EQUIPE PROJECT

CASE STUDY
GENEVA UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION - SWITZERLAND
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I. INTRODUCTION

The case study that Geneva University proposes is an analysis of its efforts to homogenize the management means of its continuing education programs. Several initiatives were considered to reach this goal. Of all the initiatives, we will present here the creation of an integrated database; this database was especially created for the Continuing Education Service of Geneva University.

Context

Since 1991, Geneva University has increased its range of continuing education programs by diversifying and expanding its operations domains. In 2002, the number of participants has exceeded 6000 while the number of programs has reached 150.

The participants of the continuing education programs have a special status: they are not registered as students of Geneva University. However when they pass the requirements of their program, the University issues them a university title that coincide with the rules established and recognised by the faculties (departments), the rectorate (presidence), and the Department of Public Education (Ministry of Education). The university titles awarded are the FCU certificate and the FCU diploma (FCU= French for *University Continuing Education*).

The continuing education programs are hosted and managed by the various faculties, departments, and sections directly concerned with the teaching domain. As a result the management of the programs is mixed, partially centralized (at the Continuing Education Service) and partially devolved to the faculties.

As the FCU has expanded, we took notice of some extremely varied administrative and accounting management practices. This heterogeneity carries different risks such as the high costs for each structure to have a proper functioning mode, the potential variability of teaching quality, and a bad image for the FCU.

The inevitable dispersion of the continuing education offers clearly calls for the setting up of an integrated management system that operates in a transversal manner with regards to the faculty structures. It is in this context that the necessity to create efficient common tools-ensuring the high quality of services- came into existence.

The mission of the SFC (Service de formation continue = Continuing Education Service)

"The mission of the SFC, a department attached to the rectorate, financed by funds from the Department of Public Education, is to facilitate the establishment of programs, and the promotion of offers and information on the subject of continuing education.

Its main activities are:
- Information and marketing
- Public relations with professional circles
- Production of continuing education programs in collaboration with professors in charge
- Coordination with the Continuing Education Services of universities and European and Swiss institutes of higher education
- Participation in European projects for fund raising
- Studies, research and publications
- Exploration of new offer formulations
- Establishment of statistics on continuing education
- Administrative management of registrations and certifications." (Ref: Strategy and management, University of Geneva, Feb. 2003)

II. INITIATIVES

Different initiatives were launched in order to professionally face the challenges presented by the evolution of the FCU in Geneva University.

"Functioning principles": a charter document answering the needs of coordination and transparency.

"Strategy and management": a document that formalizes the rectorate's strategic goals related to continuing education, the different structures of the FCU, the mission of the SFC, the FCU programs, and the management mode specific to the FCU of Geneva University.

"Procedures for continuing education": the formalization of the procedures linked to the creation of a continuing education program; in the form of a document of reference that appears on the Geneva University Intranet memorandum.

"Practical Guide of continuing education": a web document that gathers all the information and advice that the SFC can provide for the creation and the management of a continuing education program. This document contains links to other information sources.

Workshop "Conception, management, and running of a continuing education program": a training course designed to be taken by FCU staff for the duration of four half-day periods.

EDUQUA certification: a quality Swiss certificate for continuing education institutions.

"Continuing education integrated database": an IT management tool that is specific to continuing education in Geneva University.

We will here develop the last initiative listed above, i.e. the continuing education integrated database.

III. OBJECTIVES

The creation of this database answers the needs of several objectives, all of which aim for quality.

Data on participants of statistic concern: To obtain statistical data on all the participants of the FCU at Geneva University
In order to respond to the demands of the rectorate and of federal authorities, defining the Geneva University FCU clients profile became indispensable. At present the figures available are only those concerning the total number of participants, the distribution amongst males and females, and the distribution of participants by domain.

To collect all the information on a given program in one place
The integrated database keeps annual track of each edition of a program (increasing historical traceability).

To assure the visibility of all the FCU offers
Putting information on all the programs- past, present and underway- on the same database allows the evolution and status of FCU offers to be known at any time.

To facilitate the management of participants through the use of one effective IT tool for all actions
To propose an effective tool that can harmonize the administrative actions of FCU programs. To promote the image of the FCU to participants and partners.

To homogenize the management modes of the continuing education programs in Geneva University
Quality management can be assured by proposing one single tool that can perform all the administrative tasks linked to a continuing education program in Geneva University.

