

Education UK & Training Tour 2005 - Brazil



Report on the Tour – Tony Millns

The Tour and Other Events

The Education UK Tour of Brazil took place on 22 to 28 October 2005. There were ELT zones and general UK Education promotion events at student fairs in Sao Paulo on 22 and 23 October, in Campinas on 25 October, in Porto Alegre on 26 October, and in Rio de Janeiro on 28 October.

In addition there was an initial market briefing by the British Council on 21 October, followed by agent workshop and an alumni reception.

At each of the main venues, there was also a set of presentations on UK Education, covering everything from ELT (by TM) to Vocational Education, in Sao Paulo on 24 October, Campinas on 25 October, Porto Alegre on 27 October and Rio de Janeiro on 28 October.

In addition, Tony Millns held meetings with Tim Buchanan, the VisitBritain manager responsible for Central and Latin America, held two training events for British Council staff in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and met representatives of BELTA, the Brazilian Agents Association.

Background

Education promotion in Brazil has been a focus of British Council activity for around 4 years, and ARELS and BASELT represented the ELT sector at a previous set of student fairs in 2002. Since then, according to the statistics collected by ARELS and English UK, Brazil as a source market for students has moved from 11th position in the global rankings in 2002, to 5th position in 2003, and 4th position in 2004.

This is partly due to improvements in the Brazilian economic position (see below), but also to sustained promotion by the British Council and other agencies, including ARELS, BASELT and English UK. The British Council work has included collaborating with English UK on an agent's mission to the Southwest, various developments projects jointly with agents, putting on regular presentations to potential students in the information centres in Brazil, media work with Brazilian magazines, and a dedicated UK ELT area on the local website in Portuguese. The BC team is sizeable and competent, and does a great deal of work year round on promotion of the UK.

Market Overview

Brazilian Economy and Student Market

The total population of Brazil is currently around 180 million, 21% of whom are reckoned to be in socio-economic groups A and B. In the 15 to 34 age group, the population is around 61 million, so that 20% of that age-group comes to around 13 million. Life expectancy, major health indicators, and indicators of educational competence such as adult literacy have all been rising steadily. Brazil is the 12th largest economy in the world and the largest in Latin America. The currency has been relatively stable for nearly 10 years, and has recently appreciated significantly against both the pound and the dollar. In 2002, the exchange rate was approximately 6 Brazilian reals to £1; over the last two years this has changed from 5.5 reals to £1 to 3.9 to £1, so that the cost to Brazilians of foreign travel has reduced significantly. The economy grew around 5% in 2003 and 2004, and though inflation at 6% is relatively high in global terms, it is low in the context of Latin and Central America. Brazilian export performance has been strong, and it is increasingly the country of choice for foreign direct investment by companies such as Fiat, Volkswagen, Siemens, Nestle, and Coca-Cola. Per capita income has been growing at around 3 to 4% over the last 3 years.

Brazilians are technologically increasingly advanced, with the estimate being that there are around 20 million regular internet users, and mobile phone use grew 41% in 2004. With around 65 million mobiles in use, Brazil is 6th in the global ranking of countries.

However, these figures mask major disparities between the increasingly developed area surrounding Sao Paulo, and the extreme poverty of backwoods Brazil. It is not a total exaggeration to say that the real market for international education in Brazil at the moment is in Sao Paulo state including the satellite cities, particularly the two visited by the tour, Campinas and Porto Alegre. In Sao Paulo in particular, there are very visible signs of near European levels of prosperity: the traffic jams are of Beijing proportions, there is a high proportion of new cars, restaurants are extremely well patronized, and it seems that around 25% of Brazilians in the 12 to 30 age group are having cosmetic dentistry, which indicates a high level of disposable income.

With this increasing prosperity has come an increase in globalisation and international working, and an increase in the use of English as a working language. As the BC commented, the local market is demanding highly qualified professionals with a multi faceted background and an excellent command of English. A recognised international qualification increasingly provides a competitive advantage in the job market.

Sao Paulo state accounts for around 35% of Brazil's GDP, 50% of its industrial output, and 37% of total exports. Per capita income is nearly \$7000, against a Brazilian average of \$4,750. It has a population of 37 million, and around 120 Institutions of Higher Education.

VisitBritain estimates that around 70,000 Brazilians enter the UK annually. The average spend per person has been increasing rapidly. Of these, there are some 18,000 Brazilians as students, with the majority of these being in English language centres. The UK is the second destination of choice for Brazilians, slightly behind Canada, but there are reasons to believe that the UK is gaining on Canada and is in fact the top choice in terms of aspiration for Brazilians. Certainly anecdotal evidence from potential students indicates that they wish if possible to go to the UK, but would accept other countries if they cannot get into the UK or get to the centre or university of their choice.

