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Knowledge-based systems that determine the appropriate students major: In the faculty of engineering and information technology

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Abstract

In this paper a Knowledge-Based System (KBS) for determining the appropriate students major according to his/her preferences for sophomore student enrolled in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology in Al-Azhar University of Gaza was developed and tested. A set of predefined criterions that is taken into consideration before a sophomore student can select a major is outlined. Such criterion as high school score, score of subject such as Math I, Math II, Electrical Circuit I, and Electronics I taken during the student freshman year, number of credits passed, student cumulative grade point average of freshman year, among others, were then used as input data to KBS. KBS was designed and developed using Simpler Level Five (SL5) Object expert system language. KBS was tested on three generation of sophomore students from the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology of the Al-Azhar University, Gaza.

The results of the evaluation show that the KBS is able to correctly determine the appropriate students major without errors.

Keywords: Knowledge-based system, Students major, KBS, University, SL5 Object

Introduction

The staffs of the faculty of Engineering and Information technology in Al-Azhar University of Gaza spend two to three weeks collecting data from the registrar office and students major preferences. After the collection of data is completed, they all saved in an excel sheet. Then, the group of staff dedicated to determine student majors takes a number of hours trying to figure out the appropriate student major taking into consideration student's preferences and the faculty criterion for each major.

The main objective of the KBS is to determine the appropriate students major minimizing the time spent by the dedicated group while identifying the appropriate student major in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology in Al-Azhar University.

In Al-Azhar University, students get admitted to the different majors in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology after they successfully passed the scientific branch of the high school with at least 75%, students are required to study their freshman year without getting a major yet. Once the student finished the freshman year, he or she can major in Computer and Communication Engineering, Mechatronics Engineering, Software Engineering, Medical Devices Engineering, Renewable Energy Engineering, Computer Science, or Information Systems. A student can major in one of the 7 majors if he/she satisfies specific requirements such as High school score, number of credits finished, pass some subjects in the freshman year, such as Math, Electrical Circuits, and Electronics for Computer and Communication Engineering, Mechatronics Engineering, Medical Devices Engineering, Renewable Energy Engineering. Other courses such as Introduction to Computing and Computer Programming I are used for Software Engineering, Computer Science, and Information Systems.

Knowledge-Based System Definition

A computer application that performs tasks that would otherwise be performed by a human expert [1, 2]. For example, there are KBS that can diagnose human illnesses, diagnoses cars problems, make financial forecasts, and schedule routes for delivery vehicles [12]. Some KBS are designed to take the place of human experts, while others are designed to aid them.

Correspondence: Samy S. Abu Naser Faculty of Engineering & Information Technology, Al-Azhar University, Gaza, Palestine KBS are part of a general category of computer applications known as artificial intelligence [17]. To design a KBS, one needs a knowledge engineer, an individual who studies how human experts make decisions and translates the rules into terms that a computer can understand.

Knowledge-based system is a synonym for Expert Systems and Rule Based Systems. However, knowledge is the sort of information that people use to solve problems.

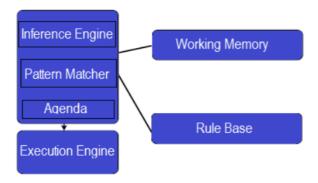
Advantages of KBS

KBS have the following advantages over human experts:

- The knowledge is permanent
- The knowledge is easily replicated
- The knowledge is represented explicitly, and can be evaluated
- The system is consistent whereas human practitioners have bad days, computers don't.
- Once built, running costs are low

Knowledge-based system Architecture

A knowledge based system generally follows the architecture in fig. 1; this is the architecture of typical KBS. The working memory stores facts about the world; it is also sometimes called the "fact base". The knowledge base stores the system's rules. The rules, objects, and the initial facts form KBS "program". The inference engine is the "black box" that performs reasoning over the facts and rules; the left hand side of fig. 1 is called the "Rule Engine". Inside the rule engine, the pattern matcher selects rules that are applicable given the facts in the fact base, and activates these rules - that is, places them on the agenda. Then the execution engine fires the rules on the agenda in a particular order. The agenda can also be called the "conflict set", since all the rules on the agenda are applicable now, and are therefore in conflict; then the algorithm by which the execution engine decides on an order in which to fire the rules is called "conflict resolution".



