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## **PREFACE**

McGill University's parliamentary program of training and research emerged from a comprehensive assessment of parliamentary staff training needs organized by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Association of Secretaries General of Francophone Parliaments, and the World Bank.

To assess gaps in current staff training programs and to provide guidance to course designers, a three-stage process was pursued. First, meetings were held with Commonwealth Clerks and Secretaries General in la francophonie to determine the need for, and parameters of, future training programs. Second, a questionnaire was sent to more than 150 Clerks/Secretaries General from around the Commonwealth and la francophonie. And finally, an international Study Group was organized by the CPA and the World Bank and hosted by the Parliament of Bangladesh. The conclusion of these deliberations demonstrated that there was a need for a university-certified training program, designed specifically for high-potential, mid-level parliamentary staff. Such a program, it was suggested, should be adaptable (building on CPA and other organizations' successes) accessible (by offering courses online rather than in a traditional face-to-face classroom setting) and unique through combining theoretical and practical approaches.

The outcome was the launch of McGill University's Professional Development Program for Parliamentary Staff. Now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, more than 150 staff have attended this program, from small Caribbean and South Pacific nations to large democracies such as Bangladesh, India, and the United Kingdom. The Program has evolved, as a result of feedback from participants: it now comprises fully graded courses and it will be offered online starting in January 2020.

Following the success of the Professional Development Program, the CPA asked McGill University to design and deliver a second Professional Development Program for newly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) from small jurisdictions around the Commonwealth. Now in its third year, more than 60 MPs from the Caribbean, the Pacific, the Crown Dependencies, and the UK's overseas dependencies have attended/completed the program.

Informing both of these programs has been a series of forward-looking research activities, funded by the British Academy and Canada's Social Science and Humanities Research Council; the results of which have helped identify global good practice in parliamentary governance, and has facilitated the development of training manuals and guidebooks.

Since 2012, both training programs, and research by McGill instructors, have been the subject of articles in both practitioner and academic publications. This compendium presents some of these articles.

For more information on McGill University's parliamentary strengthening programs, please visit [mcgill.ca/scs-parliament](http://mcgill.ca/scs-parliament)

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# AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE CPA FUNDAMENTALS PROGRAMME FOR CPA SMALL BRANCHES



**Hon. Daphne Caine, MHK** is a former Isle of Man journalist and served in various roles within the Isle of Man Civil Service for 20 years until her election to the House of Keys in September 2016.

Once upon a thousand years ago, a Parliament was born. Marauding Vikings vanquished the Manx people in the tenth century and bequeathed a parliamentary system that still endures today, with some modernizing over recent centuries by its native Celts and later English influences.

Located geographically at the centre of the British Isles but for many years a self-governing Crown Dependency, the Isle of Man boasts autonomy over its law-making and revenue raising that many a new Parliament would envy.

But how well is it functioning as a modern Parliament? That is the crucial question examined by participating in the **CPA Fundamentals Programme**: how good are we, and how do we compare with others in the Commonwealth?

No matter how thoroughly you may feel you understand the workings of a parliamentary assembly, participating in the study programme through McGill University in Montréal, Canada, fosters greater insight and enables an appreciation of the value of good governance along with the need to balance Executive power with parliamentary scrutiny.

In a recent article (*The Parliamentarian* 2018/Volume 99/Issue 3) Hon. Tony Smith MP, Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives explained how, 'on appointment to the Speaker's panel, each Member is issued with guidance notes which offer guidance on the history of the

*role and all aspects of the House practice and procedure for Chairs'.*

No such comprehensive guidance notes were available on election for the new Members on the CPA Fundamentals/McGill University class of 2018! Some received informal mentoring following their election or appointment; many studied the formal Standing Orders that govern parliamentary processes, while others reported battling against the establishment, a lack of structure and weak accountability of the Executive or a lack of impartiality by a Presiding Officer. I hope I won't break any Chatham House rules by reporting the following from the Members' presentations, analysing the merits and demerits of their assemblies.

Alongside the Isle of Man's 1,000 years of tradition, the course brought together a panoply of Commonwealth colleagues from such diverse and distant assemblies in CPA Small Branches as Tasmania, the Falkland Islands, the Caribbean Region and even fascinating little Bougainville. Geographically part of Solomon Islands but politically part of Papua New Guinea, Bougainville has a post-conflict

Parliament inaugurated on 15 June 2005. Participants hear directly from Members, frequently two per Parliament, usually on opposing sides of political and party divides.

Study on the CPA Fundamentals Programme on Practice and Procedure commenced online in the summer of 2018 with an introduction to the principles of Commonwealth Parliamentary Governance. We progressed through Contemporary Issues in Parliamentary Governance to Advanced Parliamentary Governance at McGill University's School for Continuing Studies on Sherbrooke Street, Montréal as part of the residential week of the course. We have now commenced the final 'strategic pillar' on Parliamentary Communications.

Lecturer Dr John K Johnson leads the various modules enabling Members to better understand factors that influence and impact on parliamentary functions. He provides encouragement to undertake self-assessment and analysis of one's own Parliament, to determine the strengths and weaknesses in terms of structures and processes plus





comparisons with others.

Online learning is enhanced by four end-of-module tests plus posting essays with online discussions for all students that enable each topic to be explored in more depth. Only time pressure and parliamentary duties prevents this from being as active a forum as it might be.

The residential week at McGill University was a privilege and an eye-opening collision of historic tradition and evolving modernity. Additionally, it enabled for many of us a first visit to Québec's biggest city in an historic week when cannabis was legalized (although none of us, to my knowledge, bothered queuing around the block to sample the newly legal product). Mostly it was an opportunity in an exceptionally mild week in early Fall to enjoy meeting Commonwealth Parliamentarians from across the globe, plus a little sightseeing, with our forays around Montréal brightened by the public art adorning every road and square in the streets adjacent to the McGill University campus.

While most participants were newly elected Members, a few were in a governing party and amongst the cohort was a Madam Speaker, the first woman in one of the participating small jurisdictions. But she reported 'token lip service' was given to women in her experience. Her colleague said the assembly suffered through a lack of resources and no research facilities or meeting spaces – not because of poverty but because *'the Executive controls the Legislature'*.

A major theme of our studies was to consider how the balance of power should be maintained, and the level of compliance each jurisdiction has with the CPA's **Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures**. There was also much discussion over female representation in Parliaments, which threw up some interesting comparisons between small islands and the Australian



Capital Territory (represented by Members, Michael Pettersson, MLA and Elizabeth Lee, MLA) boasting now the first female majority Parliament in Australia and the first female head of government there too. Jeff Collins, MLA from Australia's Northern Territory also revealed exceptional diversity with 12 out of 25 women in Parliament, five from indigenous communities.

One Member revealed how the first Prime Minister of their 40 years old Parliament was in office for 30 years. Another from a South Pacific island highlighted issues in a Parliament dominated by 47 out of 50 Members from the ruling party, where three members of the opposition serve on two scrutiny Committees each.

Effective scrutiny was another major area of consideration, study and debate.

One extremely pertinent lecture was delivered by Glenn Wheeler from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) in Canada's Northwest Territories, an area larger than England, France and Belgium combined, with a population of 43,000 people spread over 33 communities. The role of the OAG of Canada, he explained, was to undertake financial audits and performance audits. Reports are discussed with departments to get agreement on facts and departments' responses

to recommendations before tabling the reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. Recent report subjects ranged from Climate Change in 2017, to Correction (prison segregation) in 2015. Sometimes work would commence in response to specific requests from the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Wheeler's concluding comments resonated with me: *'We can't force departments to make change. To some extent we rely on media and the professionalism of departments to make change, and we rely on goodwill and a robust democratic system.'*

Through the residential week, we continued to study all those aspects that make up a robust democratic system, with debates continuing through the evenings and even at breakfast.

One of the highlights was a fascinating lunch with the Canadian MP for Hamilton Centre, Hon. David Christopherson, MP of the New Democratic Party, who left school at 15 and started in politics at age 22 after discovering *'a knack for talking'*. Several of my fellow students taped his whole *'off-the-cuff'* presentation. So much experience, eloquence and frank advice from someone towards the end of his parliamentary career, who will surely be in demand for speaking

engagements in his retirement!

His talk included such pearls of wisdom as: *'Be ethical and honest all the time.'* *'Politics is a marathon not a sprint.'* *'To thine own self be true.'* And the basic tenet to ensure re-election: *'The absence of screw-ups; better a missed opportunity than a screw-up!'*

Another highlight was a session by the equally charismatic Kathleen Sears on political leadership. This was one of the most impactful sessions for me – encouraging self-awareness to understand individual strengths and weaknesses and how to improve. Political skills, she advised, means utilising legitimate means to influence a course of action; advancing ideas by saying what's best for the community not the individual. We should search opportunities to create alliances, promote exchanges and make an impact, always remembering that what you do speaks louder than what you say.

The skill of a politician, (reinforced by both speakers separately) is to retain credibility. The best politician should use persuasion, think on your feet but always demonstrate integrity.

We were welcomed and gently supported throughout the week by Dr Rick Stapenhurst, the very experienced Parliamentary Programs Coordinator at McGill University. He facilitated the





## AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE CPA FUNDAMENTALS PROGRAMME FOR CPA SMALL BRANCHES



Member presentations with Paul Belisle, a former Clerk to the Parliament of Canada, plus the evaluation round-up sessions at the close. Dr Rick (it's quite informal) also provided information on the Administration and Financing of Parliament and with Dr Johnson led us through the core functions: looking at how to enhance the democracy of our Parliaments and make them better for our citizens, guarding against the common issue of the encroachment of the Executive on parliamentary power. Consideration of core functions progressed later in the week with Oversight (Dr Rick) and Committees and Executive Scrutiny plus the Role of Parties from Kevin Deveau. There was plenty more including Codes of Conduct and Legislation, the Role of Back Benchers, etc. A participant from the previous year, former Jersey Deputy of St Brelade, Murray Norton, even joined us by video link to comment on the perils and pressures on politicians of social media.

I could go into details of more of our lectures – but perhaps better to recommend signing up for the course for those interested. Participation in the CPA Fundamentals Programme delivers what it promises – it provides a well-supported learning space with excellent study materials, to enable

participants to unpick what makes Parliaments tick and stitch our own back together, with the insight to suggest improvements to the design where necessary.

Equipping Members with the time and technical knowledge to be better informed about parliamentary systems is very empowering; it is necessary to understand the systems and the possibilities to be able to work effectively. Democracy needs us to admit shortcomings in the system where they exist and seek to make improvements where necessary. On the Isle of Man, residents are frequently publicly critical of our Parliament but we don't suffer outside criticism gladly. The best scrutiny comes from Members from across the political spectrum self-analysing and working collaboratively to improve the structures that in turn will lead to better functioning of the assembly.

Parliamentary performance is improved by fully appreciating internal and external pressures, the role of media, the art of communication and the need for transparency in good governance.

The course provides technical information on all these subjects plus opens up a wealth of academic study and reading for ongoing study. While appreciating the Isle of Man's unique tri-cameral system of Parliament, I was previously unaware how

staunchly plurality-majoritarian our system of election is, how quickly perception can veer from us upholding an arena-type legislature to allegations of a rubber-stamp Parliament. Equally, how delicately power is balanced between Executive government, Parliament and its administration.

The constant striving for greater equality and better representation of women in Parliament is an interesting factor that came up for consideration on numerous occasions. While the Isle of Man has the proud boast of being first in the world to give (some) women the vote in 1881, the number of female representatives remains low, compared with many in the Commonwealth. The current House of Keys has five elected female Members, while five more women have been elected to the eight seats in the upper chamber, making Tynwald overall 31% female, the highest proportion in its long history. Recent appointments to the Legislative Council saw the Island leap from 178<sup>th</sup> place on the Inter-Parliamentary Union comparison table in 2016 to 44<sup>th</sup> place now – just below the United Kingdom. But what caused the improvement and how it can be built on in future elections is something for future analysis and report. It is likely the re-drawing of constituency boundaries prior to the 2016 General Election, forming 12 equal constituencies consisting of two seats each, prompted more women to put their name forward. It has been established that the number of women elected (five) was directly in proportion to the number who stood, so the focus in future must be on more credible female candidates coming forward. The rise of party activity is also something likely to have an impact on the next election in 2021.

And in concluding the CPA Fundamentals Programme, what parliamentary issues remain? The final session of the residential week at McGill

University enabled each of us to identify and share the top three things we would take home and recommend to our Parliament. While these centre on the CPA Benchmarks, it also throws into sharp relief the absence of any women in the Isle of Man Council of Ministers, which I feel would be addressed if more experienced women Members are returned next time at the ballot box; but other structural issues have also been highlighted by the course and its various modules.

The *Lord Lisvane Review of the Functioning of the Isle of Man Parliament* exposed some criticisms that continue to resound with the Manx public as unresolved: for instance, the lack of an appointed Auditor-General, and the number of Members from upper and lower chambers taking a role in the government. These and other management issues will be my focus in the near future, armed with the political science learnings of my year on the CPA Fundamentals Programme with McGill University, which is thoroughly recommended for any Parliamentarians who are interested in living, breathing and improving their own parliamentary structure.

I commented to one of the tutors that I was turning into a parliamentary process nerd. His response: 'We need more parliamentary process nerds.'

**For more information and how to apply for the CPA Fundamentals Programme on Practice and Procedure for Commonwealth Parliamentarians please visit [www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpafundamentals](http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpafundamentals) or email [hq.sec@cpahq.org](mailto:hq.sec@cpahq.org). There are two Programmes available – one for all Commonwealth Parliamentarians (with the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa) and one for Members from CPA Small Branches (with McGill University, Canada).**

# Canadian Universities: Emerging Hubs for International Parliamentary Research and Training

Canadian universities have recently emerged as important centres in applied parliamentary research and training, joining universities in Australia, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. This article reviews the growth of these research and training programs at three institutions – McGill University, Université Laval and the University of Ottawa – over the past five years. It also points to possible future areas of work, which will allow parliaments elsewhere to learn from Canada's experience, and vice versa.

**Rick Stapenhurst and Phoebe Zamanuel**

**I**t has long been recognized that, as Lord Philip Norton wrote some 25 years ago, parliaments *matter*.<sup>1</sup> Research has established that effective parliaments enhance democracy,<sup>2</sup> increase government accountability and reduce corruption,<sup>3</sup> encourage peace and development<sup>4</sup> and thus more generally promote good governance and socio-economic development.<sup>5</sup>

Over the past half-decade or so, Canadian universities have begun to emerge as global players in applied parliamentary research and training, joining universities in Australia, the United Kingdom and elsewhere; see Table 1. Two universities in Quebec – McGill University and Université Laval – and one in Ontario – the University of Ottawa – have recently facilitated global knowledge exchanges and ‘communities of practice,’ undertaken rigorous research on parliamentary oversight around the world and have developed cutting-edge professional development programs for both Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff. In all these endeavours, the universities have developed strategic alliances, both

among themselves, with global organizations (such as the World Bank, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)), with universities outside of Canada (principally, the University of Westminster and the University of East Anglia, in the United Kingdom) and with national organizations (such as the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs). A cross-cutting theme of both the research and training is the exchange of experience and lessons learned in Canada with other countries, and vice versa. Parliaments in other countries are learning about Canada's practices while Canadian legislators and staff are able to appreciate practices in other countries and consider their applicability here. (This is not to diminish the significance of specialized programs elsewhere; the universities of Athabasca and Tasmania, for example, offer specialized programs on legislative drafting; the University of Witwatersrand offers a Commonwealth-wide course for newly elected MPs from around the Commonwealth and the University of Hull offers degree programs in parliamentary studies. Rather, we wish to highlight the integration of more general training for MPs and staff with applied research programs and the development of global parliamentary networks at McGill University, Université Laval and the University of Ottawa). This article reviews the growth of these types of research and training programs over the past five years, and points to possible future areas of work, which – it is hoped – will enhance parliamentary democracy in Canada and abroad.

