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ialc - from strength to strength

Jan Kapper traces the association's history from its roots in the 1950s

The International Association of Language Centres (Ialc) was the brainchild of Alberto Sampere, who pioneered Spanish as a foreign language in the 1950s and founded the Estudio Sampere Spanish language school in Madrid.

In the days before agent workshops, language school directors attended educational fairs, and it was at such events that Alberto came to know the owners of private schools in Portugal, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, Ireland, the USA and the UK who would eventually form an association in 1983.

After a period of informal meetings and joint marketing, a constitution, code of ethics and by-laws were approved and Ialc was incorporated in 1990 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee.

because of a territorial policy that initially permitted only one member per destination. Subsequent generations of members have debated and reworked the association rules to suit a changing global marketplace.

Our flagship agent workshop, which is open to members, screened agents and selected exhibitors, has been held annually since 1984 in a different Ialc school destination.



PIONEER Alberto Sampere

won it three times and have been shortlisted every year.

The last two decades have seen significant changes in technology, facilities and student expectations, and from the late 1990s our quality scheme has required continuous improvement alongside minimum standards.

development plan that forms the basis of future assessment. Through seminars, workshops and an online forum, Ialc members share best practice and tips on running language schools.

We are managed by five elected school directors and a salaried executive director, supported by a small team at the Ialc secretariat in Canterbury, UK.

Ialc was founded to protect boutique schools from the competitive threat of corporate chains and state-subsidised university programmes.

Members come top of the class

Melanie Butler cross-references Ialc membership with UK quality measures

The International Association of Language Centres, or Ialc as it is known to its many friends, prides itself on being a 'network of high-quality independent language schools'.

One way of doing this is by benchmarking the member schools by their rank in other accreditation schemes of which they are members.

For four years the Gazette has been analysing the British Council inspection report summaries, known as publishable statements, and in the last year we have also analysed and published the results of the Independent Schools Inspectorate, the body responsible for educational oversight of language schools enrolling students for eleven months or more.



HIGH FLIERS The London School of English scored eight points of excellence from the British Council

Council inspections. (The results of the Scottish educational oversight scheme do not show such a clear correlation.)

UK Ialc members led the field when it came to British Council results. Based on the BC's inspection scores, both of the two top schools in the UK with a score of nine points, ELC Bristol and English in Chester, are members.

ber schools are four times more likely to be Centres of Excellence than the average English UK member. Overall Ialc schools exceeded expectations in their reports, over twice the average 1.6 points achieved by UK-accredited schools.

The results on the ISI inspections are equally as outstanding: 87 per cent of member schools exceeded expectations compared to just over 80 per cent of British-Council-accredited schools altogether.

opposed to just 10 per cent of British Council centres.

In England Ialc schools outperformed 80 per cent of language school chains and posted similar results to those of language centres at world-ranking universities and historic independent boarding schools.



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