Firstly I would like to thank the Centre for Democratic Institutions for its assistance in making attendance at this conference possible. It was a conference outstanding for both the quality of presentations and the lively and spontaneous discussion that flowed from each presentation.

**Background** For the past three years I have been working as a Principal Investigator on an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project titled ‘Parliamentary Careers: Design, Delivery and Evaluation of Improved Professional Development’. In addition to ARC funding the project has been supported by the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Chief Investigator is Associate Professor Ken Coghill, Director, Monash Governance Research Unit and Co-Director, Parliamentary Studies Unit with Associate Professor Colleen Lewis who is also a member of the research team. Other members of the team comprise academics from Monash, Associate Professor Graham Hassell, a Pacific countries expert in the School of Government at Victoria University of Wellington New Zealand, Andy Richardson, Information Specialist with IPU, with me, representing the University of Sydney where I hold the position of Honorary Research Associate. It is the first instance of research into this subject on an international scale.

Although representing University of Sydney on the research team for purposes of the conference I listed myself as representing CDI in recognition of their contribution towards my attendance and because my paper was based on CDI experience.

The conference was held in conjunction with the 125th Assembly of the IPU and represented the first opportunity to bring together representatives of countries engaged in professional development programs for their members of parliament. Over forty countries and a number of parliamentary organizations attended over both days. More than 140 participants registered for the conference of which 110 were affiliated with a parliament, MPs, secretaries general or other parliamentary staff. About 20 had a university affiliation while the rest represented external providers of capacity building programs such as the US-based National Democratic Institute or the Australian Centre for Democratic Institutions.

Day 1 was conducted as an expert seminar comprising presentations from academics and practitioners with detailed discussions on each presentation. Day 2 was a joint post-assembly meeting sponsored by the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP), IPU and
Monash University. This expanded representation allowed for considerable direct parliamentary input. The two day program was structured to address the particular needs of the diverse audience while ensuring fertile exchange between the participants.

Organisations attending both days included:

- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
- World Bank Institute (WBI)
- Westminster Foundation for Democracy
- Hansard Society, United Kingdom
- Australia New Zealand International Elections Monitors Institute
- University of Hull, United Kingdom
- Luiss, University of Rome, Italy
- Insurbria University, Italy.
- Marmara University, Turkey
- School of Oriental and African Studies, United Kingdom
- Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI)

Day 1 The change of status of new parliamentarians upon election is apparent and instantaneous. There is a great responsibility on those wishing to deliver programs with the skill and knowledge required to instruct their members on how to perform their parliamentary and electorate roles effectively. To date there is currently very little literature on capacity building for parliamentarians which can reliably advise on such programs.

The theme was ‘Theory and Practice of Capacity Building’. This consisted of three presentations, Ken Coghill – Capacity Building for Parliamentarians as Human Resource Development; Karin Steinack – Why some train and some don’t – An international comparison of MR’s attitudes towards parliamentary training; Colleen Lewis – Barriers to prioritizing education and training; role complexity and the media; which presented major findings from the Monash research project. A further presentation was given by Elsie Simpamba, a research officer from The National Assembly of Zambia, who spoke of her work assessing the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) held by new or continuing parliamentarians and the determination of their training and professional development needs. This was a valuable snapshot of a specific parliament. Equal time was given to presentations and discussion. There was a high level of interest with many questions, comments and observations. Topics included the value of benchmarking; the value of human resource management as an additional discipline; access to information - both the opportunity to seek information and the information given; how to address the exclusion of groups of MPs from the participation in the parliamentary process, either deliberately or by default; the need to take into consideration the maturity of parliaments and political parties when assessing training needs. Research shows that new MPs have no or little idea of what is involved which raised the question of whether we should look at pre-training. Other discussion considered training journalists in how parliaments work, the need to choose deliverers of training very carefully otherwise effort and material goes to waste, whether we should concentrate on training staff or MPs, and if the former is there evidence of effective knowledge transfer, and the differences generated by gender.

The afternoon session looked at the many different models for providing capacity building and the challenges they face. Some parliaments have set up specialized training institutes; others
have dedicated capacity building units within the parliamentary administration while others call on parliamentary staff or international organizations in an ad hoc manner. From this framework the session explored different models for delivering capacity building and the outcomes they have achieved so far. The four presentations were Kevin Rozzoli – Experiences in the Field, Parliamentary training in Indonesia and the South Pacific; Abel Kinyondo - Return on training investment in parliaments: The need for change in the Pacific region; Wannapat Chaitep – The Role of Parliamentary Secretariat staff in supporting International Diplomatic Duties of Parliamentarians (Case Study: Thai Senate); Paolo Zuddas and Giovanni Piccirilli – The role played by Chambers’ counselors and legislative advisors in enhancing Italian MPs knowledge and skills development: the assistance offered to an autonomous and aware collection of information in the pre-legislative scrutiny.

