

Trends in Online Learning for Professionals and Entrepreneurs in the Business Sector

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Abstract

Online education became much more popular and accepted after the world went through the COVID-19 pandemic, which is one of the main drivers for a specific part of the population to opt for continuing education through various means of online learning. The present article seeks to identify the development of online education for professionals and entrepreneurs in the business sector. For the elaboration of the present paper, a mixed approach has been developed with a descriptive research degree, under an observational study, and with cross-sectional and longitudinal research design. It was identified that several factors stimulate the professional and entrepreneurial population to access a virtual course. The main ones are price, the recommendation of people close to or influential in the decision-making process, and advertising of the classes. The primary Spanish-speaking learning environments or digital platforms are Coursera, Crehana, Platzi, and others. Similarly, the author identified that virtual education has come to stay as an innovative education system, so different studies that affirm the results presented are discussed and evidenced.

Keywords

Online learning; business sector; trends; learning environment; entrepreneurs.

1. Introduction

Online education is defined as education that takes place virtually through cyberspace, which is made possible through the connection and use of the Internet, which does not require a specific time and space but allows the establishment of a new scenario of communication between teachers and students [1]. Likewise, Morales et al. affirm that virtual education is a high-impact strategy for improving the coverage, relevance, and quality of education at all levels and types of training due to its multimedia, hypertextual, and interactive characteristics [2].

Based on history, as pointed out by Bautista et al., e-learning was used around the 1990s, and from that moment on, it has become one of the leading online learning methods. Therefore, due to the constant application of new methodologies and tools, it is in continuous evolution [3]. According to Delgado et al., education has undergone tremendous changes in scope and stability thanks to the Internet and its indispensable use. This is due to two factors. The first is that users learn and prepare themselves to use smartphones. The second is because workshops,

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specialization courses, diploma courses, professional careers, and master's degrees, which are characterized by being of the highest level and delivered online, have been digitized [4].

Along the same lines, it can be said that the sudden change in the educational system brings with it a great challenge because it is not only necessary to have access to technological tools but also that all the actors involved have the necessary skills and technological knowledge so that teachers can efficiently perform their tutoring, which requires more time and effort [5]. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to be aware that technology helps to have quick access to information and communication [6].

2. Theoretical Framework

As Vivar [7] mentions, MOOCs or Massive Online Open Courses are characterized by being massive and open virtual courses. This is because MOOCs aim to allow anyone to enroll and take classes from anywhere in the world. At the beginning of online education, e-learning portals started offering MOOCs, free massive courses, where at the end of the period, the student can buy his certificate on the platform. Those learning environments that started with this modality and were successful were Coursera, edX, and MiriadaX. It is worth mentioning that the market is very well accepted. Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology also promoted and supported these platforms.

A proper massive open online course (MOOC) is a method that differs from other classes or workshops that can be followed in other sources, such as YouTube, by the existence of an interdisciplinary work, which is aimed at participants or global students of different levels, which require more personalized teaching. In addition, these courses have an evaluation system, which can include self-evaluations and peer evaluations [8]. Besides, it is essential to note that the student's attitude is crucial to starting or finishing a course in online education [9]. To talk about MOOCs, it is necessary to know what types exist and how their methodology changes depending on it, so XMOOCs, CMOOCs, and TMOOCs will be explained below.

First, XMOOCs are delivered through video or other materials; assessments are like reinforcers that positively impact students' learning [10]. Secondly, CMOOCs are characterized by having a much more comprehensive interaction between students and tutors; however, they still need a structured teaching design [10]. This MOOC has as a platform for interaction and learning blogs, wikis, social networks, email, and evaluations are based on online tests or work proposals together [10]. Thirdly, we have the TMOOC, which combines both types of MOOCs, i.e., XMOOCs and CMOOCs. It is essential to point out that it focuses on the main competencies that should be developed in a kind of work; it also focuses on completing tasks under interaction between students, such as commenting and resolving doubts, opting for the student's effort [10].

2.1. Criteria for the online education modality in tendency

According to Marciniak and Gairín-Sallán, for an online education modality to be of quality, it must contemplate specific requirements such as adequate technological resources and the necessary service to access the educational program [11]. Likewise, the virtual course's structure and content must offer a formative value. Effective learning takes place in a satisfactory environment for students and teachers.

