



Distance Educator

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Distance Educator- Training Educators of Adults in the digital age.

DISTANCE EDUCATOR - METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

English version



METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE FOR USING THE DISTANCE EDUCATOR MOBILE APPLICATION



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The cover image source: The prompt was "Future male and female managers education in class using smartphones and cosmos background". The image was generated using the playground.com





This first chapter presents the project's modules, learning objectives and outcomes. The project outcomes (trainings) are discussed in the training delivery format.

Project module content, learning objectives and outcomes

MODULE 1: Skills/characteristics of an adult educator

This module aims to provide adult educators/trainers with the framework of the digital skills they need to be equipped to be competent as professionals. It is an easy-to-use package emphasising the importance of being digitally literate, and it provides practical ways to apply the critical competencies in practice. It can also be used as a guide for adult educators to keep digital efforts upgraded and aligned with modern practices.

Learning objectives aim to understand what the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators means for learning in a digital age, to understand the importance of digital competencies, to list the digital competencies based on the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educator, to know the educator's pedagogic competences, and to know the educator's professional competences.

Learning outcomes cover that participants will better understand digital competencies and what the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators means for learning in a digital age.

MODULE 2: Teaching methods and techniques

This module aims to ensure the transition to a dynamic distance education model that accommodates new educational and vocational contingencies and learner needs.

Learning outcomes aim to understand modes and models of distance education and corresponding teaching methods and techniques in VET sector, to understand the importance of innovative teaching techniques In VET, to understand what leads to successful teaching and learning in a distance environment, to understand that feedback and planning are critical components of any effective training program in VET sector and to understand the importance of actively engaging learners in a distance environment.

Learning objectives cover that participants will have a better understanding of distance education/learning concept and main teaching methods and techniques, participants will understand the importance of distance education/learning and the most effective teaching methods and techniques, participants will understand the importance of distance





education/learning and the most effective assessment strategies, and participants will understand the importance of feedback and planning.

MODULE 3: Digital tools of distance learning

Nowadays, technologies and digital tools are widely used in the education and VET sector. It is mainly a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required higher education institutions to pivot to distance learning. Therefore, the most critical and challenging task is to use the widely available, innovative digital tools in all online educational processes. Consequently, this module aims to provide adult educators and VET sector educators with an overview of the various innovative, commercially available digital tools to provide them with various options during adult education online sessions.

The learning objectives aim to describe the different innovative tools available for digital learning facilitation, understand the usefulness of each innovative tool, describe how the innovative digital tools can be utilised in teaching /education processes, detailed descriptions and features of each innovative tool and usability and utilisation of each innovative tool, and analysis of the educational context in which each innovative tool can be used.

Learning outcomes include that participants will acquire a holistic overview of the available innovative digital tools described. Participants will comprehend the unique features of each innovative tool and how it can be utilised in digital education for adults and the VET sector. Finally, participants will also be able to identify the usability of each innovative tool for their unique educational purpose.

MODULE 4: Cultural Awareness

Today, the world experiences cultural diversity more than it was yesterday. Cultural awareness is fundamental to providing an equitable learning environment for all students. A classroom that values equality is different from one that values equity. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they represent two approaches to teaching with very different goals and outcomes. Equality is the idea that all students should be given equal treatment; that's why all educators need to be culturally awareness

Learning objectives aim to understand what cultural awareness is, to understand the importance of cultural awareness as an adult educator and to understand the learner's cultural background

Learning outcomes cover that participants will have a better understanding of cultural awareness, and participants will understand the importance of cultural awareness as an adult educator.





MODULE 5: Designing online teaching and learning activities, courses, and assessment

This module provides knowledge and practical experience in designing online teaching and learning activities, courses, and assessments. The assessment is presented in alternative formats using generative AI and digital platforms. The cases are presented with several selected generative AI and digital platforms. The module covers “Redesign curriculum” and “Assessment using generative AI and digital technologies”.

Learning objectives aim to explain a curriculum of online teaching, understand online learning activities, provide examples of online courses and assessments, and provide a hands-on experience on how to design online curriculums, courses and assessments.

