

Verbal Presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education 2012-09-11

Introduction

Mr Chairperson, members of the Portfolio Committee, fellow invitees, ladies and gentleman. My name is Stevin Smith and my colleagues are Shaun Fitzhenry and Gavin Eyre. We represent Education South Africa (EduSA), a voluntary body of language training schools across South Africa and would like to thank the committee for the invitation to be here today. We are affiliated to SAYTC, the South African Youth Travel Confederation. In addition, we are also affiliated to ALTO (Association of Language Travel Organisations) which represents schools such as ours worldwide. At present there are roughly 45 language schools in South Africa of which plus minus 50% are either full or affiliate members of Education South Africa (EduSA). Our aim here today is to present our case for a change or amendment in legislation which will allow us to become government accredited and recognised as important role players in the field of Further Education and Training. It is also to try and relay our stated aims of job creation and economic development in South Africa. In short, our wish is for government to see the benefits to be had and to create an enabling environment for the EFL industry in which to function.

At this point I would like to ask my colleague Mr Gavin Ayre to give you a brief overview of the EFL industry globally.

History of Language Training Schools globally and in South Africa

Though ours is a relatively new industry in South Africa, countries such as the United States of America, Canada, England and the rest of the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia saw the establishment of language schools as far back as 1935. Even though research has shown that the first language school came into being in 1987, it was only after attaining democracy in 1994 that South Africa as a language training destination really came to the fore with the establishment of about 6 schools in the first ten years, mainly in and around Cape Town. Since 2004 the number of language schools increased dramatically and can now be found in major centres such as Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Port Elizabeth.

What do we do?

We teach English and other languages to foreigners. All schools have agents around the world who recruit students on their behalf. These students come here to either learn from scratch, or improve their knowledge of the chosen language. In recent years Africa, and particular the SADC region, has been showing a lot of growth in terms of language learning. This is in line with what is happening in the rest of the world. I mention the SADC because of the fact the 5% of places at our universities are reserved for students from this region and we play a huge role in accepting these students at our institutions and preparing them for their studies at English medium universities. On average it takes about nine to 10 months to bring a student from beginner level to the required standard at South African universities. In this regard, our positioning allows us to act as a sort of bridge between student from foreign education departments and South African universities.

- General English
- Business English
- Academic English
- English for Specific Purposes – Aviation, Financial, Medical, Oil Exploration, etc, etc

Structure of our courses;

- Beginner
- Elementary
- Pre-Intermediate
- Intermediate
- Upper-Intermediate
- Advance
- Proficiency
- Academic English

Schools also offer the following externally written and awarded exam courses;

- IELTS – International English Language Testing System – Accredited by Cambridge University (ESOL) Department
- TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language
- Various English Language Exams, accredited by Cambridge University (ESOL) Department
- CELTA – Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults – Accredited and awarded by Cambridge University (ESOL) Department – (teacher qualification)
- DELTA – Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults – Accredited and awarded by Cambridge University (ESOL) Department – (teacher qualification)

Here it is also important to note that CELTA is accredited by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) at level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework for England. DELTA, accepted as a professional qualification in English language teaching is at level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework as are Master's Degrees in related subject areas.

The EFL Industry in terms of Job Creation and the Economy

In 2011 the Department of Trade and Industry commissioned Urban-Econ Development Economists to do a composite report on the value of Education Exports and Educational Tourism to the economy (see report attached). The report found the following;

- Number of jobs created by the EFL industry – 15698
- Total value of education exports in 2009 – R11.5 billion
- Language Courses – R2.6 billion
- Visiting friend and relatives R1.8 billion
- 20825 international students studied at 50 language schools in South Africa in 2009

The report also found that “the highest increase in demand for tertiary education is in Sub-Saharan Africa at 8.6 percent per annum”

What is happening in other countries?

“Language Training is one of the largest and most valuable education export-educational tourist market segments. The total value of the language travel market globally is \$8 billion per year. Currently, South Africa sits on 1.4% market share.” – Education Exports and Educational Tourism Market Study by URBAN-ECON as commissioned by the DTI.

NZ – Schools recognised and accredited by the Department of Education and NZQA

Australia – Schools recognised and accredited by the Department of Education and AQA

UK – Schools recognised and accredited by the Department of Education

Canada – Schools recognised and accredited by the Department of Education

Important to note; All of these governments recognise the value and importance of this industry to their respective economies and as a result created enabling environments for these institutions in which to operate.

What will accreditation and recognition do for us?

- **Allow us to compete on an equal footing with other countries**
- **Increase our market share in the global market**
- **Enable us to enter into working arrangements/agreements with mainstream universities and colleges.**
- **Allow us to issue Letters of Acceptance or Provisional Enrolment – these letters are needed in order for students to apply for study visas (at present Chinese students are not being granted visas because the Embassy in Beijing says we are not Government accredited institutions.) – see 1996 letter attached.**

Where do we feel we fit in?

It is our opinion that from a recognition and accreditation point of view we fit in with education. From a commercial point of view we fit into Tourism because 99% percent of our students are foreign who bring in foreign currency and spend it here.

Our Proposal/Solution

- 1. Government recognise us as important role-players in the field of Further Education and Training**
- 2. A study be done on how governments in the following countries are handling the situation; New Zealand, Australia, Canada, The United States OF America and The United Kingdom.**

Should this portfolio committee find that it is impossible to accommodate us, we seek guidance as to what we can do so that the economic benefits and proven job creation potential can be further enhanced to the benefit of us all.