Durán mentions that teachers or lecturers in charge of online courses or programs must maintain a positive attitude towards constant training and information technologies since this type of education is dynamic and requires continuous updating to maintain quality standards like face-to-face education [12].

Over the years, the panorama has been changing, so the courses and programs they offer are now offered through online platforms, which are of higher quality and are taught at introductory, intermediate, or advanced levels, depending on the chosen subject. In addition, these learning environments offer certification and accreditation, often provided by prestigious universities through their e-learning platforms. The target audience of the online education market has the benefit of having a large offer and can choose according to what suits them best [4].

This type of teaching is permanently delimited and shaped by new technologies, which helps to diversify communication between students and teachers, resolves the difficulties caused by schedules and distance, increases the interrelation between training subjects, makes the teaching process more flexible according to the needs and preferences of the participants, and allows access to a large amount of information in a fast and economical way [13].

According to the new online learning platforms, people are interested in acquiring more knowledge to obtain more excellent opportunities in the workplace, which increases the chances of promotion in their jobs. According to Porto, Human Resources Director at PayPal LATAM, 56% of users who chose to study under an online methodology have had the possibility of being able to move up in their current work center; likewise, 38% have been able to improve their hiring opportunities [14].

It is important to note that the supply of online classes increased during the health crisis because many people chose to continue their education under this methodology. Due to a decrease in COVID-19 cases worldwide, online courses have been maintained as a system that generates opportunities for people who can provide their knowledge or those who wish to learn no matter where they are. Following the above considerations, this article aims to learn about the trend in demand for online business school courses for executives and entrepreneurs through digital platforms during the last five years.

A structure has been developed to allow a better understanding to achieve the proposed objective. First, the market and its trends and the labor supply of online courses are analyzed. Then, the methodology used in the research is described. Subsequently, the results are presented. Finally, the most important conclusions are offered.

3. Methodology

This article of bibliographic review and description of platforms focuses on identifying the situation of online education for professionals and entrepreneurs in the business sector. To do this, it must identify the criteria that have been influential in choosing online courses for executives and entrepreneurs, which will focus on the needs of users. Also, it sought to know the leading popular digital platforms that provide online courses as a specialization. In addition, it is necessary to know the most requested techniques by executives and entrepreneurs in virtual classes to see the demand in terms of consumption in the last five years.

It is essential to point out that this article was developed using a mixed approach. That is, the qualitative method was used. Information is gathered based on the authors' results, compiled through data, and represented in graphs to identify the objectives. In the same way, information is collected through theoretical bases, in which the contributions of authors on the subject to be investigated are highlighted.

According to the degree of research, this is descriptive. As for collecting qualitative information, we searched in academic repositories, mainly Google Scholar, Scielo, Scopus, and Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas, among others. Everything described above is done to collect valuable sources with informative characteristics to identify the proposed objective. On the other hand, it is considered an observational study, also known as non-experimental, given

that variables that are not manipulated have been identified and recognized and are mainly focused on their observations.

Finally, the study is governed by a time-directed research design, being cross-sectional and longitudinal. On the one hand, it is considered a transversal design since it allows for evaluating the variables and determining their occurrence in the established time. On the other hand, it is of longitudinal design since information is presented during the set period to obtain conclusions on the changes, determinants, and their effects.

4. Results

4.1. Bibliographic review

Online education is a form of virtual education through cyberspace facilitated by Internet connectivity. This allows flexible communication between teachers and students without limitations of time and space [1]. XMOOCs are presented through videos and other materials, and the assessments act as positive reinforcers in student learning [10]. Certificates in online courses are seen as an incentive for continued learning [17]. According to Watted and Barak (2018), some students seek to advance their research or career, while others affiliated with universities value the certificate to enhance their knowledge. Performance indicators are essential for evaluating the success of online courses [16]. These courses incorporate evaluation systems that may include self-assessments and peer evaluations [8]. Student attitude is crucial in initiating and completing an online course [9].