Learning outcomes cover that participants will have a better understanding of online teaching and learning activities and courses, and participants will also be able to redesign their curriculums and courses and create their assessments using various AI and digital tools.

Project mobile app and training delivery format

The "Distance Educator" mobile app covers a self-assessment test and a training pathway (see Image 1). The self-assessment is divided into five topics related to five modules and covers at least 20 or 22 questions. Based on the score, learners can select their training pathway. Moreover, this app can empower learners not only to check their learning progress but also to be engaged with a variety of exercises.

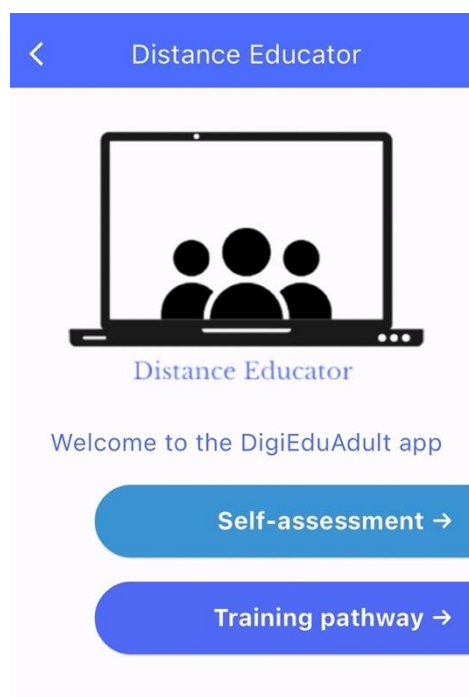


Image 1. The image presents an intro page of the app. The "Distance Educator" mobile app can be downloaded from the App Store.

The **advantages and benefits** of the "Distance Educator" mobile app and mobile apps in general are discussed in Table 1. It shows six aspects such as accessibility and convenience,





engaging multimedia content, personalized learning paths, real-time feedback and assessments, cost-effective training solutions, real-time updates and content refresh.

Table 1. The advantages and benefits of mobile apps. *Source:* created by the project team authors.

Aspect	Explanation
Accessibility and convenience	Mobile apps provide access to training materials anytime and anywhere. Learners can engage with content at their own pace, fitting learning activities into their busy schedules. This accessibility is particularly beneficial for remote or distributed teams.
Engaging multimedia content	Mobile apps can incorporate multimedia elements, such as interactive quizzes and animations. These features make learning more engaging and cater to different learning styles, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the training.
Personalized learning paths	Many mobile apps allow for the customization of learning paths based on individual progress and performance. This personalized approach ensures learners receive content tailored to their needs, promoting a more efficient and effective learning experience.
Real-time feedback and assessments	Mobile apps can provide instant feedback on assessments, quizzes, and activities. This immediate feedback helps learners understand their strengths and weaknesses, allowing for timely adjustments and improvements in their understanding of the material.
Cost-effective training solutions	Compared to traditional training methods, mobile apps often offer a cost-effective solution. They eliminate the need for printed materials, travel expenses, and physical training spaces, making them a more budget-friendly option for organizations.
Real-time updates and content refresh*	Mobile apps make it easy to update content in real-time. It ensures that learners always have access to the latest information, which is especially important in fields where knowledge is rapid.

*Evolving all the time.

The last aspect related to real-time and content refresh benefits is evolving and can be updated easily on the mobile app.





Regarding **possible challenges** for using the mobile app, there are also challenges associated with their use as training tools. Therefore, Table 2 explains six challenges such as technical issues and compatibility, limited screen size, distractions and lack of focus, limited offline access, resistance to change, and development and maintenance costs.

Table 2. Challenges for using mobile apps for education. *Source:* created by the project team authors.

