

## Distance Education in Literacy Training : for the Development of a Hybrid Approach



2008-2009

Secteur de la formation professionnelle et technique et de la formation continue

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Direction de l'éducation  
des adultes et de l'action  
communautaire

## Distance Education in Literacy Training: A Hybrid Approach

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## FOREWORD

We hope this document will provide you with a set of tools that will guide you in developing a hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training.

It introduces a new term, and accordingly, a new concept, the **hybrid approach** to distance education in literacy training.

This concept stems from the results of research conducted by the Direction générale de la formation générale des adultes (DFGA),<sup>1</sup> of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, from 1999 to 2006 with school boards and independent community literacy action organizations.

One of the main findings of this research was that combining more than one approach is key to meeting the needs of people who have little schooling who want to engage in distance education. The research report entitled "Distance Education and Literacy Training for the Development of a Hybrid Approach," can be consulted at the DFGA.

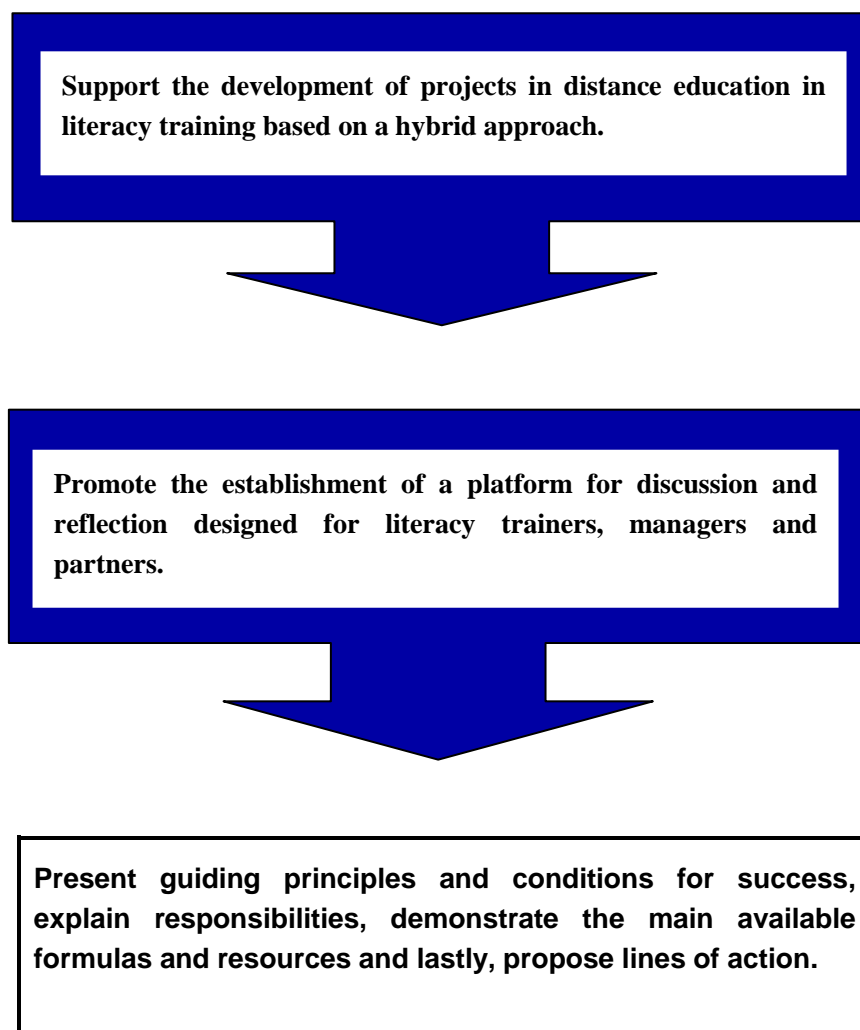
We wish you and the adult learners with whom you will be carrying out distance literacy training projects based on a hybrid approach the best success.

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1. Since October 23, 2007, following the restructuring of the Secteur de la formation professionnelle et technique et de la formation continue, the Direction générale de la formation générale des adultes (DFGA) referred to in this document changed its name to the Direction de l'éducation des adultes et de l'action communautaire.

# 1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT "DISTANCE EDUCATION IN LITERACY TRAINING: A HYBRID APPROACH"

**“Encouraging the expression of the demand and meeting this demand [. . .] will lead to greater flexibility in the supply of educational services and to consideration of the diversity of types of services and places where these services are provided [. . .].”<sup>2</sup>**



2. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec, *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2002), 5.