To facilitate the financial management of a continuing education program through the use of an appropriate software and through the automation of certain accounting actions
As the number of registrations still increases, the need to alleviate the financial charge of FCU program registrations at the Central Accounting Department appeared in order to harmonize financial practices while aiming for professional and quality service.

To allow quality diffusion of FCU programs
Marketing can be extended by combining the address files of all the FCU programs. These files can then be used to find addresses specific to domains of interest and to fields of activity.

To coordinate the management of FCU with the other services of Geneva University

By sharing the Geneva University files, optimum updating of data (Students and Personnel) is assured.

To keep track of the students' education within the framework of Life Long Learning
Learning is no longer reduced to a limited period before entering the job market; it is a ongoing life process. The continuing education integrated database can track the different stages of this process (basic education + continued education) for each of the participants (ECTS).

To insure the organisational quality of FCU courses
The rise in competition in the education market demands a high quality of services from educational institutions. In this view, participants are assimilated to clients that one has to satisfy in the form and the content. An integrated tool will assure a certain level of quality in the form.

IV. MODEL

The realisation of the project did not explicitly follow any quality norm model. As it was mentioned for other projects in the EQUAL report, this project was influenced by a variety of quality norms (mainly ISO 9000 and TQM).

A financial audit of the Geneva University continuing education took place in the second semester of 2002. It was based on process' analysis and risks' identification. The audit was performed by a private company that the institution mandated as an external auditor. Within this framework, the auditors especially emphasized the heterogeneity of the organisation's and management's means of the programs. They also identified potential risks such as "having variable teaching qualities depending on the programs and the faculties" (Internal audit report, § 6.1.4). The creation of an integrated database of continuing education stems from the acknowledgement of these risks (which had already been identified prior to the audit).

An interative process, doubled with various pilot phases, has insured the integration of the database in the various university subgroups. After getting user feedback, the functionalities of it were each time improved.

Let us finally note that the continuing education integrated database was constructed on the model of the Geneva University Students database in existence since 1996.

V. ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The demand was made by the rectorate as follows:
- "Assure the complete management of continuing education in connection with the directors of the programs and the faculties.
- Be in the lines of Life Long Learning and plan an ECTS system compatible with the curriculum of the faculties." (Development project, SJ, march 2000)

To respond to this demand, the Continuing Education Service made the following objectives:

- "To create a database specific to continuing education that corresponds with University management.
- To allow efficient management by the Continuing Education Service while giving each continuing education program director access to the database to manage data that is specifically linked to participants.
- To succeed in centralizing the whole continuing education exercise so as to have an exhaustive view in anticipation of statistics and analyses." (Development project, SJ, march 2000)
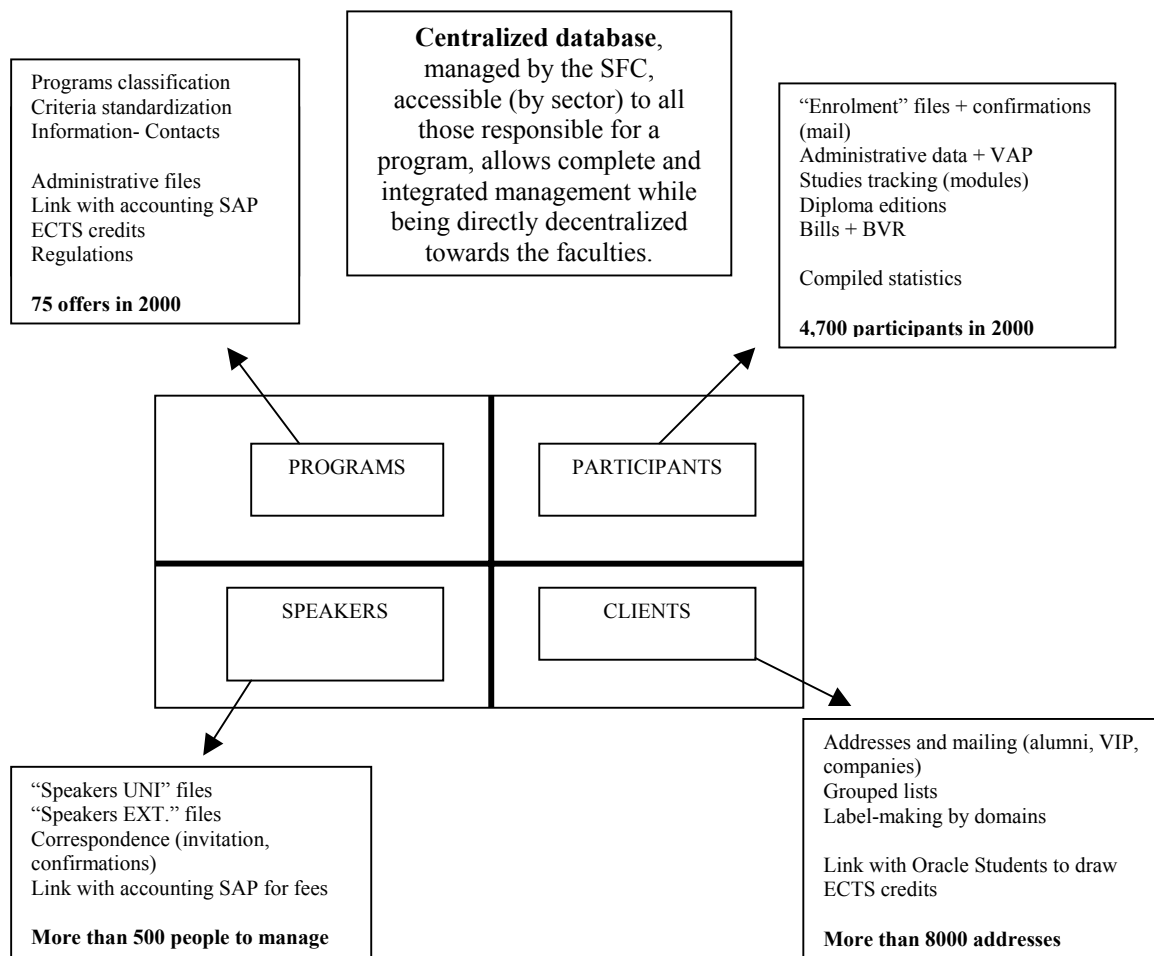
The project was carried out by the Geneva University Informatics Division using the Oracle application. It was divided into four phases:

