

EDUCATE

Insights from EdTech Solutions

DEBATE MATE

Who are you?

[Debate Mate](#) powers social change through world-class communication training, from the classroom to the boardroom.

There are three branches of the company, supporting schools, parents and teachers, teaching key skills to improve social mobility, providing virtual programmes to build communication



and self-confidence, and delivering debate-led teaching strategies, to improve academic attainment online and worldwide.

What was the challenge?

Debate Mate raised the challenge of their tutor recruitment process.

On the hiring of candidates for the role of debate tutor, the evaluations and discussions of the expert tutor interview panel revealed that many candidate skills were judged through an intuitive decision-making process, where the experts had relied upon their own experience and observational clues.

However, when questioned on what they thought made a good tutor with respect to the candidates' 'social and emotional skills' (a domain identified as essential by the expert recruitment team), the expert tutors struggled to even define these terms.

In education and training settings, some constructs, particularly those that relate to so-called 21st-century skills, and/or social and emotional learning, are neither well-defined nor are they widely understood.

How did EDUCATE help?

EDUCATE used prediction models to detect the emotions of interview candidates from audio data, and used classification models to increase the transparency of the expert interview panel's intuitive decision-making processes.

Visualisations of significant aspects of debate tutoring were also created, such as the emotional arousal of the candidates, in order for the expert interview panel to provide the candidate with an opportunity for better feedback and reflection.

AI was used to predict emotions and traits from the audio data, but this information output was then fed into a transparent classification process, ultimately for human interpretation.

What was the outcome?

The augmentation of human cognition with AI may be a more appropriate role for AI in education.

From the work done with Debate Mate, it was possible to argue that classification models could potentially support the intuitive decision-making processes of expert tutors when interviewing and evaluating other tutors. The processes can be more transparent, yielding informed reflection for educators, and generating advanced feedback for learners.

The ability for AI to cope with the complex social contexts in education needs to be explored, so that AI can serve learners equally and equitably, as appropriate.