Challenge	Explanation
Technical issues and compatibility	Different devices and operating systems may lead to compatibility issues. Ensuring the mobile app works seamlessly across various platforms can be challenging, especially as technology evolves.
Limited screen size	The smaller screen size of mobile devices can be a limitation when delivering complex content. Designing visually appealing and engaging courses on smaller screens without compromising the learning experience requires careful consideration.
Distractions and lack of focus	Mobile devices are often associated with numerous distractions, potentially hindering the learner's focus. Designing strategies to minimize distractions and encourage active engagement is essential for engaging in mobile-based training.
Limited offline access	Not all mobile apps allow seamless offline access to training materials. This limitation frequently poses challenges for learners in areas with poor or no internet connectivity.
Resistance to change	Some learners may need help transitioning from traditional training to mobile-based solutions. Overcoming this resistance requires effective communication about the benefits and advantages of the new approach.
Development and maintenance costs	While mobile apps can be cost-effective in the long run, the initial development and ongoing maintenance costs can be substantial. Organizations must assess the return on investment and allocate resources appropriately and carefully.

Addressing the mentioned challenges requires a thoughtful and strategic approach, ensuring that the advantages of mobile-based training are maximized while mitigating potential drawbacks.





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Regarding the **delivery format**, this project was ran training in face-to-face settings (e.g. auditoriums) in Lithuania, Cyprus, Greece, and Romania, and diverse teaching strategies (e.g., goal-oriented lecturing) were applied. These strategies were chosen by partners' lecturers/facilitators. Even though the content (materials, the mobile app "Distance Educator") was the same, the delivery format differed. For instance, if a lecturer has teaching experience in the US, the delivery format was infused with an interactive teaching style (i.e., group discussions). Meanwhile, other lecturers/facilitators used digital interaction tools for warm-up activities, including generative AI tools, AI tools and collaborative tools. Some examples are provided and discussed briefly.

Here is an example of padlet.com (Image 2) using an area for interactive work and sharing resources.

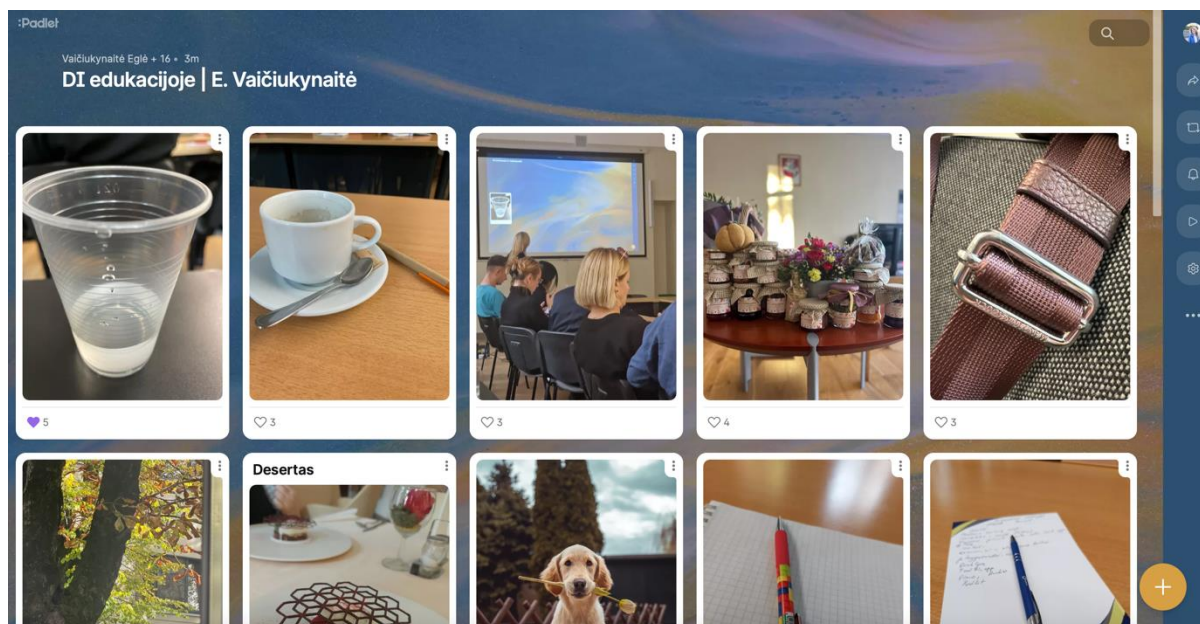


Image 2. An example of padlet.com shows some of the Distance Educator project training's workshop content. Click the link and see it on the platform. *Source:* <https://bit.ly/48WyFGH>