## 2 TARGET PUBLIC

### Managers

*A supervision tool*

To provide managers with orientations and a facilitation tool for use with staff and to guide them through the emergence of projects in distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach.

### Partners

*A tool for concerted action*

To call on partners to engage in the development of distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach.

### Literacy trainers

*A tool to support intervention*

To provide literacy trainers with a platform for reflection and discussion and to support them in the development of the following required competencies:

- situate themselves in a project and self-train
- consider the requirements of the instructional situation, distance education in literacy training, based on a hybrid approach
- master information and communication techniques
- properly master self-training or training tools

### 3 BRIEF BACKGROUND

#### Main steps in the production of the document "Distance Education in Literacy Training: A Hybrid Approach"

- Official creation of the Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec (SOFAD) (1996)
- Since then, significant development of distance education, in general adult education, led by the DFGA
- *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (May 2002)

*Distance education is seen as an important means of removing obstacles to accessibility and barriers to participation*

- Publication of the document "La formation à distance en alphabétisation: état de la situation" (Winter 2002)

*Main finding: there is a lack of supervision of testing for distance education in Québec. Emphasis is placed on the importance of developing a frame of reference.*

- Research on distance education in literacy training: exploration through experiments, meetings with people interested in the issue, observations and recommendations (In two phases, from 2000 to 2005)

*Main observation: distance education in literacy training is possible if a hybrid approach is developed*

- Tabling of the research report: "Distance Education in Literacy Training for the Development of a Hybrid Approach" (February 2006)
- Publication of the document "Distance Education in Literacy Training: A Hybrid Approach"



## 4 MAIN DEFINITIONS

Terms	Definitions
Literacy training	<p>The purpose of literacy training is to allow adult learners to access, where appropriate, other training services, to increase their abilities in various fields of learning and to exercise their social roles.*</p> <p>* Source: Basic Adult Education Regulation</p>
Common core basic education (new curriculum)	<p>Common core basic education corresponds to the first eight years of schooling (levels 2, 3 and 4 of literacy, presecondary and secondary education). It aims to provide for the needs of adult learners in basic learning.*</p> <p>* Source: <i>Programme de formation de la formation commune, document d'introduction</i> (December 2005)</p>
Distance education	<p>Individualized training that allows students to learn on their own, at their own pace, with minimum scheduling and travel constraints, with self-sufficient teaching materials, and access to various means of communication and support from resource people.*</p> <p>* Source: Groupe de travail sur la formation à distance, Rapport 2003</p>
The hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training	<p>A distance education approach that combines distance education models with appropriate and flexible support.* It thus requires in-class tutoring and distance tutoring.</p> <p>* Source: "Distance Education in Literacy Training for the Development of a Hybrid Approach," research report, January 2006</p>

## 5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Principle 1

#### **Increase access to and participation in training services**

*The general aim of the "Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training" focuses on the expression of the demand for training and lifelong learning. The models for distance education in literacy training, based on a hybrid approach, must consider organizational needs and the learning needs of all targeted learners (young adults, workers, people in sociovocational integration, adults with special needs, etc.).*

### Principle 2

#### **Reduce the constraints for targeted learners**

*The flexibility of a hybrid approach for distance education in literacy training must offer a response to the constraints of targeted learners, for example, time, scheduling, distance constraints or family responsibilities.*

It is important to understand the characteristics of targeted learners, their needs and their constraints, in order to provide them with appropriate training.

### Principle 3

#### **Provide sufficient coaching and support**

Coaching and support, whether in the form of direct contact or from a distance, are the essential elements of the supply of distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach.

Emphasize the development of innovative, hybrid approaches that can be adapted to a population with low literacy levels.

In-depth analysis of needs, flexibility and creativity are the cornerstone of the development of distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach.

