



## **Barriers to the development of electronic textbook publishing from the economic and cultural perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose-** this paper aims to investigate the barriers of the development of e-textbook publishing from the cultural and economic perspectives and to propose appropriate strategies for improving it and resolving the current problems in Iran.

**Method/approach of research-**A field survey was conducted among 294 students, experts, managers, and publishers of e-textbook. In order to analyze data, one-sample t-test and confirmatory factor analysis were used by LISREL and SPSS software.

**Findings-** From the experts' viewpoint, the components of "production" (with an average of 23), "distribution" (with an average of 26), and "sales" (with the average 22) from the economic perspective and the components of "cultural institutions" (with an average of 22), "digital literacy" (with an average of 16) and the "culture-making" (with an average of 18) from the cultural perspective were lower than average level of 50. It means that the respondents are not satisfied with the current status of cultural and economic components.

**Conclusion-** The majority of respondents had negative opinion about the current status of the components. In other words, all the economic components (production, distribution and sale) and cultural components (cultural institutes, digital literacy and culture-making) has a high

capacity for the development of electronic publishing. Major problems in the industry include book auditing and the weaknesses of related regulations, economic barriers (high costs of production, distribution failures, and inadequate advertisement), the weakness of public culture, the lack of digital libraries, and the lack of technical and cultural facilities of publishers.

**Keywords :** Analog publishing, Electronic publishing, Digital media

## **Introduction**

Electronic textbooks have existed for a number of years, being offered directly by publishers and college bookstores. Historically, the product has been a digital version of the physical textbook, with few differentiating features. Although the publisher saves nearly the entire cost of printing the textbook, e-texts have never been priced competitively with physical textbooks (Hutsko, 2012). E-textbooks seem to mirror distant learning in similarity of cost and convenience. In some instances for a college student, a printed textbook can cost as much as tuition. In terms of cost, E-textbooks are more affordable. The library is conveniently located online and therefore the articles and books you are viewing online are electronic books. Although the traditional library still exists for most universities, there seems to be a big move for more technology including E-textbooks, more learning via live collaboration online, more distance learning, and a move away from printed textbooks (Waller, 2013). For the publishing industry, the impact of the advance of the internet and the related technologies was generally limited to new distribution and promotion channels. The product itself and the business model remained virtually unchanged. However, the recent increase in popularity of e-textbooks and reading devices is likely to drive more profound changes in the sector, comparable to those observed in the cases of music and films (Maxim and Maxim, 2012). Developing countries in Asia such as Iran have been the most attractive destinations for offering e-textbooks because of their rapid rise in economic development and enormous demands for education. Although modern communication technologies have afforded increasing flexibility, concerns exist regarding the economic and cultural dimensions of e-textbook design. Existing research suggests that cultural and economic issues can have a significant effect on developing e-textbooks in developing countries. For example, Reeder, Macfadyen and Chase (2004) found that different cultural communication patterns increased miscommunication, and that the

greater the perception of cultural differences between the participants in an activity, the greater the incidents of miscommunication. In general, the growth of cultural and economic concerns in regard to e-textbooks has not been accompanied by a growing number of studies in the field. Although a handful of researchers have begun to explore cultural or economic issues in e-textbook dissemination, very few formal studies have been conducted and the results of these studies have been inconclusive. The purpose of this case study is to identify the barriers to the development of e-textbook in terms of economic and cultural perspectives. Given the limited research in the area of barriers, such a study is important in order to identify potential cultural and economic barriers that may affect the development of e-textbook industry. The main question is addressed in this study: What are the main barriers and restrictions to the development of e-textbook in Iran?

## **Theoretical background**

### **The Emergence of E-textbooks**

Technology is being incorporated into every aspect of our lives including home, education, socially, and business. Almost every home has a computer and access to the internet. Most individuals have cell phones, and a large majority of cell phones are smart phones, meaning they have internet capabilities. A majority of the business world is technology driven and automated, and businesses are looking to colleges and universities to send them technology educated workers. Hard copy textbooks have traditionally been furnished to students in Texas' public primary and secondary schools through state funding. However, in June of 2011 a law was passed by the Texas Senate, known as Senate Bill 6, which provides allotments (and incentives) for K-12 schools to provide instructional material (e-textbooks) for students. Senate Bill 6 also establishes a grant program to set up a technology lending program for equipment, such as laptops, that are needed by students to use electronic instructional materials, such as E-textbooks. This bill is part of a larger nationwide push for use and incorporation of technology in education (Shapiro, 2011). At the federal level, in September of 2011, the Secretary of Education announced that a new national center had been created known as Digital Promise. Digital Promise was created by Congress to assure technology is used by educators to better teach students and for students to reap the benefits technology has to offer. The Digital Promise center will work with educators and technology firms to develop educational technology to push education to the next plateau and to assure that America's

