

E-learning in public higher education. Italian scenario

Executive summary

1. Italian University System: a general overview¹

1.1. Introduction

In Italy, the system of higher education is mainly **public**.

His main goals, set in the articles 33 and 34 of the Constitution, are “[...to promote the advance of science and the dissemination of learning in a way that recognises the autonomy of universities and the right of citizens to university education.”²At the moment, Italian Universities are **seventy-seven, fourteen** of which are *non state universities*.

The sixty-three *state* universities include **three polytechnics, two universities for foreigners, and three schools of specialisation**.

In the 90's, the Italian University system has begun a very important renewal: it was introduced autonomy system of governance to autonomy by the Reform, which became effective in the academic year 2001-02.

1.2. The Reform

The key-issues of the Reform are:

- **The Credits Systems or CFU.**

CFU stands for *university educational credits*. The reform conventionally established the 'normal' workload of a year of study in 60 CFUs. This number of CFUs was identified with reference to the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), which had been experimented with in many countries for the mobility of the Erasmus programme and which subsequently became a European standard. On the basis of the CFU system a *degree* is obtained after acquiring 180 credits after a pathway involving three years of study; a *specialist degree* is obtained after acquiring 300 credits (3+2=5 years of study); and a *university master's* is obtained after acquiring a further 60 credits after the degree and thus a total of 240 credits.

- **The New Organisation of University Titles**

The reform produced new University Titles, which are:

- The first level three years degree;
- The specialist degree (Last two years after the first level degree)
- Masters of first and second levels.

1.3. Student population³

In the academic year of 2003-2004, the number of enrolled students to universities was 367.724; 54,8% of them were women. The faculties which have more enrolled students belong to:

1. Economic group of studies
2. Political-social group of studies
3. Law
4. Engineering.

¹ Sources: Fondazione CRUI (CRUI Foundation. CRUI stands for CONFERENCE of Italian University Rectors), “ELUE PROJECT. *E-Learning and University Education*. I stage document” Fondazione CRUI, Roma, 2005

² Fondazione CRUI (CRUI Foundation. CRUI stands for CONFERENCE of Italian University Rectors), “ELUE PROJECT. *E-Learning and University Education*. I stage document”, p.1 Fondazione CRUI, Roma, 2005

³ MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research), “L'Università in cifre. 2005, Report Research Paper, Roma 2005, pp. 34. Web site: <http://www.miur.it/ustat/documenti/pub2005/u02.pdf>

2. E-learning in public higher education

2.1. Norms and national policy⁴

The role of the central government in regards to e-learning is defined by establishing the norms and regulations of the sector and initiatives in each institutional body (universities, schools, public administration, professional training courses, health services); it also seeks to provide incentives for the adoption of instruments and approaches necessary for online teaching. The following table illustrates norms and standards set thus far in the five sectors mentioned above.

University	Schools
<p>1990: Bill 19.11.1990, n. 341 allows distance education for universities⁵</p> <p>1995: Decree DPR 30.12.1995 authorizes the development of universities consortia for distance education</p> <p>2001: EU E-learning Action Plan⁶ (28.03.2001) encourages Member States to experiment "new teaching methods and approaches and promotes virtual projects and virtual transnational campus projects"</p> <p>2003: Decree 17.04.2003 on Telematic Universities⁷ (jointly established by Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research and the Ministry for Innovation and Technologies) set accreditation criteria and procedures for distance education courses at universities and private institutions</p>	<p>1985: National Plan for the introduction of computer programming and planning</p> <p>1996-97: Multilab, the first systematic plan for teacher training on multimedia communication</p> <p>1997-2000: Plan for the Development of Didactic Technological Tools; its objective is to provide technological tools in schools and to increase teacher computer literacy.</p> <p>2002: New Training Programme for Technologies, blended learning approach is used</p> <p>2004: Teacher training programme for primary school teachers (ForTIC model)</p> <p>2004: Teacher training programme in hospitals using e-learning (specific issues regarding didactic technological tools)⁸</p>

