

## Report – Visit to Libya



### Visit to Tripoli – 5 & 6 March 2005 Ulrike Kadritzke

#### Purpose of Visit:

- To attend ELTEX Conference and Exhibition as exhibitor
- To present a paper on English UK to delegates at ELTEX
- To engage the British Council in plans for a comprehensive single UK education exhibition in Libya
- To build on previous visit by Richard Truscott of English UK

#### ELTEX

#### Introduction

The first of its kind specifically for ELT in the market, this conference and exhibition was organised by Deansgate Associates in co-operation with the British Council and the British Embassy Commercial Section in Libya. The plan was to offer a platform of information and exchange to those interested in English language teaching and language study in the UK. At the Corinthia Bab Hotel in Tripoli, 35 exhibitors and a number of speakers from the UK ELT sector (course providers, educational materials, teaching aids and books and equipment) presented UK ELT to the audience of in-company training managers, teachers, university students and government ministers.

#### Market Briefing

All exhibitors were invited to the residence of the 1<sup>st</sup> Secretary Commercial for a market briefing.

#### Exhibition Review

Covering two days, the first half day was reserved for VIP entry only after the official opening by Dr Salah Ibrahim, Director General of the Academy of Graduate Studies and Antony Layden, the British Ambassador. During the morning, around 200 guests circulated the exhibition. Attendance picked up during the afternoon with the start of the conference sessions, however, attendance at the exhibition stands was very much determined by breaks in the conference section. Deansgate report an attendance of estimated 1000 people at the exhibition and 1200 at the conference. Nevertheless, general opinion amongst exhibitors was that the exhibition was worthwhile and all reported to have gained good new interest and for

some one or two serious new partners and those English UK members who attended all commented very positively about the event.

## **Conference paper by English UK**

Ulrike Kadritzke presented a paper with the subject "Studying English in the UK" at an English UK member centre to an audience of around 60-70 people. The paper outlined the different types of courses on offer at member centres as well as opportunities for progression and gave an insight into the study destination "UK".

## **The Market**

The most important message that was confirmed over and over again during this visit to Libya is that business has to be built with a lot of patience and to do business, it is necessary to return again and again. Libya has a very short supply of educational agents and the British Council reports that they find it hard to deal with organisations as people in general move on very quickly. The advice is to identify clearly partner organisations and rely on local partners for business.

While internet usage is very slimly spread in Libya, mobile phones are booming, making this a useful marketing tool. Libyans additionally like to take publications home and to get precise information on course offers and prices. In view of this, English UK recently produced an Arabic version of the English in the UK Guide.

Overall, education is in growing demand. After years of isolation, lack of funds and travel restrictions, the country is in need of reconstruction and has great potential for education providers. After all, the country has a very young population (60% under 30 years) and a literacy rate of 80%, the highest in the Arab world. UK providers will be viewed with great favour as the Libyan population has a very positive opinion of the British.

English has recently been made the second official language and the oil and gas sector alone invests around £20m per year on the development and education of staff. It is estimated that £450m will be spent by Libyans on education in the next 4 years. Over 3000 Libyan students are in the UK at any time (half of which are enrolled in ELT institutions) and most students begin their studies in the UK with studying English in the UK before going on to further university or college studies. It is estimated that £40m are spent each year by Libyans on ELT. Over the last three years, student numbers from Libya increased by 10% each year. (For further details on the Libyan market, please view Richard Truscott's report of November 2004.)

UK Trade and Investment is planning to produce a comprehensive guide for the education sector about Libya.

A steady growth in a new middle class brings about an increasing desire and more private means to study and to study abroad, in particular in the future. At the moment, most people still cannot afford the international prices of education so that companies are still mainly funding education, at the moment. Additionally, a demand for vocational training is also rising. The largest industry sectors next to Oil and Gas are Tourism, Construction and Telecommunications.

As reported before, many companies in Libya use overseas study as a perk for staff and as a result, Libyans still don't quite understand the value of UK training as they are not used to making their own decisions on where to go.

## Visas

During the ELTEX exhibition, English UK was able to meet Nick Bostin, the new Entry Clearance Manager at the British Embassy Tripoli, who has recently moved from Bangladesh.

Nick confirmed standard visa issuing criteria as follows: a student applicant will have to show genuine interest in their future studies and show that they have made a plan of what and why they wish to study in the UK.

Another criterion is that they have to show their ability to follow the course financially and in terms of language skills as well as proof of a place to study. To facilitate visa issuing, Nick advised study centres in the UK to make acceptance letters as forgery proof as possible, for example to use dry and wet stamps and not to sign as 'pp' as well as getting the paperwork out to students as quickly as possible.

Overall Nick seemed to still lack the in-depth knowledge of the Libyan market to give further insights into the visa situation. However, English UK raised the concern with him that a good basic level of English is a difficult criterion considering the poor in-country provision of ELT and was assured that the visa office was fully aware of this difficulty. The visa office interviews every single applicant in person and visas are issued within 24 hours. Um Al – Jawabi is still the procurement agency for Libyan oil companies.

Carl Reuter from the British Council confirmed that it is now easier for Libyans to commit to going abroad due to new passport regulations. In the past, they could only enter the UK once and not leave until the end of the course to keep the visa, whereas now travel home is allowed during the period of study, which proves very important to Libyans.

## British Council Libya

One of the objectives of the trip to Tripoli was to establish a possible all-encompassing event for ELT in Libya and Carl Reuter confirmed that he would be interested in such a project in the next couple of years.

First, the Council is concentrating on the design of its new premises which should be ready in September/ October 2005. The new building will incorporate a teaching centre as well as event space. The creation of the teaching centre is a reaction to the lack of in-country ELT provision. It is also in the pipeline that the British Council may in future help Libyans with placements in UK institutions as the agent network is far too fragmented.

In terms of events, Carl Reuter is also evaluating the possibility of hosting additional, smaller events at various times throughout the year at the new British Council aimed at specific audiences (e.g. Oil and Gas or Tourism industry).

## Forthcoming Events

Another event in Libya, which was already previously mentioned, takes place in June 2005:

### **BESA– Education Libya 2005**

5-7 June 2005 (application by end of April)

Organiser BESA (British Educational Suppliers Association)

Supported by UK Trade & Investment – SESA funding available

This event ran for the first time in June 2004. Intended as an international event, the focus was nonetheless on UK participants with 24 of the 30 exhibitors coming from the UK. Education and training providers included universities, colleges, English language schools and equipment providers.

Visitor Attendance 3,000 approx

Exhibition Stand Rates (2004)  
£260 per sq m

For further information contact Mark Roelofsen at BESA  
mark@besa.org.uk

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**Summary of specific appointments during the exhibition**

Visa Section  
British Council  
British Embassy Commercial Section

Useful contacts:

Salah Rahuma, HR Training Manager of the National Oil Corporation  
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Enquiries for specific courses from visitors to the stand as well as enquiries for partnerships relating to ELT provision to Libyans are attached in a separate (Excel) document