Delgado et al., education has significantly changed its scope and stability thanks to the internet and its indispensable use. This is due to two factors. The first is that users learn and prepare themselves to use smartphones. The second is because workshops, specialization courses, diploma courses, professional careers, and master's degrees, which are characterized by being of the highest level and delivered online, have been digitized. Along the same lines, it can be said that the sudden change in the educational system brings with it a great challenge because it is not only necessary to have access to technological tools but also that all the actors involved have the necessary skills and technological knowledge so that teachers can efficiently perform their tutoring, which requires more time and effort [5]. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to be aware that technology helps to have quick access to information and communication [6].

Martelo et al. found seventeen factors that are the most important and influential for certifying the quality of virtual education: educational platform or learning environments, empathy with the territory, didactic timeliness and fulfillment of tasks, solid teacher training, quality of content, current technology, amount of information, self-management of learning content, frequency of tutorials, personalization of education, administrative processes, activities, work methodology, evaluation methodologies, course flexibility, Internet quality and student monitoring [15]. On the other hand, in Castillo and Solís, entrepreneurship has gone beyond schools and disciplinary fields. This generates a concept that is in constant evolution and development. However, all schools that refer to entrepreneurship maintain that it promotes an activity with initiative with economic and personal improvement characteristics. Its objective is the constant search for innovation in which risks are taken, with passion and commitment to exposing your idea [28].

Whenever online courses are taken, they must offer certificates. Certificates are generally considered a feedback mechanism to motivate students to continue studying online courses [17]. As mentioned by Watted and Barak, some of the students consider looking as part of their research and for further career advancement; in contrast, students who are affiliated with the university think that their principal motivation is to be able to receive a certificate as part of improving their knowledge [18].

According to a study conducted by the Online Business School, the education market delivered through online methodology has been growing steadily since 2011; it shows that the industry has grown at 7.6% to date and states that in the coming years, 50% of higher education-oriented classes will opt for the use of e-learning tools and methodologies [19]. Martínez et al. mention that educational platforms are important because students can use technological tools as a primary source of helpful knowledge. No timetable is oriented to ask questions or queries about a specific topic; therefore, course contents are accessed anytime and anywhere [29].

4.2. Main reasons and criteria for taking courses.

According to Delgado et al., two groups were conducted through segmented in-depth interviews [4]. According to this study, the first group is entrepreneurs who pass training courses, and the second group is professionals who attend virtual classes paid for by the company or on their own.

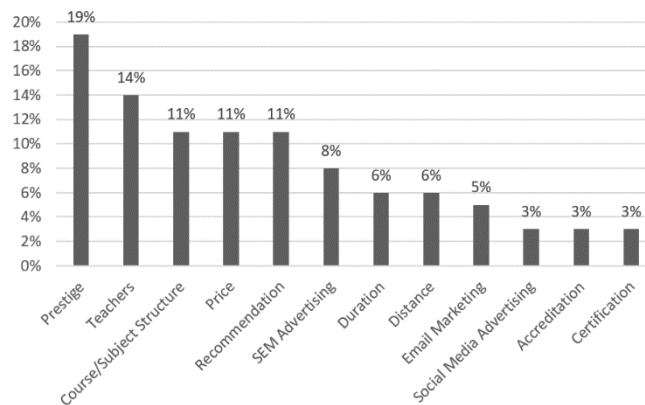


Fig. 1. Percentage distribution of criteria for selecting courses or training for qualified professionals in area managers. Note: Adapted from Distribución Porcentual de criterios para selección de cursos o capacitaciones en Gerentes o jefes de área (p. 47), by Delgado et al. 2019, Master's Thesis, Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas.

Concerning Figure 1, it is possible to learn about the criteria for selecting courses or training. It can be observed that prestige is one of the main reasons a boss or entrepreneur, representing 19% of the interviewees, decides to access one of the courses. In the second place, teachers are one of the main reasons one wishes to access the course, representing 14%. In third place is the structure of the classes or topics to be taught, with 11%. After these main criteria are price (11%), recommendation (11%), advertising (8%), duration (6%), distance (6%), emailing (5%), certification (3%), accreditation (3%) and social networks (3%). However, performance indicators are essential for evaluating an online course's success [16].

