

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS: SURVEY OF ORIENTATION AND INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

This paper reports original research which built on conceptual issues previously identified by the authors.

A survey of national parliaments sought information on orientation and induction programmes offered to first term members and on members' perceptions of those programmes.

An overview of findings is presented and significant issues identified. Most programmes provided passive development through information and a handbook rather than active skill development. Few used training processes and techniques that were based on contemporary adult learning principles. There were sharp divisions over training and development in dealing with ethical issues.

The findings suggest considerable potential for the further development of programmes and for sharing information about programmes in order to assist capacity building for Parliamentarians and thereby enhance the performance of parliaments and individual members.

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CAPACITY BUILDING FOR NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS: SURVEY OF ORIENTATION AND INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

PURPOSE

This paper reports a collaborative research project conducted by Monash University with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2007. The project was an exploratory study which aimed to build knowledge of the design and delivery of orientation and induction programmes to meet the professional development needs of parliamentarians, both immediately post-election and during their parliamentary careers. Additionally, this research project sought to identify aspects of parliamentary training and development requiring further investigation.

The study aimed to collect data required to: (1) develop an improved understanding of the extent, nature, content and evaluation of programmes; (2) review existing programmes; (3) develop an improved understanding of the adult learning techniques (andragogy¹) applied in programmes; (4) create a handbook to assist parliaments in the design and delivery of programmes; (5) add to the database maintained and published by the IPU; and (6) establish foundations for further research and development related to capacity building for parliamentarians.

BACKGROUND

Coghill, Holland, Donohue, Rozzoli and Grant (2008) argued that raising the level of parliamentary performance to a recognised and measurable standard of professional competence enhances the contribution of parliamentarians to facilitating more effective government. Moreover, they suggested that increasing parliamentarians' performance extends their contribution by facilitating further activities of value to society after they have completed their parliamentary service. The authors also argued that third party evaluation and participation is necessary to provide independent and objective assessment of these programmes (Coghill, Holland, Donohue, Rozzoli and Grant, 2008: 93-94).

There is a paucity of research and information published on the extent and nature of orientation, induction and capacity building programmes offered to new members of parliamentary chambers. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) website includes information provided by chambers of member parliaments regarding training for parliamentarians (Inter-Parliamentary Union undated). However, information concerning the programmes offered is very limited and is not presented in a standard format, making it difficult to interpret or undertake a comparative evaluation of programmes.

The project builds on previous research, including the finding that parliamentarians expressed a desire for more professional development ((Coghill et al. 2006) 2006, 2008).

METHOD

Data were collected through questionnaires administered to chambers of all national parliaments.

In June-July 2007 two questionnaires were constructed: the first was designed for national parliamentary chambers and the second for first term members of parliament. These were translated into French and Spanish and appropriate language versions distributed to the

¹ Andragogy: learning related to adults. (Johnson, Neil 2007 *Andragogy*. Warwick Medical School 2007 [cited 26 February 2008]. Available from http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/study/cpd/module_index/md906/1107/documents/andragogy_-_nj-ep_-_v0-1_-_08nov07.pdf.)

Secretaries General and Clerks of IPU member parliaments via email, in September 2007. The surveys were subsequently back-translated into English to ensure that the meaning of each question was preserved. Returns were invited by email, fax or post. The majority of the data were collected during the months of September and October 2007.

The first questionnaire asked senior chamber staff to provide information about the induction, training and professional development programmes offered to new members of the chamber. Staff were also asked to forward the second questionnaire to members elected for their first term or appointed for the first time at or since the most recent election. The second questionnaire asked the new members to describe their perception of their chamber's programme and to offer comment and suggestions on what such programmes should contain.

