





Profiles also contain information that Forum uses to integrate a participant into a course, such as their e-mail address and the drive letter of their CD-ROM drive.

In Lotus LearningSpace Forum, **Assessment** (Figure 3) measures the progress of a course participants. In addition to the quizzes and exams that all instructors use for grading students, teacher can create surveys that allow him to gather feedback from student responses to specific questions, as well as create self-assessments that students can use to evaluate their own progress in the course.



*Figure 3: Assessment*

### 3. DIDACTICAL TECHNOLOGY

The strategy for the didactical technology is to digitize the normal classroom activities and make them available to download from internet via streaming video. This version of videotaping may work well for some content and some students.

The other extreme are teachers that emulate independent study, and may give the student a copy of slides used in-class presentation and tell them to go to it. Independent study is good, but misses the input and feedback from teacher and other learners.

Thinking at the two extremes we have presented above, it is very evident that the structure and design of the learning experience is crucial.

We have revisited some important concepts of learning, and we have adopted a design strategy for the distance learning program.

Figure 4 shows the cyclic nature of the design, indicating that all elements should be considered for each and every learning experience, regardless of length.

- STEP 1: The Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) Cycle starts with an introduction of the objectives and a statement of the necessary bibliographic material for the course module. It tries to "humanize" the learning environment by making the student feel a part of a learning community.

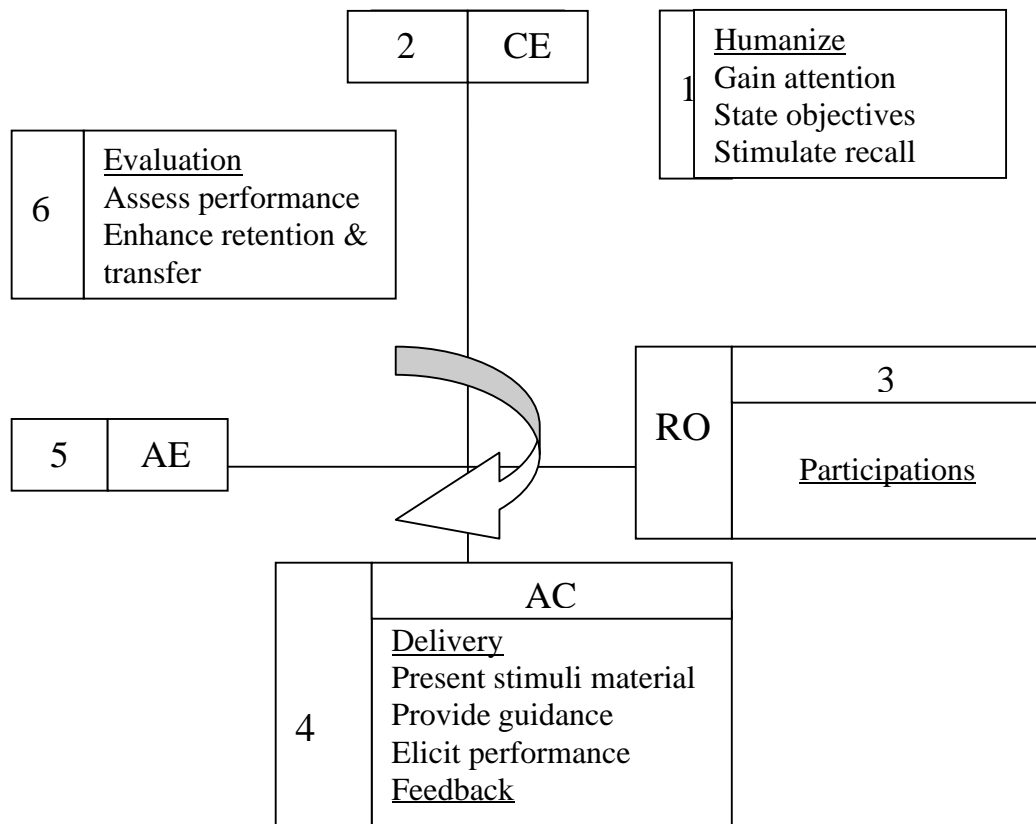
- STEP 2: Following the motivational introduction, students are exposed to a concrete example (Concrete Experience CE) of what they are about to study.

- STEP 3: Students are then asked to think about this experience (Reflective Observation RO) and share those thoughts with other students. This is all done asynchronously.

- STEP 4: Abstract Conceptualization (AC) presents principles or theories and requires feedback on performance.

- STEP 5: Active Experimentation (AE) is an activity that requires the student to go beyond regurgitating the content presented in Step 4.

- STEP 6: The student is prepared to transfer this new knowledge to future learning experiences after Evaluation.



**Fig. 4: Interactive Distributed Learning Cycle**

This Cycle serves as a template for the learning experience. Teachers can implement this cycle in any number of ways, depending on their specificity.

The learning modules lack personality, so it needs to be humanized. Among other things, we need to motivate students, orientate them and give them direction. Students seldom read a lot of text on the web. Hence, we need something more than text to add this personality.

One possibility could be to use a second window with streaming video just near the text window. It gives the illusion of the instructor talking directly to the learner. The effect adds warmth to the learner's experience.

Video streaming can be used at major transition points. Elsewhere in the module, streaming audio can be used to provide direction to the learner as well as support and encouragement.

As a conclusion we consider that there is no single way to implement the cycle and also, asynchronous learning is not for everyone. Much depends on the learner's maturity and motivation.

## REFERENCES

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- [2] <http://mmsc.upm.ro>.