Public Administration	Professional Training	Health
<p>2002: <i>Government Guidelines for the development of Information Society</i> approved by the Council of Ministers on 31.05.2002 (the aim is to provide</p>	<p>1999: Memo <u>08.06.1999 n°43 of the Labour Ministry</u> illustrates the characteristics which e-learning must have in terms of operative conditions,</p>	<p>1989: Commission Recommendation 08.11.1989¹⁴ on the development of distance education programmes</p> <p>1999: <i>Norm for the Rationalization of</i></p>

⁴ Alberto Colorni, Manuela Pegoraro and Rita Giuseppina Mangione, "E-learning in Italy: higher Education and surroundings" in "E-learning in Europe-Learning Europe", Ullrich Dittler, Helge Kahler, Michael Kindt, Christine Schwarz (Ed.), 2005, pp. 181-201

⁵ <http://www.handylex.org/stato/1191190.shtml>

⁶ http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html

⁷ http://www.innovazione.gov.it/ita/intervento/normativa/allegati/Decreto17_04_03.pdf

⁸ <http://scuolainospedale.istruzione.it>. Other target groups for MIUR are: youth in reformatories for young offenders and disabled students who are not included in programmes using new technologies

⁹ The vademecum is an operating tool which permits users to orient themselves in the myriad of e-learning programmes and teaching materials by focusing on three principle issues: the impact of e-learning projects on organization, didactic planning for e-learning courses and its impact on delivery; e-learning programmes cost analysis.

¹⁰ <http://www.infoleqes.it/service1/scheda.aspx?id=12794&service=1&ordinal=0>. A useful website:

<http://www.welfare.gov.it/EuropaLavoro/default.htm>

¹¹ <http://www.welfare.gov.it/EaChannel/MenuIstituzionale/normative/2003/D.+Lgs+10+settembre+2003+n.+276.htm>

¹² Even the FaDoI initiative (Ministry of Labour) regarding distance education teachers and professionals, <http://www.fadol.it>

¹³ Presently there are 5 Masters organized by Associated ASFOR which are collaborating in the experimental stages.

<p>1/3 of all teaching via e-learning)</p> <p>2002: Protocol of Intent signed by the Public Administration for the "diffusion, use and quality of distance and e-learning training programmes"</p> <p>2004: Directive 06.06.2004 based on the <i>Guidelines for E-Learning Teaching Programmes in the Public Administration</i></p> <p>2004: Explanatory vademecum: operative tool which offers an orientation into e-learning programmes and projects⁹</p>	<p>monitoring and evaluation results¹⁰</p> <p>2003: <u>Decree 10.09.2003, n.276</u>¹¹ takes into consideration that new training contracts may be undertaken at a distance in order to finish professional training¹²</p> <p>2004: ASFOR (Association for Managers Training) begins discussion on the definition of the Accreditation Process for Executive Master in E-Learning¹³</p>	<p><i>the National Public Health Service</i> allows for the participation in continuing education programmes as an indispensable prerequisite for professional service and work¹⁵</p> <p>2002: the Minister of Health publishes ECM (Continuing Education in Medicine) a proposal from the National Commission for Continuing Education the in order to gather proposals from public and private entities¹⁶</p>
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2.2. Public bodies

In Italy, e-Learning in public higher education is not directly managed by government or any central administration body except for MIUR and CRUI foundation

MIUR stands for Ministry of Education, University and Research; his mission is public government of Education, Higher Education and Research. As far as e-Learning, his tasks are:

- give guide-lines;
- accreditate University Distance Courses by different providers;
- promote European Lisbon Strategy and ICT innovation in education;
- provide funds for strategic projects.

CRUI Foundation¹⁷, born in 2001, is the managerial and executive branch of CRUI¹⁸. As far as e-Learning in Higher Education, CRUI foundation was a manager of Campus One project¹⁹. Campus one project was a **three-year experimental project** (the academic years 2001/2002/2003) specifically addressed to degree courses in order to sustain and disseminate **technological educational and innovation**. CampusOne was financed by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers with the funds from UMTS licences.

2.3. e-learning in Universities²⁰

The Italian university context offers various didactic forms, but two main ones are prevalent: face to face and distance courses. The last tries to take advantage of the potential of the internet enhancing infrastructure and methodologies (self-study, collaborative work, project methodologies, knowledge and community construction). The diffusion of complex e-learning gave impetus to various activities within the universities, in particular demand for a specialized centre which can create experimental teaching initiatives based on collaborative learning models and the possibilities offered by multimedia tools. Many universities have opened centers which are dedicated to this very need. What follows is a list of the principle centers.