## Principle 4

Provide more expertise in distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach, and access to high-quality materials

The development of expertise in distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach rests with the following elements:

- teacher training and support
- appropriate computer and technological material that is truly adapted to literacy training (placement test, evaluation, etc.)
- distribution of existing resources and tools
- collaboration among all partners
- the importance of documenting learning from the perspective of a hybrid approach, in distance education in literacy training, in order to grasp all the distinctive features

## Principle 5

Increase the potential of the hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training and keep up with technological change

For people who have little schooling, the reality of computers is more appealing than traditional distance education material. Thus it is important to promote sensible use of technology and to make suitable choices, for example:

- a shared platform that can be adapted to a variety of realities, and thereby avoid reproducing existing tools
- preparation of simple tools, easy to master and to update
- maintain a technological watch, in order to ensure the development and renewal of distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach

## Principle 6

Foster the development of a culture of continuing education through a hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training

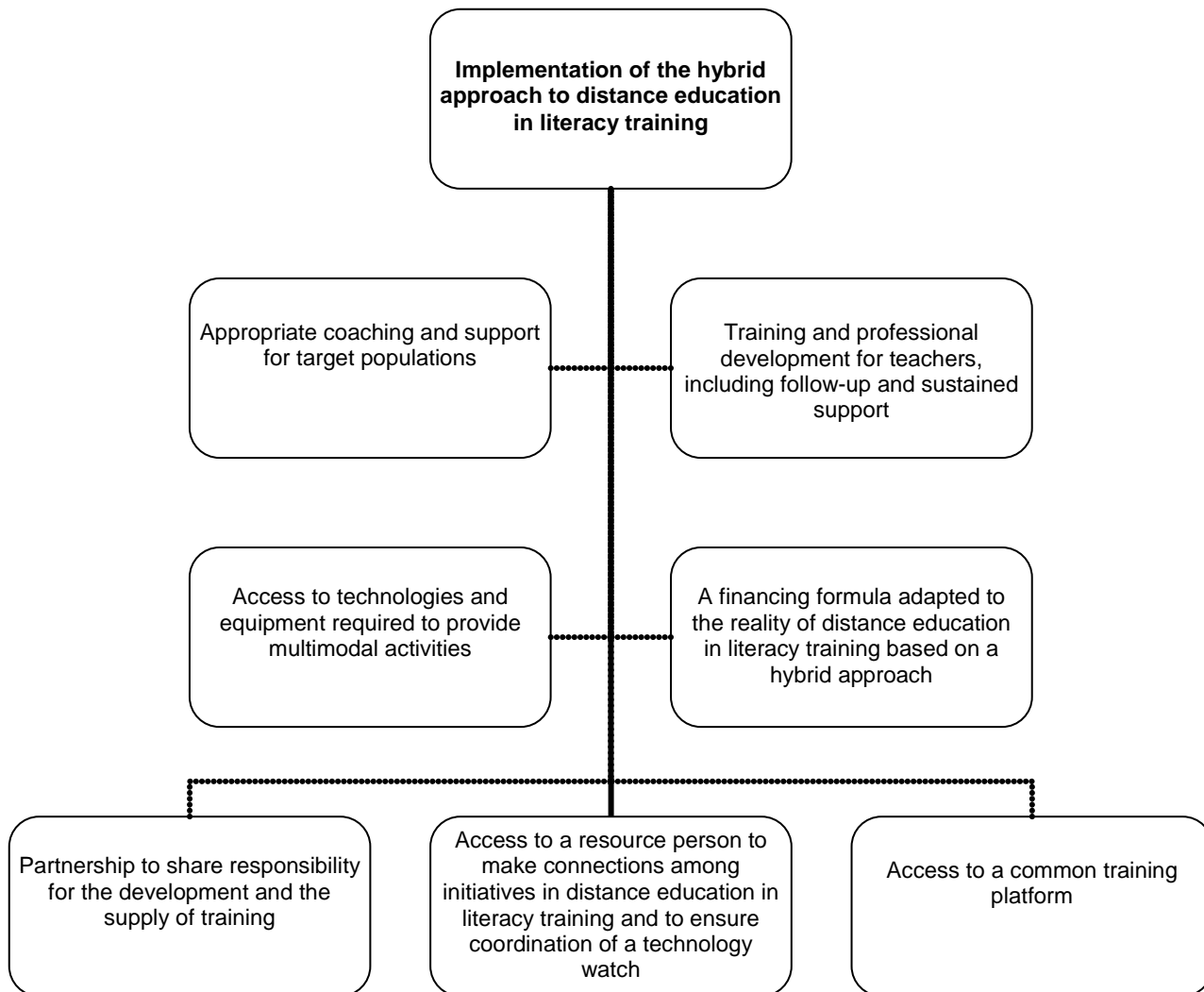
A distance education in literacy training service based on a hybrid approach can encourage and maintain interest in lifelong learning in people who have little schooling. To do so, it is important to manage the demand and supply of training, in a way that is truly adapted to the target population, i.e.:

- create the conditions that allow diverse training needs to be expressed
- ensure that the supply of training translates individual and group aspirations
- take into consideration the involvement of partners and the participation of the adult learners' environment in their "lifelong learning"

## 6 REQUIRED CONDITIONS

A number of conditions must be met to successfully implement distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach.

