

2019.12.10

**13 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for Education regarding expenditure on adult education: (OQ.305/2019)**

What percentage of the Education budget is spent on adult education and what assessment has been made of how this compares with O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member states?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon (Assistant Minister for Education - *rapporteur*):**

The O.E.C.D. adult education level is defined by the highest level of education completed by the 25 to 64 year-old population. In Jersey, adult education encapsulates skill development, post-secondary school education, continual professional development and lifelong learning. Therefore, to answer the question of the Deputy, as far as the education skills sections are concerned, it represents 3.41 per cent. As a representation of the C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) Department, it is 2.64 per cent. Members will, of course, be aware that other departments provide and fund aspects of adult education such as in health, nurse and other professional training, social security, via the Back to Work scheme, which provides courses and training for adults and there are other departments that do so. So, the figures given do not represent overall Government spend on adult education. As for how Jersey compares with the O.E.C.D. states, the O.E.C.D. compares overall government spend on adult education and not by one department alone, as in the question. Also, they use the country's G.D.P. (Gross Domestic Product) and due to the nature of our main industry, Jersey measures things in G.V.A. (Gross Value Added). Therefore, the comparison and subsequent assessment that the Deputy is asking for, in the parameters outlined in the Deputy's questions, have not been made, as it would not be comparing like with like. Members will, of course, recall the Jersey innovation review in September 2015, done by Tera Allas, which is on page 26: the Government expenditure on education, as a proportion of G.D.P. is 2.5 per cent, but that is overall education spend and not specifically adult education.

**3.13.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

The O.E.C.D. itself says: "The world of work is changing. Digitalisation, globalisation and population are having a profound impact on the type and quality of jobs that are available. The extent to which individuals, firms and economies can reap these benefits will depend critically on the readiness of adult learning systems to help people develop and maintain relevant skills over their careers." So, will the Assistant Minister confirm to the Assembly whether he is satisfied that Jersey is, indeed, preparing its adult learners for the continually changing workplace and whether he believes that more investment needs to be made?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Am I satisfied? No, of course we can always do more, which is outlined in our post-16 skills report, which has demonstrated the avenues that the Government plans to pursue, in order to address exactly the issues the Deputy is quite rightly raising. In addition to this, as Members know, what I am also very keen on is that we finally tackle the retraining strategy, to get that up and going, as well, as part of our work streams but, of course, with the Minister for Education we have other work streams such as, for the early years, the school funding review, which needs to be completed first, in order to move on to these other priority areas. So, within the lifetime of this Government, we do want to see movement in this area and I thank the Deputy for raising these matters.

**3.13.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Does the Deputy agree that lifelong learning and a decision as to whether an individual can access that should not just be based on economic benefit?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

There are multiple pedagogical models that we might consider whether learning as a therapy is also useful. We know that we have, in previous terms, lost that budget, due to a previous round of cuts, so that has gone out, so we know that there are various benefits to education. Should it just be on economic advantage? That is why we need to do the work, in order to consult and understand where the priority areas are, but that does not mean just economic. That might include health and well-being aspects, as we have now incorporated into our Public Finances Law.

**3.13.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

So, where somebody is long-term unemployed, who wants to work, but perhaps there is not any work for them, or they want to retrain from a low paid job, should it be the decision of the Government to decide what courses we will allow them to do, on a funded basis, or should they have a more broad scope, to pursue their intellectual fulfilment?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

There were 2 aspects there. They are kind of 2 different groups and can I just say that the Back to Work team at Social Security do a huge amount of work in helping and supporting people in order to retrain and get into jobs. Whether it is the first modules that they work with with employers, they will support people in getting the first modules and then work with employers, in order to get them back on track and into work. Skills Jersey does a huge amount of work. That is one section. The other section, of course, which is more to do with my Social Security hat is, of course, the approved list that we have in Social Security. As the Deputy already knows, I want to see that changed. I think we need to move it from not only an essential skills list, but also a desirable skills list that can broaden the offering, so we have a middle stage where, instead of an all, or nothing situation, we do have more flexibility in the system.