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*Rick Stapenhurst is a parliamentary advisor/consultant at the World Bank. He has a dual appointment as assistant professor at McGill University's School of Continuing Studies and as an associate professor in political science at Université Laval. Phoebe Zamanuel is Student Affairs Coordinator (Graduate Funding) at McGill University.*



**Table 1:**  
**Principal International University Parliamentary Programs**

		Degree Programs <sup>1</sup>	Prof. Dev. Program	Customized Workshops	Research <sup>2</sup>	Note
Australian National University	Australia			Y	Y	Centre for Democratic Institutions; appears to be inactive.
Deakin University	Australia			?	?	Annual international PAC workshop discontinued
La Trobe University	Australia			Y	?	Annual international PAC workshop discontinued
Monash University	Australia			?	Y	Longstanding internship program with Victoria Legislature
University of Tasmania	Australia	Y		?	?	Specialized Course in Parliamentary Law, Practice & Procedure
Athabasca University	Canada		Y		?	Specialized Certificate in Legislative Drafting
Carleton University	Canada			Y	?	Internship program with Parliament of Canada; orientation program Canadian MPs
Université Laval	Canada		Y	Y	Y	PD Program for parliamentary staff; research in collaboration with McGill and University of Westminster
McGill University	Canada		Y	Y	Y	PD Programs for parliamentary staff and for MPs, in collaboration with CPA; research in collaboration with McGill and University of Westminster
University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa	?	Y	Y	Y	PD program for MPs, in collaboration with CPA
State University of New York	United States			Y	?	Centre for International Development; funding principally from USAID
University of East Anglia	United Kingdom				Y	Parliamentary research in collaboration with McGill
University of Edinburgh	United Kingdom			Y	Y	Proposed collaboration with McGill
University of Hull	United Kingdom	Y		Y	Y	BA and MA in parliamentary studies
University College - London	United Kingdom				Y	Constitution Unit
University of Westminster	United Kingdom				Y	Parliamentary research in collaboration with McGill and Laval universities

<sup>1</sup> University degrees in Parliamentary studies; excludes degrees in broader fields such as Politics or Public Policy

<sup>2</sup> Publicly-funded research, in applied parliamentary studies

**Source: internet search (December 10-12, 2017)**

# Professional Development Programs - Parliamentary Staff

Over the period 2008-10, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and l'association des secrétaires généraux des parlements francophone (ASGPF) undertook a comprehensive needs assessment for parliamentary staff for countries in developing and developed countries alike. They found that there was a patchwork of basic training courses, offered by developed country parliaments to their own staff (although Canada and Australia, in particular, offered places in these courses to staff from developing countries, too) and by various non-governmental organizations to parliamentary staff in developing countries. Around the same time, Joachim Wehner<sup>6</sup> completed an assessment of organizations

working globally to strengthen parliaments for the UK's Department for International Development. As Table 2 demonstrates, the number of such organizations was rather small, and mainly dominated by international and US-based organizations; the only university listed was the state University of New York. Since the time of Wehner's study, the parliamentary world has evolved: The World Bank Institute has been disbanded, the UNDP has massively cut back on its global program and the US government has reduced spending on development assistance in general and on parliamentary strengthening, in particular. At the same time, both CPA and IPU are expanding their collaboration with universities around the world and new actors, such as International IDEA and Greg Power and Associates, as well as McGill University and Université Laval, have emerged.

**Table 2:**  
**The Activity Portfolio of Organizations Implementing Global Parliamentary Strengthening Projects**

Improving Information Access	Technical Assistance in legal reform	Budget Training	Study trips, conferences, network-building	Physical Infrastructure	Analytic Work
NDI SUNY-CID UNDP	SUNY- CID UNDP USAID WFD	CPA IPU NDI PC SUNY-CID UNDP WFD	CPA IPU NDI SUNY-CID UNDP	SUNY-CID UNDP	CPA IPU NDI PC SUNY-CID UNDP USAID WBI

*CPA= Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; IPU= Inter-parliamentary Union; NDI= National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (US); PC= Parliamentary Centre (Canada); SUNY-CID= State University of New York – Centre for Democratic Institutions (US); UNDP= United Nations Development Program; USAID= US Agency for International Development; WBI= World Bank Institute; WFD= Westminster Foundation for Democracy.*

**Source: adapted from Wehner (2007)**

The ASGPF-CPA-World Bank study further found that there was substantial overlap between courses offered, with one African committee clerk from Kenya stating that: "You [foreign organizations] all offer the same thing: four or five days intensive training, going over the same materials as the others use." What was needed, respondents said, was "a higher level, university-certified program that went 'beyond the basics'." As a result, the World Bank and CPA collaborated with McGill to develop such a program for English speaking countries while the World Bank and Quebec's National Assembly collaborated with Laval to develop a similar program for French speaking countries. These universities have sought to address the need for Canadian and international parliamentary training using a blended learning

methodological approach including traditional face-to-face training, web-based learning, video conferencing and online discussions. While an increasing number of parliaments have established their own training institutes, these programs' multi-organizational approach complement other established programs with the required academic rigour and pedagogical support, while seeking to minimize overlap and duplication.

In 2012, the first professional development program for parliamentary staff was conducted at McGill University under the direction of Rick Stapenhurst, former head of the World Bank Institute's parliamentary program and currently Assistant Professor in the School of Continuing Studies. Some

two-dozen high potential, mid-level parliamentary staff from countries as diverse as Ghana, South Africa, Bangladesh, Trinidad & Tobago and St. Helena, as well as from Newfoundland and Labrador, attended the program<sup>7</sup>. The program currently comprises a week-long residency at McGill, during which the basics of parliamentary administration are reviewed, five e\*learning courses which go into greater depth in selected areas and personal mentoring by McGill faculty and former Canadian and other parliamentary staff. Over the past seven years, some 150 staff (including from Newfoundland & Labrador, Ontario, the North West Territories and Saskatchewan) have attended the program. Throughout, the CPA has been a strong partner, sponsoring participants from around the Commonwealth and offering advice on program content. Participants exiting the program have highlighted its ability to give them a better understanding of the broader nature of parliamentary work in the context of society and citizen expectations and to refine skills that help them excel on the job.

#### **Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa**

In 2016, a new institute was created with a mandate to focus on public finance and institutions. With Ontario government support, the institute is an independent, non-partisan organization 'led by Kevin Page, who is the Institute's President and CEO, and Sahir Khan, Executive Vice President. Leveraging existing international relationships and partnerships with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Budget Partnership, and the United States National Governors Association, the institute is able to connect Canadian leaders and decision-makers with students and researchers and share the strengths of Canadian values and democratic institutions abroad.

While not solely focused on parliaments, an important component of the institute's work concerns the role of parliamentary oversight and scrutiny in the budget process.

Université Laval's International Parliamentary Training Program is similar. It is a joint-initiative between the Chaire de recherche sur la démocratie et le parlementarisme (CRDP), Professor Eric Montigny, along with Professor Louis Imbeau and the National Assembly of Quebec to support parliamentary staff from francophone states. In its fourth year and offered in Quebec City, it comprises a longer residency than McGill (10 days, of which five days are in the National Assembly) but no additional e\*learning courses<sup>8</sup>. The program has the financial support of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) and the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF). While there is no formal agreement between Laval and McGill, there is considerable informal collaboration: both universities were founding members of the Global Network of Parliamentary Training Institutes (GNPTI) (see below), they share a number of common resource persons and typically a member of Laval's faculty is invited as a guest speaker to the McGill program, and vice versa.

One interesting development has been the emergence of international collaboration between McGill University and Kenya's Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST), and between Université Laval and the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal. Driven by the desire to enhance sustainability and impact – and by the delay by immigration authorities to grant visas to program participants – the goal is to offer joint programs with, respectively, McGill and Laval lecturers and recognized local trainers and guest speakers.

#### **Professional Development Programs - MPs**

While many of the non-governmental institutions noted above offer seminars and workshops for MPs, until now the only university programs that offered training for MPs were in Australia. These included the now defunct programs at La Trobe University and Deakin University for members of Public Accounts Committees and at Australia National University's Centre for Democratic Institutions for MPs from South East Asia and the Pacific.

McGill University, in collaboration with the CPA, ventured into this territory in 2017: professional development for newly elected MPs from small-jurisdictions in the Commonwealth. The CPA had long recognized the reality that parliamentarians come to their jobs with little to no formal training. This is particularly an issue in small states where the number of MPs may total only a dozen or so





**MPs from small Commonwealth states at the McGill University residency, along with university faculty and staff, and former McGill faculty and staff, who are now MPs in the Canadian Parliament.**

and where the needs of parliamentarians skilled in parliamentary governance are perhaps the highest but where training opportunities are virtually non-existent<sup>9</sup>. Twenty-three MPs from small jurisdictions from around the Commonwealth (including from Canada's Northwest Territories and Nova Scotia, the Caribbean and Pacific, British islands including the Isle of Man, Jersey, and Guernsey and Australia's Capital Territory and Tasmania) attended a week-long residency in Montreal, which included presentations by Senator Wade Mark from Trinidad and Tobago and Glenn Wheeler, from Canada's Office of the Auditor General and a visit to Quebec's National Assembly. The residency also offered roundtable discussions where parliamentarians could share challenges as new MPs. To help ensure impact, participants were asked to identify three areas which they would recommend for change/improvement to their parliamentary leaders. Proposals ranged from introducing written guidelines for Public Accounts Committee (PAC) operations and strengthening the committee system more generally to refurbishing and providing public access to the parliamentary library, and seeking to improve parliamentary research by developing a partnership with a local university

## **Networks and Communities of Practice**

### *Global Network of Parliamentary Budget Offices*

In 2009, in light of the research that a strong independent budget process is central to accountable governments, the OECD encouraged the formation of the Network of Parliamentary Budget Officials. This network brought together parliamentary budget office staff to share practices, challenges, institutional arrangements and improve scrutiny of the budget process. In 2013, building on the importance of budget analysis and extending the reach to non-OECD members – the OECD network cannot invite PBO staff from non-OECD countries –, McGill University's Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID), supported by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), partnered with the World Bank Institute (WBI) to host a seminar on Open Government, Information and Budget Transparency. The seminar welcomed Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) and parliamentary experts from around the world. Through this forum of knowledge exchange, participants agreed to form a Community of Practice named the Global Network of Parliamentary

Budget Officers (GNPBO); subsequently, the University of Ottawa has hosted an annual GNPBO Assembly, providing a forum for face-to-face sharing of experiences, professional mini-courses for PBO officials and a complement to both the GNPBO e\*platform and the World Bank's online, open access course for PBO staff. At the 2017 Assembly, discussions focused on PBO relations with the media, expenditures and strategic allocation of resources, and Clerk-PBO relations.

#### *Global Network of Parliamentary Training Institutes*

Building on the experience of the GNPBO, McGill University's School of Continuing Studies hosted an international forum of parliamentary training institutes, again with support from SSHRC. At the initial forum, which took place in Montreal in the summer of 2016 and was attended by representatives from parliamentary institutes from across Africa and Asia, it was clear that there was a need for greater collaboration and sharing of knowledge and experiences among parliamentary training institutes. In January 2017, the Kenyan CPST hosted a second forum, and the Association of Parliamentary Training Institutes was born. One concrete outcome is a Memorandum of Understanding between McGill University and the CPST to undertake joint parliamentary training and research.

#### **Research**

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McGill and Laval have recently completed a major piece of research, examining the strengths and weaknesses of parliamentary oversight in francophone countries. It had been noted that, up until this project, virtually all research on oversight had focused on Public Accounts Committees (PACs) and other mechanisms found in 'Westminster' parliamentary systems, and that little was known about oversight in francophone countries. Working in collaboration with ASGPF, and supported by SSHRC, researchers were able to construct an index of *Commissions des Finances* - the francophone equivalent of PACs - and highlight both good and bad practice in francophone parliaments. Importantly, the researchers also highlighted those areas where francophone parliaments could learn lessons from Westminster parliaments, and vice versa. For example, commissions were found to have more powers (e.g. to call officials to account, sanction errant public servants and follow-up on recommendations made by the commission), while PACs tended to be stronger in terms of public engagement, outreach and communications. These and other findings will be published in a scholarly book (in French) by Les

Presses de l' Université Laval. An English language practitioner's book, summarising the research project and presenting a number of country case studies, is available in electronic format on the website of the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation: <https://Université/www.caaf-fcar.ca/en/parliamentary-oversight-resources/external-publications>.

In 2015, Université Laval won a major competitive British Academy grant, funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) as part of the Anti-Corruption Evidence Program. Partners include the University of Westminster in the United Kingdom and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs in Ghana. Noting the importance of curbing corruption in order to achieve sustainable development, DFID sought to encourage innovative, evidence-based research to guide its support for anti-corruption efforts globally. Laval's project - one of only eight awarded - is examining the role of parliaments in curbing corruption at the national level; research is being conducted in Grenada, Ghana, Myanmar, Nigeria, Tanzania, Trinidad & Tobago and Uganda. Findings underscore that to build capacity in parliaments it is necessary to abandon the 'one size fits all' and 'this is how we do things in Australia/Canada/United Kingdom' approaches so common in parliamentary strengthening projects and focus instead on in-depth country analysis. In Grenada, for example, not one opposition member was elected to the lower house, and with only 15 MPs in parliament, the Westminster guidelines that 'the chair of the PAC should be from the opposition party' and that 'ministers should not be committee members or chairs' is clearly inappropriate. These and similar issues are faced in some of Canada's smaller provinces and territories - and some of the innovative approaches being considered, such as nominating prominent citizens, who are not MPs, to sit on parliamentary committees, may be applicable here.

A related SSHRC funded research project at McGill's Desautels Faculty of Management, where researchers from Canada, the United Kingdom and Africa are looking at the supply and demand sides of corruption in Canadian mining projects in Africa is on-going; but like the other projects there is a particular focus on practical, as well as scholarly, outputs. Already it appears that in both host and home (Canadian) parliaments, parliamentary oversight of the implementation of anti-corruption legislation is weak and could be improved. This is perhaps all the more pressing in Canada, since in some countries Canadian mining companies shape public perception of Canada.

## Conclusions and Future Plans

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Several issues have emerged as the three Canadian universities have worked separately and together to build their parliamentary training and research programs. First, bringing a Canadian parliamentary perspective to the training and research programs has been important. The Quebec National Assembly and British Columbia's Legislature have provided support and encouragement to the programs, and the National Assembly and the Canadian Parliament have generously welcomed visits by participating parliamentary staff and MPs to their precincts. The universities appreciate this interaction and hope to extend their collaboration to other provincial and territorial legislatures across Canada. Second, collaboration with partners is important. Teaming up with universities in the United Kingdom (University of Westminster and the University of East Anglia) has broadened the scope of activities, as has collaborating with international organizations like the World Bank, the CPA and the ASGPF and national organizations such as the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation, Kenya's CPST and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs. And third, additional research and expanded collaboration is still needed. Some proposed additional research programs call for new partnerships with, inter alia, the Westminster Foundation, the University of Glasgow, the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi, and the IPU. One such research project, which will examine the problems of parliamentary oversight in small jurisdictions, could be especially relevant for Canada's territorial and smaller provincial legislatures.

