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Mobile Phone Quiz Evaluation

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1 Introduction

This report details the findings to emerge from an evaluation of the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the BBC by Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd.

During the autumn of 2006, a total of 19 individuals participated in a pilot project which had been developed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the BBC. The purpose of the pilot project was to develop the skills and knowledge of these individuals by means of their participation in a 'quiz process'. More specifically, individuals who participated in the pilot project were sent a series of text messages which posed a number of questions to which they were asked to seek and provide answers, ie as individuals responded to each set of questions, a further set was then issued to them by text.

The purpose of the evaluation was to elicit information from four key groups:

- ◆ individuals who completed the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project
- ◆ individuals who 'dropped out' of the project
- ◆ tutors responsible for facilitating the project
- ◆ the Working Group responsible for the development and delivery of the project

It should be noted that interviews were carried out with 15 of the 19 individuals who participated in the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project, ie it was not possible to contact the four remaining individuals.

Individuals who completed the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project

Of the 15 telephone interviews conducted, 12 were with individuals who had completed the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project (with the three remaining interviews being with individuals who had 'dropped out' of the process). Accordingly — even based on an assumption that the four individuals who it was not possible to contact had also completed the project — the views expressed in section 2 are based on 12 out of the potential maximum 16 'project completers' and, accordingly, can be considered to be representative of 'project completers' per se.

The objectives of the interviews conducted with individuals who had completed the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project were:

- ◆ to determine their views regarding the questions which had been asked

- ◆ to establish the means by which they had sourced information to answer questions
- ◆ to elicit their views with regard to the online tutor support mechanism which was available to those participating in the pilot project
- ◆ to elicit their views regarding the website which had been established to support the pilot project
- ◆ to determine their views regarding the technology which had been used in the pilot project
- ◆ to determine their views in respect of the approach which had been taken in the pilot project
- ◆ to determine their general response to the project

Individuals who dropped out of the project

Of the 15 telephone interviews undertaken, three were with individuals who had ‘dropped out’ of the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project. Accordingly — even allowing for the four remaining project participants who it was not possible to contact — it is highly likely that the views expressed in section 3 by these three individuals would be representative of ‘project drop outs’ per se.

The objectives of the interviews conducted with those who dropped out of the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project were as follows:

- ◆ to determine their reasons for not completing the project
- ◆ to establish which factors would have encouraged them to complete the exercise
- ◆ to determine their views regarding future changes for the project

Tutors responsible for facilitating the project

Telephone interviews were conducted with all three tutors responsible for facilitating the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project. Accordingly, the views expressed in section 4 are entirely representative of such individuals.

The objectives of the telephone interviews conducted with tutors responsible for facilitating the project were:

- ◆ to elicit their views regarding the questions asked
- ◆ to determine their views regarding the means by which those participating in the pilot project had sourced information
- ◆ to determine their views with regard to the website which supported the pilot project
- ◆ to establish their experience and views regarding the recruitment of individuals to participate in the pilot project
- ◆ to determine their views with regard to the technology used in the pilot project
- ◆ to determine the extent to which they believed the approach used in the pilot project would encourage further learning

The Working Group responsible for the development and delivery of the project

Face to face interviews were conducted with all five members of the Working Group responsible for the development and delivery of the Mobile Phone Quiz Pilot Project and, accordingly, the views expressed in section 5 are entirely representative of that group.

The objectives of the interviews undertaken with the Working Group responsible for the development and delivery of the project were as follows:

- ◆ to determine their views with regard to the questions that were posed in the pilot project
- ◆ to determine their views regarding the online tutor support function which was available to those participating in the pilot project
- ◆ to establish their views with regard to the website which was available to support individuals participating in the pilot project
- ◆ to determine their views with regard to the suitability of the target audience
- ◆ to determine their response to an interim report that was produced
- ◆ to determine their views with regard to processes of project development and, in particular, relationships between the participating organisations in the Working Group
- ◆ to determine the value of the project exercise to the organisations which participated in it
- ◆ to determine their views with regard to the way forward, given the outcomes of the pilot project