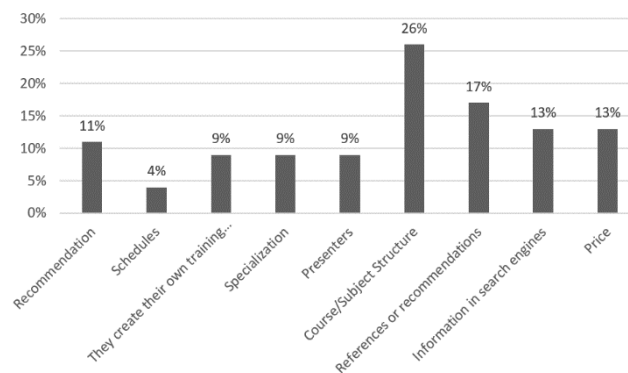


Fig. 2. Percentage distribution of criteria for selecting courses or training in qualified professionals, area heads, or managers. Note: Adapted from Distribución Porcentual de criterios para selección de cursos o capacitaciones en profesionales calificados (p. 44), by Delgado et al. 2019, Master's Thesis, Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas.

Concerning Figure 2 obtained from the study, it can be observed that the professionals who sought training through virtual platforms indicated specific criteria to consider a suitable and reliable platform where they can continue to enrich their knowledge. First, there is the criterion of the structure of the courses/topics, which is 26% important among the interviewees. Second are the references or recommendations, with 17%. Third, with 13%, are the information criteria in search engines and price. Fourth, with 11%, are the recommendations provided about the courses. Fifth, with 9%, are the criteria of the exhibitors, the specialty, and the platforms that make their training courses. Finally, 4% of the schedules are available for their virtual classes.

4.3. Description of the platforms

According to Delgado et al., the most representative organizations or learning environments that offer Spanish language courses are *Emprende Aprendiendo*, *Udemy*, *Coursera*, *Crehana*, *Platzi*, *Next U*, *MindValley*, *Harvard Online*, and *MentorBox* [4].

4.3.1. Emprende Aprendiendo

This e-learning platform offers courses related to the business world, in which they promote the teaching of its six essential pillars, which are fundamentals, business, iteration, finance, marketing, and systems. All this is done thanks to the *Silex 2.0* methodology, which is created so that you can learn from the foundation of a business to the most advanced processes that can be applied to continue scaling. The duration of a class is around 10 to 20 minutes. The complete course content stays for life for 475 euros with 30 days return. According to its Spanish founder, Euge Oller, for the blog *MasMovil Empresas*, it invests around 600 000 euros annually for advertising *Emprende Aprendiendo*, in which they exceed 50,000 students [4]. For 2019, it counted 54,000 students, increasing its sales to approximately 17,712,000 dollars [20].

4.3.2. Udemy

Udemy's goal is to improve lives through learning [21]. The platform offers online courses related to business, IT and software, productivity, design, personal development, marketing, photography, health, and fitness. The platform has 594,000,000 course registrations, 44 million students, 65,000 instructors, and 183,000 courses with more than 8,600 business clients. It should be noted that the platform has classes taught in 75 languages. Regarding the history of this vital e-learning platform, Udemy 2011 managed to raise \$3,000,000 in series A by Groupon, the prominent investors being Eric Lefkofsky and Brad Keywell, followed by 500 Startups and MHS Capital. In 2012, Series B raised \$12,000,000 in funding with leading firms Insight Venture Partners, Light Bank, MHS Capital, and Learn Capital. Subsequently 2014, the company raised \$32,000,000 in a series C round of funding, with support from Norwest Venture Partners, Insight Venture Partners, and MHS Capital. In 2015, it announced a Series D financing round by Rayas Group, where it managed to raise \$65,000,000. Finally, in the same year, it managed to raise \$60,000,000 by Nasper Ventures.

4.3.3. Coursera

Coursera [22] is characterized by being world class by having experts in more than 250 universities and leading companies, affordable by having hundreds of courses for free or with a free trial, and flexible by being able to develop their courses on desktop or mobile computers according to the user's schedule and relevant to the work for the student to master the essential professional skills. Marketplace for online courses, which different universities around the world offer, and those who take the system get the certification by Coursera (*MasterTrack* certificate). Coursera offers classes in other languages, divided into arts, business, sciences, technology, health, mathematics, languages, etc. It also offers courses such as guided projects, free lessons,

specializations, MasterTrack Certificates, and Degrees, which vary from 0 to 9000 US dollars according to the program the student wishes to acquire. Coursera has more than 82 million students worldwide, with over 100 Fortune 500 companies and over 6000 campuses, companies, and governments accessing the platform to optimize their learning anytime, anywhere. The Coursera platform was founded in 2012 to deliver life-transforming learning experiences to students worldwide. In the same year of its launch, Coursera reached more than 1.5 million students in 190 countries worldwide, with an alliance of around 33 universities willing to join the platform to deliver more than 200 online courses.