Current global networks and communities will continue to be supported and promoted, while current professional development programs will be further refined and stream-lined. For instance, McGill's two programs have recently been certified by the University Senate, which enable graduates to earned 'continuing education' credits in both.

By promoting evidence-based research on parliaments, researchers are able to identify 'good' practice and, in collaboration with practitioners and parliamentarians, determine 'best fit'. In this global focus, Canada's legislatures have a lot of knowledge and expertise to contribute – and also the potential to benefit from the research, programming and information exchanges that will result.

## Notes

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- 1 Philip Norton. *Does Parliament Matter?* Harvester Wheatsheaf: London, 1993
- 2 M. Steven Fish. *Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracy*. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17 (1), 2006, pp. 5-20
- 3 Riccardo Pelizzo and Rick Stapenhurst. *Democracy and Oversight*. Paper Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, United States of America, Aug 31, 2006; Rick Stapenhurst, Thomas Eboutou and Kerry Jacobs (forthcoming). *Assessing the Power of the Purse: Developing an Index of Ex-Post Oversight*.
- 4 Mitchell O'Brien. *Parliament as Peacebuilders: The Role of Parliaments in Conflict Affected Countries*. World Bank Institute Working Paper 37250. Washington, DC: World Bank
- 5 Rick Stapenhurst, Riccardo Pelizzo and Kerry Jacobs. *Following the Money: Comparing Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees*. Pluto Press: London, 2014.
- 6 Joachim Wehner, "Strengthening Legislative Financial Scrutiny in Developing Countries: a Report prepared for the Department for International Development" London School of Economics, 2007
- 7 Vienna Pozer "An Innovation in Parliamentary Staff Training" *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Winter 2012, pp. 1-4.
- 8 Initially, on-line courses were offered in French by the World Bank, but budget cuts and new strategic priorities meant these were cut.
- 9 The CPA is also collaborating with the University of Witwatersrand on a similar program for other (larger) Commonwealth countries.



## Evidence-Based Programmes for Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff

*Prof. Rick Stapenhurst, Inna Popova-Roche and Pegah Ehsani - McGill University*

### Introduction

Parliaments perform three functions: oversight, representation, and lawmaking. Governance reflects how state power is exercised based on four pillars: accountability, transparency, participation, and the rule of law. Parliament crucially holds the executive arm of government accountable for meeting countries' development objectives and as a representative institution, engages with the media, civil society, and citizens, to achieve open, collaborative, and accountable government (O'Brien, Stapenhurst, and Prater, 2012).

All that to say, as Lord Philip Norton (1993) wrote, parliament *matters*. Research shows that effective parliaments enhance democracy, increase government accountability, reduce corruption, encourage peace and development, and generally promote good governance and socio-economic development (Stapenhurst and Zamanuel, forthcoming). The backbone of effective parliaments is effective people – both members of parliament (MPs) and parliamentary staff, who support the performance of parliaments' primary functions. To strengthen the institutional capacity of parliament, the technical skills of both MPs and staff must be enhanced (O'Brien, Stapenhurst, and Prater, 2012). Indeed, effective parliamentary strengthening programmes will consider training for both staff and MPs.

Parliamentary staff are the 'corporate memory' of parliament, and newly elected parliamentarians often begin their jobs with little to no formal training, particularly in small states with few MPs where the need for skilled parliamentarians is greatest but the training opportunities virtually non-existent (Stapenhurst and Zamanuel, forthcoming). From the early 2000s, research has been conducted by the World Bank and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), among others, on parliamentary best practices that need to be reflected in professional development programmes for MPs and staff. Traditionally, training programmes for MPs and staff lacked coherence and were usually delivered on an *ad hoc* basis. Their reliance on face-to-face teaching resulted in inequitable access to training, and was not always inclusive for other languages, parliamentary systems, or smaller countries (Pozer, 2012).

Correspondingly, between 2008 and 2010 the World Bank undertook a capacity enhancement review of its own training programmes and identified two challenges: sustainability and scalability (Pozer, 2012). Further research and consultations, including focus groups, led to the development of McGill University's evidence-based programmes for MPs and parliamentary staff. These innovative programmes prioritize sustainability, adaptability, and scalability.



This article will examine McGill University's approach to design and delivery of parliamentary programmes. First, there will be an examination of the 'old way' of delivering parliamentary training. Next, there will be an overview of recent evidence and research underlining the need for a new approach. This then leads to the development of McGill's parliamentary professional development programmes, which address diversity of parliamentary contexts and go beyond traditional face-to-face *ad hoc* training by embracing sound adult learning principles, experience-based learning strategies and pedagogical approaches. Finally, there will be a discussion of results and feedback from past participants of McGill's professional development programmes.

### **The Old Way**

The 'Old Way' of developing training programmes for parliamentary staff was based on 'first principles' and archetype parliaments. First principles are the fundamentals underlying governance, and speak to the values with which these systems were designed to embody and promote. Training programmes would often begin with an examination of parliamentary practices in different countries, often large and developed, as a point of reference. In Commonwealth countries, this usually involved using Australia, Canada, or the United Kingdom as the archetypes, and recommending the adoption of successful processes, procedures and models to other countries. This 'one size fits all' approach, however, is inadequate. Evidence suggests different sets of critical factors, varying from region to region, that shape the issues and functioning of different parliaments. Thus, learning about the first principles underlying parliament of one country or area is not sufficient since these do not necessarily translate entirely to the context of other countries or regions.

An example of this considers Public Accounts Committees (PAC) in the Pacific region. The historical purpose of a PAC is to oversee whether public funds were spent according to the purpose for which the funds were appropriated. In doing so, PACs relied exclusively on the examination of the reports of the auditor general. The common practice was not – and in many countries still is not – to examine budget estimates. Traditionally, 'best practice' suggests that the chairperson of a PAC should be from the opposition, as it was believed that this would help avoid capture of the committee by the ruling party (Stapenhurst, Pelizzo and Jacobs, 2014). It was also believed that the ideal size of a PAC was around 11 members, as more (and less) than that would reduce committee efficiency (McGee, 2002).

However, Pacific PACs differ significantly from the archetypal PAC. Some, like those in Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu, examine budget estimates as well as government spending, while others have the power to launch their own inquiries (Stapenhurst and Larsen, 2018). Research shows that, contrary to common belief, the number of MPs on the PAC has a strong negative effect on committee outputs: PACs with fewer members are more productive than those with more members.



Research also counterintuitively demonstrates that committees with opposition chairs hold fewer hearings and produce fewer reports than those chaired by a ruling party member (Stapenhurst and Larsen, 2018). This shows that best PAC practices are not universal—and a comparison of Pacific PACs with PACs in other regions of the world demonstrates that effectiveness is highly region-specific (Stapenhurst and Larsen, 2018).

Another example considers Mali. It seemed obvious to visiting Canadian experts why, some years ago, Mali's government lacked accountability—there was no auditor general. However, this occurs because Mali has a French, and not a Westminster system of oversight. Although the relationship with the auditor general is an essential dimension of PAC powers, responsibilities, and functions, this dimension is less important for a country with a different system like Mali.

An excessive focus on first principles is also problematic when it comes to developing new solutions for government oversight. Indonesia, Morocco, Thailand and Tunisia recently established PACs despite having governance systems quite unlike the British Westminster system.

There are key differences in legislative oversight of the budget process between countries with Westminster and non-Westminster systems. PACs in the United Kingdom play a strong *ex post* function but are not strong in coordinating with the finance committee, while France's finance committees, for example, have both *ex ante* and *ex post* functions. Recent evidence shows that France scores highest on oversight, but that other francophone countries such as Morocco and Tunisia, do not score as well, and Thailand and Indonesia score particularly poorly (Stapenhurst and Imbau, 2017 and Stapenhurst, Eboutou and Jacobs (unpublished). This is not entirely a matter of systems: in 2001, France updated laws to expand the role of legislative oversight, but many francophone countries did not update their financial laws (Stapenhurst and Imbeau, 2017); perhaps updating their institutional framework along the lines of France would be more successful than copying parts of the Westminster system. In both Indonesia and Thailand, the grafting of a quintessentially Westminster institution onto presidential systems of governance was even less successful and the PACs were abolished. Hence, it is critical to have a clear, research-based understanding of the context of countries before making recommendations on how to improve parliamentary oversight, rather than solely rely on first principles and systemic generalizations.

The issue of the relevance of traditional parliamentary training programmes in different regions is evident, and yet many training programmes still try to fit that one size to all. They are often condensed to the global common denominator and lack the adaptability and flexibility required by practitioners. Further, a World Bank report (2008) found substantial overlap between courses and programmes offered by various organizations. As one African committee clerk stated: “[foreign organizations] all offer the same thing: four or five days intensive training, going over the same materials as the others use” (Stapenhurst and Zamanuel, 2018).



### **A New Model for Evidence-Based Parliamentary Programmes**

An evidence-based training programme is one in which research is not only used to complement the curriculum, it actually drives the programme content. An evidence-based programme begins with a large, overarching and cross-country study that acts as an overview of different parliamentary systems and issues. This is important because it helps distance archetypal parliaments and first principles from the focus of training and instead emphasizes the empirical realities of parliaments around the world. Subsequently, country-specific research can be undertaken to consider whether or not ‘good practice’ from elsewhere is likely to fit with the country’s particular socio-political and historical context. Such research can highlight important differences such as institutional strengths and regional needs. Finally, the two types of research can be combined and integrated into the training programmes. This approach centers experience and practicality as opposed to ‘one-size fits all’. While both theory and practice are important, this approach centers on experience and practicality and allows the programme to be tailored to participants’ own experiences and needs.

A good example of applying the evidence-based approach is the way McGill’s parliamentary training programme explores the key issues facing parliamentary oversight of extractive industries. Over the past 10 years, some African countries, such as Rwanda, Namibia, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Togo, have made considerable progress in curbing corruption while others, including Ghana, Angola, Uganda and Malawi, have fallen behind. Research undertaken by Olaore and Stapenhurst (unpublished) examines how parliamentary oversight can reduce corruption in the mining industry and looks at Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Tanzania in particular. The research concludes that some of the challenges to curbing corruption are the lack of implementation of existing laws and regulations, weak institutional capacity of legislators and legislatures, and lack of political will to confront the culture of corruption. Using research based on key informant interviews and focus groups allows a better understanding of the difficulties of parliamentary oversight of extractive industries and corruption on a country-level scale. Research findings are directly integrated into the McGill programme to help build parliamentary capacity to curb corruption (Olaore and Stapenhurst, unpublished).

### **Programme Development**

After the initial development of parliamentary training programmes in the 2000s, the World Bank Institute (WBI) undertook a comprehensive capacity review to manage the demand for those programmes in the face of declining aid budgets. The review identified two challenges to supporting parliaments globally: sustainability and scalability. Resulting recommendations included using new technology such as online modules to scale up training to achieve sustainable capacity building. It was also proposed that there be a multi-organization approach to parliamentary staff training to help reduce overlap and duplication (Pozer, 2012).



The capacity review confirmed the demand for advanced and practical professional-level programmes that reflected the needs and interests of parliamentary staff and MPs.

To develop such advanced programmes, the WBI engaged in further widespread consultations at the annual Society of Clerks at the Table meetings, and the Association of Secretaries General of Francophone Parliaments (ASGPF). A survey was sent out to 150 clerks/secretaries general from the Commonwealth and La Francophonie to obtain feedback on existing programmes within different parliamentary jurisdictions. Information was sought on the use of and experience with web-based online courses, as well as initial reactions to a proposed university-level parliamentary training programmes. In 2009, the CPA and World Bank convened a study group in Dhaka in which participants reviewed the results of the questionnaire and made additional recommendations (Stapenhurst and Pozer, 2012).

The outcome of these consultations was a clearly expressed need to focus on three aspects necessary for an evidence-based parliamentary staff training programmes: it must be adaptable, accessible, and unique (Stapenhurst and Pozer, 2012).

#### *Adaptable*

Adaptable means the programmes must have a strong core content, yet be structured in a way that allows for changes and growth: curriculum, delivery, and admission requirements should be able to evolve to meet the needs of parliaments. The programmes should also be created to be accessible to participants from both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries alike, and other groups, like the staff of the executive and judicial branches of government, to participate (Stapenhurst and Pozer, 2012).

#### *Accessible*

Online learning is cost-effective, convenient, and flexible (Stapenhurst and Pozer, 2012). It also resolves equity issues, allowing all levels of staffers from countries all over the world to have access to these training programmes (Pozer, 2012). The survey indicated that all levels of staff, including chamber of committee procedural staff, administrative staff involved in corporate governance, and research staff from parliamentary libraries and political caucuses, would benefit from the programme. To ensure strong academic standards, a bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience and a highly selective administrative process should be used in the admission process (Stapenhurst and Pozer, 2012). There was also the acknowledgement that MPs and staff have conflicting goals and require similar, but distinct training programmes (Stapenhurst and Pozer, 2012).

#### *Unique*

A unique approach to parliamentary capacity building programmes combines theory, research, practice and blended delivery format. It was recommended that “there should be face-to-face and web-based online learning components, and possibly videoconferencing. The program should not compete with existing training programs” (Stapenhurst and



Pozer, 2012). The study group conducted during the consultation process also advised that curriculum must focus on the local needs of participants. The programme must also include a practical facet, allowing for greater participant agency, and the ability to address regional and local concerns. A mentorship program would allow participants to discuss issues of importance to their legislatures with experienced practitioners (Pozer, 2012).

With all these concerns in mind, the World Bank and CPA collaborated with McGill University to design a comprehensive professional development programme for English-speaking countries and with Laval University for French-speaking countries.

### **Beyond Training**

Designing a comprehensive professional development programme, which would truly help build the capacity of diverse parliamentary staff and MPs globally, required going beyond training. Whilst good training is critical, it mostly addresses the acquisition of specific skills necessary to tackle immediate tasks according to specific standards, procedures and rules. Training is often a one-dimensional and one-directional delivery of information, and is normally accomplished with a short-term objective, whereas learning is a multi-dimensional, long-term developmental process. It involves building an individual's capacity to deal with complex, unpredictable future challenges and situations. Meaningful and transformational learning “encourages cognitive complexity – in other words, learning that changes not just *what* people know but *how* they know” (Taylor, 2006).

Hence, to help prepare and sustain parliamentary institutions for the challenges of tomorrow, McGill's professional development programmes for parliamentary staff and MPs are designed to promote critical thinking and reflection, encourage participants to exchange ideas and challenge assumptions, and translate newly acquired knowledge into action. The programmes' objective is not to merely provide more information or train participants on a specific parliamentary procedure, but to enable them to develop new perspectives and make their own meaning by building on their prior knowledge and experiences, as well as that of their peers from other parliaments. Learning is not about remembering something new, but about reflecting on past experiences and discovering the ways in which previous experiences relate to what is being taught in order to achieve meaningful learning (Taylor, 2006).