2 Review of participants

2.1 The questions

- ◆ All participants found the questions ‘easy’ — with an exactly equal split between those who stated that the questions were ‘very easy’ and ‘fairly easy’.
- ◆ A majority of participants found all of the questions asked to be ‘very easy’, with four exceptions:
 - ‘Look up the word “Triskaidekaphobia” in a dictionary — what does it mean?’
 - ‘Which footballer is the most capped player in the Scotland football team?’
 - ‘You have to get from Glasgow Central to the Exhibition Centre by 8pm. What is last train you can catch?’
 - ‘How many goals did Pele score in his World Cup career?’
- ◆ The question which caused greatest difficulty was ‘Which footballer is the most capped player in the Scotland football team?’. In addition, a further question ‘How many goals did Pele score in his World cup career?’ was stated as being ‘very difficult’ by a quarter of participants.
- ◆ With one exception, all respondents believed that the questions were suitable and, indeed, a majority believed that they were ‘very suitable’.
- ◆ With one exception — ‘Which of the following should have a capital letter’ — a majority of respondents believed each of the questions were ‘very suitable’, with those which were deemed as being ‘most suitable’ being:
 - ‘In a sale everything is reduced by 10%. How much would shoes cost that used to cost £100?’
 - ‘Craig won £75,000 in Big Brother, 1997. The prize for winning in 2008 is proposed to be 25% more. How much will the winner get in total?’
- ◆ All participants believed that the words and language used in the questions were ‘easy to understand’ and, indeed, a notable majority believed that the words and language used were ‘very easy to understand’.
- ◆ Only two respondents stated that they found the words and language used in any of the questions difficult, with these questions specifically being:
 - ‘Look up the word “Triskaidekaphobia” in a dictionary — what does it mean?’
 - ‘Which footballer is the most capped player in the Scotland football team?’

- ‘Find the website of the Scottish Football Association. Which of the following is the correct website address?’
 - ‘How many goals did Pele score in his World Cup career?’
- ◆ With two exceptions, all respondents believed that the number of questions was ‘about right’ — with one respondent believing that there were ‘too many questions’, and one respondent believing that there were ‘not enough questions’.
 - ◆ The vast majority of participants believed that they were sent questions ‘at about the right speed’, with two believing that questions were sent ‘too slowly’ and one believing that questions were sent ‘too quickly’.

2.2 Sourcing information

- ◆ Two thirds of participants stated that they had to source information to answer questions, with this most commonly being the case in respect of the following questions:
 - ‘Look up the word “Triskaidekaphobia” in a dictionary — what does it mean?’
 - ‘Which footballer is the most capped player in the Scotland football team?’
 - ‘Find the website of the Scottish Football Association. Which of the following is the correct website address?’
 - ‘How many goals did Pele score in his World Cup career?’
- ◆ Those who had sourced information to answer questions most commonly did so through ‘friends’, although a core of respondents also made reference here to ‘the internet’ (and, in particular, using ‘Google’) and dictionaries.
- ◆ When prompted, a majority of respondents stated that they had used ‘relatives’ to source information to answer questions, almost all stated that they had used ‘friends’ to do so, and a quarter stated that they had used ‘the internet’.

2.3 Online tutor support

- ◆ None of the participants stated that they had made use of the online tutor support.

2.4 The website

- ◆ Only two respondents stated that they had visited the Core Quest website for the project — although one stated that he had tried to but could not gain access.

- ◆ Both respondents who had used the website rated it as being ‘very good’ overall.

2.5 The technology

- ◆ All respondents stated that they found it ‘easy’ to read the questions on their mobile phone and, indeed, with two exceptions, all respondents stated that they found it ‘very easy’ to read the questions.
- ◆ A third of respondents stated that they had problems texting answers back. With one exception, these problems related to the need to send texts more than once.