4.3.4. Crehana

Today it is a top-rated e-learning platform in the Latin American market, as it has generated reach and good feedback [23]. Crehana's mission is to make everyone's professional dream possible. Crehana offers Spanish language courses taught by professionals from different areas, divided into the following categories: illustration, design, animation, web, photography, marketing, and business. Prices range from \$12 to \$30. Crehana was founded in 2013 by Diego Olcece, a student at the Universidad del Pacifico in Lima, Peru. The platform was supported by accelerators such as Telefónica, won the Wayra award, and had the support of Startup Peru, which is a government program that provides funding for entrepreneurs.

4.3.5. Platzi

Platzi is an e-learning platform that offers 317 paid courses on various business, technology, and soft skills topics and three free introductory classes, explains the Platzi system. Their courses range in price from \$25 to \$45, and they currently only offer courses for Latin American audiences [24]. Platzi was founded in 2013 in Colombia by John Freddy Vega. Its success is thanks to the fact that the teachers who taught classes on the platform reached their target audience through their personal Facebook pages; so, it is considered that they applied good personal marketing achieving greater trust from their customers. It is important to note that Platzi had the support of Y Combinator, the Silicon Valley incubator, Omidyar, 500 Startups, Nazca Ventures, and Amasia Ventures.

4.3.6. Next U

Next U. platform is an e-learning platform founded by the founder of Open English, Andrés Moreno, a Venezuelan national. It offers 16 careers of 7 modules that last 12 months to give the certificate as a technician. The careers offered are in digital marketing, web development, mobile programming, design, digital business, entrepreneurship, cloud computing, and IT. They offer certificates and a personal code given to the student after completing the course so they can register it on their LinkedIn page and be a plus for their resume. The prices of the systems vary from \$800 to \$1,200. Something that was identified is that Next University has a lot of negative comments on the web and does not give refunds in case the client does not like the service. On the other hand, Next University's success is due to its massive advertising in ATL and digital media; it currently invests \$120,000,000 in advertising per year, and that is because it has the support of various investors [25].

4.3.7. MindValley

MindValley is a platform [26] with a goal concentrated beyond teaching courses; instead, it focuses on teaching things that can be a problem in life. So MindValley is about exploring, inventing, and optimizing personal transformation through empowering the mind, body, and spirit. The MindValley platform has around ten thousand students worldwide, with more than 200 authors. Exhibitors and activists; also have a higher completion and fulfillment rate of all

courses on the online platform than online learning. Therefore, MindValley is considered to have content and courses that change and transform the quality of information consumption of its students and the way they can learn. According to MindValley's Quest platform, it claims to have a course completion rate of 333%, which is better than the industry. However, its method is better than that of the competition because its teaching method uses motivators and scientifically proven systems that achieve changes in the lives of people who acquire the courses. The categories presented in its platform are courses related to the mind, body, spirit, entrepreneurship, professional career, and relationships. The time of the courses varies according to the topics to be covered; likewise, the courses are divided by weeks, completing a total of weekly hours. The courses can be accessed through the monthly or annual plan.

4.3.8. Harvard Online

Harvard Business School's platform [27] was launched in 2014 to influence its impact and pass through its mission to educate leaders who make a difference in the world. So now, with its online platform, they can access leaders wherever they are. Harvard Business School has educated more than one hundred thousand students in more than 175 countries worldwide. Its success is because it has a learning model with the characteristics of being active, social, and situation-based; so, students face challenges through situations presented by the business world. The courses offered by this platform are Business, Leadership Management, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Strategies, Financial Accounting, and Business in Society.