At the time of the tour, the requirement for Brazilians to get Entry Clearance in country if they were planning to study for more than 6 months had not been introduced, and it was not clear how that change would be received. Local opinion is that the UK's record in visa processing is regarded as good, and the postal application system appears to be working well. The representative from the British Embassy who accompanied the tour to deal with questions from potential students about visa issues was extremely helpful and constructive, and did her best to ensure that students were not deterred by anything in the visa regime.

Student Response and Trends

The four events in Campinas and Porto Alegre were on university campuses, and to some extent this has skewed the kind of interest shown in courses. The quality of potential students making enquiries at the English UK stand in Sao Paulo, Campinas and Porto Alegre was extremely high, and there was a good but manageable volume at all times. The quality of the potential students in Rio de Janeiro was lower, and the Fair was noticeably slower in terms of business.

The following comments apply to the Sao Paulo, Campinas and Porto Alegre destinations. The four main areas of interest among potential students were as follows:

- Business and Professional English, often very directly tailored to existing professional career choices such as healthcare and dentistry
- Teacher training, including a sizeable number of English teachers wanting professional development and refresher courses
- English for academic purposes courses, linked with Masters courses at universities
- Longer General English courses, combined with work/work experience, with many students indicating a desire to come to the UK for at least a year, taking a course of 6 months or longer.

In Rio, the volume of enquiries was less, and though there was still an aspirational desire to visit the UK, the interest in sport and general tourism was much higher, and the educational component of a trip to the UK was seen as to some extent another type of leisure diversion.

Agents and Other Promotion

Both VisitBritain and BELTA participated with stands at all of the main events. There are a number of new agents in Brazil, and BELTA appears to be flourishing. The contacts made are listed at the end of this report. All will be invited to participate in the Fair in 2006. BELTA appears to be flourishing, and at some point, it is to be hoped that the British Council and BELTA might co-operate on a single set of Education Fairs, with a major UK dimension, rather than having two sets of Fairs, one UK focused and one more general run by BELTA. TM did presentations to agents and others in all venues, as part of the Education and Training workshops, but these were not well attended. Side meetings with agents, including meetings with the BELTA leadership, were much more productive. In addition TM had a very useful meeting with Tim Buchanan, the VisitBritain Manager for Central and Latin America, and a number of joint promotional ventures are now being planned with VisitBritain in the region.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that from the general economic background and demographics, Brazil is an increasingly attractive market, and this is borne out by its rise up the rankings as a source country for students coming to the UK for English courses. There is a strong market for international education centred around Sao Paulo. Demand for courses is largely in the four areas outlined above. Within that geographical and market area, there are good prospects for student recruitment by accredited UK English language centres.

List of Institutions and Agents Encountered

Maria Gabaro, Executive Director BELTA
Hector Escobar, Director Campinas Campus of Universidade Sao Francisco
Pierre Coudry, Director Agencia De Intercambio
Cassia Coudry, ditto
WTT-UC Cursos no Exterior, Leib Raibin- Manager
DW Brazil Cursos no Exterior, Rogerio Salari – Manager
Yazigi Travel, Maura Leao – Executive Director
Friends in the World, Luiza Santos de Souza – Educational Counsellor
Academia Cursos e Intercambio, Mayce Vilela – Director
Bex Sao Paulo Intercambio Cultural e Turismo , Adriana Covelo – Regional Director
GlobalWay, Juliana Ribeiro – Director
Student Oeradora de Viagens e Turismo Ltda, Sabrina Faria – Director



Educational Net, Solange Ludscher – Director
Connection Line, Vera Amaral, Director
Intercultural Cursos no Exterior, Felipe Jendiroba
Kartur, Nuno Ramon dos Santos – Manager
Portal do Intercambio, Glauber Vale – Director
CI –Campinas Viagens e Turismo, Bernadette Blanco
ditto Mauricio Mascarenhas
Universidade de Passo Fundo, Rosane Innig Zimmermann – Assessor
Pontificia Universidade Catolica do Rio Grande do Sul, Silvana Silvera – International Office
Director
Unilasalle, Brisolara Salomon – Professor
Central de Intercambio, Daniela Alle – Gerente
Universidade Estadual Paulista, Marco Bispo – Assistant Director
Ditto Elisabeth Urbinati – International Relations Advisor
Senai Professional School, Paolo Vidigal – Principal
Pontificia Universidade Catolica de Sao Paulo, Renee Zicman – International Cooperation
Intercambio Global, Juliana Martucci – Courses Operator
Servicio Nacional de aprendizagem Comercial, Ciontia Yao – Professional and Technical
involvement
UNESP, Patricia Spadaro – International Relations
Fast Track Consultancy, Rennan Martins – Marketing Director