educators and students are technologically savvy (Department of Education, 2011). Figure 1 illustrates the information supply chain for academic e-textbooks. The solid lines indicate “good” information links, and the broken ones indicate imperfect or incomplete ones. Imperfect information links are of course to be expected in any new industry. What immediately strikes the eye, however, is first that the academic has been replaced by the e-aggregator, followed by the librarian and then the publisher as the key driver in this information supply chain; and second that, although information links between e-aggregators, librarians and publishers are strong, the only strong information link to academics is from librarians, if they choose to use it; and the academics’ e-textbook information links to students are not strong. The academic is only imperfectly in receipt, or not in receipt at all, of information on e-textbooks from his accustomed information channels of review copies, reviews, peer group and student recommendations and information from publishers and booksellers. The student is at present unlikely to receive information about e-textbooks via the reading list, which is the single greatest influencer upon student print-book reading; receipt of verbal information from academics about e-textbooks is marginally more likely; but students are unlikely to obtain information on e-textbooks from the campus bookshop, other bookshops or direct from the publisher (Rohn, 2010). Aside from the library, the student’s and academics other main route to information about e-textbooks is likely to be via web searches, if they choose to carry them out.

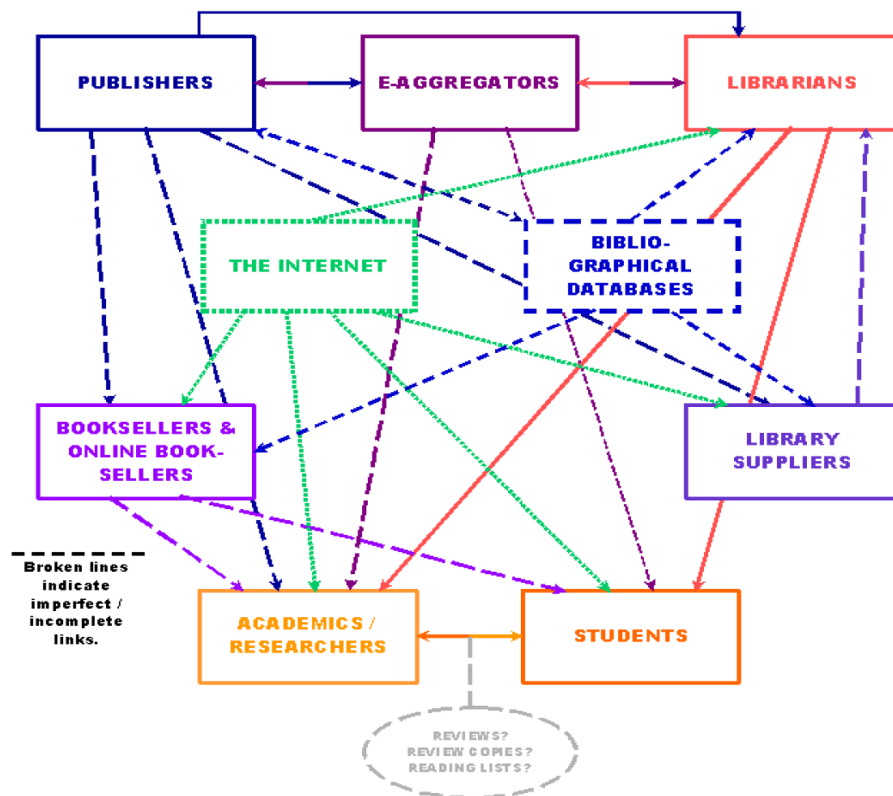


Figure 1. e-textbook information supply chain (Rohn, 2010)

### Economic perspective on e-textbook publishing

Many seem to believe that copies of e-books cost far less to produce than copies of print books because publishers save printing and distribution costs. However, a spate of recent articles, most notably Rich (2010) (see also Claypool, 2011), points out that the basic tasks involved in creating e-books are very similar to those of creating a print book: acquisition, financing, production, marketing, sales and delivery of books. Manufacturing and distribution expenses account for only about 12% of a print book’s retail price, so eliminating these costs does not greatly reduce total publishing costs. Moreover, publishers are faced with three new costs: digitized preparation, quality assurance, and digital distribution to several different distributors or retailers, with varying upload protocols and digital asset management systems. Nonetheless, the cost of producing an additional copy of an e-textbook is undoubtedly substantially lower than the cost of producing an additional copy of a print book. In addition to selling e-textbooks directly to consumers, publishers sell e-textbooks through a variety of suppliers, including wholesale distributors, such as Ingram, and retailers, such as Amazon, Apple, and Barnes & Noble. Until 2010, publishers generally used a “wholesale” model for e-textbook sales. This model emulated the print world where publishers establish a “retail” price