Four conditions are considered essential, and three are considered facilitating.



## 6.1 Essential conditions

### **Appropriate coaching and support for target populations**

Coaching and support for learners are essential elements in distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach.

While building on the development of their autonomy as learners, it is important to pay attention to adults' ability to self-train.

Several formulas are possible. They mainly depend on the learner's needs and are tied to the system implemented. Support can be offered in various ways: in-class support, at a distance, by telephone, by e-mail or by any other means deemed relevant and even during virtual group meetings, if necessary.

Considerable availability on the part of trainers is essential for adapting the reality of adult learners' schedules.

People who take this kind of training require various types of instructional and technical support.

### **Training and professional development for teachers including follow-up and sustained support**

A sufficient period of training before the project begins should be anticipated to prepare teachers to evolve in distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach, both in terms of the instructional aspects of this type of teaching and the chosen system. A number of elements should be considered in supporting trainers:

- support for teaching duties (concerning the use of tools, materials and various instructional aspects of distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach)
- dissemination and sharing of information on the topic
- recognition of the difference between this type of training and other types, particularly the time required by the hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training
- participation in the development of distance literacy training models

As well, the participation of the organization's director (or administration) and other actors concerned by the issue will promote training and support mechanisms for teaching staff.

### **Access to technologies and equipment required to provide multimodal activities**

It is important to consider access to the required material both for organizations and adult learners. The supply of distance education in literacy training must be free of charge for adults, but free access to necessary material must also be provided.

## **A financing formula adapted to the reality of distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach**

Any financing formula must develop and sustain the supply of training (upgrading of the system and material), as well as appropriate support and coaching of enrolled learners. Budgetary rules should be adjusted based on the organizational requirements for implementing this training.

## **6.2 Facilitating conditions**

### **Establishment of an appropriate partnership to support the sharing of responsibility for development and the supply of training**

The establishment of a partnership could be a facilitating condition for implementing services. Whether the development of a training system, the shared use of materials or tools, recruitment or supply of training, joining with partners who have expertise in the field may be the right choice, depending on the organization's context.

### **Access to a common training platform**

Access to a quality, simple platform that is free of charge and easily adapted to everyone's personal training plan would promote the supply of distance literacy training services based on a hybrid approach.

The agency could then concentrate on the organization and the instructional aspects of the training supply without having to spend time and money on the development of a training system.

This platform should be flexible and adaptable for all organizations but it should not standardize the training. It could also serve as a place for training and professional development for teachers, offer opportunities for telecollaboration, propose instructional resources, etc.

### **Access to a resource person to make connections among initiatives in distance education in literacy training and to ensure the coordination of a technology watch**

The organizations should have access to a resource person in the course of their process of implementing a distance education in literacy training service based on a hybrid approach, which would network them with other organizations and refer them to relevant resources or give them access to documentation.

This resource person would also ensure the coordination of a technology watch. The resource person should be appointed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and given a specific mandate. This mandate would be confirmed in a memorandum of understanding signed by both parties.

## 7 DISTANCE EDUCATION: TOOLS, REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

There are many formulas and various resources available for implementing a project in distance literacy training based on a hybrid approach. The examples provided below do not, however, constitute an exhaustive list of tools, references and resources available to you.

