UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO: ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

© Andrea Boni

University of Trento Dept. of Information and Communication Technology
Via Sommarive, 14, 38050 Povo (TN) – ITALY
Email: andrea.boni@unitn.it

Abstract

This paper presents the organization of University of Trento, Italy, a small University ranked among the best in Italy for teaching, research and international relationships. After this first part mainly oriented to the description of the organization, a second part dedicated to information management is discussed. In particular, we will discuss the ESSE3 system, a tool used to manage all information connected to teaching and students' curricula management, such as students' database, examination, courses syllabus, etc. The impacts of the University reform (Bologna program) on information system of the University will be also detailed.

1. The University of Trento: Organization

The **University of Trento** is one of the youngest Italian Universities. In the year 1962 the Autonomous Province of Trento founded the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Sociali with the purposes of promoting the progress of the social sciences by providing the scientific knowledge and methodological skills, required by those embarking on careers in teaching, scientific research, or activities and professions which require an academic background in the social disciplines'.

In 1972 the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Sociali became the Libera Università degli Studi di Trento (a private University). At that time the University had three Faculties: a Faculty of Sociology, a Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences, and a Faculty of Economics.

The academic year of 1982–1983 saw inception of the Università Statale degli Studi di Trento (State University). In the following academic year the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy were opened. The Faculty of Engineering was created in the academic year of 1985–86. In the year of 2004 the seventh Faculty-Cognitive Sciences-was founded.

Since 2001, when the national ranking by CENSIS started, Trento keeps the Top places in the national ranking of more than seventy Italian Universities and Faculties and the first place in many scientific areas.

The key indicators used to assess Universities were:
- Productivity
- Capacity of attraction
- Research quality
- Educational offer
- International relations

The following tables show the latest results of this national ranking.

The didactical structure is almost similar to other west Europe University, such as Koblenz-Landau and Valladolid REF. In the following scheme the technical-administrative structure is represented.

Rank	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Engineering	4	1	1	1	2	5
Science	17	6	5	5	3	3
Economics	4	3	4	3	3	2
Sociology	1	1	1	1	1	1
Law	3	1	1	1	1	1
Arts and Philosophy	7	2	2	2	2	3

Ranking medium Universities (10000–20000 students):	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1st	Trento	Siena	Trento	Trento	Marche Politecnico
2nd	Siena	Trento	Marche Politecnico	Marche Politecnico	Sassari
3rd	Venezia Ca' Foscari	Ancona	Macerata	Macerata	Trento
4th	Brescia	Sassari	Sassari	Sassari	Ferrara
5th	Verona	Macerata	Modena	Modena R. Emilia	Brescia
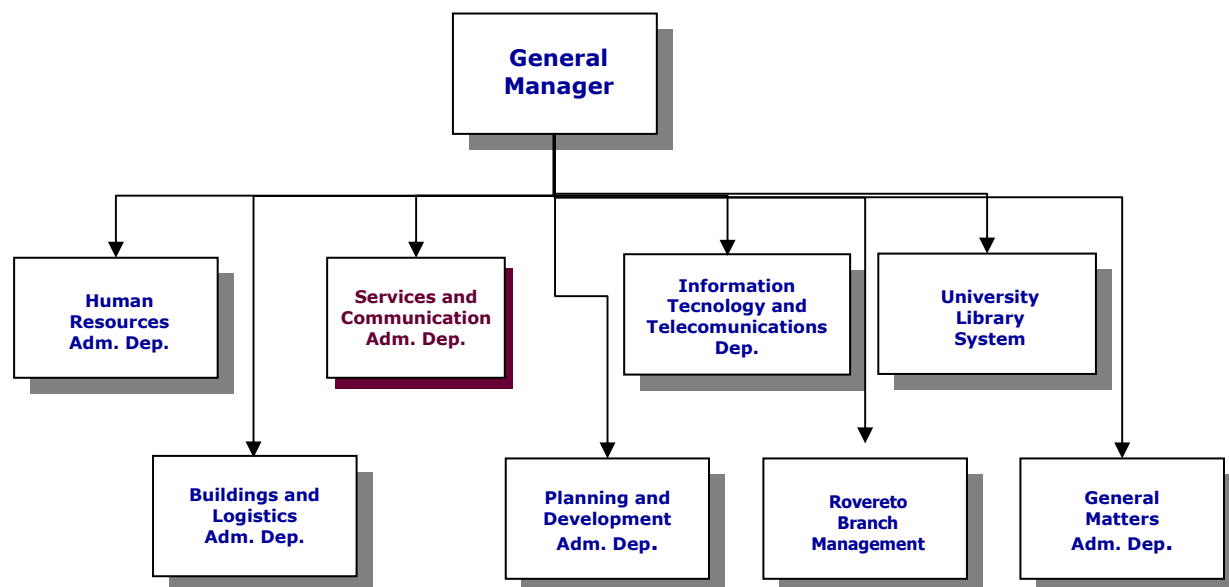
There is a general manager who is responsible for all the technical and administrative activities. Each Dep. has a proper Head who manages specific tasks. Among others, the Services and Communication Dep. is very relevant because it includes the International Relations Division (IRD). Among others, its main activities are:

