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Hong Kong launches agency association

The Hong Kong International Education Consultants Association (HKIECA) was officially launched earlier in the year with the intention of promoting quality and ethical standards among education agents in Hong Kong.

The association currently has 20 members and Joanna D'Ettore Leung, Chairperson of HKIECA, said that the venture was a first for education travel agents in Hong Kong. "Our vision is to create an association of self-disciplined education counsellors and consulting professionals whose members adhere to the highest ethical and business standards," she said.

Membership of the association requires an initial period as an associate member as well as sponsorship by two full members. Approved members of the association, who are required to sign up to a code of conduct, will be able to display a Q-mark insignia in order to identify themselves to prospective clients and schools.

Leung said that the association would also run training sessions for members as well as offer views and feedback to the local government and overseas governments on behalf of the industry. "As our members span the globe, HKIECA is able to offer advice and guidance to any person or any institution seeking advice and knowledge of students and the marketplace in Hong Kong," she added.

Future plans include working with other global and national associations, conducting research into the perceptions of students and offering seminars to parents, highlighting the importance of study abroad programmes in today's society.



Joanna D'Ettore Leung, Chairperson of HKIECA, at the association's official launch earlier this year

CI organises student fair in Brazil

BRAZILIAN AGENCY, Central de Intercambio (CI), has developed an innovative way to market its products to students, hosting the third CI International Learning Trade Show at the end of March and beginning of April this year.

The shows, held at nine different venues throughout Brazil, attracted students interested in all kinds of travel abroad programmes, including high school, university, language and work experience. CI consultants were also on hand to answer student queries and offer advice about studying or working overseas, and the event attracted 400 student visitors at the first location in São Paulo alone.



The third CI International Learning Trade Show was held in nine different locations around Brazil

Celso Garcia, Manager of CI, said that the aim of the trade show was to present to students the new identity of the company and the range

of programmes on offer. "We wish to strengthen our position among the teenagers across the country interested in studying or working abroad. A trip is always an opportunity to learn, full of experiences and fun," Garcia relates.

CI currently has 60 offices around Brazil and is one of the biggest exchange and travel agencies in the country. Last year, the agency sent over 30,000 students overseas on travel abroad programmes.

Clarissa Konishi, Marketing Manager at CI, said, "The objective of the CI Trade Show is to show teenagers that studying or working abroad is not a distant dream, but a possible wish."

Agency of the month



In a series appearing each month in *Language Travel Magazine*, we ask a different language teaching institution to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.

This month, **International Study Institute** in Ireland nominates **StudyNet in Brazil**. Peter Hutchinson, Marketing Director of the school, explains this nomination:



"Although a relatively new agency for ISI, StudyNet has been in the industry for 25 years. Based just south of Minas Gerais, between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, StudyNet is an agency with a difference. Roberto Passarelli (CEO) has been very enthusiastic from the start. He

has taken a very pro-active approach to the partnership, always asking questions, immersing himself in our materials, and even joining us on a short fact-finding trip to Dublin. This is a reflection of his personal approach, and as a result, all his students are excellently prepared for life in Dublin.

There are many new entrants to the Brazilian web agency market, as they have lower start-up costs and fewer barriers to enter the market, however, such online agencies are sometimes accused of not offering a personal approach. We feel that only agencies like StudyNet, who offer this, will prosper in this growing web-based market."

Industry issues - agents speak out

January February March April May June July August September October November December

Q. Have you experienced a trend towards younger language learners in your country? Will this continue?



Tanja Henriksen, Interstudies, Denmark

"We do see a trend towards younger

learners, partially due to the range of courses we offer having been widened. The youngest learner we have sent overseas from Denmark so far is 13-and-a-half years, but there has been interest from parents of even younger learners. Our partners provide very good programmes so we rarely come across major problems, but safety is always a big issue for the parents. Our students travel individually so the local staff and environment are important factors as we do not send a leader. In our country, young language learners mostly travel to English-speaking countries, and the youngest tend to choose Britain. When selecting a language school for our younger learners we are looking for a safe and caring environment, high quality tuition, a wide range of activities and a flexible transfer service."



Alain Bertholet, Langues Vivantes, France

"Yes, and at the same

time, parents are becoming more and more demanding in terms of detailed information about activities and staff. We've sent six- and seven-year-olds to the UK in the past, although the younger ones tend to be in their early teens. It very much depends on a student's character [whether they will enjoy the experience]. If s/he is shy and introverted it won't work well no matter what the age. The number one problem with young language learners is overprotective parents. When a student phones home and mentions something negative in passing, the parents get upset and then contact us and sometimes make a huge fuss about nothing. When contacted to check the facts it usually turns out that the student is totally surprised by the parents' reaction and does not require immediate repatriation."



Boelo van der Pool, Babel Idiomias, Spain

"I definitely see a

trend towards younger language learners in Spain. The number of junior and younger clients has grown over the past few years. I think this will continue as parents lose their fear to send their children abroad and travelling in general has become more normal. The youngest student we have sent abroad so far was a nine-year-old boy who went to the UK for two weeks. I believe young students benefit from experiencing other cultures, other languages, other food, etc and from being in a different environment than that of their family. I think it is a life enriching experience, although all depends on how the agent prepares the student and where s/he is sent to. Schools [accepting young learners] should be reliable and very flexible, especially with the younger kids as you sometimes have to spend more time on them than you might expect."