OVERVIEW OF SURVEY AND FINDINGS

Total Responses

Responses were received from 40 chambers (out of a total of 262 chambers of all parliaments) – a response rate of 15.3%. The respondent chambers included a broad, representative range of sizes (i.e. numbers of members), constitutional structures, histories and national development and geographical location and other major features. Eighty four (84) new members from 25 different chambers responded to the second questionnaire.² However, as staff in each chamber distributed the questionnaires to new members, using a convenience sampling procedure, it was not possible to systematically identify the refusal rate, nor the reasons for not participating.

Chamber Responses

Responses received from the 40 chambers revealed that 37 (approximately 95%) deliver an orientation or induction programme for new parliamentarians. The preferred description of these programmes appears to be 'orientation' rather than 'induction'. These two terms are not synonymous. Orientation refers mainly to a programme of events organised at the beginning of a cycle to introduce new members into a particular professional community (Victoria University of Wellington, 2008); it refers to simpler programmes providing information and may also include meeting mentors. Steffy (2000) regarded orientation as a component of a comprehensive induction programme. Induction is seen as "developmental and guided by the needs of the inductee" (Steffy, 2000: 52). Brock and Grady stated that developmental induction is "a sequenced set of professional growth opportunities delivered in accordance with the needs of the recipient" (Brock & Grady, 2007: 42). As discussed below, many programmes are better described as orientation rather than induction.

1. Participation and Structure of Programmes

The number of new members reported to have been elected or appointed to the chambers that responded to the survey ranged from 12 to 271. It seems that there was ambiguity in the phrase 'new members' in Q3; some respondents reported the number of recently elected members on their first mandate as Parliamentarians (as intended), whereas others interpreted it as referring to recently elected and re-elected members. For example, one parliament responded "360", which is the total membership whilst its website states that 271 members were elected for the first time (Nigerian House of Representatives 2008).

Only 15 (approximately 38%) of the respondent chambers reported on-going training and professional development programmes. "Training" and "professional development" may each have adverse connotations in certain contexts "Professional development" was used initially

² The total number of new members in all IPU Member chambers is not recorded; accordingly, the rate of response from new members cannot be accurately determined.

but “capacity building” is preferable in jurisdictions where elected members may have limited formal education or qualification. “Capacity building” is used as the preferred descriptor henceforth.

Thirteen chambers ran a variety of programmes with more specific features.

The duration of initial orientation/induction programmes varied from 1 day to 45 days. Most programmes were short (1-2 days). Some extended to up to four days, and very few ran longer. The occasional longer programmes used structures that distribute a limited number of hours over a long period of time (e.g. 1-2 hours a week over six months). This suggests a rather expedient view of the training and development process, and it may be due to an emphasis on providing basic information rather than capacity development. Initial orientation programmes were used by 33 of the respondent chambers.

On the other hand, only 15 (approximately 37%) of the respondent chambers had capacity building programmes, which amount to 2 days per year in most cases. Only one chamber reported an annual course of approximately 2 hours per week, while two others offer legal information sessions (2-3 days per year) and foreign language courses (over periods of 3 months), respectively.

Of the 34 programmes, 14 (approx. 41%) were mandatory, which indicates a tendency for chambers to assume limited responsibility for the capacity building of their new members. A matter of concern may be the fact that this approach by chambers appears to be mirrored by the attitudes of individual members involved. Attendance in these programmes varied between 20% and 100%, with an overall average attendance of approximately 65%. Where participation was mandatory, attendance was at least 60%, and in most cases 100%. Where not mandatory, attendance was low for certain components of programmes and higher for others.

When asked, *If not mandatory, what encouragement is there for new members to participate?*, a broad range of reasons and interests were reported as motivating factors: (a) own party pressure; (b) arrangements for timing of the programme to coincide with first meetings in parliament; (c) personalised letters of invitation from the Secretary General; (d) media coverage of the event; (e) interesting issues discussed; (f) informal meetings with other Parliamentarians; (g) meals provided; (h) personal research interests; and (i) no cost to parliamentarians.

As expected, most orientation/induction programmes were run either just before the parliament was convened (15 programmes) or immediately after parliament was convened (19 programmes).

