Expert at a distance

In september 2004 SURFnet, in close collaboration with Kennisnet, has run a videoconferencing pilot project for 5 secondary schools. The aim of the project was to use videoconferncing as a means to get expertise that was not available in the school, available through videoconferencing.

The schools were provided with videoconferencing equipment and knowledge on how to use the equipment. Providing videoconferencing services for secondary educational institutes requires more than just technical arrangements. The schools were asked to come up with ideas on videoconferencing sessions with expertise not available in the school. The teachers came up with lots of good ideas and in november 2004 there was a first session with a famous dutch expert on the topic of migration issues. Up untill now there has been total of six sessions where experts answered questions of pupils in a whole range of different topic areas (such as astronomy, society and culture and informatics). All sessions where broadcasted live and recorded for on-demand streaming through the SURFnet Video Portal. An on-line cutting tool that is part of the SURFnet Video Portal toolbox was used to make snapshots of the sessions to provide an easy way to browse through the recorded sessions.

At the moment of writing we are exploring the possibility to provide the expert-at-a-distance sessions as a service to a larger group of schools. Scaling up the amount of schools presents us with some interesting problems. At the end of the presentation I would like to discuss some of the potential solutions to these problems and also look at the possibilities of international expert-at-a-distance sessions.

All recorded sessions can be viewed at http://www.expertopafstand.nl

SURFnet
SURFnet connects the networks of universities, colleges, research centres, acedemic hospitals and scientific libraries to one another and to other networks in Europe and the rest of the world. http://www.surfnet.nl/info/en/home.jsp

Kennisnet
Kennisnet is the internet organisation for primary, secondary and professional education in the Netherlands. The foundation was established by the education organisations in 2001. These organisations are represented on the Supervisory Board.