

SCENARIO

During COVID, many schools and universities were forced to quickly move all their teaching online. Classrooms became virtual, requiring a camera, a microphone, and a computer to run video conferencing software (e.g. Zoom) so as to take part in class.

During classes, teachers try to “read a room” to make sure that the content being taught is being understood, offering up alternative explanations or changing their teaching approach when they feel students are losing interest. During COVID, when teaching online, this became far more difficult. Many students decided to keep their cameras and microphones turned off, opting instead to interact with teachers through text chat. As a result, teachers find it harder to build a relationship with their students.

Imagine that you are a student and a college or school you are studying in has unveiled a new feature within Zoom that aims to help teachers “read a room” through analysing the video and sound coming from your laptop when in class. Using artificial intelligence, the video and audio will be processed for signs of attention and engagement, with the results of the class as a group being fed back to the teacher during the class. The College or school says that this information will not be used for grading students, but will help the teacher understand if students are getting bored, losing track in the class or falling behind.

DISCUSS

1. How would you feel about your college or school using this feature?
2. What concerns would you have about this type of technology? What could be done to help alleviate these concerns?
3. How do you feel about AI being used to track your interest and engagement in the class? How could you or the class be affected if the AI system made mistakes?
4. How do you feel this could impact the class as a group?
5. Are there ways you think you could trick the feature? And how do you think this would affect you and/or the teacher?