

2.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding programmes in place for the on-Island training of primary and secondary teachers:

What programmes, if any, are in place for the on-Island training of primary and secondary teachers and, if there are none, what, if any, are proposed?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Over the past 5 years, 20 secondary teachers have been trained locally in partnership with the Institute of Education, University of London. Eight primary teachers have been trained over the past 2 years in partnership with Bradford College. These programmes are not operating at present, partly because of funding constraints, but also because there is now a surplus of primary teachers on the Island. If required, these programmes could be resumed in future.

2.8.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Would the Minister not acknowledge that there is a tremendous programme by his department to bring returning teachers back and it is very difficult for people to plan their career when there is an on-off approach of the kind exhibited by his department? Can there not be some kind of continuity in the provision of this on-Island training?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

What we do, Sir, is look at the demand, both for teachers and for people wishing to train as teachers locally and we will react accordingly. Therefore, you could describe it as reacting to demand or, as the Deputy said, on and off. It has happened in the past. We have stopped it, we have resumed it and we react to demand as we interpret it.

2.8.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister aware that there is currently a serious problem with the recruitment, in particular of secondary teachers, with fields being narrowed-down to having to make an appointment from a mere 2 or 3 candidates?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

There is a problem with the recruitment of secondary teachers, which is a problem that is U.K.-wide with secondary teachers. Obviously, we try to attract as high a quality as possible and we have been operating a programme equivalent to the U.K.'s graduate teacher programme for secondary teachers, a programme supported again by the Institute of Education, University of London. There will be 2 unqualified secondary teachers following this programme from September, one mathematician and one scientist, both in shortage areas. The programme is training-while-teaching and is well supported. This is one way we are trying to look at the difficulty of shortages in this area. If necessary and if there is a demand, we would resume our secondary teacher training programme but, of course, that takes time and the people wishing to train are not always in the shortage areas.

2.8.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

If I can ask the Minister: has the department analysed the retirement profile of its staff and when these staff are going to retire so that it is prepared? Secondly, Sir, is he not aware that a lot of people who wish to take up teaching are people who, because of family commitments, cannot easily get off-Island for long periods?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, I am aware and that is why we ran a programme in which 20 secondary teachers have been trained locally over the past 5 years and 8 primary teachers in the past 2 years, for the very reason that we appreciate that for some people it is very difficult for them to get off-Island. We do look at the retirement profile of teachers but, of course, it is not just a retirement profile. Teachers can retire within a window. Some retire early; some continue teaching for a few years past the age at which they can retire. Of course, some leave and then change professions, as a number in this House have done.

2.8.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister outline to Members what measures he proposes to enhance protected time to ensure that conditions of service on the Island at least match those in the U.K.? Will he address the issue not only of recruitment but of retention and is he aware that some mature teachers, in the light of changes to higher education grants, are considering moving back to the U.K. in order to avoid heavy bills to pay for their children to go to university?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

A number of questions there. We are in discussion with the unions about conditions of service. Of course, conditions of service are normally linked to pay and Jersey's pay is considerably higher than the U.K.. We have some different conditions of service, which were freely negotiated some years ago by the teachers' unions concerned. The recruitment and retention of staff: I would hope that the salaries we offer and the ambiance we offer and the facilities in our schools will mean that we will continue to be attractive to teachers wishing to teach in the Island. As for teachers leaving because of potential changes in higher education fees for their children, I think those teachers would need to look very carefully at how much they would end up paying in the U.K., where the maximum grant is £3,000 if you earn under £20,000. Most students there now are going to home universities - a preponderance of them - because of the difficulties that their parents are having in funding them to attend universities away from their home. Higher education, as everyone knows, is a difficult issue and I will be doing a complete review of it, so that Members can decide in the end how they wish the Island to support their local students in higher education.

2.8.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Could the Minister please give us the average rates of teachers leaving the profession every year during the last 5 years, be it for illness, proper retirement or whatever? Secondly, Sir, can he confirm that all grants have been stopped for all students who express a wish to go to the mainland to train as teachers, given the policy he has outlined?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I am bemused by the second part of the question. Of course all grants have not been stopped for teacher training. In fact, if the Deputy would like to look at the Education Law, he will see we are bound to give grants to people who qualify for teacher training. It is a statutory requirement. As for average rates of leaving the profession over 5 years, I think I might need a slight notice of that question as I have not got those figures to hand. If the Deputy would like to write to me and the department, of course we will endeavour to provide him with what information he requires.