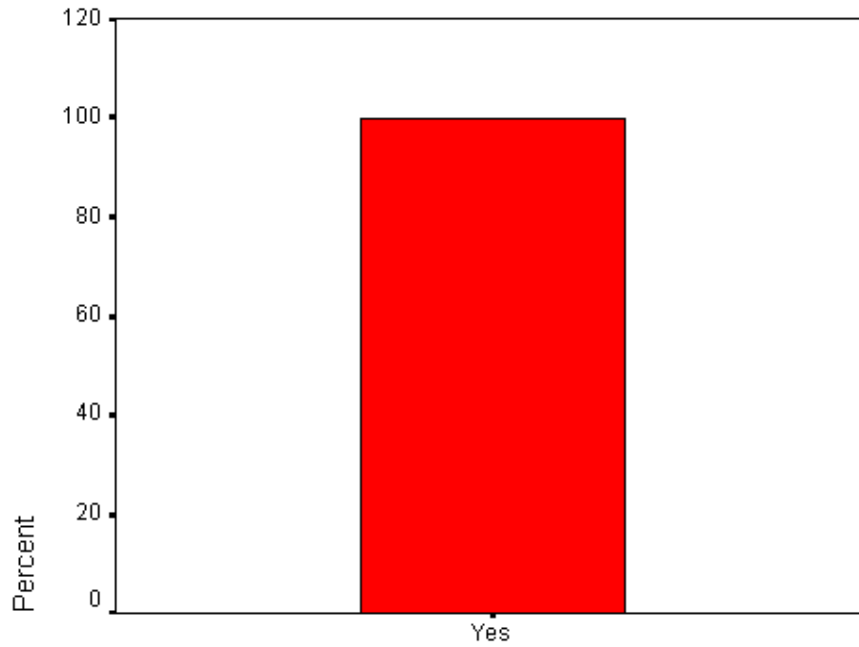
7 Annexure

7.1 Questionnaire

1. Personal Details
 - i. Name
 - ii. Age
 - iii. Number of family members
2. Have you used a computer before
3. What do you primarily use it for
4. Do you know what the Akshaya Project is and its objective
5. Is there an Akshaya kiosk near your house
6. How often do you go there?
7. What are the fees charged for internet usage? Do you think the amount charged is fair?
8. Have you visited any other centers? Is there any difference?
9. How and when did you learn to use a computer?
10. Did you face any issues during the early project period?
11. Have you given any feedback to monitoring agency?
12. Do you have a personal computer?
13. Would you like to own one?
14. Are you happy with the project rate it on a scale of 1-10? If not any suggestions
15. Does atleast one person in your family know how to use the computer
16. Has anybody in the family got a job because of this computer education
17. Has it has an impact in any other way?

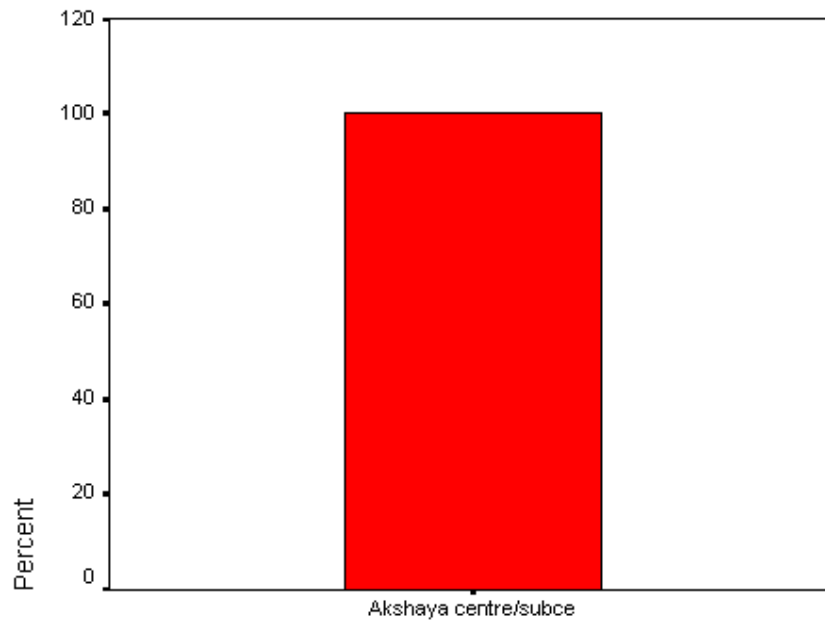
7.2 Graphical Representation of the Findings and Analysis