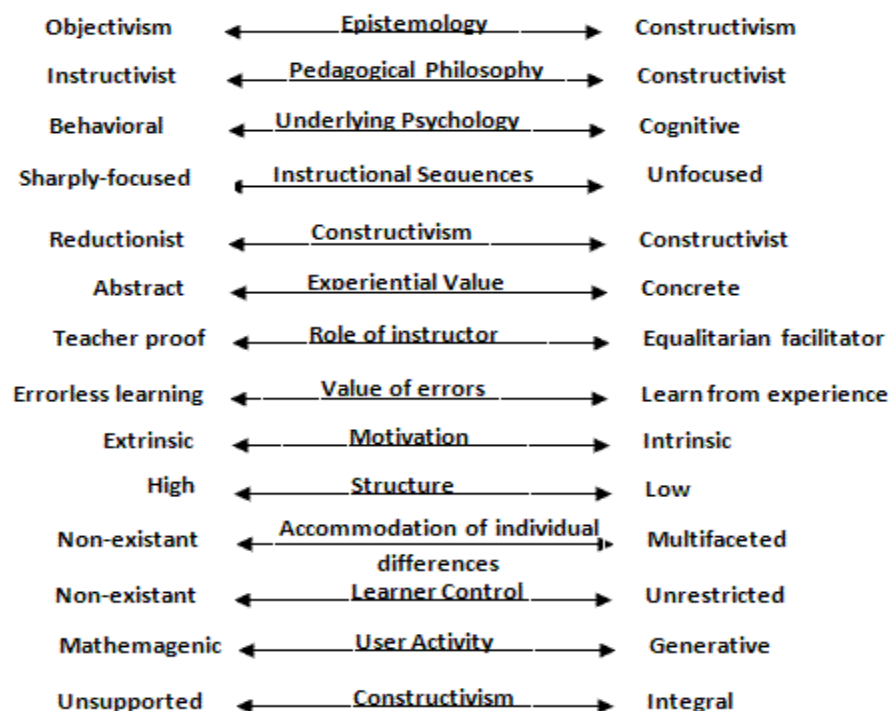
and then “sell” the book to an intermediary at a large discount (50% is typical). In this model, the retail price for e-textbooks was often linked to the lowest price established for the print book.

Publishers may be concerned that the availability of e-textbooks through libraries will cause many users to substitute borrowing from the library for individual purchases. There are many ways in which publishers might respond to this concern. First, a publisher might simply to refuse to sell e-textbooks to libraries. Grigson (2011) noted that some publishers may be reluctant to make e-textbooks available to libraries for fear of a negative impact on sales. Second, publishers might choose to delay library access to new titles for a period of time while making those same titles available to consumer markets. This is similar to an existing publisher practice called “windowing” where publishers release the hardcover format of a title before the paperback format is available. Third, a publisher might set certain e-book prices based more or less exclusively on the demand by libraries, leading to relatively few purchases by individuals. That is, a publisher may set a price so high that it expects few, if any, sales to individuals. This is more likely in the case of reference books particularly in the scientific, technical, and medical fields. Fourth, a publisher might attempt to charge higher prices to libraries than to individuals (i.e., to engage in price discrimination). The most prominent example of this practice may be found in academic journals, where it is customary for libraries to be charged prices that are several multiples of the prices for individual subscriptions. Fifth, some publishers or vendors might offer a subscription model, where a large variety of content is offered to a library for an annual fee, with the ability to monitor usage and update content as required. This could be offered as a tiered service so that budget-constrained or smaller libraries could opt for the more basic service while others could choose greater or more varied access. Finally, publishers can ignore the existence of the library market and continue to set prices based exclusively on the demand by individuals. By analogy, libraries would obtain “collectible” e-textbooks at prices that are substantially lower than those that would exist if they were the only purchasers. In this case, libraries become just another set of customers (Besen and Kirby, 2012).

### **Cultural perspective on e-textbook publishing**

Collis (1999) proposed the “flexible” approach, which suggests that the courses should be flexible enough to cater to diverse cultural perspectives, rather than simply containing pre-determined content. The central notion of the flexible approach is that the key aspects of course design should be contingent on the cultural dimension of the course, and should be

flexible enough to allow the students and instructors to choose their own learning and teaching styles as the course progresses. Reeve (1992) developed a model which consists of 14 pedagogical dimensions of interactive learning. Each of these dimensions represents a continuum from one extreme to the other (Figure 1). This model is used in order to evaluate where the instructional practices in a culture are located on a continuum with contrasting values at both ends. However, Reeve's model was criticized for being culturally biased toward the right end of the continuum, meaning that his critics felt that he was assuming that the right end of the continuum was the superior way of learning (Henderson, 1996).