Again equal time was given to presentations and discussion with many questions, comments and observations. Much of the discussion centred around the role of staff in supporting MPs and the difference between the advice that can be given by parliamentary staff and that given by partisan staff. This has particular relevance in the area of parliamentary diplomacy which Wannapat Chaitep defined as “a system of representative communication and negotiation.

The day concluded with brief statements from each of the day’s presenters in summation of their paper as the introduction to a round-table discussion which explored what their findings meant for parliamentarians, parliamentary administration and external providers of parliamentary capacity building. The changing role of MPs in today’s globalised society, whether a job-description for MPs is feasible and/or appropriate, whether compulsory capacity building for MPs is feasible and/or appropriate, and how capacity building can best be provided in countries with high turnovers of MPs was also discussed.

Day 2 The proceedings, which were simultaneously translated in English, French and Spanish, commenced with opening remarks from Anders Johnson, Secretary General of IPU, and Hafnaoui Amrani, retiring President of ASGP, who welcomed the participation of researchers in the meeting and the opportunity given to members of parliament and parliamentary staff to participate in the day’s discussions. Ken Coghill then outlined the background of the day’s proceedings. This was followed by a keynote speech by Professor the Lord Norton of Louth. In his address he stressed that capacity building matters, but takes different forms in different jurisdictions, legislatures provide the nexus between governance and governed and that even legislatures in non-democratic regimes have a role even if limited. He said legislatures needed to be both functional and representational and that there was a need to develop more interest in the concept of Opposition as there was currently a tendency to concentrate on the legislature and the executive rather than the legislature and the people. Parliament should be an important safety valve for people’s views to government.

A panel discussion between Ken Coghill, Cletus Avoka (Leader of the House, Ghana), Eve Bazaïba (Senator, Democratic Republic of the Congo), Gert-Jan Hamilton (Secretary General of the Senate, Netherlands) and Oum Sarith (Secretary General of the Senate, Cambodia), moderated by myself, looked at these questions – what knowledge, skills and abilities do parliamentarians need to do their job? How do parliamentarians learn? How can, and should, parliament help them to acquire the necessary skills? Why do some parliamentarians train, and
others don’t? Do men and women parliamentarians have different attitudes to capacity building?

The main points to emerge were the need for capacity building programs to put a stronger focus on the MPs’ constituency role as this aspect of a MP’s role creates a bridge between the people and the parliament and that parliamentary staff should be put in charge of developing the MP’s legislative capacities leaving the development of the MPs’ representational skills to their parties, However it was also pointed out that while these approaches may be applicable in parliaments with a long democratic history in the newer parliaments both staff and parliamentarians are still on a learning curve and dependant on external providers for capacity building.

After a question and answer session in which the panel responded to broad ranging questions posed by me the discussion was opened up to delegates who entered into a lively exchange between themselves and the panel which had to be drawn to close long before the questions ran out.

The next session explored the topic ‘Effective induction and orientation for new parliamentarians’. The panel comprised Ruth Fox and Matt Korris from the Hansard Society, UK, discussing the new approach to inducting new MPs in the House of Commons following the fall-out from the expenses scandal; George Kunnath, Westminster Foundation for Democracy who looked at the framework for a comprehensive induction program; and Khan Ahmed Goraya of the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Studies outlining the work being done in his country to create the Institute which will be housed in its own building and cover within its curriculum a wide range of training and research into parliamentary practice in Pakistan.

The day concluded with two important sessions, firstly two case studies from the parliaments in which Mohammed Salem Al-Mazroui (Secretary General, United Arab Emirates) provided experience from the gulf region and Omer Faruk Genckaya from Turkey who spoke of that country’s difficulty in providing capacity building due to barriers created by both the party and electoral systems. They are trying to find a way to take these elements into account and are exploring the creation of an Institute to address the problem.

The remainder of the day looked at the lessons learnt from international efforts to support capacity building for parliamentarians. Speakers included Susan Markham from NDI on strengthening women’s participation in parliament and Mitch O’Brien from the World Bank Institute who gave a comprehensive overview of WBIs’ strategy. Once again there were many probing questions generated by the sessions to the extent that the session ran seriously overtime. This meant the final session, a panel discussion on what we have learnt, had to be abandoned. On reflection I think the value of the earlier sessions outweighed the loss of this session. Both papers provided detailed information on their topic and this information is best accessed through the respective papers which will be provided on line through a link to the project at

http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/mgt/research/governance/parliamentary-careers/conf/abstracts.html or through the IPU website at

http://www.ipu.org/spiz-e/asgp11.htm

In his closing remarks Ken Coghill suggested that areas for further research could include:
the respective roles of various potential capacity building providers such as parliaments themselves, political parties or groupings, national training centres for elected representatives, government and intergovernmental partner organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs);

- capacity building of parliamentary staff, including their capacities to assist MPs build their capacities;
- appropriate adult learning techniques for different aspects of capacity building;
- reasons for low rates of participation in capacity building programs and possible solutions;
- development roles for MPs (e.g. constituency development funds – CFDs); and
- effective monitoring and evaluation of capacity building programmes.