The following example presents warm-up activities using digital engagement AI tools like the Excuses Generator. Click on the link below of an image and see how it works quickly. This task can be done individually or in groups. Thus, the results of these activities can be uploaded on padlet.com and discussed in class jointly.

Despite diverse delivery formats, the most common teaching strategy is goal-oriented. Therefore, educators had a chance to refresh their knowledge about cultural awareness or other topics and enhance their digital skills with generative AI tools.

The following paragraph presents experiences/reflections from one of the training and includes some recommendations. The final chapter covers broad recommendations for future educators based on the project's training reflections.

Image 3. The result view of the AI platform "Excuses". Source: <https://excuses.ai>

Reflections after the Distance Educator training

The number of participants has shown the importance of the project's five modules, especially the fight module, „Designing Online Teaching and Learning Activities, courses, and Assessment". The latter module presented the latest generative AI tools for educators. The trainings were organized in a face-to-face setting by one lecturer/facilitator and delivered experientially, integrating different generative AI tools and a mobile app.

Based on the lecturer/facilitator's reflections after the training, the training material can be delivered simultaneously and tailored based on participants' needs (personalization). Indeed, some participants had previous experience with digital platforms (e.g., Zoom) and expressed interest in new digital AI tools. The training content was delivered based on personalized needs.

The training included basics of diverse digital and AI platforms which can act as facilitators for educators. For instance, ChatGPT 4.0 can provide the latest trendChatGPT Google Trends plugin integration. Hence, this functionality enables educators to search trends and top charts in education and AI in real time. The GPT-4 provides Access to tools like DALL-E, Browsing, Advanced Data Analysis and more.s in education using Google Trends. Another significant consideration is related to inputs and outcomes by AI tools, such as various types of digital content and (stored) data and its ethical use, including legal citations and privacy protection issues.

Despite digital assistance for educators using AI tools, facilitators can be involved in group training. Our project experience has shown that not all participants have equal digital skills and require additional





help and support with various tasks. Moreover, not all learners were motivated to explore digital or generative AI tools. Meanwhile, some learners quickly had a hands-on experience, while others postponed to the next time. Similarly, individuals who want to finish training alone are also limited by their motivation. Therefore, the suggestion is to identify specific motivators, such as digital badges and certificates, to guarantee they will finish the training.

Recommendations

Some recommendations are based on previous reflections by the training lecturer/facilitator, which are discussed based on learners' aspects, digital and AI tools, educational materials, delivery format and educational mobile apps.

Related to learners' aspects:

- to develop tech-savvy attitudes of educators and integrate more personal or others' best cases that can inspire them to use generative AI in various ways and not be limited by content creation only
- to foster a culture of crucial skills for success ('learning to learn,' critical thinking,
- to follow brain-based learning techniques to capture students' attention, such as using novelty, curiosity, humour, emotion, relevance, and challenge in your teaching materials and methods
- to gamify learning into something more fun and engaging, such as using points, badges, leaderboards, rewards, and feedback to motivate and incentivize your participants
- to organize inquiry-based learning to encourage active participation and critical thinking, such as by asking open-ended questions, promoting discussion and debate, and encouraging learners to explore and discover knowledge independently
- to use visual aids to enhance your teaching materials and methods, such as by using diagrams, charts, graphs, maps, or infographics to illustrate concepts, relationships, or data
- to ensure storytelling that captures students' attention, such as using anecdotes, metaphors, analogies, or case studies to relate abstract or complex ideas to real-life situations or experiences
- to make active learning and encourage participation and engagement, such as by using role-playing, simulations, debates, or problem-solving activities to involve learners in the learning process