Fig 1.1



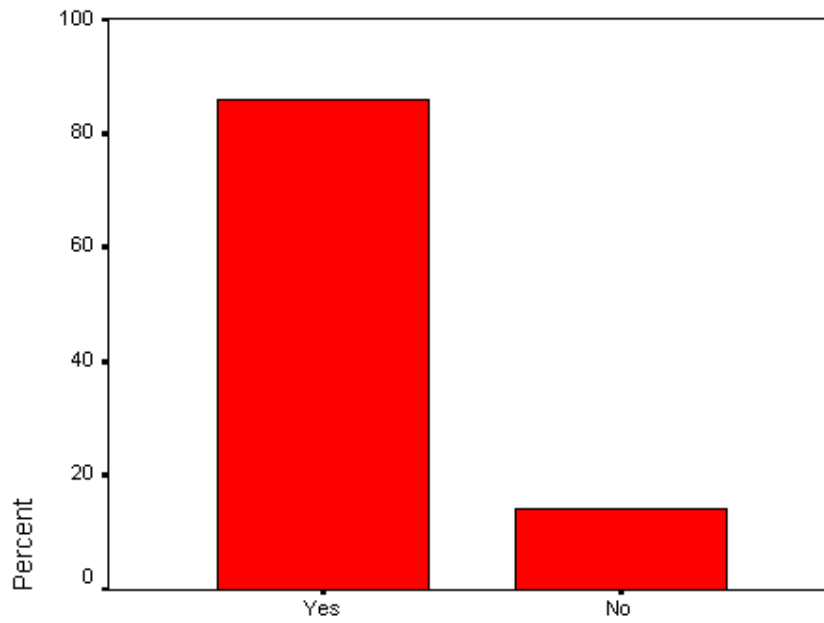
Does at least one person in your family know computers?

Fig 1.2



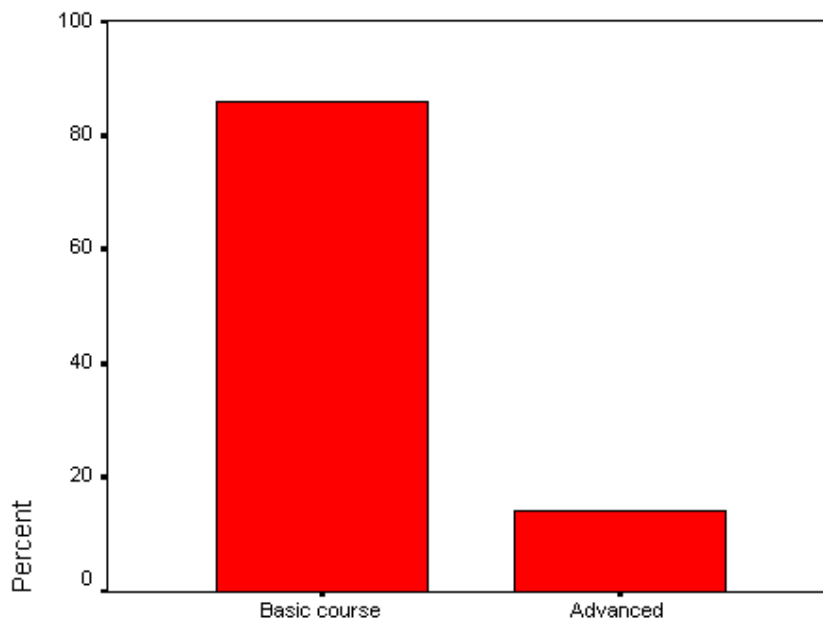
How did you/the person learn to use the computer?