2.6 The approach

- ◆ All respondents believed that using mobile phones in this way was a good way to help people learn. However, with two exceptions, all respondents believed that some kind of web-based method would have been a better way to help people learn, with this belief primarily being a function of:
 - the perceived amount of information that would be available
 - a belief that a web-based method would be ‘more interesting’
 - the greater flexibility of web-based learning (‘learning what you wanted to learn yourself’)
 - a belief that web-based methods would be ‘easier’
- ◆ It should be stressed, however, that respondents believed that the use of mobile phones was a good way to help people to learn and, in particular, to engage young people like themselves in the learning process.
- ◆ With one exception, all participants believed that this type of project was suitable to young people like themselves.
- ◆ When asked — on an unprompted basis — why the project was suitable to young people like themselves, reference was made to factors such as:
 - the use of mobiles (‘because everyone has a mobile’)
 - the method encouraging people to learn
 - the method being ‘enjoyable’ and ‘interesting’
- ◆ All respondents believed that this kind of project would encourage young people, like themselves, to get involved in more learning. On an unprompted basis, this was seen as being a function of this method being:
 - an interesting way to learn
 - a modern way to learn (ie using mobile phones)
 - an enjoyable way to learn

2.7 Response to the project

- ◆ All participants found the project ‘enjoyable’ to take part in — and, indeed, the majority found it ‘very enjoyable’. On an unprompted basis, this was seen as being a function of a number of factors:
 - the project being interesting
 - the project being fun
 - the project being a ‘different’ way to learn
 - confidence gained from taking part in the project (‘I was amazed at how many answers I knew’)

- ◆ All participants stated that they would take part in a similar project again in future. On an unprompted basis, this was seen as being a function of a number of factors, including:
 - improved knowledge and understanding
 - the project being enjoyable
 - the project being interesting
 - what individuals had learned through the project

- ◆ In summing up their response to the project, the following outcomes were apparent (in response to a number of statements provided to respondents):
 - A majority of participants disagreed with the statement that ‘I found my computer skills were better than I thought they were’, although all respondents disagreed with the statement that ‘I found my computer skills were worse than I thought they were’.
 - A notable majority of respondents agreed with the statement that ‘I found my reading skills were better than I thought they were’, whilst all respondents disagreed with the statement that ‘I found my reading skills were worse than I thought they were’.
 - A notable majority of respondents agreed with the statement that ‘I found my skills with numbers were better than I thought they were’, whilst all respondents disagreed with the statement that ‘I found my skills with numbers were worse than I thought they were’.
 - Three quarters of respondents agreed with the statement that ‘I learned more than I thought I would’, whilst very few respondents disagreed with this statement.

3 Review of project ‘drop outs’

3.1 Reasons for not completing the project

- ◆ The reasons cited by respondents for not completing the project were:
 - that they were never contacted
 - that no texts were sent to them
 - that they lost their phone

3.2 Factors that would have encouraged completion of the project

- ◆ Two respondents stated that, had they received texts, they would have completed the project.
- ◆ The remaining respondent stated that, had they not lost their phone, they would have completed the project.

3.3 Suggested changes to the project in future

- ◆ Two key suggestions were made in respect of improvements to the project in future:
 - Enhanced mechanisms for participants to make problems known to those organising/facilitating the project.
 - Better briefing before the pilot project to inform individuals as to what to do if difficulties arose.

4 Review of tutors

4.1 The questions

- ◆ None of the tutors interviewed had reviewed the questions in any detail, however, it was their general opinion that:
 - the questions were easy to answer
 - the questions were suitable
 - the words and language used in the questions were suitable

4.2 Sourcing information

- ◆ The tutors interviewed believed that participants had primarily sourced information through friends — albeit that it was their view that participants already knew the answers to a number of the questions.
- ◆ It was also stated by the tutors interviewed that it was their belief that many of the participants had used the internet to source information for some of the questions.

4.3 The website

- ◆ None of the tutors interviewed had visited the website and, accordingly, could not comment about it.
- ◆ It should be stressed, however, that one tutor stated that she had encountered difficulties in accessing the website due to ‘lack of appropriate software’.

