Using the Net to Teach about the Net
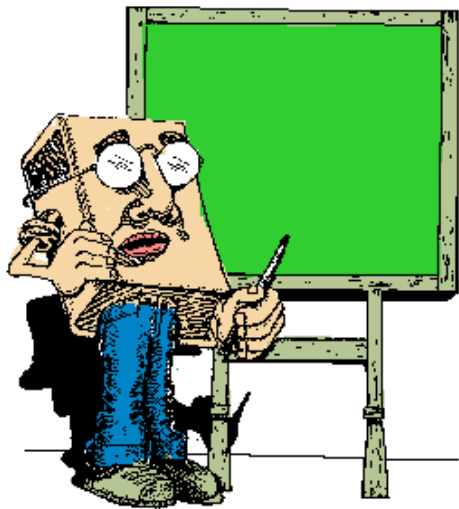
An Experience in Giving Web Based Courses

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Leaving the Classroom

- Chalenging experience
- Doubts and concerns

Web-based Courses

- Two similar, but still different courses
  - CEENet pre-course
  - Data Communications course for high school teachers
- Common for both courses
  - Study topic – the Net
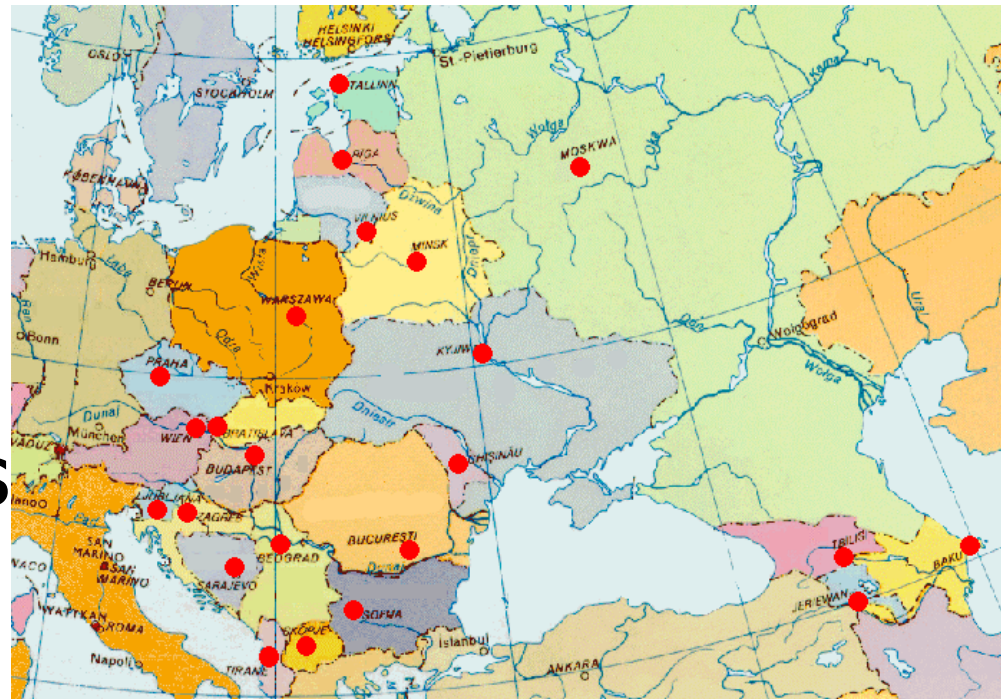 - Delivery of the courses – through the Net

CEENet

- Countries
  - from Estonia to Macedonia
  - from Slovenia to Mongolia
- One of the activities
  - Education through various workshops

CeeNet Workshops

- Used to have two tracks
  - Network Technology
  - Network Sevices
- Common language - English
- Face-to-face teaching and practical exercises
- A new distant education track introduced in 1999

The First Pre-course

- Distance Education using WebCT
- The pre-course delivered to more than 60 students from different countries
- The intention
  - To give basic knowledge to larger audience
  - To save the time of the face-to-face workshop for advanced topics

Network Technology Pre-course

- Two weeks devoted to learning WebCT environment
- Completely distant
- Different bandwidth and equipment used
- Learning – by doing curriculum
- Group exercises
- Assessment through assignments and on-line quizzes

Lessons Learned

- Learning WebCT – useful even for students with networking background
  - Keep it in the future
- Some dropouts at the very beginning
  - Assign a tutor to each 8 students
- Assignments and group work – stimulating
- Quality of connection and equipment – not too important

A Course for Teachers

- **One Country - Sweden**
  - Still rather large distances
  - One language - Swedish
- **A Part of an Education Program**
  - Additional education for existing personnel
  - Run in parallel with their ordinary jobs

Education Program for Teachers

- Lack of Computer science teachers
- 12 courses in Computer science
- WebCT used as environment for all the courses
- Two face-to-face meetings per course
- Written exams
- Students closely related to each other
- High quality connection for all the students

