

ECONOMIC DATA ANALYSIS WITH ADE+. SUMMARIZING PRESENTIAL AND VIRTUAL EXPERIENCES

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Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have introduced main changes in the dissemination and treatment of the statistical information, also affecting the teaching and learning methods.

The universities must currently face the challenge of ensuring that technological innovation really serves education, adapting their degrees and teaching methods to the new social demands and making an efficient use of the ICT facilities.

These requirements are especially clear in the field of Statistics, where the access to Internet statistical servers and the availability of statistical software provide a wide spread of teaching resources. However, the election of a suitable software for teaching purposes is not easy, especially in the case of the introductory courses, where professional applications does not seem to be adequate.

Since we have also detected some important objections related to the use of spreadsheets, we have developed the software ADE+ as an easy-to-use didactical tool organized in three different areas (a text editor, a spreadsheet-like data table and an object container) allowing a comprehensive treatment of the statistical information.

Our experience with ADE+ has proved to be satisfactory for students and teachers in both presential and virtual education. In the case of presential courses, computer-assisted sessions are periodically organized, dividing the classgroup into small workteams. Although these sessions are supervised by a profesor, the active participation of students and the group interaction is highly encouraged.

After some years of presential experience, we have developed the ADE+ website, (<http://www.aulanet.uniovi.es/ade+>) which has proved to be extremely useful, allowing the students to download updated versions of this software and providing an on-line user guide and some example workfiles.

A new step of this experience started with the implementation of the online course “Economic Data Analysis” included as a free-election subject in AulaNet, (virtual campus of the University of Oviedo) and also in the Shared Virtual Campus of the so-called G9 Group of universities.

The practical contents of this course are fully based on the ADE+ software, including solved problems and proposed exercises. Since the subject aims to give a realistic view of economic information, most of the practical material is based on actual data, extracted from some well-known statistical servers such as the Spanish Statistical Institute (<http://www.ine.es>), United Nations (<http://www.un.org>), or the World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org>).

An outstanding characteristic of “Economic Data Analysis” is the online examination, where ADE+ plays a main role.

To end, we must stress that the use of ADE+ in both presential and virtual courses has lead to satisfactory results according not only to the academic results but also to the teachers and students opinions. The practical contents and the software ADE+ have obtained high average punctuations together with low Pearsons coefficients, confirming the representativeness of these answers.