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How should elected members learn parliamentary skills: an overview*

Abstract:

This paper reports preliminary findings of a three-year international research project which aims to identify the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) considered desirable for members of national parliaments and how the education and training programs provided by parliaments and external providers contribute to the development of these KSAs. Through surveys and a series of interviews in selected parliaments, the research team reviewed existing education and training programs and identified ways in which such programs could be improved to further enhance the capacity of members of parliamentarians to do their job.

A wide range of national parliaments was chosen to represent constitutional, geographical and economic features such as executive, presidential and parliamentary models, small island to large continental nations and less-developed to highly developed states, all with elected legislative chambers. In identifying KSAs, the project team found that often stated roles and functions of parliaments were not shared universally. This has implications for the type of programs offered to members as logically it would be expected that the roles and functions of parliaments and parliamentarians would be reflected in training programs.

The investigation of programs for members and less formal learning methods such as ad hoc mentoring revealed a number of distinguishing factors. These include who designed and delivered the program, parliamentary staff, political groupings represented in the parliament or outside organisations. Other reasons for variations ranged from customs and practices to resource limitations. Program content and length and the learning methods deployed also varied widely.

The project also revealed some remarkable features of existing education and training programs: for example, quite different programs were offered by each chamber in some bicameral parliaments, with each appearing to have taken little heed of the other's programs.

The paper concludes by making preliminary suggestions about the design, delivery and evaluation of existing education and training programs for parliamentarians, in their particular context and puts forward ways in which they could be improved.

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Introduction

This paper presents an overview of an international investigation into the development of knowledge skills and abilities (KSAs) of members of national parliaments. It builds on earlier work¹ and reports its preliminary findings. The project is funded and supported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), AusAID and the Australian Research Council's Linkage Grant scheme; and is conducted by researchers based at Monash University, The University of Sydney, Victorian University of Wellington and the IPU.

The research aims to identify the KSAs believed desirable for members of parliament, to examine programs aimed to assist members to develop their capacity in these areas, and to review the effects of existing programs.

Research Approach

Several perspectives were identified that could be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the issues. A range of parliaments (see Table 1) were selected to facilitate comparisons and analysis of diverse practices.

A human resource perspective using both human capital theory and the resource based view of the firm (RBV) allow interpretation of capacity building and investment in the parliament's key asset – the parliamentarians who perform its functions. In knowledge based organisations (such as parliaments) a focus on the development of human resources can be linked to the deliberate strategies of building organisational capabilities (professional development) and the enhancement of individual and chamber performance (K. A. Coghill, Holland, Donohue, Rozzoli, & Grant, 2008). Development is a critical element in providing people in an organisation with skills to deal effectively with increasingly complex issues including decision-making (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Leonard, 1992).

A conceptual model depicting the relationship between capacity building and performance, (adapted from a model developed by Holton is shown in Figure 1 (Holton, 1996). It demonstrates that capacity building is related to individual performance, and in turn to organisational performance. However, these are moderated by trainee attitudes and motivations as well as the credibility of the training provider. Trainee attitudes (e.g., motivation towards skill development and career commitment) influence the outcomes of training programs (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000; Laske, 1999) and the credibility of the training provider affects reaction to the information they provide to attendees of such programs (Albright & Levy, 1995; Baek-Kyoo, 2005). Information is perceived as being more accurate, more likely to be accepted and responded to positively when the provider is seen as highly credible (Clark, Dobbins, & Ladd, 1993). Credibility in a training context is primarily determined by the trainer's formal knowledge (developed via education and formal training) and their tacit knowledge acquired through practical experience (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993).