No consistent relationship can be established between the size of the chamber and the percentage who participated.

Trainers employed for these programmes had received professional accreditation in 18 of the 32 programmes. This does not seem to be related to the percentage participation.

2. Programme Content and Teaching-Learning Methods

The main content areas covered by both orientation/induction and capacity building programmes are contained in **Table 1**.

There appears to have been some ambiguity in the interpretation of “ethics” as either behaviour towards other parliamentarians or ethical conduct in relation to their discharge of public duty. Further investigation is required to examine both aspects of ethics. Half of the respondent chambers included such a component. The issue of whether or not to include an ethics component appears to be controversial. For example, officials of the Australian Senate reject

the inclusion of ethics, regarding it as beyond their area of responsibility or expertise (Coghill, Holland, and Donohue 2008). Having regard to the relevance of ethics to corruption and the significance of corruption of elected personnel in many countries, this is a finding which requires further investigation.

The main teaching-learning methods employed in these programmes are illustrated in **Table 2** below. An alternative ('other') approach mentioned by a number of respondent chambers was participation in seminars and conferences.

The features of the andragogy (Johnson 2007) underlying most of the programmes included passive learning activities such as an information handbook or guide in 28 of the respondent chambers to more active learning through experiential learning techniques such as simulations or role plays by eight (8) chambers; and, video observations in only five (5) instances. Information provided through written materials and information sessions are appropriate to orientation but they have weak effectiveness in developing personal skills and capacities. Further investigation is required as to the extent to which the design and delivery of programmes is limited by the andragogical skills of the staff delivering programmes, resources constraints and other factors.

Table 1: Main Content Areas of Programmes

Content area	Orientation/induction for new members (no. of chambers)	Capacity building (no. of chambers)
Parliamentary Procedures	34	9
Rules of Procedure/Standing Orders	32	7
Debates and interventions	28	5
Committee Skills	28	7
Drafting legislation & amendments	26	8
Parliamentary Questions	26	6
Reports made to Parliament	21	5
Hearings	20	4
Ethics	20	2
Constitution	20	2
Computers/Technology	18	7
Governance	15	4
Constituency Office Management	11	3
Structure of Government	10	3
Gender Equality	10	3
Media and Communication Skills	9	8
Other ('unwritten rules', research services, international work, and introduction to parliamentary services)	4	2

Table 2: Main Teaching-Learning Methods Employed

Process	Orientation/induction for new members	Capacity building
Handbook or other documentation	29	7
Information sessions	28	8
Question & answer sessions	26	5
Web-based modules	8	3
Simulations/Role plays	6	2
Learning through observation (e.g. video excerpts of other parliamentarians)	5	1
Mentoring	5	1

3. External Collaboration for Capacity Building

Other organisations assisting parliaments in building professional capacity through training and development included: international agencies (16), political parties (13), educational institutions, such as specialised institutes and universities (10) and private providers (5). Various government departments and professional associations also provided specific training on occasions. There were 8 programmes conducted informally rather than officially.

In most cases, this collaboration with external providers took the form of experts in designated areas (be they NGO members or academics) presenting key information to new Parliamentarians, and political parties training their own Parliamentarians or contributing to wider developmental programmes organised by chambers. A more complex collaborative relationship is the one established for this purpose between parliament, university and the private sector in the Philippines:

The University of Philippines initiates the provision of capacity building. Staff of the Senate secretariat are invited to serve as resource persons during the programmes conducted by the said university. A private organisation, "PUBLICUS", conducts briefings and lectures to members of Congress and they invite resource speakers from the Secretariats of the two chambers (Senate, Philippines).

The survey revealed key challenges to working with international agencies in providing capacity building:

- a. securing the cooperation of the right people (experts) at the right time;
- b. meeting the agencies' professional standards, in order that parliamentarians and their chambers actually benefit from the training provided; and
- c. language barriers.