4.4 Recruiting participants

- ◆ Two of the tutors stated that they found it very difficult to recruit participants to take part in the pilot exercise, and that this was principally a function of two factors:
 - A general ‘lack of interest’ amongst the target group.
 - The time of year of the exercise (ie during the summer, when tutors had less contact with potential participants).
- ◆ The tutors interviewed believed that the recruitment of participants had been facilitated by the use of mobile phones as the primary communication mechanism. In addition, it was felt that youngsters were encouraged to participate in the exercise as a result of being provided with a prize.

4.5 The technology

- ◆ There was a general consensus amongst the tutors interviewed that the technology used was appropriate to the target group. In particular, it was stated that most youngsters have mobile phones (usually up-to-date mobile phones) and tend to be competent texters.
- ◆ Accordingly, it was felt that the use of technology here resulted in the approach being highly inclusive in nature.

4.6 Encouraging further learning

- ◆ There was a general consensus amongst the tutors that the approach could potentially encourage participants to participate in further learning, particularly on the basis that the technology used (ie mobile phones) was highly appropriate.
- ◆ It was also stated that the nature of the project — relatively ‘short and sharp’ — also led it to being attractive to youngsters and, therefore, increased the likelihood of further learning.
- ◆ One tutor stated that the pilot had provided her with access to new learners and, as such, provided her with an opportunity to make further learning opportunities available to these learners.
- ◆ It was stressed by all of the tutors interviewed that it was of critical importance that the approach used should be linked to a broader and more integrated package of learning opportunities for youngsters in order to encourage further learning.

5 Working Group review

5.1 The questions

5.1.1 Ease or difficulty of the questions

- ◆ There was a widespread consensus amongst the Working Group that they were satisfied with the level of questions asked in terms of their ease or difficulty and, in particular, it was felt that the questions were of a suitable level for the target group of the programme.

5.1.2 Suitability of the questions

- ◆ There was a general consensus amongst the Working Group that the questions derived for the quiz were suitable. However, it was suggested that some improvements could be made in this regard, including:
 - provision of sports questions which suited both genders ie based on a concern that some sports questions were ‘male biased’
 - a need for historical questions to focus on ‘more recent history’
 - a need for questions to focus more on contemporary or current issues
- ◆ It should be stressed, however, that these suggested improvements should be placed within the context — noted above — of general satisfaction with the suitability of the questions asked amongst the Working Group.

5.1.3 Words and language used

- ◆ There was widespread consensus amongst the members of the Working Group that the words and language used in the questions within the Quiz were suitable — although there was some suggestion that there may have been value in using some form of ‘text language’ (albeit that this was tempered by concerns that there was a requirement for some degree of formality in the words and language used in order to reflect the fact that the quiz was a ‘learning process’).

5.2 Online tutor support function

- ◆ There was widespread agreement amongst the members of the Working Group that there was a need for some form of online support function for those participating in the Mobile Quiz Pilot exercise process. It was also recognised that little use had been made of the online support function, and a belief that this had potentially been a result of a number of factors:

- Participants in the pilot exercise not requiring online support (on the basis that the questions were easy to answer and they were comfortable with the technology).
 - The pilot had not allowed for a significant ‘pause’ in the questioning process (ie between questions being answered and, thereafter, subsequent questions being texted) to allow support to be sought.
 - A possible lack of awareness of the online support function.
 - Some respondents lacking access to computers (particularly at home) and particularly online access.
 - That there is a degree of literacy required to use the online support function leading to youngsters being reluctant to use it (due to lack of confidence in the literacy abilities).
- ◆ There was a widespread consensus that there was a fundamental need for a future similar project to incorporate an online support function — particularly one which incorporated ‘personal responses/interaction’ with those posing questions, ie not the provision of ‘stock answers’.
 - ◆ It was suggested that there may be a need to ‘re-label’ the online support function, ie to use a ‘label’ which was less formal and more friendly.