**Figure 2. Reeve's 14 dimensions of cultural factors affecting learning by new tools such as e-textbooks**

In order to overcome the limitations of the existing paradigms, Henderson's (1996) multiple cultural models promote the idea of culture profiling and integrating multiple cultural perspectives into instructional design. He advocated that courses be designed in order to allow variability and flexibility in learning so that the courses can reflect the multicultural realities of society and the multiple ways of teaching and learning by e-textbooks. This model requires a deep appreciation of culturally different pedagogical objectives and philosophies as well as the design of multiple learning tools such as e-textbooks in order to accommodate cultural diversity (McLoughlin, & Oliver, 2000).

## **Literature review**

Lopatovska et al. (2014) suggested that despite the barriers of access and usability, the students have generally incorporated e-books into their academic routines. The results also suggest the factors that contribute to reader preferences for e-book technology. Waller (2013) identified advantages of e-textbooks and stated that e-textbooks update more easily than traditional paper textbooks which have to be reprinted, making e-textbooks more environmentally friendly. Technology keeps improving e-readers and e-textbooks, and now there are linking capabilities to educational websites, and interactive websites for student participation, collaboration, and engagement. Maxim and Maxim (2012) examined the impact that e-textbooks and ecommerce have on the current and future evolution of the book industry, by focusing on its various stakeholders: authors, publishers, online and traditional distributors, and readers. According to their findings, brick-and-mortar bookstores are affected as their customers increasingly prefer to shop online for both regular and electronic books. The publisher author relationship is also transformed, as the writers are now able to publish their works directly to the website of a distributor. Although printed books will probably continue to exist, publishers and bookstores need to investigate the changing preferences of their target market and revise the way they produce and deliver content to their customers. Weible and Sullivan (2012) addressed the challenges ILL librarians are faced with when trying to borrow or lend e-books through traditional interlibrary loan channels, especially in the context of international lending and borrowing. They found that international ILL requests for e-books present a host of challenges beyond the usual licensing restrictions encountered in one's home country. A wide variety of unfamiliar and perhaps incompatible file formats, a lack of compatible e-readers, and national copyright laws are just a few of the barriers to obtaining e-books from abroad.

LIU (2012) found that e-textbooks will complement our existing choices rather than substitute printed textbooks. While e-textbooks offer a number of benefits, they also produce many unanticipated challenges. Liu et al. (2010) revealed that online instructors need to design courses in such a way as to remove potential cultural barriers, including language, communication tool use, plagiarism, time zone differences and a lack of multicultural content, which may affect international students' learning performances. They also indicated that a culturally inclusive learning environment needs to consider diversity in course design in order to ensure full participation by international students. Herlihy and Yi (2010) studied model(s) of acquiring e-books to support found that Safari (with updates) showed increased usage over



time; NetLibrary (without updates) showed generally declining usage over time; and controlling NetLibrary subject content showed that usage in the science and technology area declined noticeably over the years; while education, history, social sciences, literature and language usage decline was steady. Mussinelli (2010) provided a general overview of the situation of the digital publishing in Europe starting from the insights provided by the Editech conference, and indicated that the Editech 2010 main focus had been: the market and the national and international situation of digital publishing, the new buying and reading behaviors of consumers, e-books and content for e-readers and mobile devices, new production processes (XML, ePub, digital printing) and the distribution scenario and the diffusion of digital content. Carreiro (2010) implied that the invention of e-books the publishing industry faces certain challenges, such as piracy, but with tools like encryption, digital asset management (DAM), digital rights management (DRM), and digital object identifiers (DOI), publishers are well on the way to a solution. While it is safe to say that the digital revolution has forever changed the face of publishing, e-books could actually revitalize the industry. Chen (2003) found that electronic books only bring several evolutionary changes to the current operations of publishing and distribution in comparison with traditional books. The electronic book is just as much a consequence of the application of innovative information technologies.

