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3.6 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier of the Minister for Education regarding the imposition of a pay award for Jersey's teachers:

Following the decision of the States Employment Board to impose a pay award on Jersey's teachers, what impact, if any, does the Minister anticipate this will have on teacher recruitment and retention?

Connétable S.W. Pallett of St. Brelade (Assistant Minister for Education - rapporteur):

Although it is not possible to second-guess what will happen the department estimates that there will be little change. The reason is that a Jersey teacher's pay is already higher in most cases than the U.K. (United Kingdom) counterparts in maintained schools even when the cost of living is taken into account.

3.6.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Supplementary. The teachers themselves have raised considerable concerns over this because they do not believe that it is good for recruiting teachers, potentially from the U.K., to come here to fill vacancies which we are in need of on the basis that when they come here they can expect them to be forced to pay the price with pay cuts because of Government financial incompetence over many years. Would he agree that this sends out a very bad signal to those teachers who we were hoping to be recruiting in the subjects that we have got shortfall of at the moment?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No, I would not agree with the Deputy over that. The department believes that teaching in Jersey is still a very attractive proposition for those from the U.K. We have got lower income tax here, particularly as you progress through the ranks of teachers. Teachers work fewer days in Jersey during the year and the school days are slightly shorter on average. Working in Jersey offers an attractive lifestyle environment. I think we all appreciate that as well. I know from my own visits to both primary and secondary schools, this does not apply to all children, but generally children are better behaved than in many inner city areas of the U.K. and I think we are thankful that our school buildings are in excellent condition and the facilities are very good, and that is something. Again, from my own involvement with sport, I think we are very lucky in this Island with the quality of facilities we have. So, no, I do not believe that that is the case.

3.6.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Assistant Minister agree that in any of the relations with our public sector workers, be they teachers or otherwise, that goodwill is an often unseen but important component in those relations but also in the service provision, and what does the Assistant Minister think will happen to that goodwill now that an imposition has been made against the will of many of these teachers?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think goodwill is very important in any walk of life or any business or any role that you play. I do not believe that has broken down. There have been some very difficult discussions I know over pay - discussions with the States Employment Board - but I do not believe that it is getting to the stage that goodwill has broken down. If teachers are not particularly enthused by their pay award I am sure over a period of time they will realise that the conditions they currently have in Jersey are preferable to some in the U.K.

3.6.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Assistant Minister agree that we live in a very wealthy Island where the most wealthy and the upper quartiles, in terms of income, have seen their income go up in recent years yet for some of the providers of key services, the educators of current and future generations, to not even be able to give them a pay increase which keeps up with inflation is a smack in the face for a body of people, especially when this current Government have said that they wanted to put education as one of their priorities in the Strategic Plan?

[10:15]

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Clearly, the States and Government are currently under extreme financial pressure; there is no doubt about that. But when you look at the pay of teachers locally and compare them to the U.K. there are some quite, I think, dramatic differences and I will take a couple of examples. Unqualified teachers in Jersey, £30,000 or around about that a year. In England it is £16,000. I will go to experienced teachers in Jersey: £49,500 a year, England £37,500. So, again, I think the differentials are still higher. I think there are good opportunities for teachers coming into the Island and there are also opportunities here as well and I think teachers are well looked after here. But clearly we are under, I think in terms of pay restraint, clearly it is difficult but I think that they are well paid for the services that they provide the Island.

3.6.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. Helier:

Clearly it is slightly less attractive to teach here than maybe it used to be. So I am very interested if the Assistant Minister could advise as to what efforts are currently being made to encourage and incentivise local students to consider a career in teaching?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That is something that the department is working very hard to do. The Education Department is proactive in taking steps not only to recruit teachers from the U.K. but also to retain some of our graduates that are currently off-Island. Currently, at any one time we only have half of our graduates returning to the Island, and that is something that I think the department is working hard to improve on, but we are using innovative recruitment methods, particularly online. The Talent Link system by which teachers apply for jobs has, we believe, been a little bit unwelcoming. We are doing all that we can to improve that but clearly we do need to try to attract more of our graduates back and that is something that we are actively pursuing.

