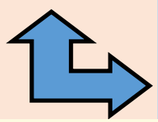
IN SIGHT

MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER APRIL 2016

Seeking the Help of Smart Software to Enhance Student Learning

As we figure our way through eLumen for assessing outcomes at all levels, I realize the potential of this software. I realize that eLumen is more than a database. The general or simple understanding of a database is a collection of information (in a computer) that can be easily accessed, but in eLumen, we can surely do more. So, I often play the "what if" game in my efforts to understand outcomes assessment in eLumen.

For example, I might ask, ***what if*** we wanted to find out how good our students were, across the college, in the production of professional written communication? How will the software help us in terms of accuracy and efficiency? Can we do it manually?



Manually

- We might, as a college, test all students individually and hold our judgments on hard copies.
- We might need to come together, bring our results on paper, and match/align them across disciplines.
- We might have to calculate the numbers and percentages and consolidate them across the board to get a collective number.
- After calculating a number, we would analyze the data and seek answers via analysis thus coming to a conclusion.

With the Software

- We would individually test our students and input our judgments into a data-management system.
- We align/map the query/outcome in the software for it to crunch the numbers.
- The system calculates across the board thus giving us a collective number.
- We would be able to analyze the data and seek answers either online or in person, either departmentally or collectively as a school, maybe during an occasion such as Institute Day.

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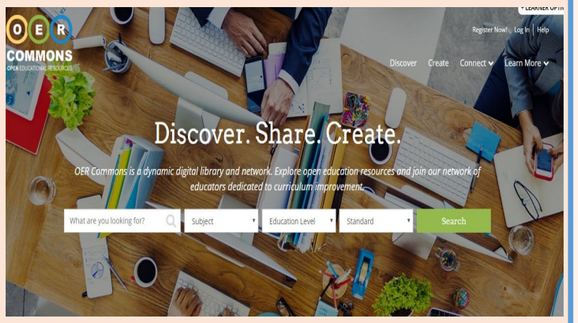
In the above scenario, the software provided us the opportunity to ask a difficult question, explore the query, find answers, and pinpoint issues that would have been extremely difficult to do manually or with a simplistic database that only stores information and lets you retrieve it (like a locker).

Playing with *what-if* questions might be a fun way of beginning the outcomes-assessment exploration. After all, as teachers, we want to know what's happening with our students' learning—the result of our own professional training, hours of preparation, sacrifices, lectures, experiments, conferences, seminars, and so on.

In that sense, an intelligent software might allow us to discover things we never knew we could. Perhaps one day, more students will take pride in what they have actually learned as opposed to what grades they received.

Open Education Resources



The Possibilities of Discovery, Innovation, Invention, Creativity and Equity in Outcomes Assessment

Speaking of intelligence, a smart software system will allow us to set up our exploration goal, understand what we are asking for, and bring that data forward in a variety of ways. For example, if in English, we wanted to track how well all students who have taken English courses during a semester have been able to format composition in MLA style, a smart software will make those calculations and bring them forward so that we, as a department, can make certain decisions. A smart database will allow instructors to become armed with what we have always sought after and advocated: Knowledge. Now, that's empowerment.

With the discovery of new knowledge, perhaps the science and art of pedagogy will expand, allowing for the provision of extra help where needed (equity) and allowing for more fearless innovation, invention, and creativity.

The intelligence of machines/software systems is evolving quickly and is being applied to more fields than one. The question is, as educators, how well do we want to use a mechanism that can perform complicated tasks?