## **Methodology**

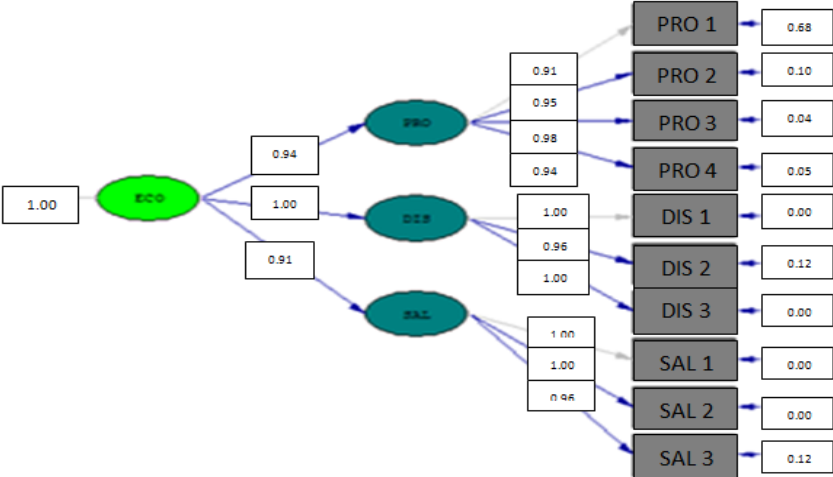
A field survey conducted on experts, students, managers and specialized people who had at least 5 years experience in the publishing industry or related educational levels. Statistical population was experts, students, managers and specialized people. A sample of 310 respondents was selected based on the convenience sampling approach in which 294 samples were useable. Questionnaires, written in Persian, containing items measuring the above dimensions were distributed to the experts. A pilot test was performed to assess how well the survey instrument captured the constructs it was supposed to measure, and to test the internal consistency and reliability of questionnaire items. The first draft of the survey instrument was distributed to 30 randomly selected respondents. Further, the instrument was sent to 8 experts to confirm the face validity. A total of 30 questionnaires were collected at the site. The results of the reliability tests for each dimension showed that Cronbach's alpha coefficients were above the minimum value of 0.70, which is considered acceptable as a good indication of reliability.  $\alpha$  value for economic factors section was 0.78 and for cultural factors section was

0.83. Based on the results of the pilot test, the final version was modified considering questionnaire design, wording, and measurement scale. One sample t-test and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were employed to analyze data.

