

The Economics of E-learning in Iran: A Book Review

Fariba Khanipoor¹,  Zahra Karimian^{1*} 

¹Department of E-learning in Medical Sciences, Virtual School and Center of Excellence in E-learning, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

Introduction

The economics of e-learning has gained significant importance in recent years, providing increased accessibility, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, personalized learning, and opportunities for continuous skill development. However, this sector also faces challenges such as technological barriers, maintaining learner engagement and motivation, ensuring quality assurance, addressing concerns around certification and accreditation, and mitigating the sense of isolation and lack of social interaction (1).

As the world becomes increasingly unpredictable and uncertain due to digitalization and globalization, learning and teaching must adapt to this new reality. Traditional instructional methods are insufficient, as they focus on technical knowledge transfer rather than the skills necessary for transformation and reflection. In this era of ecological, economic, and social sustainability, economic thinking and management practices must evolve to address the pressing issues of the 21st century. Universities have a crucial role in revising their teaching concepts to align with these changing economic and social conditions, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills to navigate and shape the future (2, 3).

The book “Economics of E-learning in Iran” explores the economic aspects of the e-learning industry within Iran. It seeks to address the potential and challenges of this sector, providing a comprehensive analysis of how technological advancements and educational demands can be harnessed to

**Corresponding author:*

Zahra Karimian,

Department of E-learning in Medical Sciences, Virtual School and Center of Excellence in E-learning, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

Email: karimian@sums.ac.ir

Please cite this paper as:

Khanipoor F, Karimian Z. The Economics of E-learning in Iran: A Book Review. *Interdiscip J VirtualLearnMedSci*.2024;15(3):221-225. doi:10.30476/ijvlms.2024.102405.1303.

Received: 03-05-2024

Revised: 24-06-2024

Accepted: 09-07-2024

Keywords: E-learning, Economics, Education, Marketing, Educational Economics, Book Review

foster economic growth and employment. The authors intend to establish a framework for steering the country’s e-learning industry toward national objectives (4). They acknowledge that despite the significant potential of Iran’s e-learning industry due to technological advancements and increasing demand, it is confronted with several challenges. These include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient investment, and the need for better strategic planning. The book emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive environment for the e-learning sector through policy reforms, investment in technology, and capacity-building. This review introduces “Economics of E-learning in Iran” to a broader audience, particularly those interested in the intersection of technology, education, and economics. It underscores the book’s importance in guiding the development of a robust e-learning economy that can generate employment and foster economic growth in Iran. In this review, we analyze the only book available in the country’s book

market that examines e-learning in Iran from an economic perspective.

Book title: Economics of E-learning in Iran / Two Volumes

Genre: Educational Economics, Technology in Education

Authors: Seyed Hossein Hosseini, Zahra Jalalvand, Mehdi Ahangari, Samad Ghafari, and Seyed Amir Aghaei

Publisher: Atinegar: Tehran (Iran)

Language: Persian

Year of publication: 2020

Edition: First

Statement

The book “Economics of E-learning in Iran” consists of two volumes. The first volume comprises eight chapters and 95 pages, while the second volume contains six chapters and 333 pages. The second volume delves into the economic aspects of e-learning in Iran, building upon and expanding on the topics covered in the first volume. Given the growing demand and expanding market for the products and services in this field, along with the existing potentials of this industry, the authors consider it necessary to have a strategic plan in line with the mobilization of the country’s existing resources and capacities. The first volume focuses on the development perspective of Iran’s e-learning economy, while the second volume provides supporting studies for this development perspective. The authors of this book review provided a detailed interpretation of Iran’s e-learning, its potential for economic growth, and the challenges it faces. They focused on the strategic development framework outlined in the book, emphasizing the need for policy reforms, technology investment, and capacity building to increase the industry’s contribution to the economy.

Body

In the first chapter of Volume 1, the author explains the theoretical and definitional basics, such as e-learning, economy, and e-learning ecosystem. E-learning is an important priority of virtual campuses and

is expected to impact the future economy greatly. The financial implications of e-learning include its impact on employment, reduced education costs, and overall economic growth (4). The economics of e-learning is a multidimensional field encompassing diverse sectors and can potentially contribute to the overall development of the economy. Learners/facilitators, learning technologies, and resources are three primary components of the e-learning ecosystem. The authors suggest the e-learning ecosystem for Iran (Figure 1). The opening chapter, “Economics of e-learning in Iran,” lays a solid foundation by defining key concepts such as e-learning, its ecosystem, and its economic impact. This chapter emphasizes the central role of e-learning in future economies by highlighting the reduction in education costs, employment effects, and economic growth. By detailing the core elements of its ecosystem (learners, technology, and resources), the authors paint a vivid picture of the multidimensional economic potential of e-learning.