Fig 1.3



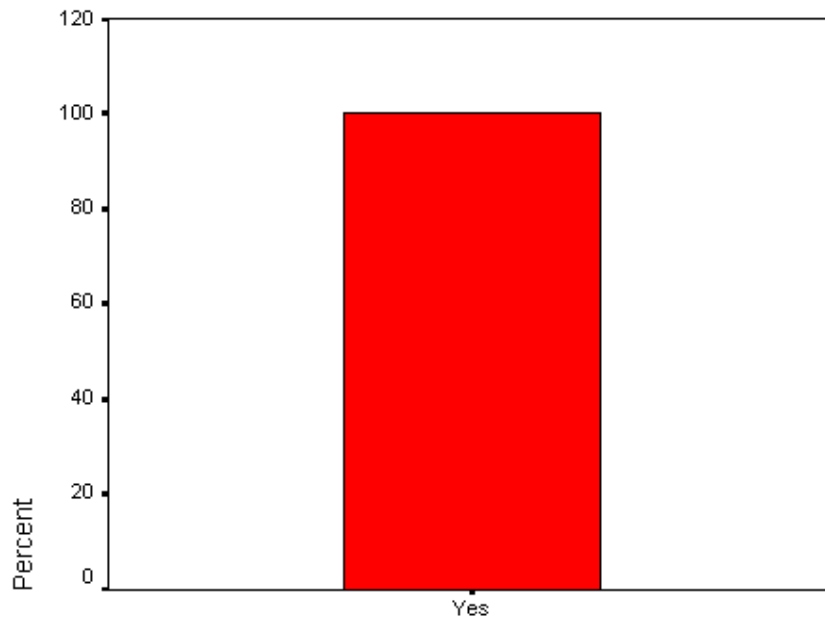
Do you know about the courses/services offered under Akshaya

Fig 1.4



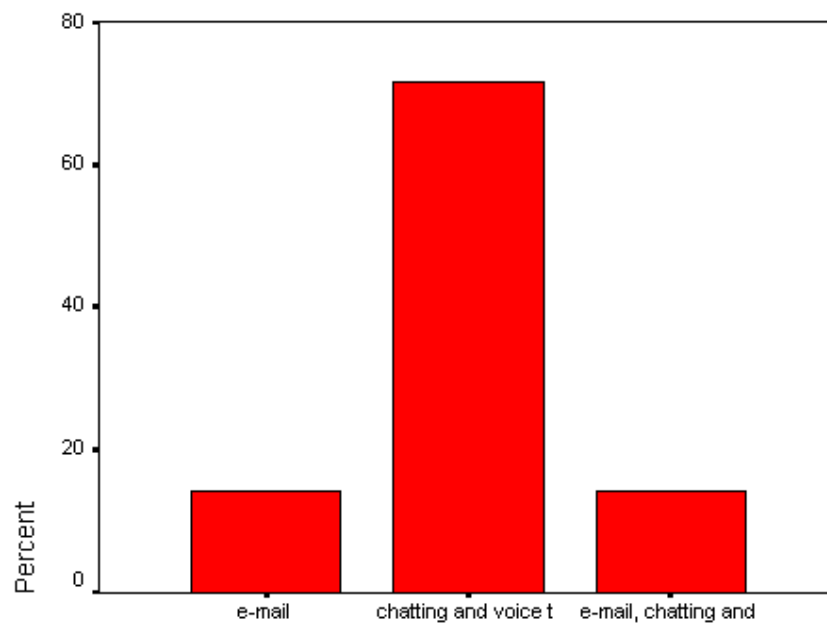
What courses did you/the person learn at Akshaya?

Fig 1.5



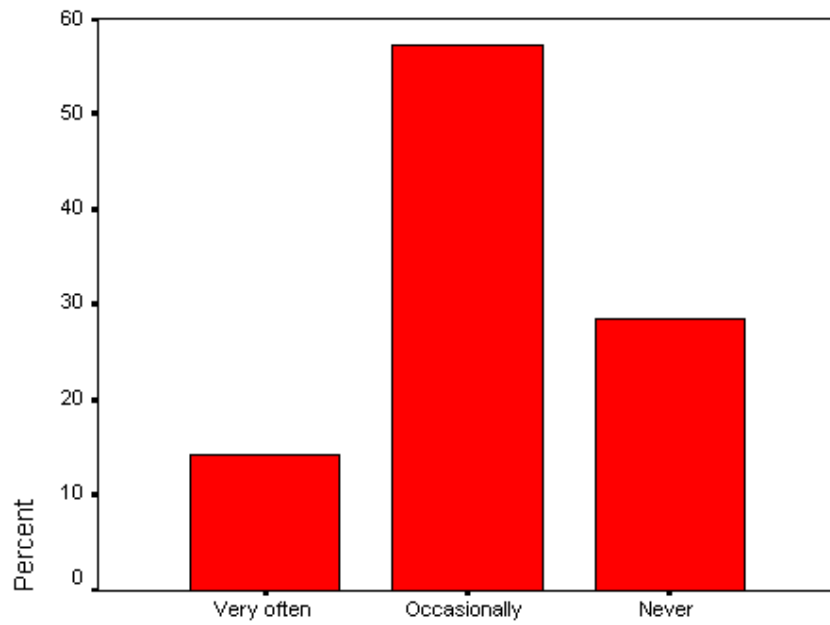
Did you/the person find the course useful?