1. Preliminary study: "Pre-projects"
2. Specifications: "Specifications list"
3. Development: "Implementation report"
4. Deployment: "User's guide"

The persons in charge of the project are a "profession" manager and the head of the Continuing Education Service who answers to the rectorate. An external company assures 75% of the project development. The project balance and management comes out of the Informatics Service of Geneva University. The final users can make their technological choices during a prototype phase in which the development of the database is "incremental", i.e. the transactions are tested against the technological choices as the project unfolds.

The project directors participate in the decision making process through each phase of the project. These decisions are made during ad-hoc work sessions initiated by the profession manager in charge. Regular controls are performed at each phase. The final users from the Continuing Education Service participate during the entire project cycle.

The diagram below shows the map of the main functionalities expected from the database.

Centralized database, managed by the SFC, accessible (by sector) to all those responsible for a program, allows complete and integrated management while being directly decentralized towards the faculties.

Programs classification
Criteria standardization
Information- Contacts

Administrative files
Link with accounting SAP
ECTS credits
Regulations

75 offers in 2000

"Enrolment" files + confirmations (mail)
Administrative data + VAP
Studies tracking (modules)
Diploma editions
Bills + BVR

Compiled statistics

4,700 participants in 2000

PROGRAMS

PARTICIPANTS

SPEAKERS

CLIENTS

"Speakers UNI" files
"Speakers EXT." files
Correspondence (invitation, confirmations)
Link with accounting SAP for fees

More than 500 people to manage

Addresses and mailing (alumni, VIP, companies)
Grouped lists
Label-making by domains

Link with Oracle Students to draw ECTS credits

More than 8000 addresses

Source: Geneva University- Continuing Education Service- S. Jacquemet- 19.06.00

A managerial line was defined by the rectorate making it compulsory to register all participants of continuing education courses in Geneva University into the data base. A number or fields were hence made obligatory. The accounting management and administrative functions of the database were made optional.

Once the development of the database completed, its integration in the centres can start. The continuing education programs are in fact managed in a devolved way in the faculties. So, there has to be a training period for the persons in charge of the administration of each continuing education centre. Two people from the Continuing Education Service are responsible for the training. They work in close collaboration with the profession manager who can insure the evolutionary maintenance of the project in parallel. More than 80 centres will be trained.

VI. RESULTS

Structure of the data base

The functionalities of the integrated database are numerous as shown in the image below.