In the second chapter, the authors describe Iran’s e-learning upstream documents by considering the four components of the development approach, the outlined vision, quantitative and qualitative goals, and actions and strategies. The development approach section focuses on aligning the e-learning system with the needs of society and global developments while preventing government institutions from monopolizing the e-learning industry. The quantitative and qualitative goals include objectives such as gaining a significant share of the educational product market in the region and Islamic countries, as well as achieving top rankings in the region for the development of educational technologies, among others (4). This chapter draws a roadmap for the development of e-learning through strategic goals and actions. By addressing social needs and global trends, promoting a knowledge-based economy, and preventing monopolies, it charts a path toward an innovative education system. It highlights prospects for regional leadership in educational technologies, emphasizing

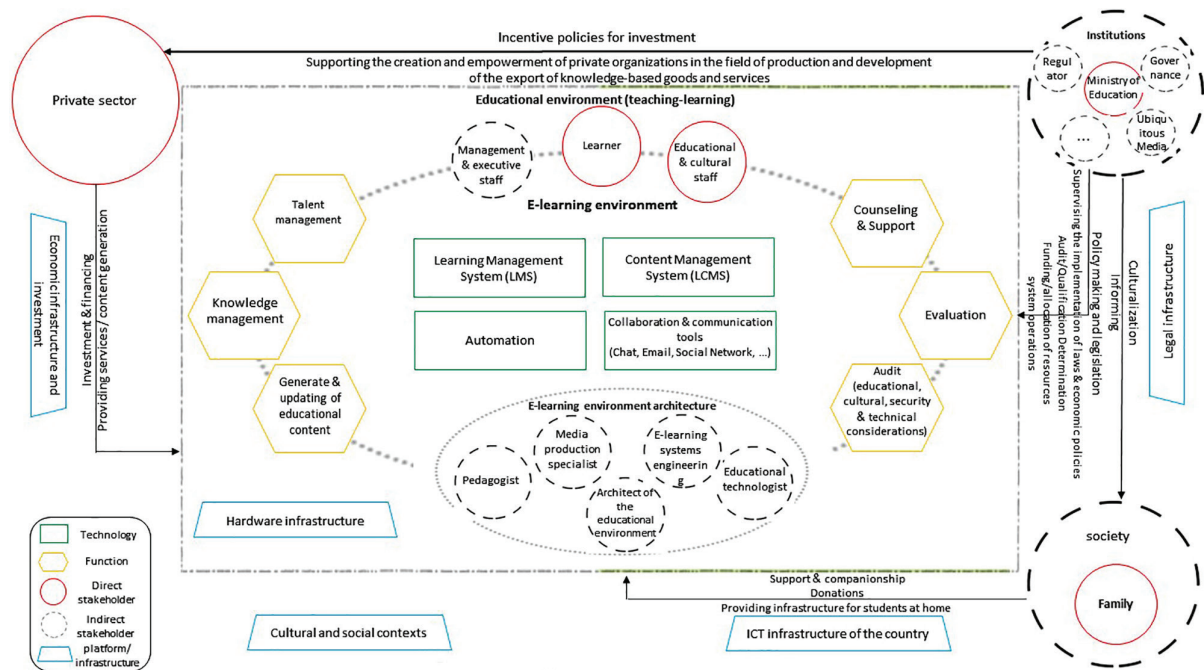


Figure 1: E-learning Ecosystem in Iran (4)

supportive policies, private sector investment, and advanced school infrastructure. This plan envisages a dynamic and globally competitive e-learning perspective for Iran.

The third chapter outlines the institutional landscape and categorizes key players into 12 functional areas, from policymaking to demand. In the provided diagram, all institutions, organizations, and bodies related to e-learning are placed in 12 functional areas as follows: Policymaking and legislation, management and facilitation, monitoring, auditing and licensing, financing and investment, research and development, culture and promotion, infrastructure, content production and service provision, marketing, advertising, publication and distribution, regulation market, training of human resources, and demand (sponsors and customers) (4). This chapter highlights global examples, such as the United States and Korea, and emphasizes the need for coherent planning and expert collaboration, advocating strong support from governing institutions and global connectivity to bridge the gaps.

In chapter four, the authors examine the experiences of the United States, South Korea, and Malaysia across five main areas.

The chapter introduces and examines the structure of the educational system, explores the role of e-learning within the educational system, investigates the institutional framework of e-learning, identifies key points for measurement and modeling, examines examples of public websites offering e-learning content and services, and concludes with a discussion of the lessons learned (4). For example, Malaysia’s focus on establishing and developing smart schools to prepare for the age of communication has led the government and private institutions related to e-learning in this country to pay increasing attention. By analyzing these global examples, this chapter provides valuable lessons for Iran to enhance its e-learning infrastructure and educational outcomes.