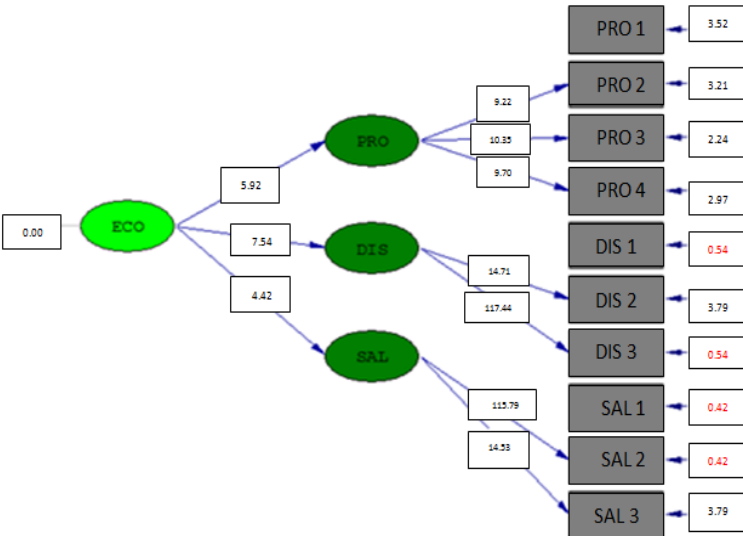
**Findings**

**Role of economic factors (manufacturing, distribution, and sale) in e-publishing development**

*CFA for economic factors*



**Figure 3. Measurement model for economic factors (manufacturing, distribution, and sale)**

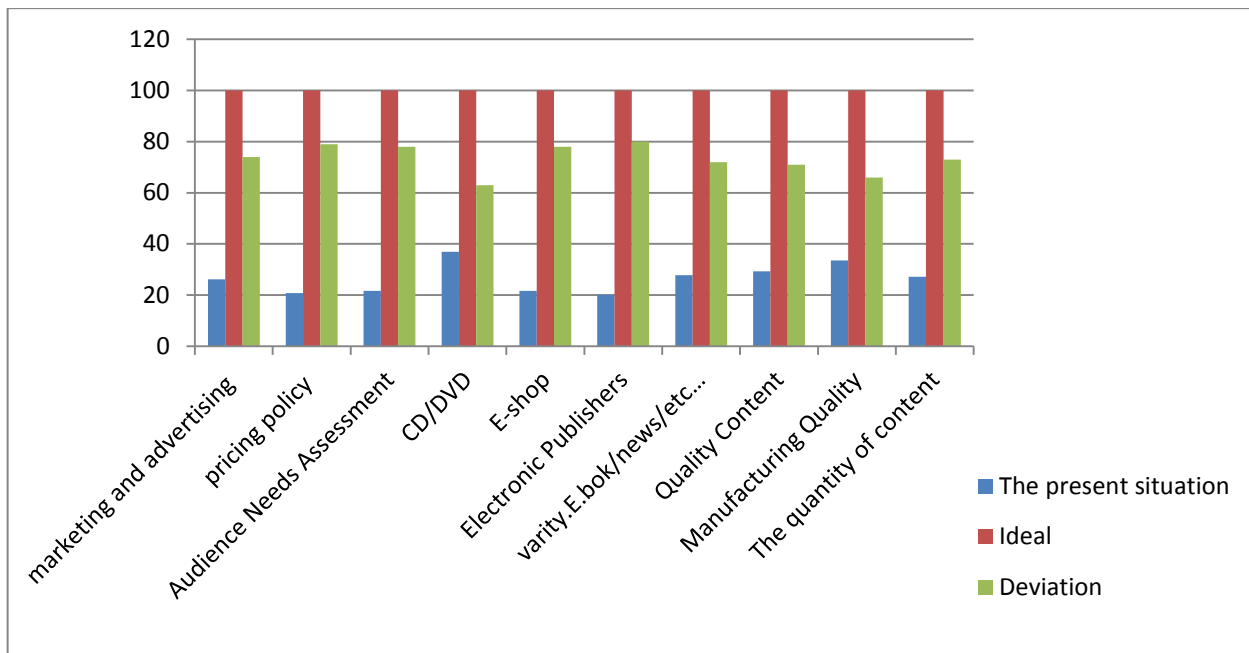


**Figure 4. Significance model for economic factors (manufacturing, distribution, and sale)**

Factor loadings in the standardized estimation indicate the effect or variance of each variable or items. In other words, factor loadings show the correlation of each observed variable (question) with latent variable (factor). According to Figure 3, it can be found that first question of Production is 0.90. In fact, first question of Production determines 81 percents of Production factor variance. Error value is 0.19 (variance undeterminable by first question). It is clear that the lower error value, the higher determined coefficient and the upper correlation between question and factor. The determined coefficient is between 0 and 1 indicating higher variance of determination. In Figure 4, model has been illustrated in significance coefficient and model parameters have found to be significant as resided in the range of above 1.96 and below -1.96.

**Table 1. Current status of economic factors (manufacturing, distribution, and sale)**

Cut-off value is 50	Significant level	T-value	Standard deviation	Mean	Highest	Lowest
Quantity of books	0	7.56	27.45	27.22	47.36	37.23
Quality of books	0	8.85	27.42	33.55	53.67	43.61
Content quality and added value of content	0	10.65	18.98	29.33	43.21	36.25
Diversity of books (e-books, e-news, multimedia CD)	0	10.20	18.94	27.76	41.66	34.71
e-publishers	0	7.48	20.58	20.13	35.23	27.67
e-retailer	0	8.31	19.23	21.65	35.76	28.71
Content savers (CD/DVD)	0	9.88	26.19	36.91	56.12	46.51
Audience needs	0	8.22	15.51	21.68	36	28.83
Pricing policies	0	7.7	20.42	20.77	35.75	28.25
Advertising and marketing	0	11.42	15.54	26.17	37.57	31.87