 $\textbf{Fig. 1} : The \ architecture \ of \ a \ typical \ knowledge \ based \ system$

SL5 Object language

SL5 Object, Simpler Level 5 Object Expert System Language is a rule-based language for specifying expert systems. Architecturally, SL5 Object is a production system executing a rule based program; thus, the SL5 Object language is a declarative (rather than imperative) language. The SL5 Object engine is implemented in Delphi Embarcadero RAD Studio XE6 [17].

Literature Review

There are many knowledge based systems that were designed to diagnose diseases[7-27], and a few expert system that advise student in selecting appropriate major[3-

6]. But there is no specialized expert system for determining the appropriate student major based on his/her freshman year and his/her requested majors.

Author in [3] used Artificial Neural Networks and expert systems to obtain knowledge for the learner model in the Linear Programming Intelligent Tutoring System to be able to determine the academic performance level of the learners.

The authors in [4] presented the design and development of an expert system that aimed to improve the method of selecting the best suitable faculty/major for student planning to be enrolled in Al-Azhar University. The basic idea of their approach was designing a model for testing and measuring the student capabilities like intelligence, understanding, comprehension, mathematical concepts and others, and applying the module results to a rule-based expert system to determine the compatibility of those capabilities with the available faculties/majors in Al-Azhar University. The result was shown as a list of suggested faculties/majors that are most suitable with the student capabilities and abilities.

The author in [5] described an Internet-based expert system which provides advice to high school students or college freshmen who are seeking assistance in selecting a potential major. It emulates a professional academic advisor. The ondemand, approximately 15-min consultation gathers information from the student on his or her grades, degree of enjoyment of traditional courses, standardized test scores, interests, and aptitudes. It assesses student qualifications for a variety of majors. The expert system recommends six majors from among 60 widely diverse majors for the students to consider and produces a report that fully describes the students' responses in such a way that the output can be used by a human advisor.

Authors in [6] proposed an expert system-SAES which aims to provide intelligent advice to the student as to which major he/she should opt. SAES acquires knowledge of academic performances as well as explicit and implicit interests of the candidate. Knowledge representation in SAES is done by the use of a combination of case based and rule based reasoning. SAES draws inferences on the basis of acquired knowledge and also takes into account the degree of dilemma faced by the candidate and the time he/she takes to decide the interest areas. SAES then recommends the most suitable majors for each candidate, which are further classified as strong, mild and weak on the basis of calculated relative probabilities of success.

Methodology

KBS requires the students' data and faculty criterion data to be stored in MS access data base.

Student data

The Student data is collected from student record in registration office and the student himself/herself (student major requests 1, 2, and 3). Then the student data is stored in MS access table to be ready for the KBS to read. The student data include:

- 1. High School score,
- 2. Results in Math I in the student freshman year,
- 3. Results in Math II in the student freshman year,
- 4. Results in Electrical Circuits in the student freshman year,
- 5. Results in Electronics I in the student freshman year,

- 6. Number of credits passed in the student freshman year,
- 7. CGPA of the freshman year,
- 8. Results in Introduction to Computing in the student freshman year,
- 9. Results in Computer Programming I in the student freshman year,
- 10. Student major request 1
- 11. Student major request 2
- 12. Student major request 3

Faculty criterion for each major

The criterion for each major as specified by the faculty of Engineering and Information technology are stored in another MS access table to be ready for the KBS to read. The Faculty criterions are:

- 1. Minimum High School score for each major,
- 2. Minimum Average of (Math I, Math II, Electrical Circuits, Electronics I)
- 3. Minimum of Number of credits passed in the student freshman year,
- 4. Minimum CGPA of the freshman year for each major,
- 5. Minimum Average of (Introduction to Computing, Computer Programming I)
- Minimum Number of credits passed in the student freshman year,

Process to determine the appropriate major

KBS is designed and developed using SL5 Object which supports the use of MS access data base. KBS opens and read the faculty criterion from criterion table and the students' data from student table (See Fig. 1).