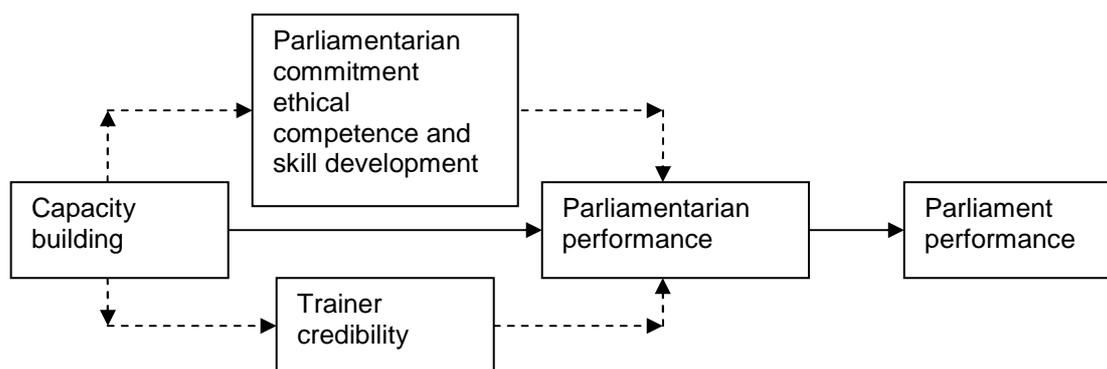


Figure 1. Conceptual model

The research has used a mixed-method design that involves document analysis, semi-structured interviews and a quantitative survey. Surveys and interviews have been conducted in countries selected to represent constitutional, geographical and economic features such as executive presidential and parliamentary

¹ K. Coghill, Donohue, Holland, Neesham, & Richardson, 2009; K. Coghill, Holland, & Donohue, 2008; K. Coghill, Holland, Donohue, Rozzoli, & Grant, 2006a, 2006b; Donohue, Lewis, Coghill, Neesham, & Holland, 2010; Grant, Coghill, & Lewis, 2004; Lewis & Coghill, 2004

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models, small island to large continental nations and less-developed to highly developed states, all with elected legislative chambers. The paper approach in which information was collected from members, of parliament, parliamentary staff and training providers, and was analysed - see Table below. Sixty parliaments were selected for survey only and 15 for survey plus interview (indicated by *) as discussed below. Of the 15, five countries within Australia's region of interest have been studied intensively by Kinyondo, supported by a PhD scholarship.

Table 1. Parliaments selected for research

Country	Constitutional Model	Country	Constitutional Model
AUSTRALIA*	constitutional monarchy	MARSHALL ISLANDS*	parliamentary
AUSTRIA	parliamentary	MAURITIUS	parliamentary
BANGLADESH	parliamentary	MOROCCO	constitutional monarchy
BOTSWANA	parliamentary	NAMIBIA	semi-presidential
BURKINA FASO	semi-presidential	NAURU	parliamentary
CAMBODIA	constitutional monarchy	NEW ZEALAND	parliamentary
CAMEROON	presidential	PAKISTAN	parliamentary
CANADA*	constitutional monarchy	PAPUA NEW GUINEA*	constitutional monarchy
CHILE	presidential	POLAND	parliamentary
COSTA RICA	presidential	ROMANIA*	semi-presidential
CUBA	communist	SAMOA	parliamentary
ECUADOR	presidential	SEYCHELLES	presidential
ESTONIA	constitutional monarchy	SOLOMON ISLANDS	constitutional monarchy
ETHIOPIA	parliamentary	SOUTH AFRICA	parliamentary
FRANCE	semi-presidential	SPAIN	constitutional monarchy
GEORGIA	semi-presidential	SWEDEN	constitutional monarchy
GERMANY	parliamentary	SWITZERLAND	other
GHANA	presidential	THAILAND	constitutional monarchy
GREECE	parliamentary	TIMOR-LESTE*	parliamentary
ICELAND	parliamentary	TOGO	presidential
INDIA	parliamentary	TONGA*	
INDONESIA*	presidential	TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	parliamentary
ISRAEL	parliamentary	TURKEY	parliamentary
JAMAICA	constitutional monarchy	UNITED KINGDOM*	constitutional monarchy
JAPAN	parliamentary	URUGUAY*	semi-presidential
JORDAN*	constitutional monarchy	UZBEKISTAN	semi-presidential
KIRIBATI	parliamentary	VANUATU*	parliamentary
LEBANON	parliamentary	VIETNAM*	communist
LIBERIA	presidential	ZAMBIA	semi-presidential
MADAGASCAR	presidential	ZIMBABWE	semi-presidential
MALAYSIA	constitutional monarchy		

* Survey and Interview; remainder Survey only.

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This range of parliaments allows identification of factors affecting the nature and effectiveness of parliamentary capacity building programs.

It is a three year project, commencing in August 2009. However it built on earlier research into the induction program for Australian Senators in 2005 and a survey of IPU member parliaments in 2007.

The research team examined archival data, reports, capacity building program guides, induction and orientation materials, website content and parliamentary procedures and manuals. A website has been established, technically compatible with the IPU website.

