

AI program to set and mark assessments helps teachers in Singapore save time

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SINGAPORE - Teachers spend long hours doing administrative tasks like marking and setting assessments, which eats into their spare time and contributes to them being overworked.

That is where Noodle Factory founders Yvonne Soh and Jim Wagstaff think their educational technology start-up can help.

The firm seeks to solve such problems by using artificial intelligence to help teachers create notes, and set and mark simple assessments.

Set up in 2018, Noodle Factory now has about 5,200 students and teachers from secondary schools and institutes of higher learning signed up to use its program.

Teachers who use its portal subscribe through their schools.

To use the program, teachers drag and drop text into its artificial intelligence engine, and the text is then converted into easily digestible chunks.

Users can also feed the engine with information that gets turned into short questions, including open-ended ones, which can be edited.

Students can access the information that Noodle Factory processes and ask a chatbot questions on the material, through platforms like Microsoft Teams.

The engine uses natural language processing to identify when a student's answers to open-ended questions are correct or partially acceptable, even if the wording is different.

It also offers analytics to teachers, such as the most-asked questions by students.

Mr Wagstaff, 54, said Noodle Factory is not meant to replace teachers, but to cut out or condense time-consuming tasks.

He said: "This is not about automating away teachers, but to find a way to take some time spent on such tasks and give it back to them, to allow them to focus on what they love and what they are best at."

The two founders started out in adult education in the corporate world. The early versions of what later became Noodle Factory were to help them with their own work.

Ms Soh, 47, said that in the future, Noodle Factory aims to become more integrated with existing learning systems like the Ministry of Education's Student Learning Space.