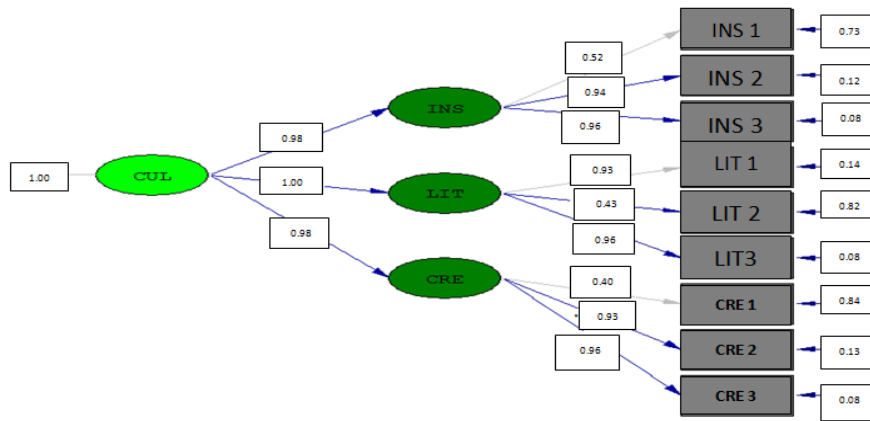


**Chart 1. Economic factors (manufacturing, distribution, and sale)**

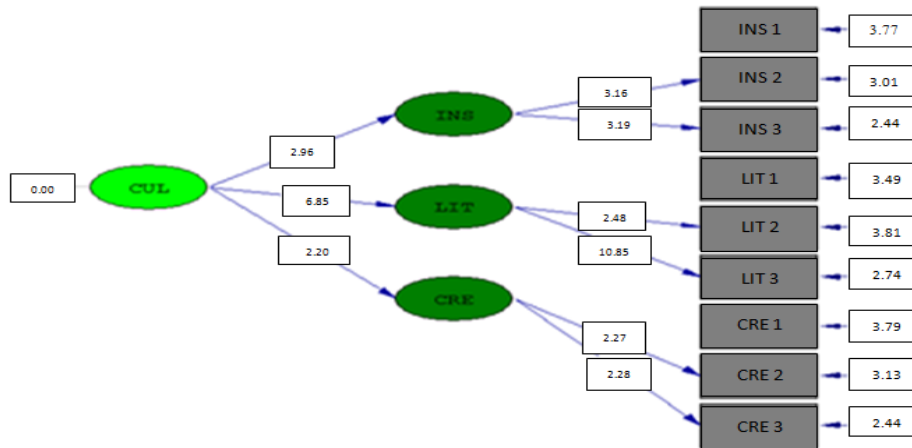
The result of t-test has been shown in the Chart 1 and indicated that the status of economic factors is not satisfactorily. The indices of Quantity of books, Quality of books, Content quality and added value of content, Diversity of books (e-books, e-news, multimedia CD), e-publishers, e-retailer, Content savers (CD/DVD), Audience needs, Pricing policies, and Advertising and marketing had averages below the cut of value of 50. It means that the majority of respondents rated the questions score less than 50. In total, the results of t-test show that respondents are not satisfied with current status of economic factors and there is negative attitude towards them. In other words, economic factors including manufacturing, distribution, and sale have a high capacity to be improved.

### **Role of cultural factors (cultural institutions, electronic literacy, and culture-making) in e-publishing development**

#### *CFA for cultural factors*



**Figure 5. Measurement model for cultural factors (training and culture-making)**

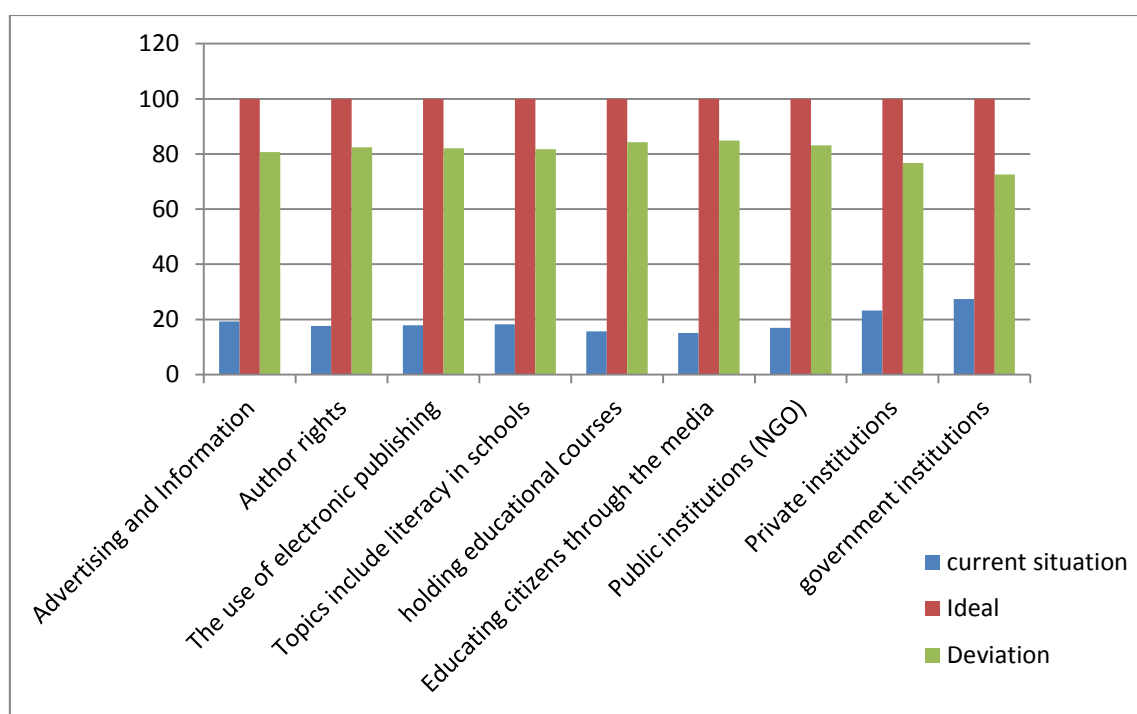


**Figure 6. Significance model for cultural factors (training and culture-making)**

Factor loadings in the standardized estimation indicate the effect or variance of each variable or items. In other words, factor loadings show the correlation of each observed variable (question) with latent variable (factor). According to Figure 5, it can be found that first question of Cultural institutions is 0.52. In fact, first question of Cultural institutions determines 27 percents of Cultural institutions factor variance. Error value is 0.73 (variance undeterminable by first question). It is clear that the lower error value, the higher determined coefficient and the upper correlation between question and factor. The determined coefficient is between 0 and 1 indicating higher variance of determination. In Figure 6, the model has been illustrated in significance coefficient and model parameters have found to be significant as resided in the range of above 1.96 and below -1.96.

