

23.07.04

**5 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for Children and Education regarding the States Employment Board pay policy for teachers (OQ.141/2023)**

Will the Minister provide her assessment of the impact the States Employment Board's pay policy for teachers is having on her own ambitions for the recruitment and retention of teachers?

**Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter (Assistant Minister for Children and Education - rapporteur):**

As the Minister is malade I hope that Deputy Mézec will be happy if I answer the question. Thank you very much. The Minister is concerned about the recruitment and retention of all employees. It is a priority in her Ministerial Plan. Her officers continue to work to enhance recruitment activities and respond to concerns of the workforce that can impact on retention. Considerable effort has been invested into strengthening recruitment capabilities through joint work between the Education Directorate and the Delivery Unit within the Cabinet Office. Developing new candidate attraction approaches, focusing on enhanced candidate management, and streamlining recruitment processes are all having positive impacts. Investment enabled through the Government Plan funding is being deployed to grow the workforce. Schools and C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) continue to focus on providing new learning and development opportunities for staff to aid retention. These include funding of development to support leadership, multilingual learners, graduate teacher training and early career teachers among others. We are currently holding 18 vacancies, 7 jobs out of which are on offer ...

**Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:**

Sorry, Sir, can I just interrupt? There is a distinct smell of burning around here.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Perhaps we should suspend the sitting for 5 minutes while this is investigated just in case there is a matter we should all be concerned about. I will suspend the sitting for 5 minutes.

[10:12]

**ADJOURNMENT**

[10:18]

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Members, I think we can resume. Deputy Mézec, for a moment I thought your question had set the house on fire. **[Laughter]** But I was wrong about that. We will continue with the answer from the Connétable.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Surely, Sir, it was the answer that set the House on fire. **[Laughter]** I will start the paragraph again that I was on. We are currently holding 18 teacher vacancies, 7 of these jobs are out on offer. Eighteen vacancies is just 2 per cent of the headcount of the workforce. Our teacher attrition ratio for the past 12 months is the lowest it has been for 4 years at just 3.6 per cent. We have 88 more teachers than we had in 2014. When looking at attrition rates, the U.K. (United Kingdom) attrition rate for teachers is 9.7 per cent. Our ratios are one that most businesses would be very proud of. That rests of my case.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

A point of order, my question was about the Minister's assessment of the impact on the S.E.B. policy on recruitment and retention and the Assistant Minister appeared to mention everything but what my question was about.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

It is simply a question of asking the same question again, is it not?

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

I would like to ask you to refer to the Standing Order to require that so I do not lose my supplementary getting an answer that I should have got the first time round.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I am not satisfied in my own mind that the Connétable did not answer the question but do you want to ask your question again?

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

No, Sir, I have asked a question about the impact of the S.E.B. pay policy on teacher recruitment and retention and the Minister did not appear to make any reference to that at all.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Do you have a supplementary?

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

No, Sir, I have my original question which has not been answered in accordance with Standing Orders.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I ruled that it ... Connétable.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I will expand on the ...

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

He will expand upon the answer and then you will get your supplementary in the usual way.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Of course, the assessment would be based on the facts that I have already given. It is quite clear from what I said that most businesses would be proud with ratios of those type, therefore what I would say about the assessment is that we have been very successful on the current levels of pay for the teachers. I do not think I can say anything more than that. The data speaks for itself. We are successfully recruiting staff, retaining staff and training staff.

**3.5.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

I think the answer shows a great disrespect to the Assembly for not actually addressing what was in it. Can I take it from his refusal to address that very clear question of S.E.B. policy that his answer could have been better phrased as: "I think it has no impact whatsoever"? Could he offer that perhaps?

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Of course that is the view of my colleague. I feel that I have answered the question. The assessment is that we have been successful and I do not think I need to say any more than that.

**3.5.2 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:**

I do not believe it is just the former teachers in the Assembly who find it quite astonishing to hear from the Assistant Minister words like “pride” and “success” when all of the Island’s teachers will be gathering in the Royal Square tomorrow and are going on strike. There is clearly a mismatch between what is coming out of the mouth of Government and what is really happening in the classrooms. I would urge the Assistant Minister to say that he takes seriously the conditions of teachers, which has forced them to take this action at a time when I am sure none of them wants to be out of the classroom.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I support the teachers every day. They do a very important job and are dedicated to their roles, which makes such a difference to so many lives. I also support the union’s right to request a pay rise they believe is fair and support their right to take industrial action in accordance with the law. Of course, I wish that we did not have industrial action taking place and I do hope that S.E.B. and the unions can come to some agreement as soon as possible.

**3.5.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Assistant Minister suggested that many businesses would be proud of an attrition rate of one in 10. If I was a business man, and I saw my retention rates only at one in 10 then I think I would be ashamed and I would be asking my officers what on earth is going wrong with our system that we are losing one in 10 teachers in the first year, for example.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I am not quite sure where my colleague has got that ratio of one in 10 because the attrition rate is 3.6 per cent.