In the fifth chapter, the author describes the performance of Iran’s electronic education industry in four sections. The prediction of the size of Iran’s education and e-learning market in a 10-year horizon, the annual income forecast of each company active in e-learning, and the prediction of the total job opportunities created by the e-learning industry in a 10-year horizon are examined. Chapter 5 deals with the future of Iran’s e-learning market and predicts its

growth in the next decade. It predicts the annual revenues of e-learning companies and forecasts the creation of numerous job opportunities. This prospective analysis highlights the significant economic potential of Iran's e-learning industry.

In the sixth chapter, the authors discuss eight key areas, including governance, economic finance, cultural conditions, learning environment, human resources, infrastructure, content production, and service provision, along with marketing. It shows how economic, cultural, and infrastructural dynamics shape the economics of e-learning (4).

In the seventh chapter, the author examines the perspective and strategic goals of the country's e-learning industry, including the detailed statement of the country's e-learning industry perspective in the 2027 horizon, the country's e-learning industry perspective in the 2027 horizon, and the strategic goals of the country's e-learning industry in the 2027 horizon (4). The seventh chapter outlines a vision roadmap for Iran's e-learning industry until 2027. It articulates detailed goals and aims to establish Iran as a regional e-learning leader. This forward-looking plan envisages strong growth, innovation, and global competitiveness in e-learning. With clear goals and strategic vision, Iran's e-learning industry is ready for transformative development.

The book's eighth chapter deals with the development strategies of the e-learning industry and economy in two parts. In the analysis of the environment governing the e-learning industry, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the country's e-learning industry are listed in detail (4). The identified strengths of the system include its capacity to expand access to education, offer flexible scheduling options, facilitate global reach, enable swift content generation, and deliver cost-effective solutions. In Addition, the eighth chapter presents the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis and strategic objectives for the rapid integration of e-learning in Iran's formal education system. The program emphasizes leveraging strengths such as

universal access and affordability while addressing weaknesses and exploiting growth opportunities for a robust e-learning economy.

Since the second volume was composed to complement and elaborate on the first volume, numerous important points and issues have already been addressed. In the final chapter of the second volume, the authors deal with the key dynamics affecting the economic development of the e-learning industry and examine seven dynamics, some of which are the growth of the number of users of e-learning, the effect of the ability and knowledge of companies active in the industry with the subject of e-learning and research and development in this field on their profitability, the effect of the number of specialized human resources in the e-learning industry on the sale of products and the provision of e-learning services, and others (4). In the second volume, the authors examine the key dynamics affecting the economic development of e-learning in Iran. These include factors such as the readiness of educational leadership to adopt technology, cultural shifts toward e-learning, and the impact of strong policy frameworks on private-sector investment. This volume emphasizes the vital role of a skilled workforce, effective marketing strategies, and user base expansion in shaping the future direction of Iran's e-learning industry.

Conclusion

The field of e-learning economics is considered to be multifaceted, with the potential to contribute to overall economic development. This book discusses the roles and responsibilities of organizations and institutions in each country based on their national and regional characteristics. It emphasizes the significance of adapting e-learning strategies and policies to the cultural and social characteristics of each country. The book also highlights the experiences of leading countries as successful models for the development of the e-learning industry in Iran. It provides a comprehensive depiction of the e-learning industry in

Iran, which is its most significant strength. This visualization, from an economic perspective, can offer valuable information to policymakers, decision-makers, investors, and e-learning organizations to help them make effective decisions and strategies. The book also paves the way for new research in policy development and the practical application of e-learning technologies.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Authors' Contribution

F.Kh was responsible for composing the book review, and Z.K provided oversight and support throughout the entire process. Both authors approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. Zahra Karimian, as the Editorial Board Member, was not involved at any stage in handling this manuscript. The Editorial Board has convened a group of independent experts to assess this paper without her awareness.

Funding/Support

This research received no funding or support.

Availability of Data and Materials

This Book review does not report data generation or analysis.

References

- 1 Morris NP, Ivancheva M, Coop T, Mogliacci R, Swinnerton B. Negotiating growth of online education in higher education. *Int J Educ Technol High Educ.* 2020;17(1). doi: 10.1186/s41239-020-00227-w.
- 2 Aversano N, Di Carlo F, Sannino G, Polcini PT, Lombardi R. Corporate social responsibility, stakeholder engagement, and universities: New evidence from the Italian scenario. *Corp Soc Responsib Environ Manag.* 2020;27(4):1892–9. doi: 10.1002/csr.1934.
- 3 Fülöp MT, Breaz TO, Topor ID, Ionescu CA, Dragolea LL. Challenges and perceptions of e-learning for educational sustainability in the “new normality era”. *Front Psychol.* 2023;14:1104633. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1104633. PubMed PMID: 36777225; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC9909484.
- 4 Hosseini S.H. Jalalvand Z, Ahangari M, Ghafari S, Aghaei S.A. E-learning economy (Iran). Tehran: Atinegar; 2019. [In Persian]