**There are diverse, complementary and numerous methods available to implement distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach.**

### Tools

- The Internet, which makes on-line learning possible, relies on multimedia resources that allow adult learners to learn using their computers.
- Various possible modes of communication such as on-line communication, telecollaboration and videoconference training
- CD-ROMs and others (courseware, tutorial programs, learning software, etc.) offering dynamic, interactive learning scenarios
- Videos that present scenarios and training sequences
- Audio cassettes that provide instructions for performing learning activities
- Print materials that consist of training activities presented in an adult learner's workbook or other document

**The available resources are numerous and constantly evolving. They enrich the development of distance education in literacy training, based on a hybrid approach, but first people must be aware of them and share them.**

### Reference organizations

- The Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec (SOFAD)  
<http://www.sofad.qc.ca/>
- The Réseau pour le développement des compétences par l'intégration des technologies (network for developing competences through the integration of technologies) (RECIT)  
<http://www.recit.qc.ca/>
- The Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDEACF)  
<http://www.cdeacf.ca/>



## Resources

- The CDEACF inventories the main Web sites for on-line learning, literacy training and various on-line resources.
- The research report *Distance Education and Literacy Training for the Development of a Hybrid Approach* (DFGA, 2006) and the summary report on distance education in literacy training (DFGA, 2002) are available on the DFGA Web site, at: <http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dfga/portail.html>.
- Telecollaboration testing, piloted by the Centre des lettres et des mots (CLEM), is documented in the research report *La collaboration à distance, un outil stratégique en alphabétisation - Rapport de recherche-action*. This report and a guide to telecollaboration tools are available on the organization's Web site at: <http://www.clem.qc.ca>.
- The results of testing the *Accroche* on-line training site have been published. The report *Les résultats de l'expérimentation du Site Accroche: guide de recommandations pédagogiques visant le développement de la FAD en alphabétisation* is available on the CDEACF Web site at: <http://www.accroche.qc.ca>.
- The results of the Commission scolaire du Chemin-du-Roy experiment will be published at the conclusion of the project and will also be disseminated on the CDEACF Web site.
- The on-line literacy training activities carried out by ABC Lotbinière, which offers a distance education service, are available on its Web site at: <http://www.abclotbiniere.com/acc.html>.
- Two pilot projects in distance literacy training were also tested in Québec in the mid-1990s: STEFI and ALPHASIM. The documents and instruments prepared for the testing of ALPHASIM are available on the DFGA Web site. Information on the STEFI project is available at: <http://clic.ntic.org/clic20/stefi.htm>.

## 8 ROLES OF THE MAIN ACTORS

### **With respect to recruitment**

- Call on imagination and creativity.
- Consider the characteristics of the target population and fully understand the demand for training that must be met.
- Take care to develop a training service that truly conforms to the demand.

### **With respect to the creation of a team of tutors**

- Make a team of tutors interested in the hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training available.
- Ensure training for existing staff so that they can develop the competencies required to apply the hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training.

### **With respect to access to materials and kits**

This role is assumed in partnership with other organizations in the community.

- Support the development of training and materials kits that are adapted to the requirements of the hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training.
- Disseminate existing material, adapting it to the hybrid approach to distance education in literacy training.
- Facilitate Internet access for the target population.
- Coordinate the production of materials and tools.

### **With respect to management and supervision**

- Plan for a flexible system that allows the implementation of distance education activities based on a hybrid approach that are integrated into organizational requirements in order to:
  - make the existing sigla, ratio and certification of studies system flexible
  - maintain a continuous supply of training for teachers and promote sharing of difficulties and successes

## 9 FUTURE PROSPECTS

In Québec, despite real development in literacy training communities and a context favourable to its implementation, particularly as the result of the adoption of the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, distance literacy training is still in its youth and is not sufficiently supported or supervised. In order for distance education in literacy training to leverage participation in training and to become a way of promoting a culture of continuing education, it must successfully stimulate the expression of the demand for training. The hybrid approach will provide a relevant response to this demand and ensure appropriate development of the supply in meeting it.

**To do so, literacy training organizations and partners must undertake or pursue many initiatives.**

- Ensure the implementation and the supply of a distance education service based on a hybrid approach structured around the needs and the characteristics of the target population and provide easy access to the required material.
- Develop a common system (training platform) that groups together numerous potential learning and communication tools that organizations can use and assimilate based on their needs and the needs of adult learners.
- Establish a network of actors and an effective partnership in order to promote coherent development and a harmonious supply of service.
- Disseminate and implement models developed in Québec in order to pursue the development already under way and to avoid repetition.
- Work on the design of training and professional development to be provided to teachers.
- Further explore certain issues or hypotheses, particularly with respect to increasing the participation of adult learners, the effects of this mode of training on learners and retaining them in training through the support provided. Research and evaluation are activities that must be closely linked to the development of this mode of training.

