Barriers to IT Industry Success: A Socio-Technical Case Study of Bangladesh

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Information technology (IT), which has evolved from the merger of computers, telecommunications and office automation technologies, is one of the most rapidly growing industries in the world. In Bangladesh, IT use is still in a backward stage in terms of information generation, utilization and applications. A dependable information system has not been developed for the management and operation of the government machinery and large volume of data transactions in the public/private sector organizations. There is a lack of locally and externally generated information needed for the efficient performance of the government, production, trading, service, education, scientific research and other activities of the society.

This case study of the IT scenario in Bangladesh discusses the challenges, analyzes the key issues that may be barriers to the success of its IT industry and discusses the inherent strengths which can be used as the launching pad for making Bangladesh a potential offshore source of software and data processing services. Recommended actions have been proposed under ‘short term’
and ‘medium term,’ depending on the priority and importance, and categorized by the fiscal, human resource development, infrastructure and marketing functional areas. The necessary ingredients to become a potential exporter of computer software and data processing services do not currently exist in the required quantum in Bangladesh. If Bangladesh wants to enter into this market, it needs to cross a number of hurdles within a very short time span. Concerted efforts from everybody concerned have to be put in on a war-footing basis, as this sector has the potential to generate the highest revenue for the country.

INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, information technology (IT) use is still in a backward stage in terms of information generation, utilization and applications. A dependable information system has not been developed for the management and operation of the government machinery and large volume of data transactions in the public/private sector organizations. There is a lack of locally and externally generated information needed for the efficient performance of the government, production, trading, service, education, scientific research and other activities of the society.

The limitation of resources, shortage of skilled manpower, inadequate research facilities and skill development programmers, lack of coordination among research organization, outmoded course curricula on science and technology education and poor social consciousness of the role of IT in nation building are the major factors contributing to this situation. Presumably, while reading this case study, the reader might be interested to know some facts such as: (1) Does Bangladesh have any historical background of computerization? (2) Was there any chronological follow up to the next generation of computerization? (3) What role did the private, autonomous and public agencies play in different periods of time for computerization? (4) What are the barriers that Bangladesh faces in attaining a sufficient pace for IT advancement? and last but not the least, (5) What is the current status of IT as a whole in the country?

This case study discusses the key issues of IT use and application in government, education and economy. Issues such as IT-based income generation, better public and private service provision, exports, fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, IT infrastructure development, human resource development, standards, protection of privacy and data security have been addressed in an objective manner.
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