Fig 1.6



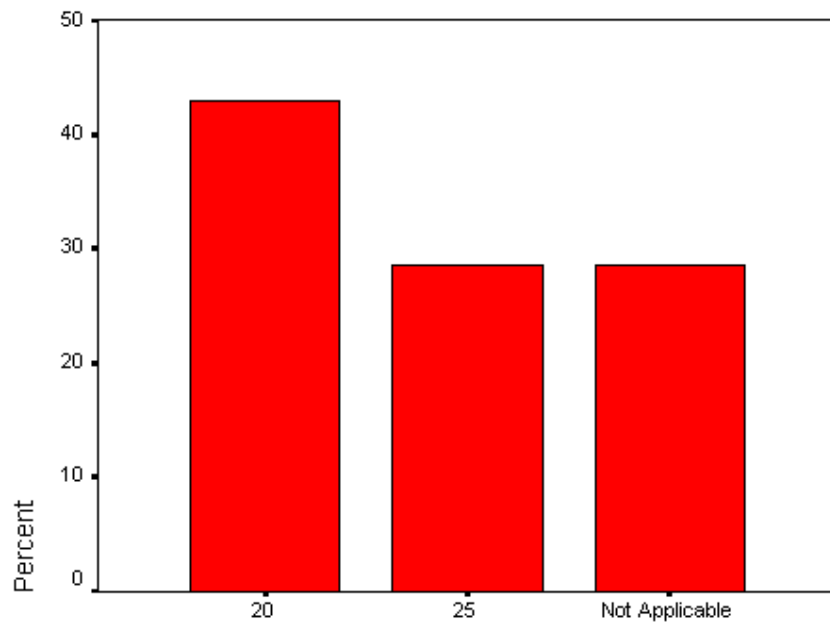
What do you/the person primarily use the computer/internet for?

Fig 1.7



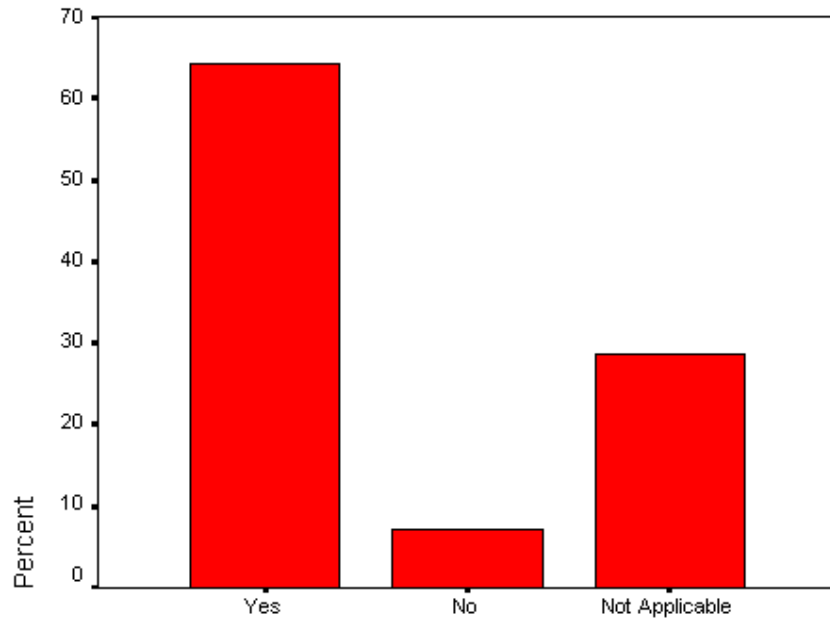
How often do you go to Akshaya kiosk for accessing the services