Related to digital and AI tools, educational materials:

- to offer complex tools and educational material pieces of diverse modules for advanced users and to provide a complete set of modules for beginners for active learning
- to integrate more personal or local best practices, update the lists/classifications of generative AI tools





- to take into consideration and/or discuss the latest ethical considerations in digital and generative AI-related topics in education and ensure positive educational experiences

Related to delivery formats:

- to integrate more diverse (digital) warm-up activities or quizzes (e.g., AI recipe creation tool) to manage their attention during the training
- to integrate QR codes that enable learners to try different digital and AI tools immediately to tailor the proposed training or material pieces, an app to a context or specific tasks
- to offer a hybrid of delivery style of the training for busy educators – partially active and partially passive
- to provide more diverse styles of delivery format, such as video content using Synthesia.io (see the practical example in the last chapter)
- to gamify educational content and make learning more fun and engaging, such as by using points, badges, leaderboards, rewards, and feedback to motivate and incentivize your participants
- to crowdsource educational content and methods by involving your participants in the creation, evaluation, and improvement of your materials, such as by using social media, wikis, blogs, or forums to gather feedback, suggestions, and contributions from your learners

Related to educational mobile apps (materials & delivery format):

- to push notifications to provide timely and relevant updates, reminders, or alerts to your participants, such as about new content, upcoming events, or deadlines, to encourage them to revisit the mobile app
- to integrate personalized feedback in the mobile app, recommendations, or rewards to your participants and encourage them to engage with the mobile app
- to ensure gamification that makes the mobile app more fun and rewarding, such as using points, badges, leaderboards, rewards, and feedback to motivate and incentivize your participants
- To enable your participants to share their progress, achievements, or feedback with their peers and followers, integrate social media platforms and connect your mobile app with popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, X, Linked or Instagram
- To keep them engaged and motivated, use personalized content to provide tailored recommendations, feedback, or resources to your participants based on their interests, preferences, or performance

The last chapter presents several of the latest (generative) AI tools and provides a platform that acts as a database of the latest generative AI tools. It invites you to discover new AI tools based on your topic or interest.



Conclusions: What’s next? Additional (generative) AI tools

New (generative) AI tools are launched daily and provide many applications. There are a vast number of applications that educators cannot test. The most popular AI tools are listed below and use Futurepedia¹ (a digital database that enables users to explore AI tools based on category filters) (Image 4).