For each student in the student table, the KBS follow these steps:

- 1. Read one student record
- Calculate the average score of the four subjects (Math I *4 + Math II *4 + Electrical Circuits *3+ Electronics I*3)/14
- 3. Calculate the average score of the two subjects (Introduction to Computing + Computer Programming 1)/2
- 4. Check if student data satisfy the requirement of the first major that was requested: if yes, store the major in the data base directly; otherwise check if the student data satisfy the requirement of the third major that was requested: if yes, store the major in the data base directly; otherwise store in the data base "None of the majors requested is fulfilled".
- Read next student record

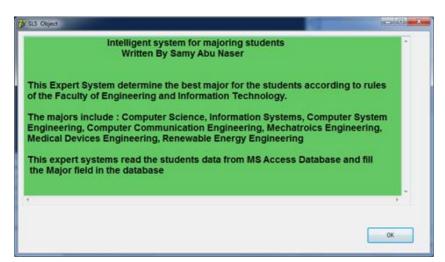


Fig. 2: Opening Session of KBS system

At the end of KBS session, KBS display a summary of how many students in each major and closes the MS access data base as in Figure 3.

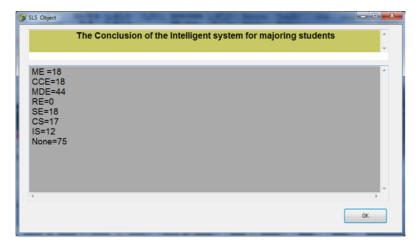


Fig. 3: Summery of KBS system

Evaluation of the KBS

The KBS system was tested using the student data and faculty requirements of the previous three years (2013, 2014, and 2015). The faculty requirement is different for every year depending on the number of new enrolled student every year. The results of testing of batch of students in each year were excellent when compared with the manual method used in all three years.

Conclusion

A Knowledge-Based System was designed and developed for determining the appropriate sophomore students major. KBS determine the major to students enrolled in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology in Al-Azhar University of Gaza.

A set of predefined criterions by the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology is taken into consideration before a sophomore student can select a major. These criterions include high school score, score of subject such as Math I, Math II, Electrical Circuit I, and Electronics I taken during the student freshman year, number of credits passed, student cumulative grade point average of freshman vear. KBS was implemented using SL5 Object expert system language. KBS was tested on three generation of sophomore students from the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology of the Al-Azhar University. The evaluation shows that the KBS is able to correctly determine the appropriate students major without problems.

Source code of KBS written in SL5 Object Expert **System Language**

CLASS db1 INHERIT msaccess

WITH sn NUMERIC

WITH r1 STRING

WITH r2 STRING

WITH r3 STRING

WITH sno STRING

WITH sname STRING

WITH calc1 NUMERIC

WITH calc2 NUMERIC

WITH electricity NUMERIC

WITH electronic NUMERIC

WITH icomp NUMERIC

WITH prog NUMERIC

WITH twajihi NUMERIC

WITH pcredit NUMERIC

WITH gpa NUMERIC

WITH major STRING

WITH subj4 NUMERIC

WITH subj2 NUMERIC

CLASS db2 INHERIT msaccess

WITH sn NUMERIC

WITH me1 NUMERIC

WITH me2 NUMERIC

WITH cce1 NUMERIC

WITH cce2 NUMERIC

WITH mde1 NUMERIC

WITH mde1 NUMERIC

WITH re1 NUMERIC

WITH re2 NUMERIC

WITH se1 NUMERIC

WITH se2 NUMERIC

WITH cs1 NUMERIC

WITH cs2 NUMERIC

WITH is 1 NUMERIC

WITH is 2 NUMERIC

INSTANCE mstable1 ISA db1

WITH access IS write

WITH action IS open

WITH eof := FALSE

WITH index file := " "