**3.13.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

We adopted, in this Assembly, the Classification of Functions of Government system of our spend. It will help the Assistant Minister to compare with other O.E.C.D. countries and so, therefore, would the Minister encourage the Treasury to get on with that system?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

That is a matter for the Minister for Treasury and Resources. I would not say to hold it back. Though, what I would say again is, if you want to do comparisons, G.D.P. is not the only aspect to look at. G.V.A. is more reasonable for a jurisdiction like Jersey, though, of course, what is important is the future of Jersey and other aspects and to look at all the other measurements that, of course, compare communities. If I have misunderstood the Deputy, I am sure he will come back.

**3.13.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Surely, the basis of lifelong learning is instilled into pupils at schools. What support and encouragement will be given to youngsters and teachers, so that students are encouraged to get their intellectual curiosity embedded at an early stage, so that it stays with them lifelong?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

That type of work is, in a sense, being undertaken. We do have more projects going on, working with industry, in order to stimulate that kind of inquisitive mind. We had the Zest festival earlier on this year. We have just had the festival where we have had the engineering forces, which has gone on, as well, but what is important, I think, is tackling this issue under the review that the Minister for Education is looking at it. So, for example, do we need to acquire less G.C.S.E.s (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in order to make room in the curriculum, in order to support these other aspects, such as critical thinking, such as creative skills, such things that employers want more nowadays, instead of being so stuck with the tests, which some G.C.S.E.s do?

**3.13.6 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Surely, it is not a question of how many G.C.S.E.s. It is how much paperwork, regulation and red tape we are hanging around the necks of the teachers.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

I would not say that it is that alone, but the Senator is right and that is why the Department is constantly reviewing and trying to remove the amount of bureaucracy that teachers deal with. We have just issued a new framework, which is looking to remove duplications, so that teachers can do what they want to do, which is teach, rather than fill in forms. Again, if any Members do have any suggestions on this matter, please, we have an open door. Come and speak to us about that, because we would love to hear it.

**3.13.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

I hear the Minister commit himself to reviewing his critical skills policy in the near future. Can he put a timescale on that and when will he be coming back to this House with a reviewed critical skills policy, in time for delivery, come September, at Highlands?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

No, it is in the lifetime of this Government. I would imagine, as we did not get support for it in 2020, then it is a priority I want to pursue in 2021 and that is looking at the relationship between Education, Social Security and the economy, because the retraining strategy is broader than just helping people on income support. It is also helping people move sideways between careers, as well as those who need just that extra support, in order to move into different areas. So, for example, we know we have healthcare assistants, who want to become nurses, but they do not necessarily have any living support, in order to bridge them over that time, in order to move from one to the other and that is something which needs to be mopped up in the retraining strategy, but that is quite a significant piece of work, which I do not have any budget for yet, which needs to be done and, at the moment, our plan for that is 2021.

**3.13.8 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

So, the commitment to reviewing critical skills is merely hot air, is it?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

As I say, it is a priority in both Education and the Social Security Ministries but, again, that needs to be provided for in the next Government Plan, in order to provide the working officers, in order to do it for 2021.

[11:30]

**3.13.9 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Given the businesses that I speak to, who constantly say that the lack of skilled people is one of the greatest constraints on their performance, will the Assistant Minister confirm whether he liaises directly with businesses throughout the Island to make sure he understands the skills that they need and is, therefore, able to prioritise the lifelong learning that will help deliver those skills?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Absolutely not, do I do it personally? No. We have a brilliant team at Skills Jersey and they do that work. They are the face of the Government and they work with employers, they develop things with the Jersey Hospitality Association, they have developed things now with the Care Association, as well as providing more bespoke models, in order to work with employers. They do a fantastic job in providing that interface between Government and the employers. So, it is not me personally, but it is our wonderful team at Skills Jersey that do that work.