As we see it, the development of distance education in literacy training based on a hybrid approach is not without challenges. We need to expand the knowledge fund, test a number of processes, develop an appropriate, common system, keep up with technological change, and implement collaborative efforts, etc.

While the challenges are many, the future outlooks are promising and the actions to be undertaken, highly stimulating.

## 10 SUMMARY: THE ESSENTIALS

Key concepts	
Accessibility	Make training accessible to all, particularly populations with access problems (geographical, technical, human, etc.).
Differentiation	Manage special features, meet needs and the demand that necessarily differ among populations and individuals.
Flexibility	Ease the constraints on the place, time, duration, tools and training methods.
Innovation	Develop a renewed approach and provide a place for instructional experimentation and innovation.
Individualization	Adapt equipment and the supply of training to individual needs.
Just-in-time	From the standpoint of continuing education, focus the demands for training on very specific, possibly short-term objectives.
Continuing education	Develop a culture of continuing education that has an impact both on individuals and the group and that contributes to cultural balance.

Essential strategies	
Abandon a "distance-only approach" or a "classroom-only approach"	<p>This implies a gradual merger of classroom training and distance training models, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ alternating in-class/distance</li> <li>▪ training in a variety of places: at home, at a centre, at the library, etc.</li> <li>▪ telephone, telematics, in-class tutoring</li> </ul>
Change practices and cultures	Currently focused on the dominant view of training, which is the "school" form.
Design open training models	In other words ensure that training is consistent overall, and think in terms of learning paths for adult learners rather than course planning. This is a significant paradigm shift focusing on the demand, not the supply.
Develop self-training	This assumes that adult learners develop control over their training plans, resulting in greater autonomy.
Develop collaboration	Collaboration is required because of the isolation learners experience and the tools available to them (exchange between learners and between learners and tutors). Collaboration makes it possible to reintroduce in-class interactions in the distance situation.

## Tools for distance education in literacy training

Self-training media	<p><b>Books and print media</b> Documents prepared by tutors and other books useful to distance education and in-class instruction.</p> <p><b>Web site</b> Print documents that are transferred to on-line electronic media. They can be conserved as is, or transformed into real on-line multimedia applications.</p> <p><b>Videocassettes</b> Support media, testimonials or observations that facilitate understanding of learning contexts.</p> <p><b>Audio cassettes</b> Support media that facilitate understanding of verbal exchanges and questions-and-answers. Cassettes are inexpensive, but adults with little schooling find them difficult to use.</p> <p><b>Software and courseware</b> Software and courseware promoting interactivity and the development of computerized teaching and learning strategies. However, for adults with little schooling, this type of support should not be used alone, but in combination with complementary means of support (identified above).</p>
Monitoring	<p><b>E-mail (written correspondence)</b> For adult learners in the initial learning levels, this is not always feasible.</p> <p><b>Fax</b> The immediacy of this medium is appealing but it is not always accessible.</p> <p><b>Telephone monitoring</b> Humanizes technical mediation and is much easier to use for people who have little schooling.</p> <p><b>Group meetings</b> Group meetings, held at any given time during the training period, help develop a sense of belonging and encourage discussion of the training goals. Group meetings also stimulate motivation.</p> <p><b>In-class meetings with the tutor</b> Held at the centre or in an office with a tutor.</p>
Evaluation tools	<p><b>Homework</b> More traditional distance education tools.</p>
Evaluation tools (cont.)	<p><b>Self-tests</b> Taking of exams and correction for adult learners. These are integrated into the training tools and are more closely associated with the adult learner's path.</p> <p><b>Electronic evaluations</b> Live or off-line machine and human marking allow faster marking.</p>

**Interpersonal distance evaluations**

They refer to monitoring and coaching and they use all available methods of interpersonal communication.

**In-class interpersonal evaluations**

They refer to written, oral in-class evaluations.

## CONCLUSION

- Manage training as a global entity, not a sectoral entity (adjustment of situations, tools and people).
- Use media, ensuring consistency with the training objectives.
- Ensure the continuity of training and monitoring.
- Ensure development of a sense of belonging through occasional meetings of peers with tutors.
- Capitalize on previously acquired learning and make the connections with various training activities.
- Promote "intertraining" between peers.
- Restore the role of tutor/coach, tutor/leader.
- Abide by the rules of self-training, its role in learning and its place in the training model.





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