**3.5.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Read any liberal-leaning newspaper is where you will find the answer of one in 10.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Is there are a question? That was a statement.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

I suggest the Assistant Minister reads any liberal-leaning newspaper.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

It is still not a question.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Does he not agree?

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Sorry, I cannot agree because we appear to be quoting the attrition rate of the U.K., which is 9.7 per cent, not the Jersey attrition, which is 3.6.

### **3.5.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask the Assistant Minister directly: does he believe that the pay method used by S.E.B. is retaining teachers effectively - experienced teachers - and attracting a decent field for every post that is offered?

#### **The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Once again, I would go back to the success of both our recruitment and retention and that is taking into account the States Employment Board's pay policy. We currently have 2 per cent teaching vacancies. If we allow for the fact that 7 of the 18 vacancies are out to offer it is even less than that. An attrition rate of 3.6 per cent, which is almost a third of that of the U.K. Government. I am fully aware that one vacancy in a school can have an impact and that some schools will have more vacancies than others. This is why we are working hard on our retention and recruitment. But I cannot accept that the States Employment Board policy has had a particularly negative effect on our attempts for recruitment and retention.

### **3.5.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Does the Assistant Minister understand or agree that, by having a reduced pay increase for the most experienced members of staff, that is actively affecting retention rates of the most experienced staff on this Island?

#### **The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I would have to ask my colleague the data that he has based that on given that we have a low attrition ratio of 3.6 per cent. Now if he has some data, if he can bring it forward, I am happy that we will check that and establish what the discrepancies are.

### **3.5.7 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I would like to ask the Assistant Minister for some further clarification on the attrition rate, in particular whether the rate that has been quoted includes teachers that may well be leaving at the end of this term?

#### **The Connétable of St. Peter:**

The attrition rate I have is for the last 12 months. So it will not see into the future. But I am happy to forward or get the officers to forward any additional information they might be aware of on potential job losses in the forthcoming months.

### **3.5.8 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I would welcome that information from the Assistant Minister because I think that might give us a better picture of the attrition rate. Given that the Assistant Minister does not have that information in front of him, has he been briefed by officers about what a forecast might be about the level of vacancies that they might be expecting come September?

#### **The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I have. The 18 vacancies that I quoted are what is predicted for September.

### **3.5.9 Deputy M. Tadier:**

It seems to me that for teaching staff and for the unions that retention and recruitment is an issue and, with that in mind, will any of the Ministerial team be attending tomorrow's rally to listen to the concerns of teaching staff and their unions? If not, why not?

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I am always happy to meet staff and hear their concerns on behalf of the Ministerial team. It is important for me to say that I recognise and appreciate the hard work and dedication of our teachers and lecturers. As the Deputy is aware, negotiations on pay are carried out between unions and the States Employment Board and they are not something that I am part of, but I am happy to talk about wider conditions that may be discussed when the unions meet either myself or the Minister.

**3.5.10 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I did enjoy that answer. Those are all wholesome facts which one would expect from an Assistant Minister, but I am not sure if he said whether anyone would be attending the rally tomorrow from his team, which was of course the original question. If not, why not?

[10:30]

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I think I did answer that. I said that I was willing to meet the staff ...

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

You did not answer the question, the question was a simple one. Are you or members of your team going to the rally tomorrow? It is a yes or no.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

If, as I leave this building, the rally is going then I will speak to teachers and the union, that will be ... so I would say that that is yes. But of course we are in this Assembly tomorrow so my opportunity would be when we leave this Assembly tomorrow.

**3.5.11 Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin:**

Regardless of the Minister's data on attrition and retention, recruitment, payments and pay policy, does the Assistant Minister agree that as things currently are structured it is impossible for teachers to complete all the work required of them during the working day and they have to work weekends and evenings to achieve what they are asked to do?

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I have great admiration for teachers and the work that they do. It is a fact that they will have work during the evenings. However, that is recognised as part of the job that they do, just as many of us, as politicians, have to work in the evenings. I, myself, worked long into the evening on at least 2 or 3 weekdays last week. I do not think that that is particularly unusual.

**3.5.12 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

Could I ask the Assistant Minister if it is his or his team's assessment that the S.E.B. policy of continuing the year's long trend of real terms pay cuts for teachers, for that is what the policy is, has a positive, neutral or negative impact on their ambitions on recruitment and retention?

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I thought we had already answered that. However, I will go back to the data that we have. We have improved recruitment and retention rates, which are, despite what one of my other colleagues said, ones that some businesses would be proud to have. They are quite low rates. It is not only the pay

aspect. It is the whole package. Therefore, I do not particularly think that the S.E.B.'s policy has negatively impacted our attempts at recruitment and retention.