### **Designed with Adult Learners in Mind**

Parliamentary staff and MPs participating in McGill's professional development programmes are adult learners who come from various cultural and educational backgrounds and have different levels of professional experience. According to the adult learning theory (andragogy) developed by a well-known American educator, Malcolm Knowles, adults learn differently from children (pedagogy). Adults are mature, self-directed human beings whose accumulated experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for learning. Adults have an internal motivation to learn and are most interested in learning that has an immediate relevance and impact on their job or personal life. They prefer problem-centered rather than



subject-centered learning and like to discover knowledge for themselves without depending on others (Knowles, 1984). Learning that translates into change and action occurs only when adult learners get the opportunity to experience learning through the four phases of the learning cycle: experience, reflection on and analysis of experience, constructing learning by forming one's own conclusions about the links between concepts, and planning for effective action.

McGill's professional development programmes are designed keeping in mind that "overarching objective of adult learning is not to simply master the content of specific courses, but to understand that knowledge is not given or gotten, but constructed; the ability to take perspective on one's own beliefs; and the realization that learning and development are worthy life-long goals" (Taylor, 2006). Programme participants are given the opportunity to create connections between the content being taught and their own professional experiences, allowing them to seek new meaning through new constructions of knowledge.

### **Experience-based Learning Activities**

Adult learners are motivated to learn and apply what they learn when concepts and activities are relevant, practical and contextualized. To promote meaningful non-veridical learning, programme instructors rely on experience-based learning strategies and activities that call on prior knowledge or experience such as making use of narrative and writing-to-learn, as well as critical reflection and open-ended problem discussions that question assumptions and premises.

Participant presentations (narratives) as well as in-class and online discussions are some of the key components to McGill's programmes, which allow participants to revisit and share their experiences and engage in self-examination. "Such construction of narratives with peers and instructor is another important factor in the learning that ensues" (Taylor, 2006), because "narratives allow us to combine – in conscious memory – our knowledge, sensations, feeling and behaviors supporting underlying neural network integration" (Cozolino, 2002). McGill programme participants often report that discussions with their peers are some of their most valuable learning experiences.

The writing-to-learn approach is another form of narrative, which is used in the programme through written assignments, online discussions, and the final research paper at the end of each course. Writing is a powerful tool for self-discovery and reflection as it allows one to describe and capture thought in a more precise and concrete form and is a further step in to the "process of integration, ... assessment and recalibration of perception" (Taylor, 2006). Some course assignments require students to write about and explain the way their parliaments function. On the surface this may seem like a basic activity, yet encouraging students to write all the things they implicitly know about their parliament can help make implicit assumptions explicit and help participants re-evaluate their assumptions, approaches and beliefs.



Discussions of open-ended problems and real-life case studies with many possible solutions are used to promote non-veridical learning. Veridical learning (predominant across many education systems) focuses on how to get the right answers to problems constructed to guide to a single answer (Taylor, 2006). However, this is not the case when it comes to real-life situations, particularly in a parliamentary context, where there is a need to consider many variables and multiple perspectives. These require reflection and adaptive decision-making.

To encourage transformational learning, McGill's programmes emphasize "meaning making based on discourse and critical reflection, which involves questioning the very assumptions or premises that created a particular situation as a problem" (Taylor, 2006). Such reflective learning depends on discovering and challenging one's own and others' assumptions as a step in establishing new meaning perspectives. These new perspectives can lead to more than just a reframing of current ideas; they foster qualitatively more complex ways of understanding and knowing (Kegan, 2000).

Though writing-to-learn, co-construction of narratives, and various self-reflective activities can encourage awareness and growth, learning experiences such as these are most effective when they take place within a supportive relationship (Taylor, 2006). Therefore, one-on-one mentorship was introduced as an integral and unique part of McGill's programme for parliamentary staff. At the beginning of the parliamentary staff programme, each participant is assigned to a mentor (one of the programme instructors), who accompanies, encourages, motivates, and guides the mentee throughout the duration of the programme and beyond.

All the aforementioned adult learning principles and experience-based learning strategies have been considered when developing McGill's two programmes: The Professional Development Certificate (PDC) in Parliamentary Management for staff, and the Professional Development Certificate in Parliamentary Governance for MPs.

### **Programme Details**

The PDC in Parliamentary Management comprises 180 hours, corresponding to 18 continuing education units, and includes a one-week intensive face-to-face residency course in Montreal or elsewhere (in 2018, the residency was held in Kenya), followed by five online courses. They are: Parliamentary Research and IT, Corporate Management of Parliament I, Corporate Management of Parliament II, Parliamentary Committees and Public Financial Management.

Since 2012, over 150 participants with parliamentary experience ranging from five to 20 years from over 40 countries have completed the programme for parliamentary staff.

In 2017, McGill University launched the PDC in Parliamentary Governance for newly elected MPs from small jurisdictions of the Commonwealth. This blended programme of 130 hours (13 continuing education units) is sponsored by the Commonwealth



Parliamentary Association and also includes both online and in-class components. Courses in this programme are: Introduction to Commonwealth Parliamentary Governance (online), Contemporary Issues in Parliamentary Governance (in class), Advanced Commonwealth Parliamentary Governance (online), and Parliamentary Communications (online).

Twenty-three MPs from around the Commonwealth, including from the Northwest Territories and Nova Scotia in Canada, the Caribbean and Pacific, and from British islands including the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey, attended the programme last year.

### **Feedback**

Participants of both programmes believe they broaden knowledge and enhance skills; offer access to experts, resources and tools; allow them to share best practices and network with peers from other parliaments; and help obtain a relevant professional qualification from one of the top universities in the world. The opportunity to exchange diverse experiences, tap into undocumented tacit knowledge of experienced parliamentarians, and meld theory and practice are other programme features greatly appreciated by participants.

As intended, the programmes enabled participants to translate their learning and new ideas into action. In a follow-up survey of parliamentary staff programme participants conducted in 2017, all participants reported being able to apply what they learned in the programme to their work in parliament. Some improvements implemented by programme participants in their parliaments have been: handling of investigative hearings and reporting back to the parliament; creating a structure for the committee secretariat division; implementing data sharing systems and public engagement initiatives like a virtual tour of the assembly; Improving quality of research work; introducing a code of conduct for parliamentary staff; building new links between parliamentary committees and researchers; developing a draft communications strategy for the national assembly; introducing an orientation/training programme for new directors at the assembly, which has since been extended to managers and supervisors; and improving parliamentary standing committee work and secretarial support services to the member of parliament.

In their own words, participants describe the programme as a “rich source of inspiration,” enabling them to “learn from world-class professionals and access experiences in other parliaments that are not documented elsewhere”. Participants enjoyed sharing experiences that “opened new horizons for us to make our parliamentary practices more innovative”, and were pleased with “brilliant moderators and wonderful mentors [who] made this programme excellent and more effective”. Overall, they said the programme “introduces and reinforces best practices, new ideas and alternate ways of thinking. The result is change in parliamentary institutions and service improvements to MPs and citizens”.



## Conclusion

This article discussed the ‘Old Way’ of developing parliamentary training programmes, their challenges and shortcomings. It explained the research and consultative process, as well as key considerations, in the development of new training programmes by the World Bank and the CPA that led to the launch of McGill’s professional development programmes for parliamentary staff and MPs. McGill’s use of sound adult learning principles and experience-based learning strategies was explained, followed by an overview of the positive feedback from past participants and examples of positive changes inspired by the programme.

We would like to conclude this article with the following quotes, which perfectly reflect the philosophy of McGill’s approach to professional development: “If you become aware that something is in a certain way, then you also become aware that it could be in some other way” (Marton and Booth, 1997). Adults in whom such awareness develops are likely to be less reactive and more considerate in personal, workplace, and political decisions, as well as better able to adapt to changing circumstances. They are also better able to recognize the need for more just, humane, and equitable economic and social structures. In short, they are prone to be more deliberate, responsible, and competent in working toward the health of the commons (Taylor, 2006).

To learn more about McGill’s parliamentary professional development programmes, please visit [www.mcgill.ca/scs-parliament](http://www.mcgill.ca/scs-parliament).

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# BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY TO STRENGTHEN PARLIAMENTS

Nigeria's National Institute of Legislative Studies (NILS) was the first organization to collaborate with the CPA-WBI and McGill International Executive Programme for Parliamentary Staff. The Professor of Practice at McGill University, Dr Rick Stapenhurst, and the Secretary-General of NILS, Dr Ladi Hamalai, report on their collaboration in implementing the programme, and learning from the participants' feedback.



## Dr Rick Stapenhurst and Dr Ladi Hamalai

Dr Rick Stapenhurst is both a consultant/advisor to the World Bank Institute, where until his recent retirement, he was team leader of the governance/parliamentary programme and a Professor of Practice at McGill

University's Institute for the Study of International Development.

Dr Ladi Hamalai is the Director General of NILS.

Dr Hamalai has been the pioneer Project Coordinator of Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP), National Assembly, since 2004.



**Dr Rick Stapenhurst**

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), and the World Bank Institute (WBI)-McGill University's International Executive Programme for Parliamentary Staff recently entered a new phase of building the capacity of national parliamentary institutes to deliver the programme in their own respective countries, while at the same time adapting the content to local social and political circumstances. Consequently, substantial economies



**Dr Ladi Hamalai**

of scale can be achieved, making per-participant programme costs substantially lower, and longer term capacity development is enhanced, according to the Professor of Practice at McGill University, and the Secretary-General of Nigeria's National Institute of Legislative Studies (NILS).

### **Nigeria the first**

The first such institute to collaborate with the CPA-WBI and McGill

University is Nigeria's National Institute of Legislative Studies (NILS). NILS was established by the Nigerian National Assembly (NASS) by an Act of Parliament in 2011.

Building on the successes of the Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP), which was started in 2003 as a capacity building institution of NASS and supported by the Africa Capacity Building Foundation, the vision of NILS is to be a world class facility that will support Legislatures in Nigeria (at the Federal, State and local levels) and in neighbouring Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) countries. The objectives of NILS include, to:

- Provide training, capacity building, research and extension services to Nigerian Legislatures;
- Promote best practices in legislative activities both in Nigeria and across West Africa;
- Promote and disseminate the practice of science-based method-



## International Executive Programme for Parliamentary Staff

Until comparatively recently, efforts to strengthen the capacity of Parliaments typically focused on improving the skills of Members of Parliament and on improving infrastructure (libraries and information technology) within Parliaments. As important as these activities are, they yielded limited results and it is now recognized that enhancing the institutional memory of Parliament and concentrating on the training of parliamentary staff, is also important.

Leading the way in parliamentary staff development were the CPA, WBI, the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, and the State University of New York's Centre for International Development (SUNY-CID), among others. Deciding to join forces and thereby capitalize on each institutions' unique set of strengths and competencies, it was recognized that any programme should be demand-driven and as a result an extensive consultative process was launched with Clerks and Secretaries General from across the Commonwealth and la Francophonie. The outcome was the development of a unique n Executive Development for Parliamentary Staff, which represents the height of technological and academic knowledge available today which recognizes the expectations of what is needed for the future.

The programme comprises a one-week intensive residency, at McGill University in Montreal plus a set of advanced e\*learning courses. A unique feature of the programme is that it combines theory and an academic approach with practical case studies and experiences. Recognized international leaders in parliamentary development from Canada, the United States, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia were engaged in the development of the curriculum for the programme and an advisory board of leading academics and practitioners provides strategic guidance.

The first residency, held in Montreal in June 2012, included resource persons from a wide array of backgrounds and disciplines, from business administration and political science to parliamentary administration and parliamentary development. A second residency was held in April 2013 and a third is planned for April/May 2014.

ologies of law making to Legislatures in Nigeria;

- Improve the capacity of legislators to sustain and consolidate democratic governance through deliberation and policy formulation;
- Improve the technical capacity of legislative staff, committee secretaries and legislative aides to process appropriation Bills and oversight; and
- Assist NASS and state assemblies in their efforts to conceive and draft Bills.

In carrying out activities to fulfill these, and related objectives, NILS provides extensive training programmes to enhance the capacities of Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, and undertakes research on current and emerging key issues, legislation and policy reviews. It also has a comprehensive database of Nigerian, African and global laws and a growing collection of parliamentary publications in its library.

This innovative collaborative agreement was initiated by Dr Ladi Hamalai, Secretary General of NILS. She asked for support, in developing training programmes for parliamentary staff in Nigeria. Three senior faculty members from NILS, along with three staff from NASS, attended the 2013 International Executive Programme's Residency in Montreal, in order to develop an understanding of the goals, objectives and content of the programme and to begin a dialogue with the programme's directors and international staff.

NILS staff were charged with the adaptation of the residency schedule, to ensure Nigerian content, while the programme team wrestled with the modalities of delivering the programme five thousand miles from its home base, with a resource team of five international experts from four countries in two continents along with several Nigerian experts.

The first Nigerian residency of the

programme was held in November 2013 in Abuja.

Tasked with developing a set of confident and well-informed parliamentary staff with adequate capacity and competence in issues pertaining to law-making, democracy, parliamentary budgeting and other relevant components of parliamentary process, the objectives of the programme were to:

- Acquaint participants with the general knowledge of parliamentary administration;
- Avail the participants the opportunity of gaining knowledge that will enhance their productivity in comparative perspectives and boost the performance of their principals (that is, Parliamentarians);
- Appreciate parliamentary capacity building, parliamentary oversight of the budget and parliamentary corporate governance and time management;
- Expose the participants to the role

of parliamentary staff in law-making, policy and budget processes with a view to equipping them to perform their jobs effectively.

Dr Ladi Hamalai, Mr Paul Belisle, (WBI) and I welcomed participants and outlined the agenda for the week. The ten sessions held through the week were:

- Democracy, Accountability & Parliaments;
- Government Accountability;
- Parliamentary Oversight;
- The Legislative Process;
- Parliamentary Representation;
- Corporate Management of Parliaments;
- Strategic Communications for Parliaments;
- Benchmarking of Parliamentary Performance;
- Parliamentary Leadership; and
- Parliamentary Research.

International resource persons included: Mr Riccardo Pelizzo (Parliamentary Consultant, WBI); Mr Anthony Staddon (Professor, University of Westminster); Prof. Mark Baskin (Professor, State University of New York); and Mr Mitchell O'Brien (Team Leader, WBI). Nigerian resource persons and guest speakers included: Prof. Amucheazi; Chief Jarumi; Senator Ike Ekweremadu; and Prof. Chudi Uwazurike,

Each participant is required to take a total of five e\*learning courses. The first course, on Parliamentary Oversight of Extractive Industries, to be moderated by Nigerian consultant at the World Bank, Mr Deji Oloare, began in early 2014. Future courses include Committees, Corporate Management, the Budget and Public Financial Management, Research and Research/ICT.

On completion of the programme in mid-2015, participants will receive a joint certificate from NILS and McGill University's Institute for the Study of International Development.

### Participant feedback

The Abuja residency was attended





Speakers and resource persons during the programme in Abuja. From left to right: Dr Rick Stapenhurst, Mr Mitchell O'Brien, WBI; Prof. Mark Baskin, SUNY; and Mr Paul Belisle, WBI.



by 63 parliamentary staff from NASS, various Nigerian state Legislatures and the ECOWAS Parliament, the residency was a resounding success.

As the residency came to an end, an overwhelmingly positive response was shown from participants and resource persons alike.

Both groups attributed an overall programme content score of 4.3 out of a possible 5.

This first review reflected the relevance, interest and organization of the week-long seminar, as well as a marked enthusiasm for the 18-month-long e\*learning portion of the course that is still to come.

Additional positive feedback was given based on the quality of instructors and moderators as well as the level of synergy that developed within the group.

Along with their praise for their initial experience in what is to be the first of an annual programme, participants offered several suggestions as to the possible changes that could be made in order to benefit future participants. A recurring remark was made regarding the demanding agenda during residency.