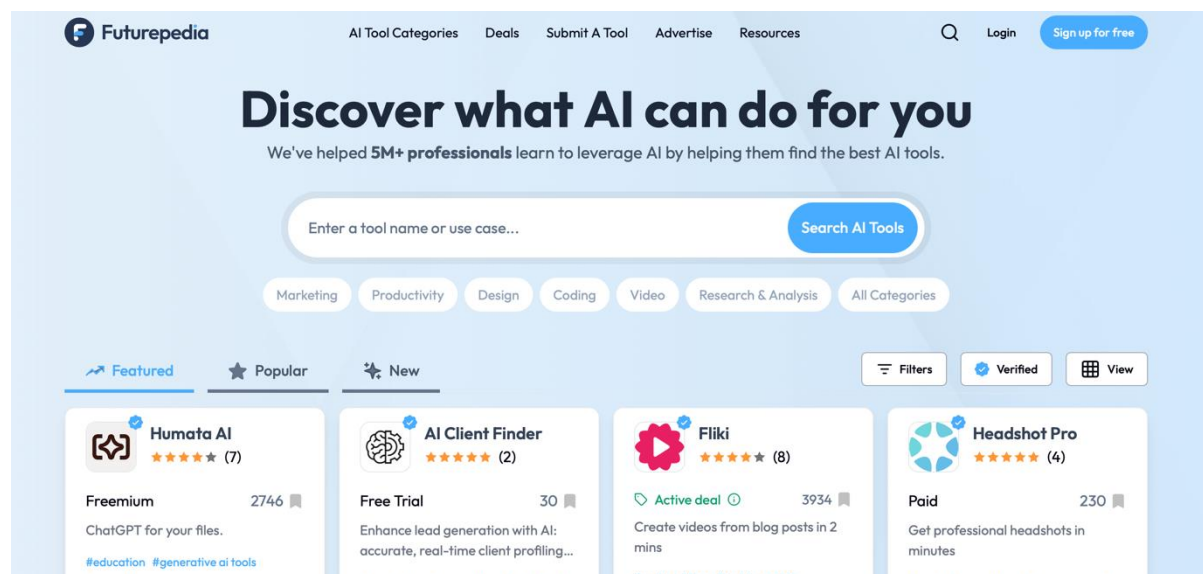


Image 4. The introduction of the Futurepedia website. *Source:* <https://www.futurepedia.io/ai-tools>

Futurepedia.io encourages educators to find the latest AI tools related to their content (e.g., content creation and delivery format tools). Thus, it provides features such as the most popular or new tools on the market. Moreover, a search option categorises tools into specific categories, such as AI productivity tools (Website builders, marketing, etc.), AI video, text, image, art, audio, miscellaneous, and code generators. For more information, open the Futurepedia.io website and explore AI tools’ classifications and tools in practice.

Several generative AI tools using the Futurepedia.io are provided in Table31. Notably, these listed generative AI tools are not covered in the content of the Distance Educator module.

Table 3. The list of generative AI tools for educators. *Source:* created by the project team authors.

Name	Description	The link
Synthesia	generates studio-quality videos from the text, links and pdf files.	https://www.synthesia.io
Beautiful.ai	generates professional and beautiful slides using AI-assisted design.	https://www.beautiful.ai

¹ <https://www.futurepedia.io>



Tome.app	generates polished presentations and docs from a prompt. Thus, the platform integrates a generative AI tool for appropriate visuals for slides.	https://tome.app/
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One example is presented below in Image 5. Please open the link and see four slides using a computer and smartphone. The interface works perfectly with diverse devices and ensures high interactivity and the presentations' adaptability to these diverse devices.

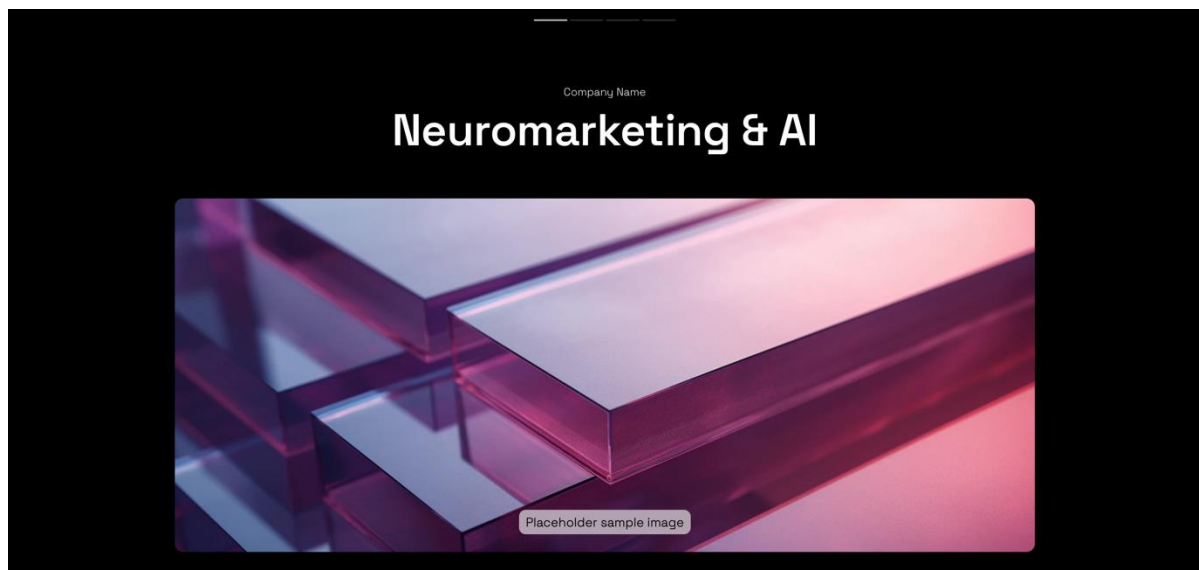


Image 5. The example of interactive slides created by the Tome.app platform. Source: <https://bit.ly/3SD1IYC>

Example of the video content generation and delivery format

The following example represents a generative AI tool that empowers educators to create educational **video content and/or enhance their training delivery format**.