**Table 2. Current status of cultural factors (training and culture-making)**

Cut-off value is 50	Significant level	T-value	Standard deviation	Mean	Highest	Lowest
Public institutions	0.006	-2.95	4.92	27.3	80	5
Private institutions	0.001	-3.61	4.18	23.2	90	5
Human institutions (NGO)	0	-10.25	3.03	16.9	50	0
Citizenship training through media	0	-7.65	2.71	15.1	50	5
Establishment of training courses for citizens	0	-4.71	2.81	15.7	60	10
Inclusion of media literacy in school schedule	0	-5.21	3.27	18.24	60	10
Creation of believe in using e-publishing for protecting environment	0	-6.30	3.21	17.9	70	5
Respecting authors' right is public right	0	-8.15	3.16	17.6	50	3
Advertisement and informing	0	-5.24	3.46	19.3	80	5



**Chart 2. Cultural factors (training and culture-making)**

The result of t-test has been shown in the Chart 2 and indicated that the status of cultural factors is not satisfactorily. The indices of Public institutions, Private institutions, Human institutions (NGO), Citizenship training through media, Establishment of training courses for citizens, Inclusion of media literacy in school schedule, Creation of believe in using e-publishing for protecting environment, Respecting authors' right is public right, and Advertisement and informing had averages below the cut of value of 50. It means that the majority of respondents rated the questions score less than 50. In total, the results of t-test show that respondents are not satisfied with current status of cultural factors and there is negative attitude towards them. In other words, all cultural factors for e-publishing of books have a high capacity to be improved.

## **Conclusion**

The results of t-test indicated that the status of cultural and economic factors is not satisfactorily. The scores of economic and cultural factors were less than average of 50, indicating dissatisfaction of respondents with the cultural and economic dimensions and as a result, both factors can be improved in order to develop the industry. The barriers of e-publishing in Iran are book auditing and weakness of regulations, lack of attention of public institutions towards e-publishing, the expensive cost of manufacturing, distribution weakness, lack of advertisement, one-sided training system, weakness of public culture and the lack of digital library, weakness of technical and cultural equipments of publishers. On the other hand, users consider traditional books reading more easily than observing screen. One of the most important reasons for not attending e-textbook by the users is imposing a new physical structure to them. It means that the majority of users have addicted to studying traditional books and it has been become to an addiction for them. Hence, new addiction and familiarity with the method of electronic books, including computer and study tool of e-textbook, is time consuming. In the conducted survey on e-textbook users, the following results were achieved: 1) users like e-textbooks but they are not willing to buying them; 2) lack of consistency of various e-textbooks with an organization that make them force to purchase more than one e-textbook, are the main problems of professional e-textbook users. At present, usage range of e-textbook is mainly limited to reference books including dictionaries, encyclopedia, and or any highly cited scientific book. It is has several reasons. First, in comparison with traditional books, e-textbooks needs lower volume. Second, the cost of e-textbooks is lower than traditional reference books. Third, the speed of information recycling in e-textbooks is more

than traditional books. Fourth, the books are lonely suitable for referring not for studying. As a result, problems such as illustration quality and eye boring are not barriers to referring users. If continuous study is done, bad quality of text illustration in e-textbook, eye boring, and weakness of eye power lead to failure in using e-textbooks.

### **Major barriers of e-textbook publishing development**

First, in the authors and translators sector, it can be referred to: the low cultural level the sector due to lack of public culture and lack of equipments fitting with their potential force to mental growth, ignoring of professional writing and translating activities as a job, lack of financial rights, lack of respecting the rights by publishers and users, lack of rules for defending the rights, lack of a responsible organization for implementing the rights, lack of social-political arena and lack of deserved social position.

Second, in the publishers sector, economic failures are expensive manufacturing cost, weakness of distribution, readers' group constraint, low level of book manufacturing, and weakness of advertisement. Further, cultural failures are lack of believe in copyright principle of authors and translators, lack of attention towards spiritual and basic needs of society, lack of attention towards cultural position of publishers, lack of attention towards specialization importance, and having not believe in advertisement, the weakness of technical equipments and finally, weakness of unions.

Third, in the section of readers, we can refer to the lack of literacy, lack of access to e-textbooks, shortage of public digital libraries and colleges, lack of suitable books, newness of electronic study, and addicting to other media.

Fourth, in the government sector, the barriers are book auditing (the most of publishers have implied), shortage of education system and related regulations, lack of attention towards cultural issues particularly digital library.

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