A survey was distributed to parliamentarians in 60 selected chambers with the view to examine relationships between capacity building and parliamentarians' performance and whether parliamentarians' career commitment and motivation towards skill development, as well as parliamentary training officer credibility, affect this relationship.

Details of the nature and type of training provided are outlined in Holland, Donohue, & Coghill (2011).

Up to a maximum of 15 elected parliamentarians ranging from first term to long-serving members at various levels of a parliamentary career (back-bencher to minister) were interviewed as were staff of parliaments, and other providers of capacity building. This was done in order to examine the effectiveness of professional development education and training programs.

Included in these interviews were interviews with providers of parliamentary assistance programs (i.e. donor aid) in five Pacific-region parliaments. Details of the findings of that research are reported by Kinyondo (Kinyondo, 2011).

The research project is now in its final year, with interviews almost complete and some survey returns pending.

These preliminary findings relate to several key factors affecting capacity building by parliamentarians, including: the functions of parliaments; the roles carried out by parliamentarians; the relationship between functions of a parliament; capacity building needs; whether capacity building in the form of education and training programs should be compulsory; the content of such programs; learning and mentoring methods; evaluation and review of capacity building.

Functions of parliaments

Understanding the functions of a parliament is essential to designing capacity building which will enable its members to contribute to the fulfilment of that parliament's functions. However, inquiring into the functions of a parliament can raise apprehensions that there is some external standard against which that parliament will be assessed. That was not the purpose of this research and the researchers have explained to those interviewed and surveyed that the intent was to reconcile a parliament's functions, as perceived by its parliamentarians and staff, with the capacity building associated with that parliament.

We found no evidence that interviewees felt that their own parliaments were being judged according to foreign or international standards.

In investigating the functions of parliaments, interviewees were asked to rank Hazell's list of parliament's functions: (1) Representation; (2) Legislation; (3) Deliberation; (4) Scrutiny; (5) Budget setting; (6) Making and breaking governments; and (7) Redress of grievances. Most interviewees identified the same three as major functions of their parliament: representation, legislation and scrutiny (Table 2). However, note that these findings are indicative only, as the data is from interviews, not a quantitative survey.

Of these 106 respondents, 79 thought legislation to be one of the two most important functions of parliament, closely followed representation by (68). While only two respondents thought scrutiny to be their assembly's most important function, a total of 47 interviewees ranked scrutiny as one of the three most important functions of their legislature.

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Table 2: Parliamentary functions rated by interviewees

Rating of function by interviewee	Representation	Scrutiny	Legislation	Making or breaking government	Deliberation	Redress of Grievances	Budget setting
Most important	23	2	20	2	1	0	1
Second most important	6	16	13	1	2	1	8
Third most important	7	15	13	1	3	1	8
Fourth most important	3	3	0	6	6	3	9
Fifth most important	2	3	1	5	9	4	5
Sixth most important	2	3	0	11	7	7	1
Least important	2	2	1	7	4	11	2

However, two very significant distinct types of representation were identified. Firstly, representation was seen as representing the citizens in legislating and deliberating, generally as a trustee rather than a delegate. Some interviewees saw their role in this parliamentary function as representing their political party and therefore only indirectly representing their constituents. Parliaments of all types were reported to perform this type of representational function.

Secondly, representation was seen as a vehicle for the redress of grievances, not only in the formal proceedings of the parliament but in taking up matters on behalf of constituents, e.g. directly with ministers or public service agencies. Parliamentarians regard addressing grievances on behalf of constituents as very important in some jurisdictions, particularly those where parliamentarians are elected by single member constituencies such as the UK House of Commons, Australian House of Representatives and Canada's House of Commons. For parliamentary staff, this was not such a major function of the parliament. This function was not regarded as relevant to a parliament in an executive presidency.

The legislative and scrutiny functions were seen as legislating and holding the executive to account respectively.

Budget setting was generally acknowledged by MPs and parliamentary staff as an important function, but some saw it as little more than legitimating decisions made by and effectively under the control of the executive. Responses were mixed, ranging from replies like "Budget setting, how would that apply to me?" (AUS_7_AWE, para 10) to "without budget what can you do? Nothing" (SA_2_70008, para 2). Many MPs saw budget setting as a particular form of legislation e.g. "budget setting and legislation are not mutually exclusive because you set the budgets through budget bills" (AUS_8_FOS, para 44). Both MPs and providers of parliamentary training programs felt that a greater amount of education for MPs in budget setting would be appropriate.²

Deliberation was not readily recognised by interviewees. Many asked for further explanation or conflated it with legislation.³ The interviews with Australian MPs took place quite soon after the highly significant debate on Australia's participation in the war in Afghanistan, yet it was necessary to remind interviewees of the debate as an example of deliberating being separate to legislating.