From 9-5.30pm every day, participants followed an intense programme. It was suggested that

this be eased somewhat to allow time for individual reflection and interaction among participants.

Furthermore, looking beyond the technological and academic improvements, WBI and its partners were asked to more explicitly recognize that no single model is right for all jurisdictions and especially to develop greater insights into the needs of Nigerian state Legislatures.

Furthermore, many participants noted a particular interest in going beyond the objectives set by programme coordinators and building upon the platform of knowledge of the parliamentary procedures and practices at the national level.

In particular, they wanted to increase their own level of understanding of parliamentary democracy and democratic principles and become better knowledgeable in core functions of Parliament, in order to provide efficient services to MPs.

Participants also showed significant interest in the specificity and flexibility of e\*learning courses offered. The exchange of knowledge using peer-to-peer learning, was viewed by participants as a valued way to share, replicate, and scale-up those parliamentary practices found effective elsewhere.





Parliamentary staff participants voiced a desire to learn from the practical experience of those who had faced similar problems.

Participants remarks included: "I am so impressed with the resource persons during the lecture. I am so happy I have learned many things that will improve my schedule of duties in the office..."; "Generally speaking, all the resource persons were wonderful. They gave enough illustrations and examples [ranging from the] African region, the United Kingdom and America"; "Committed, precise and well-articulated. Allowed for interactive sessions, thereby motivating participants"; "The

programme should be organized again and again, because it is rich and educative"; "I really want to give a great thank you to NILS for giving me the privilege to be part of this historical programme... I give a great thank you to all the resource persons... I wish that NILS should continue to organize such programmes, at least every three months, to improve the knowledge and capability of parliamentary staff".

In short, participants found that the current programme's framework provides parliamentary staff with what is perceived as both needed and lacking in other available training programmes.

### Next Steps

Following the successful programme delivery, Paul Belisle, Mitchell O'Brien and I met with Dr Hamalai to review progress and to plan the next steps in building the capacity of NILS to deliver the programme without international technical support.

Three examples of the activities agreed upon for the next 12 months include:

- Publication of presentations in a special edition of the *Nigerian Journal of Legislative Studies*;
- A three-day 'training of trainers' workshop for NILS faculty and NASS staff to be held either at McGill

University or in NILS' facilities in Abuja; and

- A second Abuja Residency to be held in August 2014, during which the international resource persons and NILS faculty will co-deliver the programme.

It is interesting to note that this model has a global appeal.

The Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia has expressed a strong interest in working with CPA, WBI and McGill University to develop their capacity to deliver the programme.

For more information, contact Rick Stapenhurst at: [frederick.stapenhurst@mcgill.ca](mailto:frederick.stapenhurst@mcgill.ca)

# World Bank Institute's Approach to Parliamentary Capacity Strengthening

Mitchell O'Brien<sup>1,\*</sup>, Rick Stapenhurst<sup>2</sup> and Brooke Prater<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>World Bank Institute, Washington, DC, USA;

<sup>2</sup>Institute for the Study of International Development, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

\*Correspondence: [mobrien@worldbank.org](mailto:mobrien@worldbank.org)

For approximately 15 years, the World Bank Institute (WBI) has aimed to enhance the capacity of parliaments in their oversight, representation and law-making functions, recognising their essential role to good governance: they are representatives, set priorities, hold the executive accountable and engage directly with the media, civil society and individual citizens. This article outlines WBI's model for strengthening parliamentary capacity globally and regionally by considering: capacity development and adult learning; challenges in implementing parliamentary capacity support projects; WBI's parliamentary strengthening model; a case-study on WBI's parliamentary staff training and the conclusion that a multi-faceted, medium-to-long term process is the best approach to parliamentary capacity building.

The World Bank Institute (WBI) seeks to enhance the capacity of parliaments to effectively perform their functions (oversight, representation and law-making) in order to better contribute to open and collaborative development. Good governance is essential to achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Governance is the manner in which state power is exercised and is based on four pillars—accountability, transparency, participation and the rule of law. Open and collaborative governance reinforces the need to include supply-side and demand-side actors in the governance process in order to achieve these four pillars. Central to a multi-stakeholder approach to good governance are parliaments; as constitutionally mandated institutions they have a vital role to play not only in priority setting, but also holding the executive to account for meeting a country's development objectives. Furthermore, as representative institutions they are better placed to engage more directly with other demand-side governance actors, such as the media, civil society and individual citizens, in order to achieve truly open, collaborative and accountable governance in client countries.



Achieving this objective requires development practitioners to not only capture and share international good practice around parliamentary performance, but do so in a way that strengthens these institutions by building sustainable internal capacity.

Experience has shown that parliamentary capacity-building faces many challenges (see further [Carothers, 1999](#)), not least the natural attrition of elected members due to the election cycle. This article aims to outline WBI's model for strengthening parliamentary capacity on a global and regional basis, which has evolved over the last 15 years in order to take into account this unique institution and the challenges faced in building their sustainable capacity. This article proceeds in five parts. First, the notion of capacity development and adult learning, for the purposes of this initiative, is defined. Second, the specific development challenges faced in implementing parliamentary capacity support projects will be identified. Third, WBI's parliamentary strengthening model will be outlined. Fourth, a case study on WBI's parliamentary staff training efforts will examine a new approach to broadening and deepening staff capacity. Finally, the article concludes that a multi-faceted, medium-to-long term process that recognises the unique learning environment, informational needs and absorptive strengths of the stakeholder is best suited for regional and global approaches to capacity building for parliaments.

## 1. Capacity development

Institutions are structures or conventions that govern the behaviour of certain individuals or communities and seek to reduce uncertainty by establishing stable structures for human exchange ([North, 1990](#)). Parliament is an example of a political institution, with defined structures and conventions, which influence how individuals within the institution engage each other in order to represent the interests of the community they serve, pass legislation and hold the executive accountable. Strengthening institutional capacity must take into consideration how best to enhance the technical skills of the individuals who form part of the institution in question. The two primary groupings of individuals who make up parliament are Members of Parliament (MPs) and parliamentary staff who support the performance of parliaments' primary functions.

Capacity building of institutions entails enhancing the capacity of individuals to learn new skills in order to shape established structures to better achieve the institution's purpose. Therefore, it makes sense for parliamentary strengthening practitioners to employ lessons learned—not just in the field of international development, but also concerning adult education more generally. The relevant literature details several simple principles that are essential to effective adult learning, many of which are incorporated in the lessons expounded by WBI

recently published practitioners guide to facilitating effective knowledge exchange (WBI Guide; [World Bank Institute, 2011](#)). These principles are briefly summarised below. They generally focus on motivating learners, reinforcing the lessons, promoting retention and helping participants transfer new information to different situations.

In short, adults learn best when their educators take into consideration some of the very qualities that make them 'adults.' For example, adults have a much greater sense of agency than children. As a result, they usually have a better understanding of what they would like to learn and why, so their motivation to learn increases when they believe that the subject matter will help them reach their goals. Also, adults come to new subjects with substantial life experiences and pre-existing knowledge. Effective teaching styles will help them use those stories by recognising existing biases and connecting the new material to the old. Finally, adults learn best when we are able to practise what we learn and *apply* it in different environments; it helps cement new ideas and makes the ideas the learner's own. To that end, educators and development practitioners are wise to include a series of different activities in their educational programmes and initiatives (see generally [Zemke and Zemke, 1984](#); [Lieb, 1991](#); [Delivering Training: Adult Learning Principles](#)).

A few other general principles exist as well. In addition to the above, educators should make goals clear from the outset; ensure that material is relevant and practical; include tools to reinforce new knowledge and do what they can to help learners feel respected, creating a safe space for open discourse and a platform for participants to inject their own perspectives into the learning experience (see generally [Zemke and Zemke, 1984](#); [Lieb, 1991](#); [Delivering Training: Adult Learning Principles](#)). In order to ensure that the educational experience is as relevant and practical as possible, clients and other stakeholders should be actively involved in determining the content by participating in processes that allow the end user to identify the issues to be addressed during the learning event, identifying challenges and setting goals and outcomes. Importantly, knowledge exchanges should be designed with challenges and limitations in mind, have clear and well-thought-through goals and include appropriate stakeholders ([World Bank Institute, 2011](#)).

Capacity building is often reduced simply to training. Although training is a tool that can be used as part of a capacity development process, parliamentary strengthening practitioners should not rely solely on this modality if they seek sustainable institutionalised capacity impact. Practice has shown that capacity development is a complex, multi-faceted process implemented over the medium-to-long term. The structural design of a knowledge exchange project should contain a variety of learning vehicles, ranging from face-to-face training, technical assistance, just-in-time advice, study tours, practitioner exchanges and



peer-learning, action-planning, e-Learning, practical exercises/role play and many more. This creates dynamic experiences that enhance participant engagement and helps individuals internalise good practice incrementally in response to their informational needs, which evolve as they begin to implement the content contained in earlier components of a capacity-building process.

Finally, when developing the content and structure for any parliamentary strengthening initiative, the following capacity constraints should be assessed:<sup>1</sup> institutional capacity—processes, conventions and frameworks within a parliament that influence behaviour; organisational capacity—clarity of mandate and internal structures to effectively manage change management processes; information capacity—the ability of parliaments to elicit, absorb and manage the flow of information and analysis necessary to perform parliament's functions and relay information about parliamentary action to the community and resource capacity including material, financial and human resources.

## 2. Development challenge

Global efforts to strengthen the capacity of parliaments are driven by two fundamental understandings: parliaments have a constructive role to play in a good governance environment; and there are substantial challenges to parliaments strengthening their own capacity. This provides impetus for externally funded capacity-building efforts, delivered on a global, regional, national and sub-national basis. However, WBI has identified a number of challenges to providing support to parliaments. They include the following: technical expertise—mobilisation of appropriate technical skill to inform parliamentary reform processes—the bulk of international expertise rests with parliaments themselves; sustainability—the natural election cycle process erodes capacity achievements when MPs are not returned (NB: This is also a strength as the periodic election of MPs under a constitution provides parliamentarians with a legitimacy other demand-side institutions lack.); scalability—although country-driven programming has proved to be successful in some instances, resource limitations mean that it is not possible to have devoted institutional strengthening projects in every client country. A model that is scalable is essential to respond to the burgeoning global demand for capacity support; complexity—the complexity of development issues parliaments must now grapple with requires new thinking as to how to build the capacity of parliaments to constructively engage on cross-sectoral issues and complex public financial management systems; and

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that although a parliament will, most likely, experience capacity constraints in all four areas, a capacity building project need not address all four areas. However, the explicit objectives of the project should be defined in clear terms from the outset.

homogeneity. No two parliaments are the same and parliaments consist of multiple institutions operating within parliament. This requires an adaptive and targeted approach to support.

### 3. WBI's approach to parliamentary strengthening

WBI has been working directly with parliaments for over a decade and a half. The Institute has adopted an iterative approach to parliamentary strengthening, learning from successful implementation of projects as well as implementation challenges in order to refine its approach to parliamentary development. This programmatic learning has been supplemented by periodic internal reviews and on-going monitoring and evaluation of the impact of its initiatives, as well as literature and international experience around adult learning and designing capacity-building processes. The approach outlined in this article is not presented as a universal model; rather, it was designed to meet the implementation and development challenges particular to achieving WBI's development objectives.

As a broad generalisation, there are three approaches to parliamentary capacity building: individual approach (enhancing the capacity of individual MP and professional parliamentary staff); institutional approach (parliament is an institution made up of multiple smaller institutions. An institutional approach can seek to strengthen the whole institution or select institutions under the umbrella of parliament, such as the parliamentary administration or oversight committees) and network approach (bringing together like-minded MP/parliamentary committees at the regional and global levels using parliamentary networks).

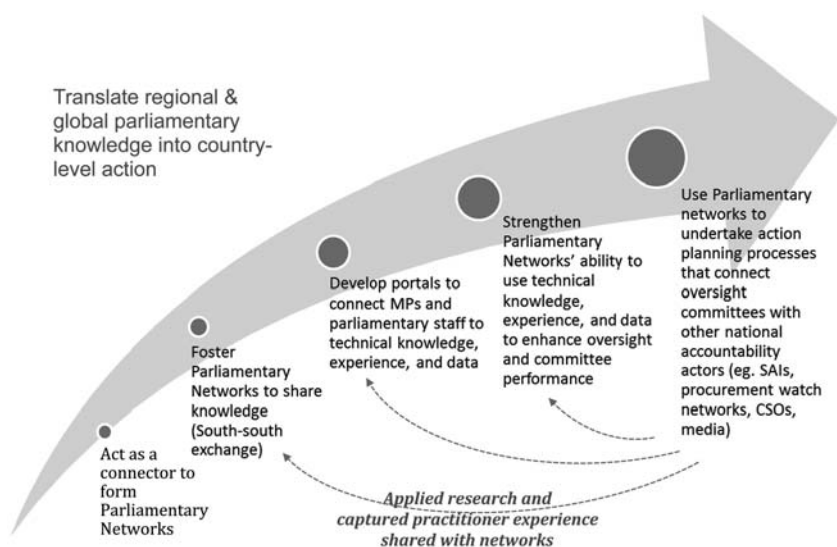
Experience has shown that a strategy that combines all three approaches is adaptive to changing circumstances and needs, and adopts participatory and adult-learning techniques outline above achieves better capacity yields.

The objectives of WBI parliamentary strengthening efforts have been guided by this assessment of parliamentary capacity building. The objective of WBI's Parliamentary Strengthening Programme is to identify innovative approaches to reform (supplemented by applied research); foster and strengthen parliamentary networks/communities of practice to act as platforms for south-south learning and deliver targeted training to MPs and staff, including facilitating demand-driven action planning processes, in order to bolster the effectiveness of specific oversight committees.

The WBI achieves these objectives by connecting global knowledge; convening and coalescing stakeholders and managing knowledge for capacity development.

Figure 1 outlines the parliamentary capacity development approach developed by WBI to facilitate knowledge exchange, maximise knowledge dissemination through networks and portals, and ultimately capitalise on global, regional and





**Figure 1** WBI model for parliamentary engagement.

geographic knowledge-sharing to strengthen parliaments' functions at the national level.

Meeting growing demand for support to parliaments has meant that WBI has had to shift its approach from direct or retail delivery of courses in overseas locations to working more with regional networks (and their secretariats), regional and national training institutes, think tanks and universities to support in-country capacity-development programmes and to help build their capacity to build capacity. The new approach aims to have a greater and more lasting impact by customising global knowledge to local realities. Where it is strategic, important retail learning programmes will continue to be delivered while WBI also builds the capacity of regional and selected country institutions to scale-up programme implementation.

The WBI parliamentary strengthening model is a five-stage cyclical process. The first stage aims to convene institutions or individuals experiencing common capacity challenges to identify issues that need to be addressed, set goals and outcomes. This stage helps refine the appropriate entry point for engagement and ensures that any capacity-building initiative is adaptive and demand driven. At this stage, future practitioner exchange is usually highlighted as a key instrument in addressing knowledge and skill deficits. The second stage involves the development partners working with those like-minded institutions or individuals in order to foster networks or communities of practice (either on a regional or global basis) aimed at providing a platform for south–south

exchange. This approach recognises that the technical expertise necessary to address the capacity constraints of parliament resides within the parliaments themselves. The third stage focuses on developing portals or mechanisms for on-going information exchange. This can be as simple as a list serve managed by all the members of the community or as complex as designing online portals and e-Learning platforms. The fourth stage sees the development partners working with the networks in order to strengthen their internal capacity to provide critical on-going training and capacity support to the membership. This helps build sustainable internal capacity and helps ensure scalability of efforts. The fifth stage periodically convenes the membership in order to review progress in developing a regional or global community and undertake national action-planning processes. The action plans draw upon the knowledge and skills gained by the membership through participating in stages one to four and consist of actions to be implemented by national parliaments in order to enhance parliamentary performance. In this way, stage five seeks to translate regional and global knowledge into country-led action. The action plans also provide a framework for development partner engagement at the national level.