		OFFERS		HUMAN RESSOURCES		REFERENCES
Programs		▪ Editions ▪ Modules		▪ Governance/ Committee ▪ Coordination/ Management ▪ Speakers ▪ Uni/External Staff		▪ Structures ▪ Fields of activities ▪ Fields of interest ▪ Key words ▪ Logos
	CLIENTS/ PARTICIPANTS	ENROLMENT REGISTRATION	ADMISSION		CORRESPON-DANCE	DOCUMENTS
Participants	▪ Personal Information ▪ Searches	▪ Enrolment ▪ Candidates registration by program, by module ▪ Cancellation / Postponement	▪ Files ▪ Mail		▪ Letter templates ▪ Labels ▪ Data export ▪ Summaries	▪ Attendance lists ▪ Results ▪ Attestation/ Certificate/ Diploma ▪ List templates
		PERSONAL INFORMATION		MAILING		WEB
Mailing		▪ Clients/ Participants ▪ Companies/ Institutions ▪ Uni / External Staff		▪ Clients/ Company mailing ▪ Internal mailing		▪ E-files of interest
	PRICES	FINANCES	PAYMENTS	CONTROL	EDITION	
Financial follow up	▪ Enrolment finances ▪ Special prices ▪ Payment conditions ▪ Payment deadlines ▪ Education-grants	▪ Invoices ▪ Recalls ▪ Cancellation fee	▪ PTT processing files ▪ Manual payments	▪ Financial files ▪ Financial summaries ▪ Balance ▪ SAP exchange control	▪ Lists ▪ Proof of payments ▪ Financial journal	**Geneva University Continuing Education** Phone : 0227057833 Fax: 0227057830 info@formcont.unige.ch
Tools	http://www.unige.ch/formcont					

Source: Geneva University - Continuing Education Service – July 2003

In summary, four action groups are proposed:

Management of the continuing education offer: definition of each program (type of training, duration, ECTS, modules, directors, tariffs, speakers) and annual renewal.

Management of candidates and participants: entering clients' information data, candidates enrolment, participants recording, cancellations/postponements, results (grades, passes, fails, elimination), correspondence (enrolment confirmation, course notification, schedule change, information on results) and miscellaneous print-outs (participants list, attendance lists, name plates, badges).

Marketing management: editing internal and external mailings, and requests' management through Internet.

Financial management of enrolments: costs, grants' management, defining payment conditions, payment planning, issuing enrolment finances (with BVR), payment status, list of debtors, recalls, budget, financial balance.

A supplementary zone, accessible only to the base managers, will allow the management of various references such as fields of activities, domains, logos, letter templates, key words, structures and organs, and functions of collaborators.

Reaching the objectives

At present, the development of the database is complete and the deployment phase has started. Five centres currently use the integrated database for their continuing education programs.

Until now, the trained users have shown great enthusiasm and great satisfaction with the multiple functionalities of the base. Those responsible for programs are aware of the necessity to provide quality services in order to assure the future of programs. It is important to them to use a tool like the continuing education integrated data base in order to provide quality services. In their view, time is wasted through the use of many different software for each administrative task. This practice is also a source of potential errors. The use of only a single tool is therefore welcome for the users.

We can note at this stage:
- A decrease of workload for the Accounting Department because payments are transmitted directly from La Poste (Banks) to the University via Internet (YellowNet)
- Greater homogenization of mail correspondence and lists coming from the continuing education centres (headers, logo, contents, etc)
- Impeccable presentation of all documents coming from the base (lists, badges, name plates, correspondence, etc.)
- Greater rigour in the follow up of billing and the issuing of recalls
- A reminder support for all "special" cases (partial enrolment, special prices, etc.)
- Facilitation of coordinators' and secretaries' work through the use of a single tool instead of multiple tools
- Data that is usable for precise and nuanced statistics (thanks to the COGNOS software, aspect to be further developed)

Moreover, setting up this integrated database has allowed us:
- To list the different stages of the administrative management of a continuing education program
- To identify the improvements needed in the accomplishment of certain tasks
- To institutionalize the administrative management function of a continuing education program by emphasizing the different tasks in its specifications list
- To reinforce the Continuing Education Service's visibility in its role as a service within the University

VII. PROSPECTS

The creation of a continuing education integrated database constitutes the first stage in the establishment of university continuing education platforms. With the considerable development of the continuing education offer, it has become necessary to gather the management of programs in administrative centres, for example in the faculties. For the future, insuring the maintenance of the courses' quality will be possible only on the basis of

different factors such as the solid training of collaborators, a professional and centralized marketing method, and common and effective administrative and financial tools.