² UK_8_48, para 152, VIET_1_BJPV_external

³ Typical were comments such as: "In order to legislate you have to deliberate. And therefore it's the same thing" (ET 7 Mohai_admin, para 16f.) One MP saw it as a party-specific training for public speaking "Deliberation – Party training, debates, videos and then feedback and critique. It is often how you say it" (SA_8 noteA, para 66).

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Curiously, few recognised making and breaking government as a function of their parliament, even where the functioning of the parliament clearly determined which leader was commissioned to form a government, as in recent Australian, British and Canadian parliaments. However, this function is absent in executive presidencies, notwithstanding the rather different capacity of some to impeach a president in certain circumstances.

Kinyondo has identified constituency development funds (CDFs) as a function of two Pacific-region parliaments. CDFs are known to be used in other jurisdictions (Coghill et al., 2011).

The analysis of responses to Hazell's seven functions of parliament indicates functions which largely reflect the roles parliamentarians see themselves as performing. The major difference is the strong emphasis that parliamentarians in parliamentary systems put on taking up constituents' grievances. Such grievances rarely require legislative action and are generally incompatible with a parliament's budget-setting function, so that they fall outside the functions of greatest concern to parliamentary staff. CDFs are likewise outside the normal interest of parliamentary staff.

Thus the research team found that there is agreement on the three major parliamentary functions and roles taken by parliamentarians which in turn suggests common ground may be found in relation to the KSAs most relevant to parliamentarians.

We will concentrate on the three functions parliamentarians consider significant before briefly discussing the remaining four.

Representation requires particular KSAs. Knowledge of parliamentary procedures and processes are necessary: e.g. the available opportunities to speak during proceedings and the formal and informal rules that apply to them.

Representational communication skills include the capacity to represent views and attitudes primarily to the parliament in session but also to the community through media ranging from public meetings, print, radio and television to the most recently-popular Internet-based social media. However, listening skills – the capacity to pay attention to the voices of constituents expressing their views, concerns and desires – were emphasised much more strongly by parliamentarians in some jurisdictions (e.g. Ethiopia, South Africa).

Effectiveness as a parliamentarian is related to the ability to apply knowledge and skills. The more effectively a parliament's members can execute those, the greater the capacity of the parliamentary chamber to fulfil its representational function, even when one party has a large majority in the parliament.

Parliamentary staff have a professional interest in the effective functioning of the parliament and are disinterested, professionally, in the conduct of political discourse outside the chamber. That concern led to the suggestion that parliamentarians should be assisted to develop the confidence to speak effectively in proceedings.

However, it would not be accurate and it would be putting an idealised interpretation on parliamentarian interviewees' comments to suggest that they wished to enhance their communication skills in order to ensure more effective performance by the parliament of its Representation function. Parliamentarians speaking about the importance of communication and media skills were most likely to relate them to advancing their individual political interests, the interests of their political party or both. Indeed, few if any mentioned the desirability of enhancing the parliament's functioning.

This could be viewed as rational self-interest on the part of parliamentarians as focusing on improving their own performance, or the performance of their party, are both more proximal and personally beneficial than enhancing their parliament's functioning. Also, one may argue that training undertaken by parliamentarians to improve their own individual performance, in aggregate, improves the functioning of the parliament. However, it may be the case that the goals of the individual parliamentarian are different from (or perhaps counterproductive to) the goals of the parliament. This may lead to sub-optimisation (Kearney & Berman, 1999), where the individual's or party's goals assume priority over the institution's goals, thereby reducing the functioning of the parliament.

Nonetheless, there is some evidence that capacity building can lead to parliamentarians contributing to the improved performance of their parliamentary chamber. Australian Senate staff reported that they had observed that the performance of new senators whose induction program had included role-play in a mock sitting was noticeably superior to earlier new senators whose earlier induction had not had a role-play component (Coghill, Holland, Donohue, Rozzoli, & Grant, 2008).