Underpinning this model is on-going applied research aimed at capturing and feeding knowledge, experience and data back into the networks, activities and country-level action throughout all five steps of the process. It should also be noted that WBI works closely with several partners in the delivery of this approach, including working closely with parliaments that have undertaken reforms or implemented good practice in order to share knowledge as to how to successfully navigate reform processes.

### 3.1 *Focus areas and cross-cutting initiatives*

Consistent with the challenges identified during stakeholder consultations, the WBI identified three focus areas where WBI could support parliamentary capacity development efforts in order to enhance open and collaborative development processes. These focus areas were selected based on the following criteria: parliamentary demand; comparative experience/technical knowledge and consistency with the World Bank's global mandate and strategic priorities.

There are three focus areas: open budgeting; extractive industries and climate change.

**3.1.1 *Open budgeting (including public financial management and procurement oversight)*** The objective is to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to engage the budget process, by establishing and working with parliamentary budget offices and regional networks of parliamentary audit committees to enhance the capacity of parliaments to play a constructive role during the



formulation of the national budget and overseeing implementation of projects funded under the national budget.

**3.1.2 *Extractive Industries*** The objective is to improve parliamentary oversight and committee coordination in relation to the extractive industry (EI) sector. In order to do this, WBI has developed a participatory process whereby parliaments themselves map how parliamentary oversight committees engage along the EI value chain. The aim of this participatory process is to identify where there are gaps or overlap in the responsibility of different parliamentary committees to oversee the EI sector and design organic mechanisms for internal coordination with an eye to improving oversight and transparency of the EI sector.

**3.1.3 *Climate change*** In this case, the objective is to enhance the capacity of parliaments to address challenges posed by climate change, including oversight of international climate change financing. Working closely with World Bank's climate change practice, WBI (working with partners) has developed a global community of practice of like-minded MPs who seek to enhance their understanding of issues related to the changing climate and how parliaments can use their functions (representation, law-making and oversight) in order to enhance country responses to the climate challenge.

There are two cross-cutting initiatives aimed at supplementing programmatic efforts in these WBI focus areas.

**3.1.4 *Parliaments in fragile and conflict affected countries*** The first initiative concerns parliaments in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Here the objective is to strengthen the capacity of parliaments in fragile and conflict-affected states to play a constructive role in the national budget process and ensure that national development plans and annual budgets contribute to conflict prevention. WBI facilitates the participation of parliaments from conflict-affected countries in regional networks in order to foster linkages between fragile states and neighbouring parliaments; encourage parliaments to learn from best practice previously implemented by neighbouring parliaments and strengthen the capacity of the parliament to use the budget process as a conflict prevention mechanism.

**3.1.5 *Parliamentary staff training*** The second involves parliamentary staff training. The objective is to strengthen the capacity of professional parliamentary staff to support parliamentary operations. WBI's parliamentary e-learning portal ([www.parliamentarystrengthening.org](http://www.parliamentarystrengthening.org)) and e-Institute provides an open access training catalogue for the parliamentary community from around the globe. This is supplemented with concerted training of select mid-level parliamentary staff on topics such as the budget process, committee operations, anti-corruption, etc.

#### 4. Case study: parliamentary staff training

Two challenges to providing support to parliaments globally that were identified during stakeholder consultations were sustainability and scalability. An internal evaluation of WBI's parliamentary strengthening efforts in the mid-2000s specifically recommended scaling-up engagement with parliamentary staff in order to achieve sustainable capacity yields. In a majority of jurisdictions (although not all), professional parliamentary staff act as the corporate memory of parliament. However, reliance on traditional face-to-face training of parliamentary staff was alone not addressing the growing demand for staff training. Furthermore, only using face-to-face trainings raised issues of equity of access as junior staff are most often not selected to participate in training programmes and parliaments from smaller jurisdictions were often excluded due to availability of resources.

In order to overcome these challenges the WBI is scaling up its capacity support to parliamentary staff through an enhanced wholesale approach. This approach consists of two pillars: broadening access to training for junior parliamentary staff through the WBI's e-Learning catalogue and deepening access for mid-career parliamentary professionals through the development of a University Certified WBI Executive Training Course for Parliamentary Staff (to be piloted in Summer 2012).

##### 4.1 Broadening access

After several years of costly and limiting face-to-face and videoconference training available to only a handful of the world's parliamentary community, WBI, together with its partner, The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, began transforming its academic papers prepared by international subject area experts into easily accessible and quickly absorbable learning modules to strengthen the capacity of junior to mid-career level parliamentary staff by offering them through two e-Learning portals—[www.parliamentarystrengthening.org](http://www.parliamentarystrengthening.org) and now the e-Institute (<http://einstitute.worldbank.org/ei/>).

Since August 2007 the WBI Professional Development Program for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff has used these sites as open enrolment platforms to offer online training for free or at a marginal cost for all interested members of the parliamentary community and provides a feasible, affordable, sustainable and targeted learning programme. To date, the e-Learning project has trained just under 2000 participants from across the globe using a variety of interactive, moderated modules on different development and institutional topics. Participants interface with the moderator/subject matter expert through email and the messaging board on the portal. The course culminates with a final project that allows participants to take what they have learned

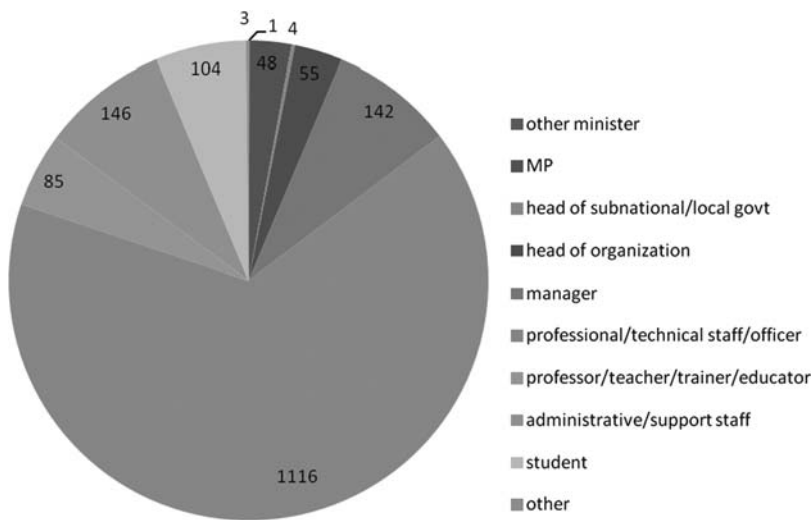


from the module, the expert moderator and the experiences of their course peers and contextualise it in terms of their own country so they are not just learning new theoretical information, but applying it practically to help improve their own parliaments. Each course paper is graded with comments by the course's moderator.

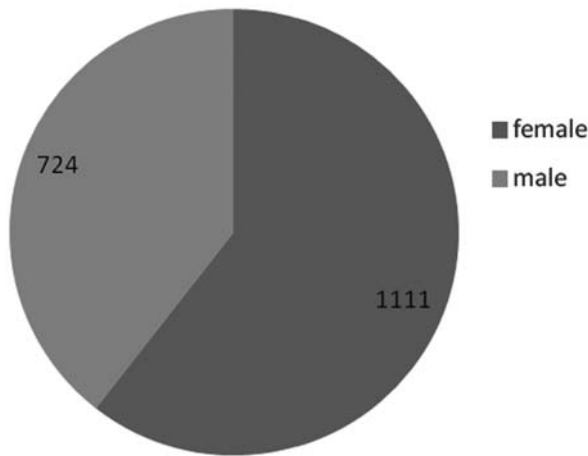
The high rate of participants who go on to undertake further courses after completing their initial course suggests that the content has been appropriately tailored to the needs of the audience and that this model is meeting an unmet demand for parliamentary strengthening. This is borne out by the responses from regular participant evaluations.

Figure 2 breaks down the technical positions of the professional who have participated in the course to date. You will note that the overwhelming majority of participants are parliamentary staff, therefore, reinforcing the argument that the content has been appropriately developed for the target audience. Interestingly, there is a selection of participants from alternate professions and a small number of parliamentarians who have participated in the moderated courses. We have found that their inclusion has been beneficial to the learning process as they offer an alternate perspective, especially during the online discussion forums.

Figure 3 provides a gender breakdown of participants. These statistics are important as they show that a substantial majority of participants have been females. It is notoriously difficult to obtain accurate comparative information of parliamentary secretariats and even more difficult to obtain gender disaggregated



**Figure 2** Technical position of participants.



**Figure 3** Gender breakdown of participants.

information. Dichotomies that inhibit accurate comparative analysis of parliamentary secretariats include the distinction between devoted parliamentary services compared with the administration of parliament being supported by the public service; the distinction between professional parliamentary staff and parliamentary advisors (often appointed directly by the members and similarly vulnerable to the election cycle process); the distorting effect the increasing role consultants play in providing support to parliamentary administrations; and even when disaggregated gender information is available, it is often unclear the extent to which female parliamentary staff perform leadership/management roles within a parliamentary administration.

Irrespective these hurdles to information gathering on gender and parliamentary secretariats, there is anecdotal evidence that a growing cadre of female parliamentary staff are providing support to parliaments across the globe.<sup>2</sup> The practice of parliamentary associations and development partners asking parliaments to be gender sensitive when nominating delegates to participate in regional and global training opportunities has helped increase women's access to capacity development efforts. However, there is no data to suggest that the numbers of women participating in capacity-building programmes commensurate with the

<sup>2</sup>It is assumed that enhanced women's participation in parliaments has benefited from devoted gender programs, especially those conducted through professional parliamentary associations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The recent IPU report entitled 'Gender-Sensitive Parliaments' Reports and Documents No. 65-2011 notes that there have been modest improvements in women's participation in the democratic process.



increasing role women are playing in parliamentary administrations. This could be due to female parliamentary staff holding more junior posts, therefore, unable to access traditional training opportunities, or on-going structural and organisational impediments to greater gender parity in capacity-building efforts.

An objective to developing an open enrolment e-learning platform was to promote greater equity of access to knowledge exchange and training opportunities. The gender-disaggregated data below suggests that e-Learning approaches have been successful in facilitating greater female participation in parliamentary capacity-building efforts.

The success of the first phase of the WBI e-Learning project provided impetus to scale-up the scope of the project. In partnership with the Association of Francophone Parliamentarians, WBI has adapted and translated the first module in the e-Learning catalogue into French, which was piloted in November 2011.

Feedback to date suggests there is high-unmet demand for junior to mid-career parliamentary staff training in French-speaking jurisdictions. Also, expanding the scope of the project to include Francophone deliveries is consistent with the objective of broadening access to parliamentary development opportunities to a broad range of parliamentary staff, who would not normally be able to benefit from training opportunities. We anticipate that the take up for expanded Francophone offerings will be consistent with participation in the English language trainings and will follow a similar development timeline.

#### *4.2 Deepening access*

The WBI's e-Learning programme has been in operation for four years. The capacity demands of those parliamentary staff who initially participated in trainings offered through the e-Learning portals has naturally evolved as they successfully progressed from each of the entry level modules and acquired greater experience in their respective parliaments. At the same time, there was increasing demand for a university-certified training programme, for mid-career parliamentary staff. Thus, a global consultation was conducted in 2010 by WBI and its partners to clarify interest in and parameters of such a training programme.

An outcome of the consultation was a recommendation to establish a fee-based executive training programme aimed at deepening the knowledge of high potential mid-career parliamentary staff. Such a programme, we believe, will complement efforts to broaden access to training for junior parliamentary staff by providing a university certified executive training programme for a select group of mid-career/senior parliamentary staff who have already participated in and matriculated from the entry level e-Learning courses and/or comparable courses offered by our other parliamentary capacity-building organisations.



WBI and McGill University, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Parliamentary Centre and potentially other partners around the world, are offering a unique, university-certified development programme for senior parliamentary staff. The programme focuses on advancing parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. It follows a three-pronged approach with courses concentrating on parliament in government systems and its core functions; modern management practices and theories and on current issues of local concerns.

Key is the recognition that no single model is right for all jurisdictions. For this reason, the theories and practices that will be studied will focus on their application to parliamentary settings within different political systems and cultures.

The executive training course is adaptable, accessible and unique.

#### 4.3 *Adaptable*

To attempt to fill all of the needs of all parliamentary staff would not be constructive or feasible. For this reason, the programme is structured in such a way as allow participants from diverse parliamentary backgrounds to benefit and learn. Further, the programme is structured to allow other groups besides parliamentary staff, such as staff of the executive and judicial branches of the government and journalists from the parliamentary press corps to participate. However, parliamentary staff will be given preference in admission.

#### 4.4 *Accessible*

The programme builds on the WBI e-Learning modules, which have proved to be effective and its success would serve as a model for the programme. e-Learning allows for increased access, cost efficiency, convenience and flexibility to clients and it enables participants to develop essential skills related to mixed media and information and communications technology (ICT).

The programme is intended to be offered to senior staff—and others, as noted above—possessing a university bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience. Priority will be given to House/Committee procedural staff. However, accommodation will also be made to administrative staff involved in the corporate governance of parliament and to research staff mostly from parliamentary libraries and political caucuses.

#### 4.5 *Unique*

The programme is a unique training and capacity-building plan for parliamentary staff. Combined with both a theoretical and practical approach, it uses a

blended learning methodology of face-to-face training/residency programme, web-based learning and videoconferencing training for its delivery.

The programme also offers mentoring by current and former senior parliamentary staff, and the option for a short attachment at another parliament, in lieu of one of the courses.

The 18-month curriculum will comprise a blend of two one-week residential sessions [one at McGill University (Montreal, Canada)] and the other at a location to be determined plus seven e-Learning courses. Those who have successfully completed WBI's e-Learning offerings will receive advance standing for admission.

The pedagogic approach includes a practical facet; theoretical courses in a formal setting are not sufficient to meet the training needs of parliamentary staff. The programme encourages participants to address specific regional/local concerns of their legislative institution or to develop skills and abilities that are needed in their actual or future jobs.

Including not only a set of compulsory and elective 'theoretical' courses, but also a 'practical' component, the executive training programme has incorporated integrative mechanisms to complement the theoretical courses. Case studies of personal or local interest, a study trip to another parliament or an in-house supervised assignment are unique features of this course.

This cost for the fee-based (but not-for-profit) executive training programme would be borne by the participants, their parliaments or by third parties. Priority will be given to applications endorsed by the leadership of their parliament's secretariat, thereby ensuring that parliament itself identifies the most important candidates for the executive training programme and makes provision for those staff members to both participate in the residency components of the programme and to undertake on-going learning through the e-Learning modules and mentoring services.

The WBI is presently assembling a steering committee, including representatives from parliamentary secretariats and staff associations, in order to ensure that course content is fully tailored to parliamentary needs.

