

2014.12.09

8.8 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding progress towards Chinese language tuition in schools and the establishment of a Confucius Institute:

Will the Minister state what progress is being made towards Chinese language tuition in schools and what steps, if any, are being taken with Ministerial colleagues for the establishment of a Confucius Institute or similar in the Island?

Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Officers and head teachers are currently working together to produce a detailed plan to address a number of key issues within the Island's education system. Reshaping the curriculum to better reflect Jersey's economy, history and culture is one of the key issues. I am of the view that children's acquisition of languages is important, both in terms of the Island's economy and its culture. The teaching of modern languages is therefore a key aspect of this work.

[10:30]

A recent review into the teaching of modern languages will inform the debate. However, there is no assumption that the teaching of Chinese will be an outcome of this work and I am not able, therefore, to give a commitment to its inclusion within the curriculum. I can however confirm that it will feature in the discussion and the debate. I can also confirm there are no current plans to establish a Confucius Institute on the Island.

8.8.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for that comprehensive answer. He said that there is no assumption that Chinese will play a part in the curriculum. Could he answer then perhaps whether he thinks that China and Chinese culture, whether it is to do with the business that is going on, will play an impact in the Jersey economy and in Jersey society going forward. If that is the case, then the Chinese, so to speak, are here to stay when it comes to business in the Island. Would it not make sense for us to making sure that our graduates, whether from schools here or from university coming back to the Island, have at least a cursory understanding of Chinese language and culture, at least in terms of business for the Island?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I think the Deputy raises a very valid point. Going back to the Confucius Institute for a second, I was not aware of the Confucius Institute and googled it - like most Members do when they have to refer to oracle that can give them the best information that is available - it seems to me that there are a thousand of these around the world now. There have been some concerns over what the Confucius Institutes attempt to do in displaying the language and the culture throughout America in particular. I think he has got a point and I think it is really relevant. I can tell you that conversational Chinese classes are available at Hautlieu, De La Salle and J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls). We have 2 teachers who have just returned from an exchange with J.C.G. and over 100 Chinese students are visiting in February from Beijing to Hautlieu, where we have twinned-up the schools. I think he has a relevant point and I will be speaking to Locate Jersey in particular to amplify his particular concerns.

8.8.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I think generally the Minister and myself are on the same wavelength so I would just ask for a reaffirmation of the fact that there will be genuine joined-up thinking when it comes to his department. As the Minister for Education, and at the moment Sport and Culture, he does have a vital role to play in making sure that Chinese language and culture in the overarching scheme of things is taught one way or another in our schools and it is taught at the optimum ages, which is

younger rather than older. If the Minister is happy to confirm that I look forward to working with him.

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Yes, I am happy to confirm that. Thank you.