Generally, advantages in working with international agencies for this purpose seemed to outweigh the challenges, and the most relevant of these advantages were:

- a. an enlargement of the participants' legislative horizon by sharing experiences from other jurisdictions; and
- b. exposure to working procedures of other parliaments.

4. Evaluation and Feedback

Capacity building programmes were evaluated in 19 of the 39 respondent chambers but were not in 13 cases; the other seven (7) did not answer the question. Evaluations were undertaken internally in 15 cases, while 5 were performed by external agencies; including three (3) which used both internal and external evaluation. Three (3) did not indicate the source of evaluation. Evaluation processes took a wide variety of forms, such as:

- a. training session evaluation and/or feedback forms;
- b. internal surveys (e.g. annual questionnaires);
- c. stakeholder surveys;
- d. reports from external consultants; and
- e. informal opinions from past participants, collected before the preparation of each new programme.

The survey also identified that the parliamentary staff at 35 of the 39 respondent chambers provided ongoing support to their new members. The main types of support provided consisted of:

- a. procedural advice and logistical support;
- b. information on past legislative functions;
- c. secretarial and research services;
- d. administration on parliamentary processing;
- e. IT resources and technical advice; and
- f. advise on how to draft parliamentary questions.

The responses indicated a wide range in the extent and nature of on-going support reported. Further investigation is required to understand the most effective forms of support.

The main constraints identified by the 29 respondents who commented on developing more and better orientation/induction programmes for new Parliamentarians were: (1) the diversity of MP's backgrounds (7 responses); (2) Parliamentarians' time availability for these activities (7 responses); and (3) financial resources – mainly referring to a sufficient budget for the organisation and delivery of programmes (3 responses).

A total of 33 chambers recommended good practices for building the capacity of Parliamentarians. The most frequently recommended good practices were:

- a. constant orientation and reorientation;
- b. regular consultations by Parliamentarians with parliamentary staff;
- c. individualised attention to the needs of participants;
- d. regular evaluations and reviews; and
- e. long-term cooperation with expert educational institutions.

Parliamentarian Responses

A total of 84 (52 men and 32 women) survey respondents (approx. 98% of all respondents) volunteered information about their age. The age profile is presented in **Table 3** below. It can be seen that the mode age category of new Parliamentarians who responded to the survey was 45-54 years.

Table 3: Number of New Parliamentarians by Age Group

18 – 24 years	25 – 34 years	35 - 44 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	65+ years
	10	13	36	18	5

In addition, a total of 77 participants volunteered to provide information about their educational level. Most respondents are tertiary educated to bachelor degree level, with very few at secondary/high school level and even fewer at postgraduate level (one MBA and one PhD).

The most frequent occupational backgrounds were:

- a. public service (17)
- b. business (13)
- c. academic (4)
- d. medical profession (4)

The extent to which parliamentarians' activities are indeed becoming 'professionalised' (with previous political or public service experience having more appeal to political parties &/or voters), and whether careers in either political organisations, the public service or business experience are indeed growing is incompletely researched.

Only 55 reported that they had participated in a programme of this kind. Among the reasons given by respondents for not attending the programme were unavailability of such a programme, lack of awareness of such a programme, and preference for an alternative programme offered by the parliamentarian's own party.

1. Evaluation of Orientation/Induction Programme

Respondents confirmed that most orientation/induction programmes are delivered either just before the parliament was convened or immediately after the parliament convened. In one case, the programmes took place approximately two months after the parliament was convened but this seems to have been accidental rather than planned. Out of a total of 42 responses, 37 indicated that the timing of the programme was appropriate, 3 felt it was too late, while 2 considered their programme was provided too early. Further research may clarify the reasons why an orientation/induction programme run right at the start of a cycle of parliamentary activity may be 'too early', and whether this has to do with new Parliamentarians being confronted with information overload.

New members' responses also confirm that most programmes are 1-4 days long, with some going to 5, 7 or 14 days. A small number of members explained that involvement of Parliamentarians in the programme was optional, time commitment was up to the individual, and scheduled times were not always convenient for the new members.