## 5. Conclusion

WBI seeks to enhance the capacity of parliaments to effectively perform their functions (oversight, representation and law-making) in order to better contribute to open and collaborative development. WBI identified a number of challenges to providing support to parliaments globally and sought to develop a model that addressed these challenges so as to be able to enhance the capacity of parliaments in client countries to be active and constructive players in open and collaborative governance systems. The approach to parliamentary capacity development outlined in this article is not designed as a universal model;



rather, it was designed to meet the implementation and development challenges particular to achieving WBI's development objectives.

WBI's experience suggests a multi-faceted, medium-to-long term process that recognises the unique learning environment, informational needs, and absorptive strengths of the stakeholder is best suited for regional and global approaches to capacity building for parliaments. The capacity strengthening approach developed by WBI combines all three approaches to parliamentary capacity building (individual, institutional and networking) in a five-stage change process aimed at translating global and regional parliamentary knowledge into country-level action. The cyclical process is underpinned by applied research that seeks to capture international good practice with respect to parliamentary performance. The change model used is adaptive and adopts participatory and adult learning techniques in order to achieve better capacity yields.

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# An Innovation in Parliamentary Staff Training

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Vienna Pozer

*In June 2012 the pilot session of a global first – an International Executive Parliamentary Staff Training Program – was hosted by McGill University’s Institute for the Study of International Development. Organized as a collaborative venture between ISID, the World Bank Institute, the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the State University of New York, with support from other organizations around the globe, the program brought together participants from 11 countries.*

Assistance to parliaments has historically included activities intended to improve the skills of Members of Parliament. And, more recently, to help improve the infrastructure, such as libraries and information technology, within parliaments. However, experience has shown that focusing on these areas alone yields limited results. The effectiveness of parliaments depends on more than structure and capacity of their premises, equipment and technical services and of the skill-sets of MPs, important as these are. Over the past decade, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of enhancing the institutional memory of parliament and thus combating the problem of skills loss at election times, when in some countries the turnover of MPs is 80% or higher. Building institutional memory in parliament requires a focus on training of parliamentary staff.

## The Need for Parliamentary Staff Development

Starting in the early 2000s the development of training programs geared towards meeting the specific needs of parliamentary staffers has expanded dramatically. Leading the way in this new approach to parliamentary strengthening were several of the world leaders in international development; the World Bank Institute (WBI), the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the State University of New York’s Centre for International Development (SUNY-CID), among

others. However, early attempts in the development and delivery of training programs for parliamentary staff lacked coherence, and were usually delivered on an *ad-hoc* basis, not interwoven with broader staff development initiatives within parliaments. Furthermore, because these early programs relied mostly on traditional face-to-face training methods, there was an issue of equity of access. International organizations and bilateral donors tended to focus on a few favoured countries, such as Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, with francophone nations and smaller jurisdictions being excluded due to unavailability of resources.

Concerned about these and related issues, the World Bank Institute undertook a ‘capacity enhancement review’ in order to help it to best manage the burgeoning demand for parliamentary staff training globally, in the face of only slowly increasing – and more recently declining – aid budgets. The review identified two challenges to providing support to parliaments globally; sustainability and scalability. The review recommended the scaling up of training for parliamentary staff in order to achieve sustainable capacity results and the use of ‘new technology’ – such as the delivery of courses online and via multimedia – so as to be financially sustainable. At the same time, it was recommended that WBI’s partnership network – *inter alia*, the Canadian Parliamentary Centre and the CPA – be approached in order to develop a multi-organization approach to parliamentary staff training, thereby helping to reduce the overlap and duplication of staff training programs heretofore offered by international organizations.

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*Vienna Pozer is a Graduate of McGill University and currently a consultant to the World Bank’s parliamentary program.*



## International Executive Parliamentary Staff Training Participants in 2012

### Bangladesh

Md Enamul Hoque  
Md Faisal Morshed  
Abu Sadat Mohammad  
Ataul Karim  
A.K.M.G. Kibria  
Mazumdar  
Shahan Shah Azad  
Kabir  
Md Enamul Haque

### Barbados

Ruth Linton  
Suzanne Hamblin

### Canada

Kimberley Hammond  
Linda Buchanan

### Ghana

Robert Apodolla

### Kenya

Phyllis N. Makau



### Namibia

Margareth Walenga  
Dorotea Haitengi  
Amalia Iita  
Dorothea Fransman  
Benedict Likando

### St. Helena

Gina Benjamin

### South Africa

Timothy Layman

### Tanzania

Emmanuel Mpanda

### Trinidad & Tobago

Keiba Jacob  
Candice Skerrette

### Uganda

Paul Wabwire  
Josephine Watara

## Using New Technologies

This approach resulted in what evolved as a two-track approach. First, driven by potential economies of scale, was the development of an open-access, introductory-level, program of e\*learning courses. By increasing the number of participants that are able to engage in such a program, costs of delivery were reduced and access was increased. Operating over the past six years or so, this program – offered free to parliamentary staff around the world on a first come-first served basis – offers a dozen different courses, ranging from Executive-Legislative Relations and Committees to Parliament and the Budget Process and Climate Change. Each course typically has 40-50 participants, which come from countries as diverse as Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, New Zealand and Greece, although the majority of participants are from English-speaking African countries. Encouraged by this success, the World Bank Institute, with encouragement from the Canadian Parliament, is working with ASGPF (the Association of Francophone Parliamentary Secretaries General) to deliver these courses in French.

The second track is the outcome of ongoing collaboration between WBI and the CPA. As successful as the basic e\*learning courses are, there was increasing demand from parliaments for a more advanced set of courses. Recognizing this, and the fact that such a program should be demand-driven, thereby reflecting the needs of developing country parliaments, rather

than supply-driven (reflecting the interests of donor agencies) WBI and its partners sought guidance from the clerks and secretaries general of developing country parliaments. A three-stage consultative process was launched: regular briefings to Commonwealth Clerks and Secretaries General; a survey of Clerks and Secretaries General across the Commonwealth and la Francophonie and a WBI-CPA study group which brought together a dozen senior parliamentary staff for a week to provide detailed guidance to program designers.

## Professional Development for Parliamentary Staff

The outcome of these consultations was the development of a pilot program which represents the height of technological and academic knowledge available today which recognizes the expectations of what is needed for the future. To complement the existing e\*learning courses, which were designed to expand the breadth of international efforts to support parliamentary staff training, WBI and its partners have developed a unique program that expands the depth of parliamentary staff training programs. While the e\*learning courses described above are designed for junior parliamentary staff, the new program is more for mid-career parliamentary professionals. It is a global, university-certified, executive-level training program which combines the personal aspects of face-to-face training with the flexibility of web-based courses. Unlike the basic e\*learning courses, however, there



During the week participants had the opportunity to break away from the more traditional class setting and visit the Parliament in Ottawa, where the group was acknowledged by the Senate and where the group attended presentations by Charles Robert and Terry Moore on the procedures of the Senate and House of Commons. The group also attended a roundtable on extractive industries and parliaments, organized by the Parliamentary Centre, which provided participants with an opportunity to discuss the role of legislatures in ensuring good governance of extractive industries around the world.

is a fee for participating in this program. Currently, Can. \$5,995 per participant – representing the financial break-even for program delivery. WBI and its global partners, the Government and Parliament of Finland, have both met all program development costs and offer discounts of up to \$1,500 to highly qualified participants from developing countries.

The program comprises a one-week intensive residency, at McGill University in Montreal, a set of advanced e\*learning courses and an applied research project, related to the individual's professional interests. Throughout, participants are assigned a mentor to assist and guide them through the program. A unique feature of the program is that it combines theory and an academic approach with practical case studies and experiences.

Recognized international leaders in parliamentary development from Canada, the United States, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia were engaged in the development of the curriculum for the residency and the e\*learning courses and an advisory board of leading academics and practitioners provides strategic guidance. The first residency, held in Montreal in June 2012, included resource persons from a wide array of backgrounds and specialties, from business administration and political science to parliamentary administration and parliamentary development.

To open the residency, program co-ordinator,

Dr. Rick Stapenhurst, parliamentary adviser to WBI and Professor of Practice at McGill University, led the opening address along with Paul Belisle, former Clerk in the Canadian Senate. Following this, eight sessions were held through the week:

- Democracy, Accountability & Parliaments
- Legislative-Executive Relations
- Parliamentary Oversight
- Parliamentary Representation
- Strategic Communications for Parliaments
- Corporate Management of Parliaments
- Legislation
- Parliamentary Procedure

Resource persons included Philip Oxhorn (Professor, McGill University and Director, ISID), Riccardo Pelizzo (Parliamentary consultant, WBI), Anthony Staddon (Professor, University of Westminster), Rasheed Draman (Director, Canadian Parliamentary Centre), Mitchell O'Brien (Team Leader, WBI), Craig James (Clerk, BC Legislature), Gurprit Kindra (Professor, University of Ottawa), Marie-Andree Lajoie (former Clerk Assistant, Canadian Parliament).

Included within the residency were a series of keynote speakers, including the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, former Prime Minister of Canada. Other speakers were: Jean-Paul Ruszkowski (President and CEO of the Parliamentary Centre) and Mark Baskin (Senior Associate and Professor at SUNY-CID).



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## **E\*learning and Applied Research Projects Begin**

Each participant is required to take a total of seven e\*learning courses, out of ten offered, by December 2013. The first such course, on Executive-Legislative relations, began in August 2012. Future courses include Committees, Corporate Management, Strategic Communications, Public Financial Management, Research, ICT, Parliament and the Media, Controlling Corruption, Extractive Industries Oversight and Parliaments and Climate Change. Participants have the option for a short attachment at another Parliament, in lieu of one of the e\*learning courses and McGill and WBI have agreed to give advance standing in the program to parliamentary staff who have completed the Canadian Parliament's Parliamentary Officers' Study Program (POSP).

All participants have been assigned mentors and are now beginning, either individually or in groups, to develop their applied research projects, the topics of which range from improving the 'money' committees in Bangladesh to enhancing parliamentary communications across the Caribbean. The professional mentoring relationship is a unique feature of this program, building a professional link between participants and experienced professionals with parliamentary experience. The selection of each individual's mentor was made in the last two days of residency, to allow participants and resource persons to become familiar with each and their own respective fields of interests.

On completion of the program, in December 2013, participants will receive a certificate from McGill University's Institute for the Study of International Development.

### **Participant Feedback**

As the residency came to an end, an overwhelmingly positive response was shown from participants and resource persons alike. Both groups attributed an overall Program content score of 4.3 out of a possible 5. This first review reflected the relevance, interest and organization of the week-long seminar as well as a marked enthusiasm for the 18-month-long e\*learning portion of the course that is still to come. Additional positive feedback was given based on the quality of instructors and moderators as well as the level of synergy that developed within the group. Along with their praise for their initial experience in what is to be the first of an annual program, participants offered several suggestions as to the possible changes that could be made in order to benefit future participants. A recurring remark was made regarding the demanding

agenda during residency. From 9:00 am until 5:30 pm every day, participants followed an intense program. It was suggested that this be eased somewhat, to allow time for individual reflection and interaction among participants. Furthermore, looking beyond the technological and academic improvements, WBI and its partners were asked to more explicitly recognize that no single model is right for all jurisdictions and especially to develop greater insights into the needs of parliaments in smaller jurisdictions and 'semi-westernized' states.

Furthermore, many participants noted a particular interest in going beyond the objectives set by program co-ordinators and building upon the platform of knowledge of the parliamentary procedures and practices at the international level. In particular, they wanted to increase their own level of understanding of parliamentary democracy and democratic principles and become better knowledgeable in core functions of parliament, in order to provide efficient services to MPs. Participants also showed significant interest in the specificity and flexibility of e\*learning courses offered. The exchange of knowledge using peer-to-peer learning, was viewed by participants as a valued way to share, replicate, and scale-up those parliamentary practices found effective elsewhere. Parliamentary staff participants voiced a desire to learn from the practical experience of those who have faced similar problems.

In short, participants found that the current Program's framework provides parliamentary staff with what is perceived as both needed and lacking in other available training programs.

### **Next Steps**

Response was overwhelming for the first residency – not only was the program over-subscribed, but about half-a-dozen participants who were not accepted this time round were placed on a waiting list. As a result, a second program offering is being planned, with its residency at McGill in mid-April 2013.

At the same time, substantial interest is being shown by francophone parliaments in such a course. WBI is currently working with its current program partners plus professors at Laval University to adapt the program for francophone parliamentary staff, with the aim of offering the program in French in late 2013.

For more information, contact Rick Stapenhurst at [frederick.stapenhurst@mcgill.ca](mailto:frederick.stapenhurst@mcgill.ca)

# AN INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE PROGRAMME FOR PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

Ongoing professional development courses are fully recognized in other occupations, even to the point of being a requirement for continued work in some jobs. Professional development courses for parliamentary staff are, however, less common. A new parliamentary staff course combining face-to-face training with continuing virtual support has begun at a Canadian university, writes the course's leader.

## Dr Rick Stapenhurst and Ms Vienna Pozer

Dr Rick Stapenhurst is a Professor of Practice at McGill University and Parliamentary Advisor to the World Bank Institute. Ms Vienna Pozer is a senior undergraduate student at McGill University.

Recognizing that parliamentary staff are the "corporate memory" and procedural experts of Parliaments, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the World Bank Institute (WBI) have, both individually and collectively, organized a variety of training courses for parliamentary staff across the Commonwealth. Topics have included Committees, Parliament and the Budget, and Poverty Reduction and Financial Oversight, among others. Four years ago *The Parliamentarian* reported the substantial training programme expansion gained through the use of web-based learning courses (R. Stapenhurst and B. Prater, *The Parliamentarian*, 2008, issue four, p.337). Feedback from participants in both the traditional (face-to-face) and web-based courses has been positive, with staff welcoming tailor-made courses designed to assist them to carry out their work within



**Dr Rick Stapenhurst.**

Parliament. There has been a growing demand from staff, however, for a global, university-certified, executive-level training programme... a programme that would combine the personal aspects of face-to-face training with the flexibility of web-based courses and which would be certified by a top class Commonwealth university. In this article, we describe the process which CPA and WBI have followed to launch such a programme.

## 1. Ensuring success through consultations

To ensure the success of such a programme, CPA and WBI recognized the importance of obtaining substantial input from the potential users of the programme, the parliamentary staff, at the design and conceptualization stages. Guidance from the Clerks and Secretaries General was essential to ensure that the programme curriculum and its delivery would be in line with the contemporary needs of the parliamentary staff. As a result, a three-stage process has taken place, involving regular briefings to Commonwealth Clerks and Secretaries General, a survey mailed out to Clerks and Secretaries General across the Commonwealth and la Francophonie and a WBI-CPA study group which gathered in depth views from parliamentary staff of both Communities.





**Qualified parliamentary staff are essential to all Parliaments.**

CPA and WBI have briefed Commonwealth Clerks and Secretaries General at the annual Society of Clerks at the Table meetings, held concurrently with CPA's annual conferences and of the Association of Secretaries General of Francophone Parliaments (ASGPF). Through such consultations, both organizations were able to obtain useful feedback in terms of the need for, and parameters of, such a programme.

In addition, a questionnaire, designed to obtain specific feedback on existing programmes within each parliamentary jurisdiction, on the utilization and experience of the WBI/CPA web-based E\*Learning courses and on the proposed university-certified programme itself, was sent to more than 150 Clerks/Secretaries General from the Commonwealth and la Francophonie. A total of 36 per cent (for the Commonwealth) and 41 per cent (for La Francophonie) Clerks and Secretaries General responded, providing useful feedback and providing a general endorsement to proceed with the development of the proposed programme.

