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Study of Doel Laptop Project: Causes of Failure and Lessons for Future Government-Backed Technology Initiatives in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The Government of Bangladesh launched Doel Laptop project in 2011 with the aim of reducing the digital divide and promoting technology literacy among its citizens. As the first locally assembled laptop in the country, the Doel laptop was expected to be an affordable solution for students and the public. However, the project faced numerous challenges and ultimately failed to meet its objectives. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the reasons behind the failure of Doel Laptop project and extract some lessons that can be learned to ensure better success rate for any technology initiative undertaken by Bangladesh. Through qualitative research, this study reviews existing literature, news articles, case studies and official reports from Telephone Shilpa Sangstha (TSS) regarding the Doel Laptop project. Additional calculations have been made to get financial losses and investigate the reasons for the project's failure. The Doel Laptop project started well with demand for the Primary 2102 model, which costs Tk 10,000. This lowest priced model only saw sales of 98 units over a two-year period despite a price reduction to Tk 5,000 leading to high demand. By 2013, there were a total of 26,622 laptop PCs sold, two-thirds of which were purchased by the Ministry of Education. The project faced major difficulties due to issues with partners 2M Corp and TFT, who held a 75% stake in the venture. Inside a year, both partners stepped back, while TFT asked for expensive kit in return. In 2013, however, only 28000 out of 37 059 assembled laptops were sold. The Doel Laptop project can be treated as a case study for future tech initiatives in Bangladesh. This failure shows why good planning is needed with quality and public-private collaborations. Later projects should focus on product testing, consumer response potential and sustainability of funding.

Keywords
Doel Laptop, government-backed technology, Government Initiatives, Digital Divide.

Biographies

Mahin Montasir Afif is a dedicated student at the American International University- Bangladesh, with a keen interest in statistical analysis, deep learning, and machine learning. His research pursuits are application-focused, particularly on how various machine learning and statistical techniques can be utilized across diverse fields to yield more accurate analyses and impactful insights. His academic interests center on exploring the potential of data-driven methods to address complex problems, pushing the boundaries of predictive and prescriptive analytics.

Abdullah Al Noman is a passionate student at the American International University- Bangladesh with a strong focus on machine learning and artificial intelligence. His interests lie in exploring the vast potential of AI and machine learning techniques to develop innovative, data-driven solutions across various domains. Noman's academic pursuits are geared toward understanding how intelligent algorithms can be applied to solve real-world challenges, aiming to drive impactful changes through technology. He is committed to advancing his technical knowledge and skills, with a vision to contribute to a future shaped by AI-powered advancements.

Emamul Arefin Islam is a student at the American International University- Bangladesh with a strong interest in machine learning, climate change, and the food chain. His academic pursuits focus on applying data-driven techniques to understand and address the effects of climate change, particularly on global food systems and ecosystems. Emamul is dedicated to exploring innovative solutions that leverage machine learning to promote environmental sustainability and resilience, with a vision of making a positive impact through technology.

Md. Mortuza Ahmmed a Statistician with an extensive range of research interests. His interests are mainly application based -- how to apply different statistical techniques in different sectors to perform more accurate and precise analyses as well as projection. His core academic research areas are public health, education and machine learning. One of his primary goals concerning students is to assist them with technical knowledge to turn their thoughts into successful outcomes to form a modern society.