He suggested that the conference outcomes and identification of areas for further research established the desirability of a further similar conference, perhaps in the alternate year to the International Workshop for Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians held every second year at Wroxton, UK. He indicated that if the IPU and ASGP partners so wished, Monash University would be pleased to again join in organising a similar conference in association with the 129th IPU Assembly in October 2013.

Observations
The conference was of immense value. It was summed up succinctly by Ken Coghill in his closing remarks, “It was a genuine conference in the sense that participants did confer – there was a genuine sharing of information, debate and development of thinking.”

What surprised me most was the amount of attention being given to capacity building and/or professional development in a significant number of parliaments, particularly the developing parliaments. This included efforts to create dedicated centres or institutes, for example, Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Studies, the work being done by Federated National Council of the United Arab Emirates, School of Oriental and African Studies, to promote enhanced performance of parliamentary institutions in those countries. This contrasted sharply with the established democracies in which members feel comfortable with their knowledge base and their parliaments education role is confined to induction programs that concentrate on forms and practices of the house and administrative dos and don’ts. Evidence beyond the conference indicates however that an aspect of professional development that extends beyond this basic level is needed as much in the established democracies as it is in the emerging democracies. Unfortunately this aspect was not considered at the conference, indeed I think it would have gained little traction if it had been raised. It is I believe an area for research in the future.

Because of constraint on time many of the findings of the Monash research could not be considered in detail. What was important however was the gathering of valuable information on the approach taken by the various countries and the bringing together of those interested in parliamentary training. It also produced areas of attention not revealed in the Monash research, for example, parliamentary diplomacy which is a matter of great concern in countries where border conflicts are ever present or areas where regional tensions exist. In relation to job descriptions for parliamentarians, which was the subject of considerable discussion, it was
agreed these were desirable and that there were some common factors however they needed to be generated internally so they met the requirements of each jurisdiction.

There was a strong feeling that outside trainers often impose their own ideas and biases. I am sure Monash will be keen to identify these areas as subjects for further research. An area identified by Monash which was also confirmed as a field for future research was the practice of constituency development funds to members. This is an area particularly pertinent to the work of CDI.

A further observation from the developing countries was a concern that external providers come in with their own ideas on training which are often inappropriate for local conditions. Often they are geared to Western ideas of running courses which are based on an element of pre-knowledge drawn from the education systems in the provider’s country and so do not take into account the mix of education backgrounds existing in the local parliament or differences in language where certain words and phrases have quite different meanings. It is particularly difficult where there is a multiplicity of languages within the country. This is also linked to the observation mentioned earlier of the care needed in the selection of trainers who have an empathy with those being trained and an understanding of both the political and background culture of the country.

There is obviously a long way to go in developing effective programs. To ensure there is progress the efficacy of what is achieved by professional development programs should be evaluated over a number of years through a periodic and structured review process. For example, the paper by Abel Kinyondo, developed from a series of interviews with members of Pacific Island parliaments, indicated a very negative attitude towards all training programs. These included countries where CDI has made a considerable investment. However these interviews, which were a random selection of members who were available, may well have included members who took little interest in training programs or even failed to attend having deemed them of no value based on previous experience or anecdotal comment. It may also be a reflection of a common attitude among many members that they don’t need training and that therefore any training offered is useless. The sample was small and could have missed members who had found benefit from training. I think it also may reflect the lack of a structured plan to follow through with further training to reinforce the initial work. Even in established parliaments for example the perceived value of induction programs is quickly dissipated, in relation to a member’s learning curve, as other experiences transcend the information offered. For example in evaluating CDI’s own work the question of what type of material should be gathered to build a picture of the effectiveness of its programs is important to confirm what works, what doesn’t and what may have been missed completely. One suggestion is to create a profile of MP activity against which the major areas of MP performance could be tracked. Some of the evaluation benchmarks could be:

- Rate of re-election (a sign of growing stability and maturity)
- The quality of committee reports and the take up by government of recommendations made by committees
- Progress of members to higher office on the basis of experience
- Community polling on parliamentary performance
- Effective use of parliamentary budgets in providing services to members
- Using benchmarking standards developed by bodies such as CPA, IPU and WBI but scored by external assessment not for the benefit of the parliament but for the use of external providers to highlight areas of capacity building for the parliament.
- Management of capacity to produce relevant outcomes in areas of critical need.
- Development of work plans and outcomes against those plans

I was pleased to see that much of the training carried out by CDI scored well in the list of issues important to the emerging democracies, for example, the role of women in parliament, local input to induction programs, representational skills courses and specific training modules in parliamentary work such as committees.

Once again I wish to thank CDI for affording me the privilege of attending this most worthwhile conference and especially Stephen Sherlock for his personal support.

Kevin Rozzoli
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