4.3.9. MentorBox

This platform is focused on entrepreneurs. MentorBox offers high-quality content on its platform and expert mentors in the topic to be addressed as executives and industry experts. It also provides an efficient learning experience by mixing courses through videos, audio lessons, and workbooks, among others, that suit how each person learns. The MentorBox platform has more than 500,000 active members committed to the learning experience. The courses offered by this platform are oriented to entrepreneurship, peak performance habits, success mindset, marketing, advanced business, money, sales, leadership, business cases, decision-making, lifestyle design, networking, health, and stress. MentorBox offers a platform trial at one dollar for three days, seven dollars per month, and \$59 per year. Subscriptions can be canceled at any time. It also offers another type of access to the platform: unlimited access for \$2949.

5. Discussions

This article explores the trends in online learning and the influence that specific criteria have on the choice of online courses among executives and entrepreneurs in the business sector.

It has been shown that nowadays, e-learning is one of the most recommended options for studying, training, and improving skills in the professional field or for people who wish to form entrepreneurship. Throughout the research work, it has been possible to reflect on the importance of e-learning platforms, showing their beginnings and their evolution until today and how their learning method, their most demanded courses, the price of the classes, and flexibility, among other features, can make them a success in virtual education.

Meanwhile, a virtual course does not mean that only different technological proposals are used. Still, an organization or instructional design that includes the teaching and learning process must be carried out [30]. In terms of student satisfaction, these are manifested in several aspects, such as the virtual platform and the planning of course activities, help in interactivity and communication for the construction of knowledge and learning, and consolidating knowledge management and learning [31].

Concerning the information collected, it is mentioned that certification is the criterion for accessing online classes. According to an article by Marco Antonio Coral about virtual teaching systems and their legal environment in Peru, so far, the design of evaluation, accreditation, and certification of educational quality (SINEACE) is defined in articles 14, 15, and 16 of the General Law of Education). This accreditation offered by SINEACE is only directed for education under the face-to-face methodology and not for virtual instruction. This contributes as a negative point if an educational certification is sought. Therefore, courses taught through digital platforms should provide a certificate with added value. With this, verifying the integrity of the dictated methods that qualify as courses with a high degree of instruction will be possible. Likewise, the scope of the system, the target audience, and the learning objectives of the study should be identified [32]. The information was collected by interviewing two entrepreneurs about their experiences with virtual courses to enhance their knowledge.

Quijano et al. [33] indicate that the use of massive open online courses or MOOCs is based on the availability of internet access and the population's level of digital literacy. Over the years, a decrease in technology use has been reflected because more Peruvians have access to the Internet; becoming familiar with these tools has been a positive change in the immersion of new technologies. This data could reflect the importance of the Internet in improving the educational quality of the country, not only in terms of training professionals and entrepreneurs but also in general. This factor is crucial since people have greater access to the Internet and can get more opportunities to educate themselves through free massive courses on topics of interest.

Among the limitations presented in this academic article is the literature since it does not focus on online courses for professionals or entrepreneurs who want to increase their knowledge. On the contrary, they focus on conducting research based on online teaching in schools and universities.

It is also recommended that specialists in education conduct further research to learn about the evolution of online classes for professionals and entrepreneurs, as well as what new topics they need to know to manage a company optimally. Also, more articles must be written about MOOCs and their influence on those who wish to specialize in topics that will serve them in their work. This can help creators who want to carry out a project focused on creating study platforms aimed at professionals or entrepreneurs specializing in different areas.

6. Conclusions

Trends in online learning for professionals and entrepreneurs in the business sector 2016 - 2021 have achieved the acceptance and high demand of entrepreneurs who wish to acquire more knowledge and manage their businesses efficiently to grow. On the other hand, professionals also access this type of platform to educate themselves. Sometimes, the same companies where they work pay for their training to increase their knowledge and skills, implement them in the company, and achieve the goals set.

Likewise, as Mercado del Collado mentions, countries and organizations must create more excellent conditions so that more people can take advantage of opportunities to contribute to personal improvement and acquire new knowledge and skills that will help them improve their quality of life and that of their communities. Likewise, as the author indicates, organizations must have competent collaborators who are frequently updated on different professional topics, and courses such as MOOCs offer this possibility to people who wish to study and satisfy their requirements.

Finally, it is essential to point out that virtual education has a scalable future and is constantly growing due to its perceived benefits. That is why the literature mentions that a virtual

methodology is nowadays considered a trend and a phenomenon that will be implemented for a long time.

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