

### **3.8 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the teaching of German in the Island:**

Given the increasing importance of German tourists to our economy, what plans, if any, does the Minister have to ensure that German continues to be taught in the Island schools?

#### **Deputy P.J.D. Ryan of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):**

German is an optional subject and used to be offered in several of Jersey's schools, but I am afraid that there is very little student demand for it, certainly at the moment. In 2011, 17 students took G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) German and there was a similar number in 2012. The course is run at Beaulieu School, which also hosts an A Level German course and because it is at A Level, it is open to all Jersey 6th form students. There are currently no plans to reintroduce German in other schools. However, as with other subjects, I would support a school that wanted to run a course provided there is sufficient demand and the numbers make it cost-effective to do so. Also, if there is a broader economic case for a particular subject other than German, I would also be interested to hear this.

#### **3.8.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I thank the Minister for his response. Would the Minister comment generally about the trends in modern language tuition over the last perhaps 2 to 5 years as to whether we have seen a move away from the learning of foreign modern languages and what he thinks the reasons for that might be and whether he thinks that is a desirable thing, a neutral thing or a positive thing?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

Apologies for the slight delay, there was a number of questions in that. I will try to make a quick note of them. As regards the trends over the last 3 to 5 years, my understanding, certainly at G.C.S.E. level, it has remained reasonably constant overall. I can quote the 2011 numbers. Of the total G.C.S.E. cohort of just short of 1,000 - 996 students - 604 took French, 125 took Spanish, 32 Italian, 47 Portuguese, 3 Polish, and last but not least, one Latin. What are the reasons for any changes in attitude towards modern languages? Who knows? I can probably, like most of us here, think in terms of what is going on electronically with learning and whether languages are becoming less important. I do not have a particular view on it, although I know that some other people do. Do I think that it is a bad thing or am I neutral in my thoughts on perhaps the reducing importance of modern languages? My own personal opinion is that I think it is a bad thing and I would like to see that trend reversed, yes.

#### **3.8.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

In that context, despite the numbers you just quoted, is it not the case that let us say 6 years ago, there were French, Spanish, German and Portuguese available in 9 schools at G.C.S.E. level and at least that range of languages available to A Level in at least 3 schools? Is the case that that has now been reduced and what steps will he take to improve the access of students to European languages in the near future?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

It is demand driven. I do not have the numbers to hand for 6 years ago but I will take the Deputy's word for it. I have already said that I think it is a trend that I think could lead to be undesirable in the future. I have already said that I would support any school that wishes to run courses as G.C.S.E. or A Level as far as was economically possible within the kind of cost restrictions and efficiency restrictions that of course we are all living with. I do not think I can really say more than that, other than I think it is a trend that I would like to examine over perhaps a longer timespan than instantly today.

#### **3.8.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The supplementary is; is the Minister prepared to lift the class size restrictions, which is the driver which has reduced the access of students to languages in schools today? Is he prepared to lift the class size restrictions on languages?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I would like to give that some further consideration. I hear what the Deputy says and it is something that I would consider, but I would not be prepared at this point to say whether I would be prepared to do that, but I would certainly think about it, yes.

### **3.8.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

Having a constituent with a daughter who has experienced problems in being able to take up German, I echo what Deputy Southern is saying. But what I would like to ask is given one of the Ministers, I believe, of Chancellor Merkel's, statements - quite an enigmatic statement - that Europe would soon be talking German again, does he not agree that probably if that is going to be the case, an international language, then any moves we can make to encourage such developments will be very, very beneficial and worthwhile?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I think any improvement in the ability of Islanders to speak modern foreign languages is desirable, whether it be German or whether it be French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese indeed, or even Mandarin *et al.*

### **3.8.5 The Connétable of St. Mary:**

A brief 2-parter, if I could. Firstly, does the Minister consider that part of this problem is inherent because of our 14-plus transfer system, when students are getting taster sessions in the schools and then when they are transferring are finding that the options they have been looking at are not available in that school. Also as a general principle on language tuition - which I support, I think there is no greater gift we can give our children than a second language - will he introduce or consider reintroducing the language assistance and re-evaluate their assistance?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I am just trying to remember the range of questions that were there. Let us start with the 14-plus transfer, which I think was the start. Our system is complex. As we all know, we have had many debates in this Assembly about the nature of our education system. There are advantages to the 14-plus system and there are disadvantages to the 14-plus system, our 6th form provisions spread over 5 institutions, the nature of our 11 to 16 fee-paying schools, and indeed the stresses and strains that there are because of the high number or selective nature of our thing. So there are pros and cons, and that may be one of the cons that the Constable is referring to. I cannot remember the rest of the question.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

You only have to reconsider them, Minister.

**The Connétable of St. Mary:**

The reintroduction of teaching assistance in language.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

To teach languages effectively requires specialist teaching. The question of reintroducing... well, the U.K. Government is currently looking at the primary school curriculum. We will have to wait and see what the U.K. decides to do. If, as the Right Honourable Michael Gove has suggested, modern languages are part of that, then we will have to keep a watching brief and see whether we will take the necessary actions to reintroduce more specialist teaching.

### **3.8.6 Senator L.J. Farnham:**

Sorry, just a quick one, and the Minister might have already alluded to it. Could he just remind Members, French is still compulsory, I believe, up to G.C.S.E. level, and if not, why not?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

That is a question that I do not know the exact answer to. I do not think it is. I am ashamed to say that I should know the answer, but I do not. I do not think it is compulsory. I think you can see from the numbers, however, that French dominates the modern languages that are taken at G.C.S.E. level.

**3.8.7 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I would suggest that because the total number was 996 and 600-odd took French that it is not compulsory, but I thank the Minister for his answers. Just one consideration is also perhaps that the International Baccalaureate was sat for the first time last year, and that will include language tuition, which does not feed through in the other statistics, so that is perhaps something which is positive. The real basis for this question is the fact that we have heard in recent weeks that German and German tourists are particularly important to a growing section in the tourism sector. Also that we are trying to encourage young locals who are born in Jersey to go into hospitality and presumably that will require some knowledge of a foreign language, whether it is German or for the emerging markets, Chinese, Russian, whatever. Does the Minister agree that if we are to have joined-up thinking between the 2 departments in order to get more locals into work in the hospitality or even into the other sectors that it is important that we provide the necessary subjects at school which will be coming through in perhaps 5, 10, 15 years?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes, I do.