Respondents' evaluation of the length of the programme indicates that most of them were satisfied with the choices made by the programme organisers: out of 44 respondents, 32 (over 66%) appreciated that the duration of the programme was 'just' right', while 12 (over 31%) considered it too short. Further investigation may be required to determine whether this latter result is an indication of a need for more content and/or skills development in these programmes. Only one respondent indicated that the orientation/induction programme was too long.

With respect to participant satisfaction with the programmes offered, the responses by 46 Parliamentarians are shown in **Table 4** below.

Table 4: Participant Satisfaction with Orientation/Induction Programmes

Very Unsatisfied (1)	Moderately Unsatisfied (2)	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied (3)	Moderately Satisfied (4)	Very Satisfied (5)
1	3	3	26	13

Whilst the participants' preponderant level of satisfaction is moderate or high, their views on whether the programme content should have an ethics component vary widely, e.g. among the 14 Swedish respondents, 2 gave ethics the highest rank while 4 gave it the lowest. However, as noted above, there was some ambiguity in interpretation of "ethics". As indicated above in comment on responses by chambers, the inclusion of ethics in programmes is an important area for further investigation, especially having regard to the widespread concern to prevent corrupt behaviour.

Suggestions for improvement have been received from 39 respondents closely related to adult learning issues, with most referring to:

- a. the allocation of more time (for both delivery and assimilation of information)
- b. ensuring that all material presented is directly and immediately relevant to the new Parliamentarians
- c. making the material presented more practical, through workshops and case studies, and through informal discussions with experienced Parliamentarians.

Several respondents indicated that an effective measure would be to schedule these programmes just prior to commencing the sitting, with updates and follow-ups six months later.

Interestingly, the question enquiring about participation in orientation/induction programmes provided by other organisations attracted far more responses than the previous questions. Thirty three respondents mentioned programmes delivered by their political party, 8 referred to programmes by educational institutions, 8 by private providers and 15 by international organisations. One of the 17 'others' mentioned independent speakers, otherwise the nature of these 'others' requires further research.

2. Programme Content and Teaching-Learning Methods

The survey results collected in relation to perceptions by new Parliamentarians of the most useful content areas in an orientation/induction programme are illustrated in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Desirable Content Areas in Orientation/Induction Programmes

Survey respondents were asked to rank content areas from 1-5, with 1 being least useful, and 5 being most useful.						
Content area	Ranking					TOTAL responses to this content area
	1	2	3	4	5	
Debates and interventions	3	7	21	17	24	88
Parliamentary Procedures	5	5	6	6	56	78
Rules of Procedure/Standing Orders	5	4	5	13	46	73
Drafting Legislation & amendments	5	4	21	17	24	71
Committee Skills	10	8	10	14	28	70
Parliamentary Questions	3	13	24	13	15	68
Ethics	6	9	13	6	33	67
Media and Communication Skills	6	6	14	18	23	67
Constituency Office Management	6	8	22	14	14	64
Constitution	3	7	14	17	23	64
Gender Equality	13	5	18	18	10	64
Computers/Technology	8	13	12	16	15	64
Reports made to Parliament	8	11	18	20	6	63
Governance	6	8	17	12	20	63
Structure of Government	8	11	16	12	14	61
Hearings	7	12	15	16	10	60
Other (democracy in Parliament, supremacy of House above politics, international trade, religion and culture, logistic resources, human resources, where to find resources, using the library effectively, and drama skills)						17

Similarly, the survey collected perceptions of new Parliamentarians on most useful teaching-learning processes in an orientation/induction programme. **Table 6** below displays these results.