3.6.5 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Is there any specific incentive to encourage a recently graduated education student in the U.K. that is from Jersey to return to the Island, i.e. some kind of golden hello?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

As the Deputy may be aware, I am not as fully knowledgeable in the department as the Minister is. I am sure they are looking at that type of issue and if there is I will get back to the Deputy with that information.

3.6.6 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

I just want to pick up on what the Assistant Minister is saying about teacher's pay and conditions being slightly better in Jersey. Does the Minister not agree that we should be proud of the fact that we value and respect teachers on our Island and in fact is the department going in the direction of worsening those pay and conditions? It sounds as if that is the direction the department is inclined

to move towards. Also, is the Assistant Minister aware that countries where teachers, as a profession, are respected and valued, correlates with higher educational standards?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I cannot disagree with part of what Deputy Doublet says but again I go back to the fact that I still believe our teachers are very well paid. The differentials, as I have said, are still great compared with the U.K. It is still an attractive proposition to come here and teach, as we are finding when we advertise in the U.K. Many people are looking for that type of employment. So I agree with part of what she says but I still think it is a very attractive proposition to come here and teach in the U.K. but clearly pay is an emotive issue. We do try to pay our teachers as much as we can but we have got to do that within the budgetary restraints that we have within the department.

3.6.7 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I am not sure my question was answered. The Assistant Minister agrees with me that yes, the conditions and pay for teachers in Jersey are slightly, and only very slightly, better than the U.K. Is the direction the department is moving into worsening those pay and conditions or is the department proud of the fact that we value of our teachers and are going to maintain those pay and conditions?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We do value our teachers and we are very proud of the work that they do. I do not agree that the differentials are small. I think the differentials, as I pointed out previously, are quite great. With experienced teachers there is nearly a £12,000 difference in pay so I do not believe we undervalue our teachers. I think we do value our teachers. I know from my own visits around schools, they do an incredible job in sometimes difficult circumstances in some of the town schools in sometimes very difficult situations. Do we value our teachers? Absolutely we do and I do think they are well paid for the work that they do.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

My question still has not been answered. Is the department worsening the pay and conditions or maintaining them?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy. I have allowed you a supplementary to your question. If you are not satisfied the question is answered there may be time to come round again but I must move on.

3.6.8 Deputy G.P. Southern:

It is the same topic. Do not worry. Will the Assistant Minister, on behalf of the Minister, give a categorical assurance that it is not his department's policy to reduce salaries for teachers, especially newly qualified teachers? Will he give that assurance to the House here and now?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think that is a matter for the States Employment Board rather than the Minister himself. We have to work, like I say, within budgetary restraints within the department and it is a matter for the States Employment Board and negotiations with the teachers.

3.6.9 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it the Assistant Minister's perception that the States Employment Board may well be considering reducing newly qualified teacher's salaries?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I cannot answer that. I do not have that particular information. I think that is something that the Minister would have to answer.

3.6.10 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

If there is U.K. regional variations with the U.K. teacher's pay, would it not be more meaningful for the Minister to provide Members with a comparison between, perhaps, say the London boroughs as opposed to a melange which includes Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and if the Minister does not have those figures to hand will he provide that to Members?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I do not have all the figures to hand. There are differentials even within London itself but I will ask the department to provide those figures to all Members.

3.6.11 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

If conditions are so much better for teachers here than they are in the U.K. why is it the department is struggling to recruit teachers for certain key subjects? He has spoken about the conditions being better for teachers on the whole but we also know that there is an inordinate amount of stress and mental health problems that teachers here face, which must surely have at least some link to the financial worries some of them have. Given that the teachers take the opposite view to the Assistant Minister and the department about this, would he like to take the opportunity to stand and say that they are wrong and that their view on this is clearly misinformed despite the fact that they are the people on the front line?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Attracting teachers is challenging across the U.K. and it is becoming more challenging here. Having spoken to head teachers myself during visits to schools, clearly attracting teachers, especially in the secondary school sector, is becoming more and more difficult but nevertheless when positions are advertised we are getting a great number of people looking for those positions so I think we will still attract teachers here but it is becoming increasingly challenging but it is across the U.K.