The legislative function is much more clearly related to the parliament. In so far as legislation-making extends beyond parliamentary proceedings, it involves the communication skills that relate to the

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Representation function. However, this is highly relevant as many parliamentarian interviewees revealed a much stronger interest in policy, which is often the basis of legislative proposals, than in legislation per se.

Again, there is a completely understandable distinction between the legitimate interests of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. In relation to the formulation of public policy Parliamentarians are elected to represent citizens in defining, creating and monitoring the implementation of public policy whereas for parliamentary staff, enabling the legislative function is a primary responsibility.

Contrary to widespread belief that many or most parliamentarians are qualified lawyers (Carrick, 2005), they rarely form a majority of members of a parliament. Thus, most parliamentarians lack the formal training in the law which we might suppose provides valuable knowledge, skills and abilities in fulfilling the legislative function. Indeed many are elected without any prior knowledge of legislation or the legislative process. However, even some lawyer parliamentarians felt the desirability of training related to the parliament's legislative function. Kinyondo has observed that in some Pacific jurisdictions, many parliamentarians are content to withdraw from an active role in legislating, leaving to others more expert than themselves (Coghill, et al., 2011). However, parliamentarians remain responsible for their role in the parliament's legislative function. They cannot abdicate it whilst remaining members of the legislature. That being the case, it is their responsibility to acquire the capacity for this aspect of their role.

Parliaments that offer induction programs generally include a component on legislating. A well-designed program would include: knowledge of the principles of the construction and drafting of legislation to implement policy; skills in comprehending Bills, Acts, sub-ordinate legislation and legislative amendments; and, the ability to use that knowledge and skills in debating legislative proposals.

The third major function of parliaments, scrutiny, is both a parliamentary function and a function occurring in the wider political discourse involving not only politicians but also the media and other social actors. In many but not all parliaments it directly involves the supreme audit authority (known under various titles e.g. Auditor-General, Comptroller, Court of Audit, Royal Audit Authority, Supreme Audit Institution). Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff have a common interest in the effective operation of this parliamentary function, but for parliamentarians it is felt as a stronger interest when they are in opposition than in government. In this function, parliamentarians need knowledge of the various accountability mechanisms, the research skills to know when, where and how to seek and obtain information about the actions and performance of the executive and the ability to use the knowledge and skills effectively. Again, the ability to communicate the findings to in the course of proceedings and to the public is crucial.

Similar arguments can be made concerning the knowledge, skills and abilities needed amongst parliamentarians for the effectiveness of the other functions of the parliament.

Although budget setting was identified less frequently as a distinct or high priority function of the parliament, it was nonetheless one of the most commonly suggested areas requiring more attention from providers of education and training programs. Parliamentarians in most countries indicated that they would like to have better knowledge and understanding of the budget process.⁴

Questions then arise as to how parliamentarians can develop these capacities. A preliminary analysis of our research suggests several important findings.

Most parliamentarians have progressed through various non-parliamentary roles during the course of which they have learned skills such as public speaking, media communications and negotiating. In some cases these required levels of ability similar to those as a parliamentarian but other cases their career paths had not equipped them well for their new careers. It follows that capacity building programs must assume that there may be newly elected parliamentarians who are ill-prepared to contribute to the functions of the parliament. The interviews revealed that parliamentarians in many parliaments felt the need for training to deal with the media.⁵

Parliamentarians often feel the need to develop skills in managing their time and multi-tasking due to the heavy workload and competing demands for their time and attention.⁶

⁴ SA VN870013 para 159-161 "Q: Budget deliberations? Training help? A: This is something that I think if I tell people I need to start afresh on this one. Somebody has to take me from level one. Move up. Step by step with me. I think that can help me a lot."

UK_55040_A paras 149-150 "Budget setting? That, I would say, is probably about the greatest weakness in terms of training in that there's no training at all – not that I've been on – to do with budgets and budget setting."

⁵ E.g. AUS_5_ALE para 66 "I would like to organise some media training" Rom_4_GH para 32 "Communication and powers of expression are also important. "VIET_TDL para 118 "relations with the mass media"

⁶ E.g. AUS_3_GHU para 65 "I think the induction program has to cover ... personal management and personal development"

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From interviewees responses it seems that formal mentoring arrangements are almost unknown. Informal mentoring seems to be very much a product of particular circumstances, such as being of the result of individual relationships or, in some cases on the initiative of party officials who see it as desirable. This is quite common but is sometimes so casual or ad hoc as to barely meet definitions of mentoring e.g. “(t)he action of advising or training a another person, esp. a less experienced colleague; (esp. in early use) the coaching of a sports team; the activity of a mentor” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2011).