WITH file name := "majoring.mdb"

WITH table name := "table1"

WITH active := TRUE

INSTANCE mstable2 ISA db2

WITH access IS read

WITH action IS open

WITH eof := FALSE

WITH file name := "majoring.mdb"

WITH table name := "table2"

WITH active := TRUE

ATTRIBUTE start SIMPLE

ATTRIBUTE X NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE r1 NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE r2 NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE r3 NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE me NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE cce NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE re NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE mde NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE se NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE cs NUMERIC ATTRIBUTE is NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE subj4 NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE subj2 NUMERIC

ATTRIBUTE num of me NUMERIC INIT 0

ATTRIBUTE num of cce NUMERIC INIT 0

ATTRIBUTE num of re NUMERIC INIT 0

ATTRIBUTE num of mde NUMERIC INIT 0

ATTRIBUTE num of se NUMERIC INIT 0

ATTRIBUTE num of cs NUMERIC INIT 0 ATTRIBUTE num of is NUMERIC INIT 0

ATTRIBUTE num of none NUMERIC INIT 0

ATTRIBUTE calc stats NUMERIC INIT 0

INSTANCE the domain ISA domain

WITH start := TRUE

WITH X := 0

WITH r1 := 0

WITH r2 := 0

WITH r3 := 0

WITH me := 0

WITH cce := 0

WITH re := 0

WITH mde := 0

WITH se := 0

WITH cs := 0

WITH is := 0

WITH subj4 := 0

WITH subj2 := 0

INSTANCE the application ISA application WITH title display := introduction

WITH font size := 14

WITH text :=" --===--"

RULE r1 WITH conclusion display := Conc WITH exit := FALSE IF start WITH refraction := FALSE THEN action OF mstable1 IS top AND action OF mstable2 IS top **INSTANCE** introduction ISA display AND start := FALSE WITH wait := TRUE AND subj4 := ((mstable1.calc1 * 4) + (mstable1.calc2 * 4)+ (mstable1.electricity * 3) + (mstable1.electronic * 3)) / 14 WITH delay changes := FALSE WITH items [1] := textbox 1 AND subj2 := (mstable1.icomp + mstable1.prog) / 2 INSTANCE textbox 1 ISA textbox RULE r2 WITH location := 10,10,800,350 IF me = 0WITH pen color := 0.0,0AND mstable1.gpa >= mstable2.me1 WITH fill color := 100,200,100 AND mstable1.pcredit >= 24 WITH justify IS left AND subj4 >= mstable2.me2 WITH font := "Arial" THEN me := 3WITH font style IS bold WITH font size := 14 RULE r3 WITH text :=" IF cce = 0AND mstable1.gpa >= mstable2.cce1 AND mstable1.pcredit >= 24 Intelligent system for majoring students AND subj4 >= mstable2.cce2 Written By Samy Abu Naser THEN cce := 3This Expert System determine the best major for the RULE_{r4} students according to rules IF mde = 0of the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology. AND mstable1.gpa >= mstable2.mde1 AND mstable1.pcredit >= 24 The majors include: Computer Science, Information AND subj4 >= mstable2.mde2Systems, Computer System THEN mde:=3 Engineering, Computer Communication Engineering, Mechatroics Engineering, RULE r5 Medical Devices Engineering, Renewable IF re = 0Energy Engineering AND mstable1.gpa >= mstable2.re1 AND mstable1.pcredit >= 24 This expert systems read the students data from MS Access AND subj4 >= mstable2.re2 Database and fill THEN re:=3 the Major field in the database" RULE r6 INSTANCE Conc ISA display IF se = 0WITH wait := TRUE AND mstable1.gpa >= mstable2.se1 WITH delay changes := FALSE AND mstable1.pcredit >= 24 WITH items [1] := title textbox AND subj2 >= mstable2.se2WITH items [2] := result textbox THEN se := 3INSTANCE title textbox ISA textbox RULE_{r7} WITH location := 20.10.800.70 IF cs = 0WITH pen color := 0.0.0AND mstable1.gpa >= mstable2.cs1 WITH fill color := 200,200,100 AND mstable1.pcredit >= 24 WITH justify IS center AND subj2 >= mstable2.cs2 WITH font := "Arial" THEN cs := 3WITH font style IS bold WITH font size := 14 RULE r8 WITH text := " The Conclusion of the Intelligent system IF is = 0for majoring students" AND mstable1.gpa >= mstable2.is1 AND mstable1.pcredit >= 24 INSTANCE result textbox ISA textbox AND subj2 >= mstable2.is2 WITH location := 20,90,800,300 THEN is := 3WITH pen color := 0.0.0WITH fill color := 170,170,170 RULE r9 WITH justify IS left IF mstable1.r1 = "ME" WITH font := "Arial" AND me = 3