Thirdly, in order to tailor the programme specifically to the needs of high-potential, mid-level parliamentary staff, CPA and WBI convened a Study Group in May 2009 which was held in Dhaka,

Bangladesh. Those in attendance included: Bangladesh (Mr Ashfaq Hamid, Secretary of the Parliament and Mr Pranab Chakraborty, additional secretary); Burkina Faso (Mr Alphonse Nombé, Secretary General of the National Assembly); Cambodia (Mr Oum Sarith, Secretary General of the Senate and Mr Sotkun Chhim); India (Mr P.P.K. Ramacharyulu, Director, Rajya Sabha Secretariat); New South Wales (Mr Russell Grove, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly); and South Africa (Mrs Sesh Paruk, Human Resources Executive). Also present at the meetings were representatives from the WBI (Dr Rick Stapenhurst and Mr Niall Johnston) and from the United Nations Development programme (Mr Warren Cahill). Mr Paul Belisle, former clerk of the Canadian Senate acted as facilitator and rapporteur. The participants reviewed and endorsed the results of the questionnaire and made significant recommendations to WBI and the CPA.

### **Nature of the programme**

Participants in the study group noted that, for the executive training programme for parliamentary staff to succeed, it would need to be adaptable, accessible and unique.

Adaptable: study group participants believed that, for the

programme to succeed, it would have to have a strong base and should build on CPA and WBI successes and strengths. It was determined that the programme should be structured in such a way to allow for changes and growth in areas such as curriculum, delivery modalities, and admission requirements so as to meet the evolving needs of Parliaments. This would require rigorous evaluations by WBI's Evaluation Group and by the participants' own evaluations on the quality and relevancy of courses and their effectiveness. It was thus recommended:

□ that the programme be structured to allow future changes and growth to permit other languages, and other groups such as staff of the executive and judicial branches of the government to participate

**Accessible:** study group participants proposed that such a programme should be built on the existing WBI/CPA E\*Learning modules, which were proving to be highly successful, with a substantial uptake, particularly by African parliamentary staff. This method of delivering training courses has proven to be effective and its success would serve as a model for the programme. E\*Learning, it was noted, allows for increased access, cost efficiency,

convenience and flexibility to participants as it enables them to develop essential information and communication skills.

Study group participants suggested that the programme should only be available to mid-level parliamentary staff who have demonstrated a potential to reach the highest levels of parliamentary management. Applicants to the programme, it was believed, should possess a bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience. Results of the questionnaire indicate that the vast majority (82 per cent) Clerks and Secretaries General favored the programme targeting Chamber or Committee procedural staff while 50 per cent thought the programme should be offered to administrative staff involved in the corporate governance of Parliament. Some 26 per cent felt that research staff mostly from Parliamentary libraries and political caucuses would also benefit from such a programme. In short, it was generally felt that all mid-level staff, no matter their areas of their responsibility within Parliament, would benefit from the programme. However in order to ensure professional academic standards, it is recommended,

□ that the minimum requirements for admission to the programme be a bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience and that a competitive and highly selective administrative process be adhered to.

It was proposed that the programme would be offered initially in English and subsequently in French. Moreover, it was thought that the programme would be developed for parliamentary staff only and not be offered to Members, as such a joint programme (to both staff and Parliamentarians) would result in a curriculum that would be too loaded, and most probably, with conflicting goals. It was therefore recommended:



□ that the development of a similar programme for Members of Parliament be considered in the future

**Unique:** Study Group participants argued that the programme should offer a unique training and capacity building plan for mid-level parliamentary staff. It should combine a theoretical and a practical approach, use a blended learning methodology of face-to-face training, a web-based learning and possibly videoconferencing for its delivery. In order to safeguard its uniqueness, the programme should be structured in a way so as not to compete with existing training efforts. Study group participants recommended:

□ that a review of university curricula be undertaken to ensure that the programme not compete with existing efforts of universities

## Curriculum content

Study group participants noted that, if the main objective of the programme is to strengthen the capacity of Parliaments by having better trained staff, the course content would have to reflect this objective. They recommended:

□ that the course be designed to concentrate on how Parliaments work with participants focusing on their local needs

Study group participants and respondents to the questionnaire offered advice on curriculum development. They proposed that WBI and CPA carefully review their existing courses and that they both strengthen those which should become part of the new programme and develop new courses, as necessary. It was felt that the current split between parliamentary governance, core parliamentary functions and contemporary global (development) issues was appropriate, but that the courses

under core parliamentary functions needed to be expanded, to include:

□ three new courses: i) in parliamentary procedures and practices (including privileges and immunities of Members, rules of debate and parliamentary documents); ii) parliamentary management (including leadership training); and (iii) possible courses of a more specific nature such as information technology, research and legislative drafting.

Other courses were also recommended, including federal/provincial/ local relations, Hansard reporting, information management, parliamentary diplomacy and international affairs. For this reason, the study group recommended that a data bank of courses be created to orient staff in disciplines that would not be offered by the programme. As an example, a course in (say) Hansard-reporting, which would be too technical to be offered within the constraints of the proposed programme, could be identified. It was thus recommended that:

□ that WBI create a data bank of courses and act as the conduit to institutions for participants who may wish to specialize in specific areas not offered by the programme

It was further believed that participants of the programme should also have the opportunity to customize part of their programme by choosing elective courses from the list of modules listed in the

development series that would meet their individual interests and career goals. Thus, the study group recommended:

□ that the compulsory courses, be supplemented with pre-approved elective courses selected from the development series.

Study group participants and survey respondents stressed that the pedagogical approach also had to include a practical facet. This would permit staff to address specific regional/local concerns of their legislative institution and/or to develop skills and abilities that they need in their current or future jobs within Parliament.

It was believed that the programme should entail opportunities or integrative mechanisms to complement the theoretical and practical courses. Case studies of personal or local interest, a study trip to another Parliament or an in-house research assignment were possibilities that it was felt would enrich the programme.

Such opportunities would be pre-approved by the director of the programme in consultation with the participant's supervisor. It is recommended:

□ that integrative mechanisms of practical nature be built into the programme to complement the theoretical component.

Study group participants further felt that staff participating in this programme would benefit from a

professional mentoring relationship with experienced practitioners. This would give the participants the advantage of working with someone who he/she has established a good working relationship, in an environment that is more conducive to discussing the theories and applying them to local issues. Thus, it was recommended:

□ that a mentorship programme be developed to assist participants in the learning process

To maximize results, a model for a comprehensive learning programme was proposed for consideration. See Diagram 1.

## Curriculum modalities

The study group further considered the duration of the programme, financial considerations and faculty.

**Duration:** Even though the focus group recommended a strict time frame of nine to twelve months to complete the programme, respondents to the questionnaire felt this to be too restrictive. Smaller jurisdictions stated that they could not afford to have essential staff concentrate on a full course-load at the expense of their parliamentary work. More than a third (39 per cent) raised concerns of the time-cycle being too limited.

For this reason, it was felt prudent to address these valid concerns with a more liberal timeframe. To be too restrictive may result in students abandoning courses or a high drop-out or failure rate.

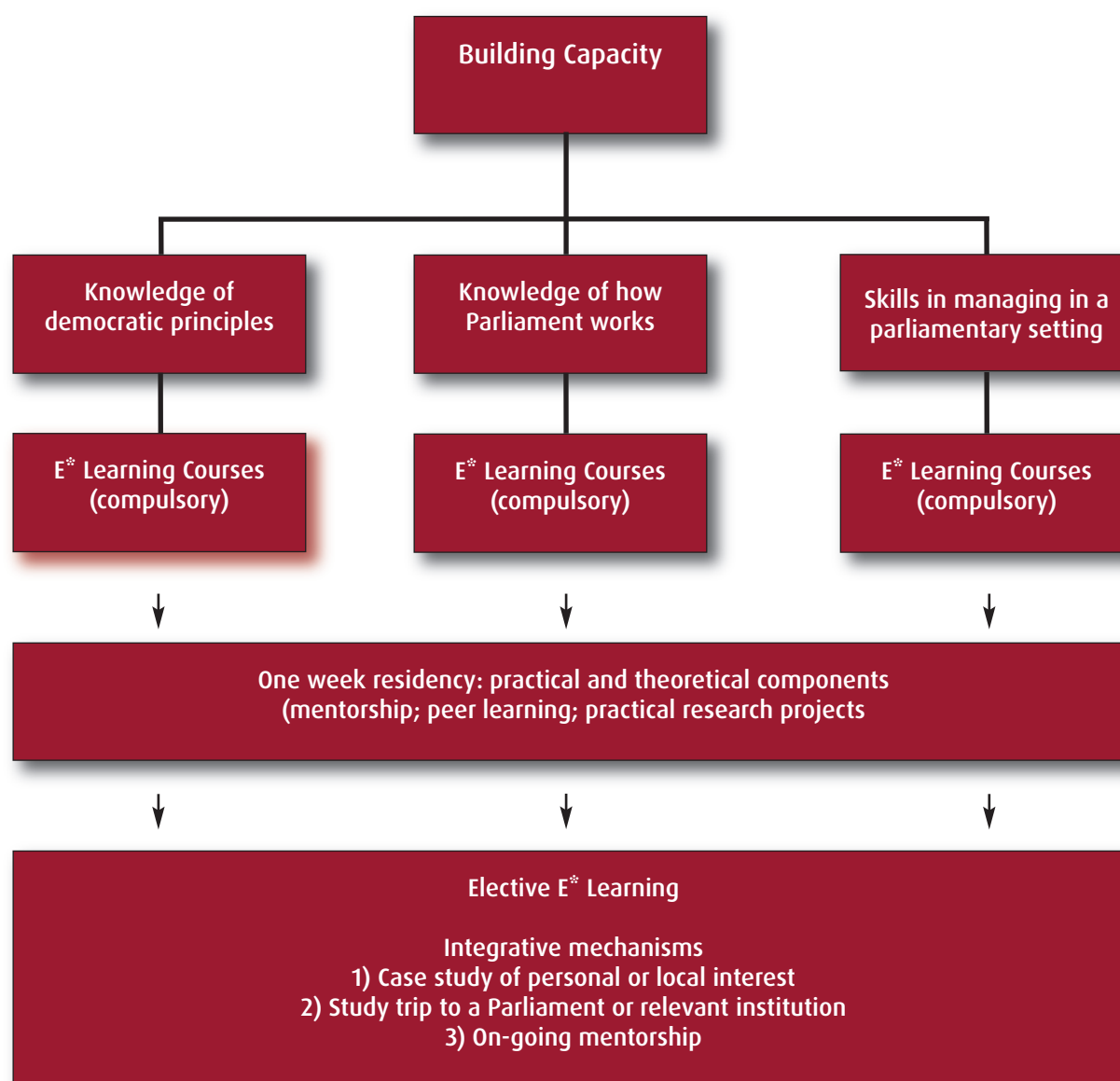
Study group participants suggested that consideration could be given to accepting requests for extensions when substantiated by justifications and with the authority of a superior of their institution. However a time limit up to possibly three years should be established. Consequently, it was recommended:

**“...The programme should...combine a theoretical and a practical approach, use a blended learning methodology of face-to-face training, a web-based learning, and possibly videoconferencing for its delivery.”**





**Diagram 1: Comprehensive Learning Model (Study Group Recommendations)**



❑ that the programme follow a nine to twelve month cycle but in the event that circumstances do not permit students to complete the programme within that time frame, consideration for extensions for up to three years be granted.

**Financial considerations:** Cost was a key driver in the discussions by the Clerks. The results of the questionnaire showed that financial resources for staff training are not increasing and for smaller jurisdictions it is almost inexistent. For this reason, it was

stressed that the programme be affordable. (Pursuant to its mandate, WBI would facilitate the development and assist in the oversight of the programme but it cannot fund individuals or universities). Sources of funding for enrollment would have to be provided by participating Parliaments with possible financial assistance from donors partners. The study group recommended:

❑ that selection of partners and funding modalities be explored and determined in accordance with

WBI's past funding experiences, policies and procedures.

A rough estimate indicates that annual programme delivery would cost approximately Can. \$150,000. Assuming an initial enrollment of 25 participants, fees of approximately Can. \$6000 per participant would be necessary to ensure financial self-sustainability.

**Faculty:** The Study Group believed that the programme, bringing together theoretical thinking and practical experience, local experiences and international

perspective, would be inspired by a team of experts. These experts would have to combine theoretical and practical skills and should represent a high level of expertise in Parliament and its role in democratic governance.

Programme designers, it was recommended, should recognize the necessity for the courses to address the local/regional concerns of Parliaments. It considered important that, even though the programme would have a "home-base" at a recognized university:



**Table 1: draft agenda for June 2012 residency programme**

	9.00-10.30	10.30-11.00	11.30-13.00	13.00-14.00	14.00-15.30	15.30-16.00	16.00-17.30
<b>Sunday and</b>	<b>Arrival</b>						<b>Registration welcome reception</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Programme overview</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>Parliamentary Democracy-1</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Parliamentary Democracy-2</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>Government Accountability</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Core Functions of Parliament – Legislation</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>Core Functions of Parliament – Oversight</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Core Functions of Parliament – Representation</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>Participant Presentations Discussion</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Research Projects – Overview</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>Corporate Management of Parliaments-1</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Corporate Management of Parliaments-2</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>Parliamentary Procedures</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Visit to Canadian Parliament with Briefings (to be confirmed)</b>						
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Introduction to Mentors-1</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>One-on-One Meeting with Mentors</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Research projects Presentation of Proposals</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	<b>Introduction to E Learning</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Farewell breakfast</b>		<b>Departure</b>				

❑ that the programme faculty be knowledgeable of Parliament and its role in democratic governance, and

❑ that when possible, these instructors/facilitators be selected from different countries

## **2. An international executive programme for parliamentary staff**

McGill University's Institute for the Study of International Development has offered to pilot an executive development programme for parliamentary staff reflecting the above principles on a cost-recovery (no profit) trial basis. Willing to work with partners, it has also offered to help find sponsors to help reduce tuition costs, especially for participants from developing countries.

The programme broadly mirrors

the recommendations from the study group and takes into account many of the suggestions from survey respondents (see Diagram2). It comprises three elements:

- i) a one-week intensive residence programme, to be held at McGill University's main campus in downtown Montreal (scheduled to take place in June 2012); see Table 1.
- ii) five of eight e\*Learning courses on democratic principles, how parliament works and particular skills required by parliamentary staff; and
- iii) two elective e\*Learning courses on contemporary development issues.

Three unique features of the programme are a required case study or applied research project

by participants on their own Parliament; on-going mentorship by experienced parliamentary staff

**“Programme designers...should recognize the necessity for the courses to address the local/regional concerns of Parliaments.”**

and other practitioners throughout the programme and the possibility of a short-term attachment to another Parliament.

The programme is summarized in Diagram 2:

Tuition costs of the programme have been set as low as possible, and currently are Can. \$ 5,995 (plus applicable taxes). Special team savings of \$500 per person are available when two or more people from the same organization register at the same time. In addition, tuition bursaries (of up to \$1,000) are available to highly qualified applicants from developing countries.

In the spirit of inclusiveness, CPA, WBI and McGill are reaching out to other parliamentary strengthening organizations to partner in the programme. To date, the Parliamentary Centre and the State University of New York (SUNY-CID) are committed





**Diagram 2: International Executive Programme for Parliamentary Staff**