The source of induction and other capacity building programs varies according to local custom and practice and resources. In Commonwealth parliaments it appears to be common practice for the parliament to take primary responsibility for such programs. Subject to the availability of resources, these programs are delivered by staff of the parliament (e.g. Australia, United Kingdom), augmented by the political parties and sometimes also by outside expertise. That outside expertise may be very much in the background and virtually unknown to the parliamentarians, as in the case of UNDP assistance to the Parliament in Uruguay. In yet other cases, external providers may be highly visible in the delivery of programs, as observed by Kinyondo in a number of Pacific region parliaments.

However, in some other countries, parliaments play little if any role. In any induction training and capacity building is undertaken by the political parties, as in France for example.

Another point of distinction is whether participation by parliamentarians in induction or other capacity building programs should be compulsory. It is widely accepted, that a member is elected in a personal capacity to represent electorate constituency and having been elected, cannot be directed as to how to conduct her or him-self e.g. Indonesia (Prof. Dr. Muchammad Zaidun, Nurul Barizah, & Radian Salman). Accordingly, a parliamentarian cannot be compelled to attend any form of training or professional development.

However, in many democracies parliamentarians are members of political parties to which they voluntarily offer loyalty, submit to collective decision-making and are influenced by party leaders in their decisions and actions. In other matters they voluntarily accept direction by party leaders or whips. That raises the question as to whether in such jurisdictions they would also accept direction to participate in capacity building programs, notwithstanding their formal freedom from direction.

One parliamentarian interviewee went so far as to advocate that parliamentarians undertake formal tertiary education.⁷ A corollary of increasing professionalization of a career is the expectation that there are acceptable minimum standards of competence and ability. Indeed, in other professions incumbents are required to engage in professional development activities such as training in order to practise their profession and maintain accreditation with professional bodies. Therefore, one may argue that as the parliamentarian role becomes more “professionalised”, it is not unreasonable to expect that parliamentarians should be required to engage in training and development activities to ensure that they perform their roles competently.

In practice, high proportions of parliamentarians do participate, but the rate is substantially lower where it is not compulsory – 40 to 60 percent compared with close to 100 percent when compulsory (Coghill, Holland, Donohue, Richardson, & Neesham, 2009).

Most parliamentarians interviewed in jurisdictions without compulsory participation in capacity building responded that it should not be compulsory but a significant minority believed that at least the basic induction program should be.

The extent and nature of capacity building reported by parliamentarians interviewed in the 15 parliaments varied in two respects. Firstly, many parliamentarians did not find it memorable, in that they did not recall having had an induction or other program, even though other sources such as relevant parliamentary staff provided details of such programs. This reflects a common research finding that participation in training or a particular type of training provided is best measured via accessing organisational records or by surveying the training providers. Recall errors often occur when participants self-report retrospectively on their involvement in these programs.

Secondly, the content, learning techniques and length of education and training programs all varied widely. The resources available to a parliament are an obvious factor in this. A small parliament with few staff in an economically poor country is ill-equipped to allocate resources to training its parliamentary staff to train parliamentarians or other-wise fund capacity building.

⁷ There was one suggestion for a more formal requirement: “I think you would treat it like degrees, graduate degrees and then shorter certificates or diplomas. I think they should be an absolute part of the parliamentary process on precisely the same terms as the senior executive of the public service” (AUS_3_GH paras 19-21).

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Needs analysis is a basic feature of the process for designing the content of capacity building programs. Little evidence of effective systematic needs analysis was found in our research; participating parliamentarians were asked to comment on their programs and to offer suggestions for further programs. However, few if any parliaments have thoroughly investigated either the capacities needed to enable their parliament to fulfil its functions or the capacity building needs felt by the parliamentarians. One parliamentarian summed up the situation as

this place is such an odd place at times. It is probably the only organisation I have ever worked in where there is this inability to recognise the kind of skill sets that are required. Any other organisation ... in the government department I used to work in, we used to try to spend 4% of our FTE, full time equivalent budget, on training every year because we recognise....⁸

The content on induction programs generally included a grounding in procedural rules and practices and arrangements for salaries and entitlements.