Table 6: Desirable Teaching-Learning Methods in Orientation/Induction Programmes

Survey respondents were asked to rank processes from 1-5, with 1 being least preferred, and 5 being most preferred.						
Processes	Ranking					TOTAL responses to this process
	1	2	3	4	5	
Question & Answer Sessions	3	10	22	20	22	77
Information Sessions	2	6	16	19	33	76
Handbook or Other Documentation	5	14	14	22	20	75
Mentoring	12	3	11	24	21	71
Web-based Modules	12	11	25	13	8	69
Simulations/Role Plays	18	6	16	17	12	69
Learning through observation (e.g. video excerpts of other parliamentarians)	10	7	20	13	16	66
Other (group discussions, visits or tours, and availability of a designated website)						6

3. Capacity Building Needs

Participants in the survey were also asked to indicate what skills and knowledge from their previous occupation had been most relevant to their role as parliamentarians. A total of 79 (more than 94%) responded to this question. The responses received included:

- a. Communication and interpersonal skills (11);
- b. Knowledge of legislation, policies and procedures (10);
- c. Knowledge of economics (1);
- d. Knowledge of (public) administration (2);
- e. Financial management skills (3);
- f. Knowledge of ethics (2);
- g. Knowledge of IT (1);
- h. Teaching experience (1);
- i. (Transferred) management and/or leadership experience (4);
- j. Research skills (3); and
- k. Political experience (5).

Regarding changes in capacity building needs since becoming parliamentarians, respondents (a total of 57) indicated:

- a. Economics (4);
- b. Development and social awareness (2);
- c. IT (1);
- d. Communication and public relations (7);
- e. Public management and administration (3);
- f. Law (2);
- g. Staff management (1);
- h. Time management (2);
- i. Leadership (1); and
- j. Knowledge of the European Union (1).

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings described above suggest that the following areas require further research in order to assist in the design, delivery and evaluation of capacity building and professional development programmes for parliamentarians:

- the capacity needs of parliamentarians in relation to induction, career path objectives, competencies desired and/or required post-induction and along a parliamentary career path;
- the incentives for parliamentary chambers to offer such programmes;
- the motivations affecting parliamentarians' participation in such programmes;
- the content, processes and effectiveness of capacity building activities offered by chamber staff, as well as those offered by executive government departments and agencies, political parties, international organizations and other non-parliamentary organisations;
- the extent, nature and effectiveness of training and development provided to personnel delivering programmes for parliamentarians;
- the factors affecting the effectiveness of capacity building components of parliamentary assistance programmes;
- the development of
 - improved assessment and evaluation methods for capacity building programmes for parliamentarians; and
 - a better practice framework and implementation strategy for capacity building programmes.

The findings suggest that research should be conducted on the desirability and nature of training and development of parliamentarians on ethical issues. This is the more relevant as, internationally, an increasing number of chambers are providing advice and training for members on how to handle ethical issues and the appointment of independent parliamentary officials with related responsibilities is spreading. It is in the interests of parliaments to provide training to their members from the time of election, continuing opportunities to develop and refine skills in ethics and ready access to advice at all times. The previous study by Coghill, Holland and Donohue (2008) concludes that professional development programmes focusing on solving ethical dilemmas could improve the accountability of parliaments, especially in regards to the ethical standards practised by their members.

CONCLUSION

Orientation and induction programmes for new parliamentarians are offered in many parliaments. Most parliamentarians accept the need for such programmes.

The programmes are often conventional (passive learning) "talking heads" information sessions, including the supply of handouts and handbooks. The use of more proactive adult learning strategies such as role play is neither widely known nor strongly endorsed.

The basic content is related to roles within chambers and is widely similar. However, the inclusion of an ethics component is not general; nor is it generally endorsed by either parliaments or parliamentarians.

Programmes are mandatory in many jurisdictions and that clearly leads to much higher rates of participation than is commonly the case where new parliamentarians are not obliged to attend.

Overall, the programmes reported here are often more similar to information-giving orientation programmes than capacity building induction programmes.

Further research is required to develop knowledge and understanding of many aspects of these programmes as indicated above, in order to better assist parliaments in the development of the capacities of the chambers through building those of individual members.

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