Dr Russell Beale - The changing face of technology transcript

The changing face of technology by Dr Russel Beale, University of Birmingham

Title: **Dr Russell Beale - The changing face of technology (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_VYIiCMBQw)**
Duration: 3.13 mins
Speaker Names (if given): S1 Dr Russell Beale

S1 My current research is trying to understand people, technology and the influences each have on each other and in particular I'm most interested in how you can add artificial intelligence into systems to make them cleverer and simpler for people to use. One of the main areas that we're working on is in Healthcare and particularly in behaviour change and we're trying to support people give up addictive behaviours like eating too much or smoking or drinking. One of the things that we're trialling is trying to engage people more in a process and the idea is that if we present computer avatars, computer faces that actually express appropriate emotions, people will tend to believe in them more and want to please them more and we've run some experiments about this and essentially it's shown that there is a good, positive effect. People recognise these emotions and they're much more engaged with the process and we're hoping to turn the sort of pilot systems into real ones that we can roll out, which will give many, many more people access to some of the sorts of support they need in order to improve their behaviour, their lives and their health.

Most of our teaching is research led essentially, so whilst we cover all the basics in the first and part of the second year, the perspective we take on things tends to be informed by our own research and this really comes to the fore in the final year when people do projects and a lot of my undergraduate students are effectively working with my overall research team on aspects of big projects that we're doing. A lot of them produce publishable work, they go to conferences and they get mixed in with the full academic community. So really in the third year they're really being researchers and they're being trained and taught to be researchers, as well as doing their undergraduate work, so there's a really strong synergy between the two.

For me one of the great things about my area is that there's an ever increasing demand for it. As the internet becomes more pervasive, as mobile phones become more pervasive, as technology generally infiltrates every aspect of our lives, having people who understand what it can do, how it can work, how you can design it effective, how you can improve people's experiences with it – they're becoming in short supply. We need more and more of them; we need more good ones; we need people to do basic research in that; we need people to build systems; we need people to evaluate them; we need people who've got an interest in society to work out how these things should go in politics, economics, business. So any sort of technologist with an interest in any of those areas finds a home in this sort of space because there's a niche for them to do work and there's huge demand from industry, which is only ever going to grow.

One of the great things for me is that technology is changing at an ever increasing pace and people are having greater access to it. So the interplay between the two things is a fascinating and ever changing area and the great thing is that we can actually influence that and direct it – and one of the nice things is I think we can direct for good; so we can improve the lives of people in Africa, we can improve people's health here, we can just make people's life, entertainment, all sorts of things much more fun and interesting – and it's a really exciting time to be doing this sort of work.

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