5.3 The website

- ◆ The members of the Working Group were generally positive about the website. In particular, there was a general consensus that it was well designed, contained appropriate information and had an appropriate style (ie largely informal).
- ◆ There was also a general feeling amongst those interviewed that there was significant potential for the use of the website to be expanded.
- ◆ There were concerns about potential problems of accessing the website if individuals did not have appropriate ‘flash’ software. In particular, it was stated that if such software was not available online (within, for example, libraries) then there may not be the opportunity to download it from the internet.

5.4 Suitability of the project to the target market

5.4.1 Suitability

- ◆ The members of the Working Group overwhelmingly believed that the project was suitable for the target market and believed that this had been borne out by the responses of those who had participated in the evaluation process.

- ◆ Furthermore, the Working Group believed that there was significant potential for further expansion and/or development of the principles of the project — including the use of mobile technology for other learning purposes (including promoting or prompting learning opportunities amongst the target market).
- ◆ There was, however, a belief that in order to exploit these expansion or development opportunities, there would be a need to promote the use of mobile technology in projects such as this more effectively within the youth sector and, in particular, within the Youth Literacies Network.

5.4.2 Encouraging young people to learn

- ◆ There was a degree of debate within the Working Group in respect of the extent to which the project would encourage young people in the target market to get more involved in learning. However, there was a general consensus that the project had the potential to act as a significant ‘hook’ to promote learning opportunities to young people and, thereby, promote engagement in learning opportunities — particularly due to the appropriateness of the technology, ie the fact that texting is a significant and popular activity for young people.
- ◆ In addition, it was emphasised by a number of those on the Working Group that there was significant potential for the principles of the project to be used to ‘direct’ young people to learning opportunities and, in particular, make them aware of appropriate learning opportunities that may be available to them (using a comfortable and familiar technology).

5.5 Responses to the interim report

- ◆ The Working Group members interviewed stated that, generally, the interim report contained no ‘real surprises’ and, to a large extent, had provided outcomes which had been expected.
- ◆ However, it was noted by a number of those interviewed that they were ‘pleasantly surprised’ with the extent of positive responses elicited — particularly from the youngsters who had participated in the programme.
- ◆ Despite this, however, Working Group members noted a number of concerns pertaining to:
 - the perceived ‘hostility and suspicion’ of some tutors regarding their engagement in the progress
 - the lack of use of the website by tutors
 - lack of briefing of tutors
 - recruitment levels

5.6 Project development/relationships between participating organisations

- ◆ It was apparent from the interviews carried out with the Working Group members that a significant range of personal relationships had been developed — both at operational and strategic levels — between the organisations participating in the project (ie the BBC, SQA and Youth Literacies Network). In particular, it was stated that all three organisations had a ‘common mission’ or ‘shared agenda’ in respect of the key principles of the desired outcomes of the project.
- ◆ It was also felt that the project had helped to initiate and/or further develop relationships between the three organisations participating in the project which, it was believed, would be of considerable value in terms of the organisations working together again in future.
- ◆ The only significant concern which emerged in respect of the project development process related to the ‘slippages’ that had been apparent in respect of timescales. However, it was clear from those interviewed that no blame was attributed to any particular individual or organisation in this regard, but that these slippages were seen as being a ‘natural part’ of the learning process associated with any pilot exercise — particularly one such as this which was innovative and experimental in nature.

5.7 The value of the project to participating organisations

- ◆ It was apparent from the discussions undertaken with Working Group members that the project was of significant value to each of their organisations.
- ◆ For SQA, the importance of the project was a function of three key factors:
 - that it was part of the Social Inclusion and NEET agendas
 - the focus of the project on a key target group for SQA, ie young people who are disenfranchised from the learning process
 - that the project is an integral part of a wider agenda for SQA
- ◆ For the BBC, the importance of the project was a function of the fact that it meets a number of key criteria for the Corporation, including:
 - Its desire to ‘get closer’ to its audiences — including young people
 - that part of the licence fee remit is to educate and inform
 - that the BBC is keen to engage youngsters as an audience group
 - that the BBC is keen to use a range of platforms to engage youngsters
- ◆ For the Youth Literacies Network the importance of the project was a function of the fact that it ‘fitted well’ with its priorities, ie in terms

of engaging with young people and, in particular, those in the NEET category. In addition, Communities Scotland had already been investigating the potential use of mobile technologies as a means of engaging with young people (again, particularly those in the NEET category).