THEN r1 := 1

AND me := 2

RULE r10 IF mstable1.r1 = "CCE" AND cce = 3 THEN r1 := 1 AND cce := 2	RULE r21 IF mstable1.r2 = "CS" AND cs $>= 2$ THEN r2 := 1 AND cs := 1
RULE r11 IF mstable1.r1 = "MDE" AND mde = 3 THEN r1 := 1 AND mde := 2	RULE r22 IF mstable1.r2 = "IS" AND is >= 2 THEN r2 := 1 AND is := 1
RULE r12 IF mstable1.r1 = "RE" AND re = 3 THEN r1 := 1 AND re := 2	RULE r23 IF mstable1.r3 = "ME" AND me >= 1 THEN r3 := 1 AND me := -1
RULE r13 IF mstable1.r1 = "SE" AND se = 3 THEN r1 := 1 AND se := 2	RULE r24 IF mstable1.r3 = "CCE" AND cce >= 1 THEN r3 := 1 AND cce := -1
RULE r14 IF mstable1.r1 = "CS" AND cs = 3 THEN r1 := 1 AND cs := 2	RULE r25 IF mstable1.r3 = "MDE" AND mde >= 1 THEN r3 := 1 AND mde := -1
RULE r15 IF mstable1.r1 = "IS" AND is = 3 THEN r1 := 1 AND is := 2	RULE r26 IF mstable1.r3 = "RE" AND re >= 1 THEN r3 := 1 AND re := -1
RULE r16 IF mstable1.r2 = "ME" AND me >= 2 THEN r2 := 1 AND me := 1	RULE r27 IF mstable1.r3 = "SE" AND se >= 1 THEN r3 := 1 AND se := -1
RULE r17 IF mstable1.r2 = "CCE" AND cce >= 2 THEN r2 := 1 AND cce := 1	RULE r28 IF mstable1.r3 = "CS" AND cs >= 1 THEN r3 := 1 AND cs := -1
RULE r18 IF mstable1.r2 = "MDE" AND mde >= 2 THEN r2 := 1 AND mde := 1	RULE r29 IF mstable1.r3 = "IS" AND is >= 1 THEN r3 := 1 AND is := -1
RULE r19 IF mstable1.r2 = "RE" AND re >= 2 THEN r2 := 1 AND re := 1	RULE r30 IF r1 =1 AND calc stats = 0 THEN mstable1.major := mstable1.r1 AND mstable1.subj4 := subj4
RULE r20 IF mstable1.r2 = "SE" AND se >= 2 THEN r2 := 1 AND se := 1	AND mstable1.subj2 := subj2 AND action OF mstable1 IS update record AND action OF mstable1 IS advance AND subj4 := ((mstable1.calc1 * 4) + (mstable1.calc2 * 4) + (mstable1.electricity * 3) + (mstable1.electronic * 3)) / 14

```
AND subj2 := (mstable1.icomp + mstable1.prog) / 2
                                                              AND calc stats = 0
AND r1 := 0
                                                              THEN calc stats := 1
AND r2 := 0
                                                              AND action OF mstable 1 IS top
AND r3 := 0
AND me := 0
                                                              RULE r34
AND cce := 0
                                                              IF calc stats = 1
AND mde := 0
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "ME"
AND re := 0
                                                              THEN num of me := num of me + 1
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND se := 0
AND cs := 0
AND is := 0
                                                             RULE r35
AND X := 0
                                                             IF calc stats = 1
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "MDE"
RULE r31
                                                              THEN num of mde := num of mde + 1
IF r1 = 0
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND r2 = 1
AND calc stats = 0
                                                             RULE r36
THEN mstable1.major := mstable1.r2
                                                             IF calc stats = 1
AND mstable1.subj4 := subj4
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "CCE"
AND mstable1.subj2 := subj2
                                                              THEN num of cce := num of cce + 1
AND action OF mstable1 IS update record
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND subj4 := ((mstable1.calc1 * 4) + (mstable1.calc2 * 4)
                                                              RULE r37
+ (mstable1.electricity * 3) + (mstable1.electronic * 3)) / 14
                                                              IF calc stats = 1
AND subj2 := (mstable1.icomp + mstable1.prog) / 2
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "RE"
AND r1 := 0
                                                              THEN num of re := num of re + 1
AND r2 := 0