Gabriella Perfetti, Aurigia Servizi, Italy

"The number of

young learners is higher now than it was in the past due to an increasing motivation to study a foreign language and more open-minded parents who are willing to send their children abroad. Our youngest client is a seven-year-old girl who enjoyed her experience and was happy with her residential accommodation. She could meet lots of international young people, attend high-quality classes and play lots of games – everything she expected just in one place. There is not a minimum age to go abroad since it depends on personality and motivation, and parents' expectations and mental aptitude. The schools we cooperate with usually offer all-inclusive packages, that is accommodation, full board, classes, social programme including sports and excursions, and 24-hour supervision."



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Q&A

Spanish language school association, Fedele, has been active in promoting its members overseas this year. President FRANCISCO PÉREZ NAVARRO, answers our questions.



Fact box

Full name: Federación Española de Asociaciones de Escuelas de Español para Extranjeros

Year established: 1999

Number of members: six associations with a total of 70 schools

Type of members: private schools specialised in teaching Spanish to foreigners

Association's main role: to represent the Spanish teaching sector to the Spanish government and defend the commercial and professional interests of member schools

Membership criteria: quality standard (Instituto Cervantes or CEELE)

Government recognition: yes

Code of practice: yes

Complaints procedure: Fedele Quality Charter and Code of Guarantees for Fedele students

Agent workshops/fam trips: yes

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Fax: +34 952831153
Email: info@fedele.org
Web: www.fedele.org

What has your association been up to in the last 12 months?

We published the second edition of the catalogue, *Learning Spanish in Spain*, in different languages, which represents all the schools and different destinations in Spain as well as the courses offered. This was distributed to universities, education councils, airlines and linguistic agencies. We organised our yearly agents' workshop and the convention for Fedele members, attended several fairs and carried out an international advertising campaign in many different medias. Two of our regional associations, AEEA and Olé, both from Andalucía, merged into one association called Español en Andalucía.

What marketing activities are you currently planning?

We are currently working on the restructuring of an important database Teaching Spanish in Spain and making it available on the Internet, as well as a leaflet providing the public with basic facts about Fedele, Turispaña and the Instituto Cervantes. We have also noticed a considerable increase in the number of applications for the Dele exams, which is administered by the Instituto Cervantes on behalf of the Spanish Ministry of Education. Since this year, Fedele has registration centres in eight cities: Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, San Sebastian, Granada, Malaga, Seville and Cadiz. This shows an important increase regarding the last year.

Have you made any headway in improving the visa process for Spanish language schools recently?

Since a law proposal was presented to the Spanish parliament last year, there seems to be fewer problems in the area of visas.

What challenges are your members currently facing when it comes to recruiting new students?

The main challenge is probably the competition, not only in Spain – due to the high number of schools and creation of chain schools – but also the competition from the Latin American market.

On the move

Laura Ruiz has been appointed Marketing Director of Omnicom School of Languages in Toronto, ONT, Canada. Originally from Venezuela, Ms Ruiz has lived in Vancouver for the last nine years and is looking forward to meeting and interacting with the students in her new role.



Natalie Dawe joins Bell International as the new Marketing Communications Manager based in Cambridge, UK. Ms Dawe is an award-winning communications expert with over 10 years' experience and will be responsible for raising the profile and services of Bell worldwide.



Intrax Cultural Exchange, based in San Francisco, USA, has appointed Geoff Watson as President of the company. Mr Watson has been with Intrax for more than four years and will be responsible for AuPairCare, Intrax Career Development, Intrax International Institute and Intrax Education Abroad.



Anita Kuehnel has opened her own consultancy firm, rEvolve EPS – Education Promotional Services, after working for four years as Exhibition Manager at IEFT – International Education Fairs of Turkey. Among other projects, Ms Kuehnel is currently the in-country liaison for the 2007 World Youth and Student Travel Conference (Wystc), which will be held in Istanbul in October.



Andrea Garutti is the new Director of CSI – Choice Students International based in Orlando, FL, USA. After three years working for CI in Brazil as International Director, Ms Garutti will be responsible for receiving students from all over the world for the work and travel programme. Also, Daniel Jose, ex CI inbound/ Come2Brazil supervisor, will be part of the team working as Business Development Manager.



The English Language Centre York in the UK has appointed Jeannette Bollen-McCarthy as its new Marketing Manager. Ms Bollen-McCarthy has previously worked in marketing and events management within the tourism sector and says, "York is a wonderful place to learn English, and the ELC offers an extremely high quality learning experience whilst maintaining the friendly approach on which it has based its reputation. I am excited about exploring new markets and raising the profile of the school even further".



Grapevine



Scott Anderson, former Marketing Manager at SES Folkestone in the UK, has started up his own company organising activity holidays for independent travellers in the South of France, proving that there is life outside language travel! The Enlightened Traveller offers clients a variety of programme options including walking and art tours and the pictures below and left show some of the company's first clients thoroughly enjoying all that the region has to offer.



Language Travel Magazine welcomed its newest addition to the team on 19 April this year when Editor, Amy Baker, gave birth to a baby boy. George Harris (right) weighed in at a healthy 9.5 pounds and is currently making more demands on his mother than a whole year's worth of issues of LTM! Amy would like to thank everyone for their good wishes and will be back in the office in October.



The recent ialc workshop, held in the idyllic location of Cape Town in South Africa, was enjoyed by all attendees. In the pictures above we see Christopher Malenfant from the English Language Center in the USA, Harriet Niland from Galway Cultural Institute in Ireland, Rebecca Brincat from BELS in Malta and Gayle Forler from Language Studies Canada competing in a 'dance face' competition, while other attendees get to grips with the local music!

Next issue – August 2007: **Special Report** investigates problematic visa issuance • **Market Report** charts trends in Malta • **Agency Survey** canvasses French agencies • **Direction** previews the top four nominees for the LTM Star Awards • **Destination** takes us to Canada • **Feedback** surveys students in Spain



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