5.8 The way forward

- ◆ There was a general consensus that — in some shape or form — the project should be further developed. However, whilst expressing a desire for the further development of the project, it was clear that this would be contingent upon a number of key issues being resolved. In particular:
 - the future funding of the project
 - recruitment issues
 - other ‘systems failures’, eg regarding tutor briefing and the lack of use of the online support mechanism
- ◆ It was also apparent that there is significant willingness amongst the organisations participating in the project to work together in the future in terms of developing the project and, in particular, it was stated that there was considerable interest in examining the extent to which the principles of the project — and, in particular, the use of mobile technology — could be developed in order to promote learning amongst the target group.
- ◆ There was a widespread consensus within the Working Group that there could be significant merit in undertaking some form of ‘extended pilot exercise’ as this would allow:
 - the endorsement of the positive outcomes from the initial pilot exercise
 - systems failures (such as those relating to recruitment, tutor briefing and lack of use of online support) to be improved and tested
- ◆ In particular, it was stated that an extended pilot exercise would be critical in terms of securing future funding. More specifically, it was apparent that the organisations participating in the pilot project were unable and/or unwilling to provide further funding for the project and, accordingly, it was stated that such funding would have to be sought from other sources such as:
 - the Scottish Executive (given that the project fits with its ‘More Choices More Changes’ Initiative)
 - Literacies Partnerships in Local Authority areas in Scotland
 - European Social Fund
- ◆ Accordingly, it was apparent from the outcomes of this part of the discussion with Working Group members that, at the very least, the project should be used as a means by which its key principles could

be further developed and applied in respect of engaging learning amongst the target group.

6 Recommendations

- ◆ Based on the outcomes of the research process, a number of recommendations can be made in respect of the project.
- ◆ Firstly, it is apparent that a number of systems associated with the project could be improved and, in particular:
 - the promotion of the project to the youth sector and, in particular, the Youth Literacies Network
 - improvement of briefing processes for tutors
 - promoting the use of online tutor support
- ◆ Secondly, the issue of participant recruitment must be re-examined. In particular, better promotion to the youth sector would be a fundamental factor in enhancing recruitment levels to any future project, with a requirement for this to be supplemented by means of:
 - improving and/or formalising the relationship between the BBC, SQA, Communities Scotland and youth workers
 - reviewing the time of year when recruitment is undertaken and, in particular, avoiding the summer months when people tend not to be engaged in learning activities
- ◆ Thirdly, it would also seem apparent that there is significant potential to explore the use of the key principles of the project to engage young people in learning and, in particular, the use of mobile technology to ‘direct’ young people towards learning and prompt learning activities, eg learning opportunities available or tasks to be done during projects.
- ◆ Fourthly, there may also be some merit in considering an extended pilot exercise of the project — for the range of reasons outlined earlier in section 5.8.
- ◆ Irrespective of the way forward for the project, it is of critical importance that any future approach to targeting learning to disenfranchised youngsters should be part of an integrated approach ie presenting youngsters with a ‘suite’ of learning opportunities that are integrated and, in particular, allow both concurrent and sequential learning opportunities.
- ◆ Given the time and resources dedicated to the development of the project, the relationships established between the participating organisations, the positive outcomes of youngsters participating in the initial pilot exercise and the significant potential for the use of mobile technology as a means of engaging youngsters in learning, it would seem that it would be highly inappropriate for no further development to be undertaken and that, at the very least, the outcomes of this initial pilot exercise should be used as a means by which further initiatives can be identified, developed and evaluated.