

# CASI and CATI Systems as Tools for University Teaching Evaluation

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In the last years many Italian universities have developed systems for the evaluation of the didactic activities attended by students and since the end of 1999 a national law requires to all universities to collect data about student ratings of teaching. Usually, very traditional surveys are carried out, based on “paper and pencil” self-administered questionnaires filled in classroom by students attending lectures in a given day. Questionnaires collect information about lectures organization and content (such as timetable, slides or texts used by the teacher during lectures, teacher’s clearness in explaining lecture topics and so on). In one semester (or one year) students fills as many questionnaires as the number of different courses they attend, providing every time the same general information about their characteristics (sex, place of residence, ..) and their university carrier (high school degree, year of enrollment to university, ..).

In this contribution, the main results of a project of web and telephone surveys for didactic evaluation carried out by the University of Padua at the end of 2000 are presented.

The EXPERTUM (Experimental Project on Educational Reckoning and Transition from University to job Market) project was developed with the aim to explore the possibility to carry out surveys on didactic activities evaluation as well as surveys on transition from university to work for graduate students by the means of Casi and Cati systems. Compared with the traditional approach to collect data (Weeks, 1992), computer-assisted systems present several important advantages in didactic evaluation surveys:

- 1) to save time and money in the phase of data collection and data analysis;
- 2) to improve data quality;
- 3) structural questions are answered only one time;
- 4) it is possible to connect students (and their answers) to the courses they attend in the same period.

Obviously, these advantages, particularly in web surveys, are obtained if all students can access to Internet connected computers as usually it happens in University structures.

The EXPERTUM project for didactic evaluation regards the planning of two different surveys (Dominissini *et al.*, 2000) directed to the students enrolled in the Faculty of Statistics and in the Faculty of Political Sciences of Padua University, for a total population of about 9000 students. All students attending lectures in the first term of the academic year 2000/01 could participate to the first web survey, while a sample of 700 students were interviewed by telephone in the second one. The Cati survey was planned to obtain an estimate of the number of student not actually attending lectures, also asking the reasons for this behaviour. Didactic evaluation were requested too, but concerning courses attended in the previous terms. Further, by the means of telephone interview, student actually attending courses were solicited to fill web questionnaires.

In Table 1, the main characteristics and results from the two surveys are reported. Some considerations can be made. Although many computers in computers-laboratories were dedicated only for filling web questionnaires and although the majority of students regularly attending lectu-

**Table 1** *Casi and Cati surveys in the EXPERTUM project*

Type of survey	Web	Telephone
Period	22/11/00 ÷ 31/01/01	15/12/00 ÷ 31/01/01
Target population	Students attending university courses in the first semester	Students enrolled at University in the year 2000/01 with telephone ~ 9000
Sample size		700
Solicitation modes	e-mail, visits in classroom advertising posters	
Completed interviews	300	508 (response rate = 72.6%)
Average number of evaluated course	2	2
Average time to complete interview (minutes)	15/16	21

res were informed about the project (as they declared to the Cati interviewers) the web survey was not very successful, even if it required few minutes to complete questionnaires. Very few students participated to the survey compared with the estimated percentage of students attending courses (62%, respectively 72% for the Faculty of Statistics and 51% for the Faculty of Political Sciences) obtained from the telephone interviews. Further, also comparison by the total number of questionnaires collected in classroom in traditional way (about 4200) reveals a very low participation rate. Students behaviour can be explained considering that:

- (a) unlike survey carried out in classroom during lectures to which all students participate without problems, web survey are strongly based on voluntary and autonomous participation by students that is more difficult to obtain;
- (b) some students could be not fully assured that the answers provided in web questionnaires were really anonymous;
- (c) participation rate can be also influenced by students familiarity in using computers and university structures. At this regard, students studying Statistics, more familiar with computers than their colleagues studying Political Sciences (as declared in the telephone interviews) and older students have higher participation rates.

Although the not very encouraging results of this limited project, Casi systems will become more and more spread in surveys on university teaching evaluation by the means of the methodological and organizational improvements these systems provided (Piazza, 1997), as it is revealed by similar in progress project carried out in other Italian universities.

## REFERENCE

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## RESUME

Dans cete communication on analyse les principaux résultats d'un projet de sondage "CATI et CASI" pour évaluer la didactque universitaire.