Fig 1.8



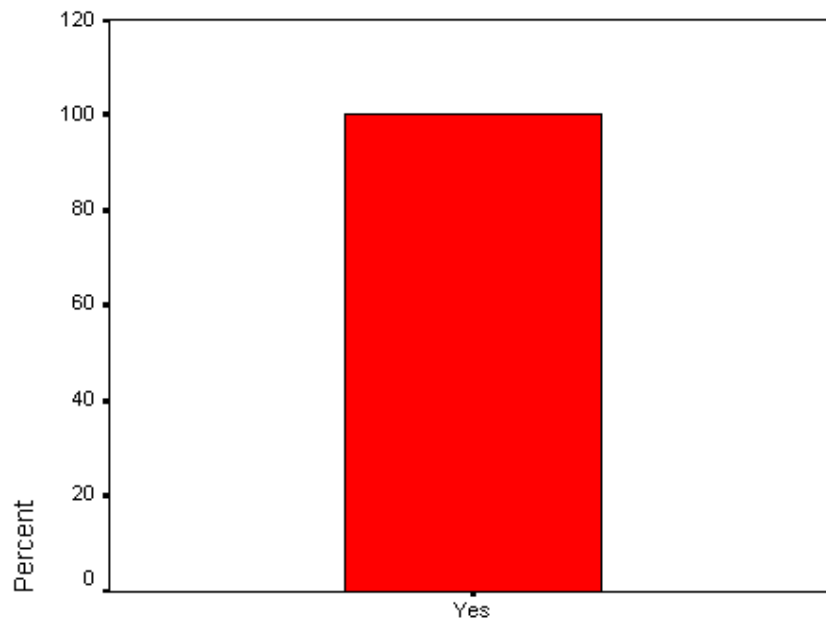
What are the fee charges for internet use?

Fig 1.9



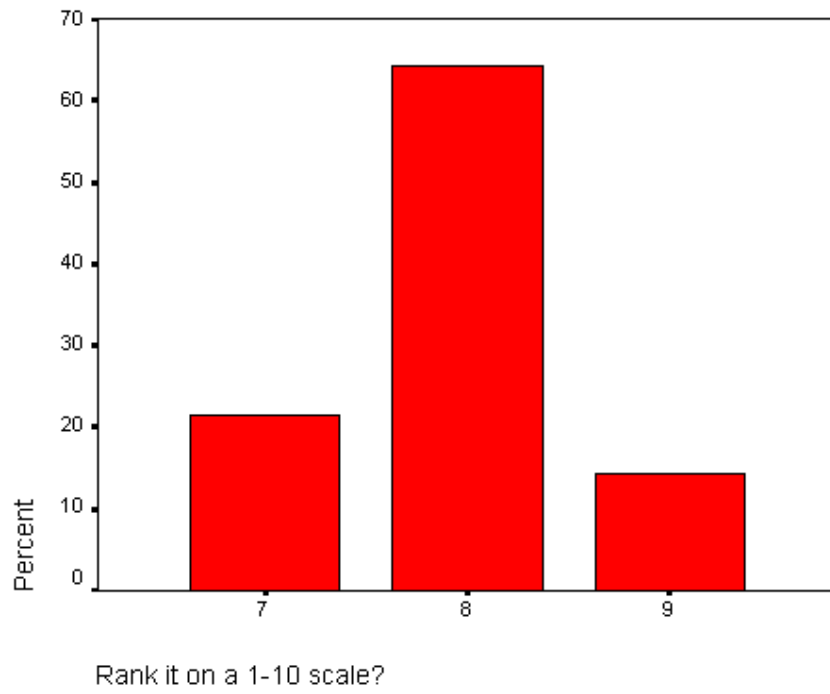
Do you think the amount is fair?

Fig 1.10



Are you satisfied with the courses/services offered by Akshaya?

Fig 1.11



7.3 Aruna Sundararajan on Akshaya

Aruna Sundararajan during her tenure as the IT secretary of Kerala attracted IT enabled services as what she saw was a step towards raising the living standards of the people along with providing an alternative to the tourism industry.

As part of the IT initiative, she stated that the focus was mainly on three areas. The first, to establish an environment to attract investments and follow it up with an efficient branding exercise, second to build the human resource capacity in order to meet the requirements of the companies and the third being e-governance. As part of this Akshaya was launched as a pilot programme in building IT capacity among the masses. Under this programme the idea was to make at least one person in the 7-lakh families living in Malappuram district computer and Internet literate. As of December 2003, more than 4,00,000 people have been trained to operate a computer.

She explained that small entrepreneurs were invited to set up computer centers where the people would be trained. There was an investment of around INR 2, 00,000 by over 600 entrepreneurs each, as they saw some business potential and set up centers.

The initial training fee was at INR 20 with the balance INR 100 being shared by gram/block and the district panchayats. For the first time in India 3,500 computers were installed in one district.

Akshaya has helped train 6, 50,000 people in Malappuram, one of the most backward and remote districts, but also the first in the country to be Wi-Fi enabled. People go to the 630 cyber kiosks in the district, pay their bills and send e-mails. This area has a predominantly Muslim population. More than 50 percent of those trained were women. Information regarding IT and why it is useful and appealing to them was done through organizing big campaigns on the advantages of Information technology. In addition, they learnt because they wanted to teach their children and send e-mails to their husbands who were abroad.