Recently, studies on wine tasting have raised several issues. Relationships between quality and a mix of elements such as price, brand name, winery reputation as well as consumers expectations have been discussed from different perspectives (Goldstein et al., 2008; Hadj et al., 2005; Weil, 2007). Accordingly, results often argue that consumers can hardly capture the wine quality, i.e., their perception about quality may be biased by many factors affecting consumer’ expectations. Indeed, no-expert wine consumers often show opinions which do not meet the expert ones especially about price and quality (Goldstein et al., 2008). Yet, the educational background as well as socio-cultural aspects tailored to area of living may play an important role in giving to consumers some hints in recognizing wine quality.

In Italy, while the wine culture has spread all over the country there is a great interest from people having different living styles and cultures. Training courses on wine tasting and reviews scoring wines have been still increasing across Italy. Many university courses and degrees on wine and oenology have also started according to an increasing educational demand. Nevertheless, the ability of the Italian average wine consumer to appreciate quality is still on debate. Actually, average wine consumers show general preferences mostly affected by price and seem not benefit from expert wine ratings (Quandt, 2007; Weil 2007; Malorgio et al., 2008).

In this research we want to assess the relationship between education and wine quality appreciation through a survey on a sample of university students. The experimental design will mainly follow the one proposed by Goldstein (2008) and will be focused on three samples: i) students following agricultural courses only; ii) students of Oenology and Viticulture School; iii) a panel of selected wine expert students. Each sample will involve over than 100 students while the blind test will evaluate a flight of red wines having different wine quality and price. We suppose that the appreciation of wine quality increases as we go from students not having specific knowledge on wine or oenology to the ones whose have a greater knowledge not only about wine tasting but also on their components and origin as well as processing or vintage processes.

In the experiment, data about socio-economic aspects and opinions expressed by tasters as well as other technical and economic elements about wine will be also analyzed in order to measure the differential among samples and then to isolate the effect or impact of skills acquired during the academic carrier. Results are expected to estimate the impact of education while excluding factors coming from the experience (e.g. tasters that already work in wineries) or other fixed effects such as price, brand, winery reputation or area of origin.

References