Viewpoints

Skill Acquisition and AI

As teachers struggle to place AI in their current instructional contexts, questions often at the top of mind are how to optimize the extra time created by AI. A book report, for example, has instructional value–students learn how to research, synthesize, and comprehend what they are reading. But what do you with the extra time created when the book report that would otherwise take a week, can now be generated in a matter of seconds? More importantly, how do we ensure that those skills, otherwise gained by writing the book report, are acquired by other means? There is great opportunity here for a revolution of sorts in teaching methods. This does not come without challenge, but bridging the technology gap between teachers and students may set an incredible stage for student engagement.

In a recent book exploring the influence of generative AI on teacher education, two researchers, Punya Mishra and Marie K. Heath posed a question that I can't seem to shake. "What does it mean for learners to trade off the zone of proximal development for ease of access to the creation of knowledge?" Mishra and Heath admit they don't have the answer, but say they think it's an important question for educators and scholars to consider.

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