- European Project management
  - Leonardo da Vinci
  - Mobility and Europass

- ▪ Promotion and implementation of European Programs in the field of
- ▪ Culture
- ▪ Education and Training
- ▪ Cooperation with third countries
- – Networks
  - ▪ ASEM
  - ▪ Asea Uninet
  - ▪ GE3-4
  - ▪ Viet-net
  - ▪ Within EU programmes
  - ▪ Alfa
  - ▪ EU Canada
  - ▪ Leonardo (AT&Q and Leonet)

IRD undertakes a range of actions in fulfilment of the University's policy of internationalisation. In particular, it works to 'Network' the University with foreign partners, and to offer international opportunities for study and training to students and young graduates. Another activity of IRD is to build partnerships with European universities, with reciprocal recognition of academic credential and opportunities to develop trans-national skills, foster international inter-university exchange programmes, promote the international mobility of students and graduates, promote the learning of foreign languages and to contribute to the promotion of the University of Trento abroad. As far as bilateral agreements with foreign Universities and international organizations are concerned, current projects include: 42 agreements have already activated (teacher/students/graduates mobility and joint projects) a study center of the University of California in Trento.

2. The University Reform: Management

This section describes the impacts of the University reform on the information system of the University. We will discuss national and local point of views.

The University reform has influenced the design of national information systems. In particular, among others, three main aspects are considered:

– Data Bank design of **Curricula offer** (Offerta Formativa) containing all programs of study at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (LT –BS- and LS –MS-) running at the Italian universities;

– **Students anagraphic database** (ANS Anagrafe Nazionale Studenti), containing personal details and academic records of all the students enrolled at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at the Italian Universities;

– All the Italian Universities are committed to issue the **Diploma Supplement** (DS).

Since more than 6000 programs of study are offered (post-reform only), a data base is required (Off.F). See **http://offf.miur.it/** for details**. Off.F** advantages are: firstly, a wider choice, because the number of programs of study offered in the system of Italian Universities has sensibly increased; secondly, a comparison among different programs of study. Of course, Off.F has some problems, such as lack of possibility to design an "educational path" (relating undergraduate and postgraduate studies).

The National Student Database (ANS) is a MIUR DB managed by CINECA (see **http://anagrafe.miur.it/**). It gathers all the students' data (enrolment, courses, exams, degree) concerning Italian Universities, (official registered courses) and it is a national resource accessible to everybody. At the time of this writing there is an on going assessment of the number of enrolments and student progresses in the academic path and a cross-control between the students positions and didactic rules of each course of study. Note that Universities must regularly update the information on students details. In particular, 7 deadlines are foreseen by the end of 2005 from the beginning of studies to the final titulation. As a final remark, the system accepts data entries only for students enrolled in certified programs of study.

Annexed to the Degree certificate the DS testifies the contents of the student career supporting the transparency and comparability of EU titulation (see **http://www.crui.it/crui/DS/default.htm**). It is structured in 8 sections, and may have "annexes". Comparability of the student workload (by means of CFU), use of ECTS to compare the marks obtained. From 01/01/2005 all the Italian Universities are compelled to issue a Diploma supplement both to BA and MA graduates. The DS template to be adopted at the national level has been developed at Unitn. One of the main problems is related to managerial and organizational impact (connections with the internal informative system to merge certification, educational offer, courses Syllabus).

– The main organizational problems of National and local information systems are.

– Plurality of parts involved, such as relationships between Unitn and Miur to approve or revise programs of study regulations; coordination of different Units (Central Board – Faculty Board).

– Managing data and procedures: different offices jointly involved in the management of processes (student office and other academic offices); revision of processes and procedures (teachers are asked to input syllabi for the students guide; student office provides to the enrolment procedure for the National DB – ANS); double language (Italian/English).

– Deadlines constraints: to enter data in Off.F and to file student records in ANS; to issue DS by means of the internal information system.

– Planning a multi-annual educational offer.