¹⁴ <http://ecm.sanita.it/normativa/documenti/89-601-CEE.doc>

¹⁵ <http://ecm.sanita.it/normativa/229-16.htm>

¹⁶ http://ecm.sanita.it/Documenti/Linee_guida_e_criteri.pdf.

¹⁷ The web site of CRUI foundation is: <http://www.cruir.it/englishsite/link/?ID=1133>

¹⁸ The CRUI is the association of the Rectors of Italian state and private universities. The web site of CRUI foundation is:

¹⁹ At this purpose, see the following web site: <http://www.campusone.it/?Arg=128>

²⁰ Alberto Coloni, Manuela Pegoraro and Rita Giuseppina Mangione, "E-learning in Italy: higher Education and surroundings" in "E-learning in Europe-Learning Europe", Ullrich Dittler, Helge Kahler, Michael Kindt, Christine Schwarz (Ed.), 2005, pp. 181-201

LOCATION	CENTRE
Ancona	CESMI → http://www.cesmi.unian.it
Bologna	CITAM → http://www.citam.unibo.it
Calabria	CSDIM → http://www.csdim.unical.it CRTI → http://crt.unical.it
Ferrara	CARID → http://carid.unife.it
Firenze	CSIAF → http://www.csiaf.unifi.it
MilanoStatale	CTU → http://www.ctu.unimi.it/home.asp
MilanoBocconi	ASIT → http://www.uni-bocconi.it/
MilanoCattolica	CEPAD → http://cepad.unicatt.it/home/home.htm
MilanoPolitecnico	METID → http://www.metid.polimi.it
Napoli	CDS → http://www.cds.unina.it/index_800.html
Roma1	CATTID → http://www.cattid.uniroma1.it
ROMA3	CARFID → http://w3.uniroma1.it/carfid
TorinoPolitecnico	CETEM → http://www.polito.it/ateneo/centri/cetem
Venezia	CIRED → http://helios.unive.it/~cired

The EU research *Virtual Models of European Universities*²¹ was conducted in 2003 on over about 200 (out of 550) European universities. The results divide the institutions in four categories:

1. front runner universities (18%) which demonstrated high standards in all areas of activity;
2. co-operating universities (33%) which offer limited e-learning courses and digital services;
3. self-sufficient universities (36%) which integrate e-learning in their programmes, but whose academic staff is not involved e-learning;
4. skeptical universities (15%) which are behind in terms of e-learning on all fronts.

In which category do Italian universities fall?

The Osservatorio ANEE 2004²² deeply surveyed 37 universities (45% of the total number in Italy). The survey tried to estimate the actual percentage of e-learning activity (according to the definition proposed by the Osservatorio itself) in comparison to the total technology based teaching which includes both first generation distance teaching and web enhanced courses. The statistics show that the majority of universities (25 out of 35) said that their e-learning offer constituted a minority of overall didactic activity, while web enhanced courses were the most popular. Almost half of those surveyed said that web enhanced courses offered the 60% of the all didactic activity and 25% stated that their web enhanced courses constituted 50-60% of the total didactic activity. On the whole, the statistics show that there was a change from 2003 (when tele-teaching was most popular) to 2004, which show that academics prefer using e-learning and web enhanced strategies in the classroom.

²¹ http://www.elearningeuropa.info/index.php?page=doc&doc_id=5082&doclng=1

²² The data were taken from surveys conducted by the Observatory for e-learning by ANEE (the Italian Association of Multimedia Products and Services).

As well as CRUI Foundation last survey brings to light organizational models and data about e-learning within universities; the results indicate the following scenarios:

Scenario 1: the presence of a blended form of e-learning as a way to renew university courses and increase quality. Teaching staff have the benefit of online services and materials which enhance student participation and reduce the workload of the teachers themselves.

Scenario 2: e-learning efforts are flexible and not necessarily linked to a degree programme, and are mostly directed towards periodic or permanent training programmes for adults (a natural development from scenario 1).

Complete online programmes, catering to specific needs, will remain small part of the overall e-learning scenario: they could be developed in the future as more blended e-learning courses and programmes are introduced in universities in Italy.