Data Communications Course

- Scheduled at the middle of the program
  - Students already have had experience with WebCT
  - Students have a background in Computer science
- The first face-to-face meeting before the end of the previous course
  - Students' minds still with the previous course
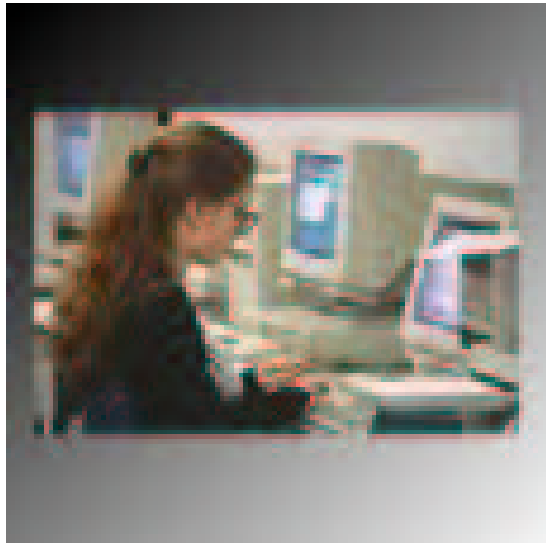- Groups formed according to students' wishes

The Problems during the Course

- First face-to-face meeting unnecessary
- WebCT environment not very familiar to the students
  - In previous courses private e-mail used as a main vehicle for assignment submission and communication
- Group work done via face-to-face or other type of communication
  - Hard for the teacher to grade

Similarities - 1

- Students with Computer science background
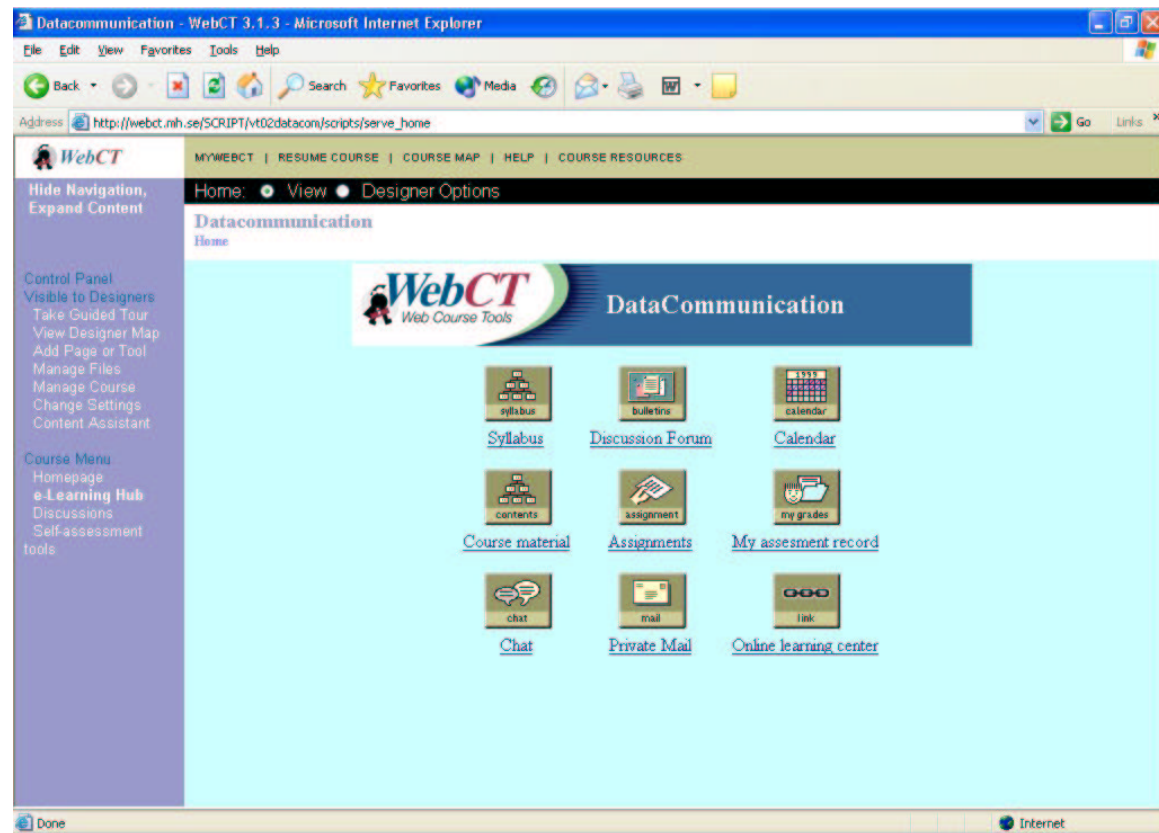- High motivation is present

Similarities - 2

- WebCT environment used
- Learning by doing approach implemented

Differences

- One is completely distance, the other is mixed
- Different nationalities versus one nationality students
- WebCT lessons present in the first, omitted in the second
- Various quality versus high quality connection

Conclusions - 1

- Devote time to teach about learning environment even when dealing with students with Computer science and Networking background

- International, not closely related group more collaborative than closely related group
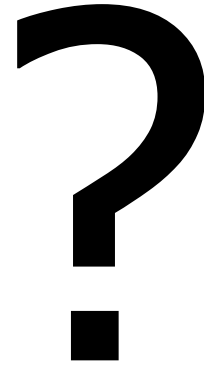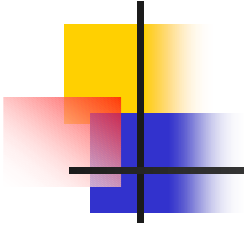
Conclusions - 2

- Motivation and learning by doing approach crucial for the course
- Face-to-face meeting with a proper timing improves the quality of the course
- The bandwidth and the equipment does not have very big impact on the success of the course

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Questions