In the following the "road-map" of developing the information system at UNITN is indicated

Main steps
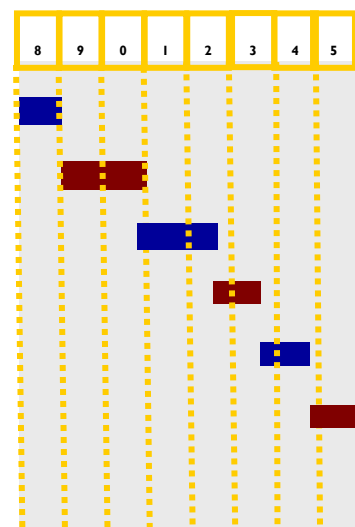
3. A Tool for System Management: the esse3 Tool

Here we provide an example of a Tool developed at UNITN from a teacher's point of view. Among other facilities, the "esse3 tool" permits one to enter a complete syllabus of his/her courses, managing classes, a virtual community for on-line learning, managing the calendar of examinations. The following picture sketches the user interface with an example of courses given by author.

The esse3 tool is the only platform used to manage all aspects of students' activities, and is the main reference of administrative staff to monitor the activity of professors.
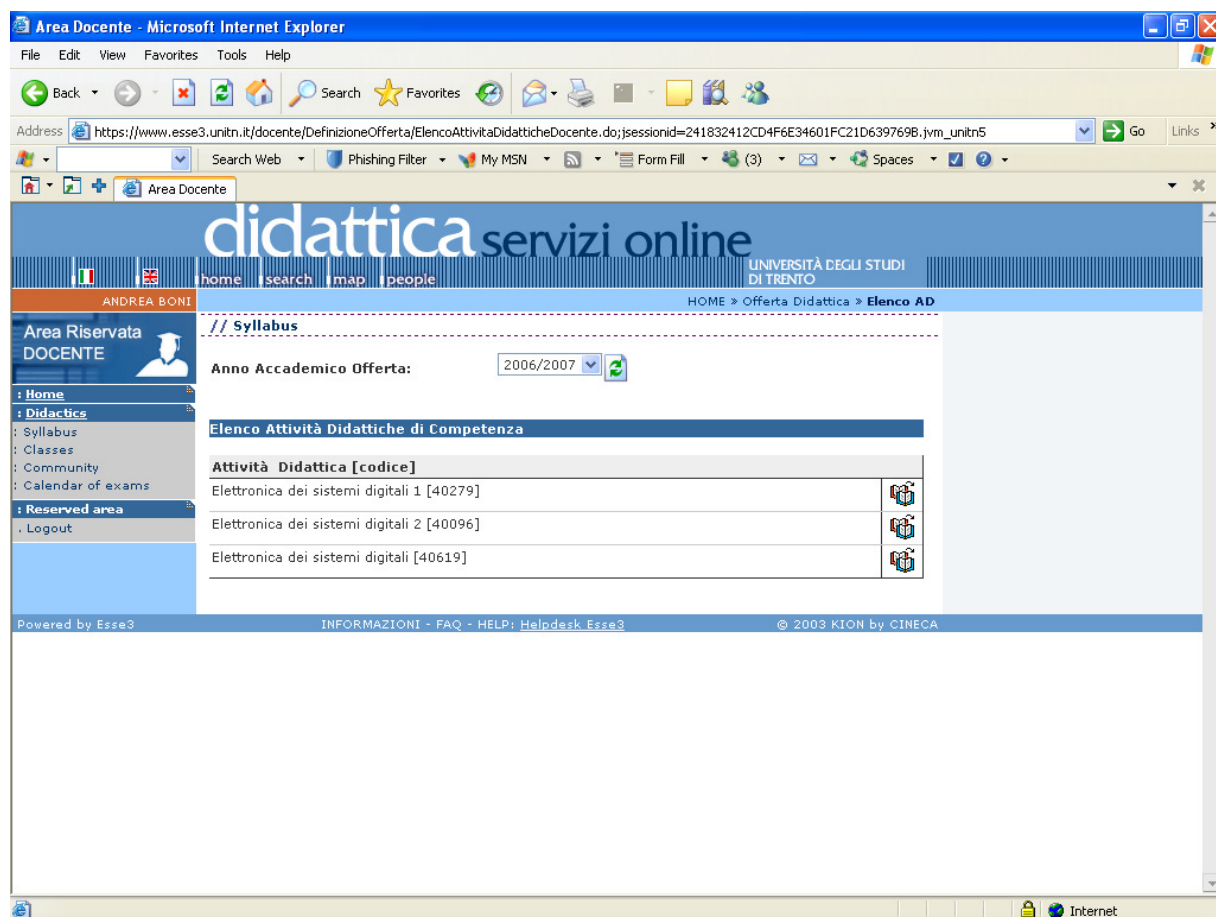
4. Conclusion

University of Trento is very young, but this is its main power because several young and dynamic professors guarantee efficiency and expertise. The impact of University reform has been remarkable, and a considerable change of information system has been carried out. In this paper we have introduced the main aspects of impact of University reform on information system, and an example developed at UNITN has been also introduced.

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