Synthesia.io is an AI video-creation tool that allows educators to create educational videos using simple text or combining diverse media (weblinks, PDF files). Thus, it also enables educators to create their educational videos with personalized brands if there is a need. The created videos are easy to edit and change talking persona appearance and voice style. These functionalities can ensure learners' attention and enhance the training experience.

The example below (Image 6) was made for the Distance Educator project. The image shows five scenes generated with a talking man (avatar). The avatar is animated in the final video. All scene text is provided below. Many diverse features allow educators to enhance their video content. For instance, there is a functionality to edit (see in the middle), change the background colour or add music (on the right). Notable, this example was generated with the paid version.





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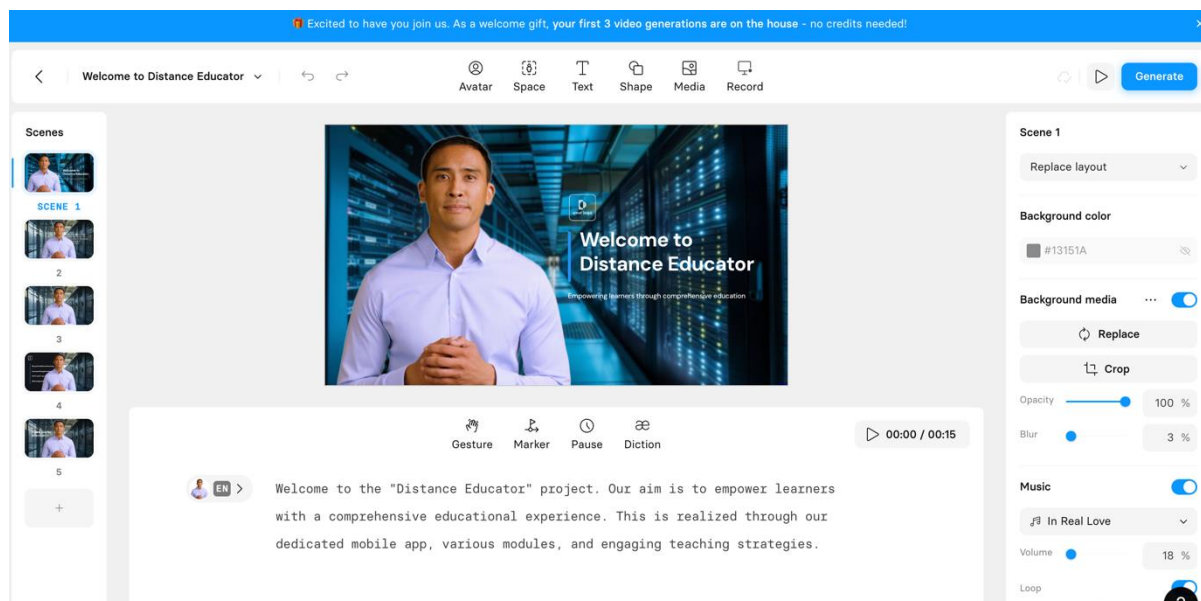


Image 6. Draft preview of video content created by the Synthesia.io platform. The content covered the distance educator project. *Source:* <https://bit.ly/42GwGUe>

These engaging educational videos take less time to create. Thus, 150+ human-like AI avatars of diverse ethnicities and genders, the text-to-speech technology with 120+ languages and many accents to make professional voiceovers quickly (Alster, 2023). Moreover, the AI script assistant can auto-generate script drafts using prompts based on the topic, audience and other aspects.

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