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND r3 := 0
AND me := 0
                                                             RULE r38
AND cce := 0
                                                              IF calc stats = 1
AND mde := 0
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "SE"
                                                              THEN num of se := num of se + 1
AND re := 0
AND se := 0
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND cs := 0
AND is := 0
                                                              RULE r39
AND X := 0
                                                              IF calc stats = 1
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "CS"
RULE r32
                                                              THEN num of cs := num of cs + 1
IF r1 = 0
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND r2 = 0
                                                             RULE r40
AND r3 = 1
                                                             IF calc stats = 1
AND calc stats = 0
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "IS"
THEN mstable1.major := mstable1.r3
                                                              THEN num of is := num of is +1
AND mstable1.subj4 := subj4
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND mstable1.subj2 := subj2
AND action OF mstable1 IS update record
                                                              RULE r41
AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
                                                              IF calc stats = 1
AND subj4 := ((mstable1.calc1 * 4) + (mstable1.calc2 * 4)
                                                              AND mstable1.major = "none"
+ (mstable1.electricity * 3) + (mstable1.electronic * 3)) / 14
                                                              THEN num of none := num of none + 1
AND subj2 := (mstable1.icomp + mstable1.prog ) / 2
                                                              AND action OF mstable1 IS advance
AND r1 := 0
AND r2 := 0
                                                             RULE r42
AND r3 := 0
                                                              IF calc stats = 1
AND me := 0
                                                              AND eof OF mstable1
AND cce := 0
                                                              THEN text OF result textbox := "ME =" + num of me +
AND mde := 0
                                                              "\n"+ "CCE=" + num of cce +"\n"+ "MDE=" + num of mde
AND re := 0
                                                              + "\n" + "RE = " +
AND se := 0
                                                              num of re + "\n"+"SE=" + num of se +"\n"+"CS="+ num of
AND cs := 0
                                                              cs + "\n" + "IS = " + num of is + "\n" + "None = " + num of none"
AND is := 0
                                                              AND exit OF the application := TRUE
AND X := 0
                                                              RULE r43
                                                              IF r1 = 0
RULE r33
                                                              AND r2 = 0
IF eof OF mstable1
                                                              AND r3 = 0
```

AND calc stats = 0

AND NOT eof OF mstable1

THEN mstable1.major := "none"

AND mstable1.subj4 := subj4

AND mstable1.subj2 := subj2

AND action OF mstable1 IS update record

AND action OF mstable1 IS advance

AND subj4 := ((mstable1.calc1 * 4) + (mstable1.calc2 * 4) + (mstable1.electricity * 3) + (mstable1.electronic * 3)) / 14

AND subj2 := (mstable1.icomp + mstable1.prog) / 2

AND me := 0

AND cce := 0

AND mde := 0

AND re := 0

AND se := 0

AND cs := 0

AND is := 0

END

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