Earlier research suggested that a dividing feature was advice on recognising ethical dilemmas and handling such issues (Coghill, Donohue, & Holland, 2008). Some parliaments include this component whereas others deliberately eschew it. In the current research, some interviewees, when prompted, endorsed its inclusion in capacity building, but at least one thought it too “sensitive”.⁹

Capacity building beyond an initial induction program also varied widely. Some had briefing sessions, often held at lunchtime, dealing with specialist topics. For example, the Australian House of Representatives had one briefing on speaking opportunities in the House and another on the annual Budget shortly before its presentation, the latter was designed to help parliamentarians learn how to use and interpret the large volume of information provided with the Budget.

Learning techniques also varied widely, ranging from the simple provision of documents to the application of adult learning techniques, such as mock sittings in which newly elected parliamentarians practice normal daily sitting procedures, advised and guided by senior experienced parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. No parliamentarian interviewed expressed any reservations about mock sittings; on the contrary, the concept was welcomed by some.¹⁰ Such learning techniques are reported to have enabled new parliamentarians to become more effective more quickly (Coghill, et al., 2008).

Education and training programs were rarely more than one week; most were shorter and varied even between the two chambers of bicameral parliaments. For example, the Australian House of Representatives offered a 1½ day program for parliamentarians first elected at the 2010 election whereas new senators who took office in July 2011 were offered a three day program. The differences confirmed the autonomy of each House but the explanation is less clear. House of Representatives staff believed that a 1½ day program was the maximum to which new members, and their political parties, would agree; the staff indicated that that was the customary duration of their induction programs and that it had not been questioned.

No parliamentarian-interviewee questioned the length of the program. Some readily agreed that they would have made more time available for induction if necessary. Programs in emerging democracies often were longer. In case of South Africa there were various lengthy modules and parliamentarians were encouraged and supported to undertake formal tertiary studies. Ethiopia offered a whole year of learning with parliamentarians dedicating between two to four months to training issues.

Some parliaments offered only a brief induction which amounted to simply giving new members basic information in documentary form.

Many of the more extensive programs were comprised of presentations and related documentary information (e.g. procedural rules and practices; arrangements for salaries and entitlements), with opportunities for questions. These were given by parliamentary staff, other local experts or other providers such as international donors e.g. Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI).

Parliamentarians views on the value of the program or programs in which they had participated were mixed. A major finding reported by Kinyondo concerned programs delivered for Pacific region parliaments by foreign

⁸ CA 10 JERO paras 53-55

⁹ Viet_10_NTN para 101-102 “in those training courses, the organisers do put those contents into the training course, like the codes of conduct and ethical issues of being an MP. It’s important.”; Viet_11TDL para 207-214 “... accountability should be included, but not ethics. It’s kind of a sensitive topic”

¹⁰ UK_550035 para 66-67 “we actually had a training session on the floor of the House, which has never been done before, because normally, they’re very sensitive about people blundering around before they’ve been sworn in. It was great.”; Viet_10_NTN para 55 “there were activities like role playing, how to make a speech, how to make questions and things like that”; Viet_11_TDL paras 188-189 “many courses in TCER do have role-plays and rehearsal of the skills. For example, this group is the government and that group will act the MPs who have to ask questions”

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providers. Kinyondo explains that these were strongly criticised by parliamentarians who participated in them, largely on the grounds of relevance (Kinyondo, 2011).

Conclusion

The investigation of capacity building programs for members and less formal learning methods revealed a number of distinguishing factors. These include whether program were designed and delivered by parliamentary staff, political groupings represented in the parliament or outside organisations. There were wide variations between programs, for reasons ranging from custom and practice to resource limitations. The content, program length and learning methods deployed also varied widely.

The starting point for capacity building is to understand the capacities that must be built. Those capacities are a product of the functions an organisation aims to fulfil. In the parliaments investigated, there was general agreement that the major functions in all cases are representation, legislation and scrutiny, notwithstanding some significant differences on other functions.

This paper makes preliminary suggestions which parliaments could consider in the design, delivery and evaluation of programs for parliamentarians, in their particular context.

A thorough needs analysis, as the first step in designing a capacity building program for any particular parliament, is the most significant among these. Each program must serve both each parliament's purposes and address needs felt by parliamentarians

Use of adult learning techniques is crucial to the acceptance by parliamentarians of any program and its effectiveness in helping them build the capacities they and the parliament need.

This research, when complete, will provide new information and guidance for parliaments and their partners as they build their capacities to fulfil their vital roles.

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