An analysis of parliamentary questions raised by Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh (India) State Legislative Assembly

Suman Ojha, School of Political Science and International Studies, the University of Queensland, Brisbane

Sanjay Mishra, School of Engineering Systems, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane

Address for correspondence

Suman Ojha
PhD candidate
School of Political Science and International Studies,
The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
E- mail: suman.ojha@uqconnect.edu.au

ABSTRACT

The use of parliamentary questions is the most popular and visible tool in the hands of the Opposition as a means to make government accountable. Their main purpose is to seek information or press for action. Contemporary parliamentary literature from the UK, Canada, and Australia, however, suggests that parliamentary questions have lost their effectiveness. The literature points out that Question Time in parliaments has become a battle ground between Ruling and Opposition parties in their fight to gain maximum political advantage. In this context, the effectiveness of parliamentary questions in the Indian state legislatures has not been investigated. The aim of this study, therefore, is to analyse the use, purpose and effectiveness of parliamentary questions in the State Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh (India) to explore differences, if any, between Ruling and Opposition parties.

In this study, 4023 parliamentary questions asked in the Uttar Pradesh State Legislative Assembly were analysed. The effectiveness of answers was also analysed qualitatively. The results show that half of the total members of the Assembly used this device, out of which 60% of the questions were asked by the Opposition party members. 31% of the questions from the Opposition were seeking information and 69% were pressing for action. The government provided the required information in 96% of the questions in the former category and took action in only 35% of the latter category. Furthermore, 60% of the questions raised by the Opposition were related to constituency matters and the remaining 40% were related to policy issues or public welfare. Comparing the data with the ruling party, the results indicate that the use, purpose and effectiveness of parliamentary questions were similar to that of the Opposition except some minor differences. Surprisingly, there was no evidence of any 'Dorothy Dix' questions. The study concludes parliamentary question is an effective device in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

An analysis of parliamentary questions raised by the Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh (India) State Legislative Assembly

Introduction

Parliamentary questions are a visible and popular parliamentary device, which ensure the accountability of the executive. Indeed, the concept of executive accountability is embedded in parliamentary questions. In fact, 'they are a very important element in the doctrine of individual ministerial responsibility' (Chester 1977: 160). The notion of government accountability, through ministerial responsibility, is best seen in action (Uhr 1981: 8) during Question Time. Crick (1964:252) has rightly remarked that 'it is a great safety valve and a safeguard against abuses and it makes sure that Government departments cannot get very far out of line with public opinion without being pulled up short.' Therefore, Opposition party member tend to use this legislative device to air public grievances, make government accountable for their actions and inactions and expose the weaknesses of administration.

Despite their importance in the parliamentary system of governance, only a few studies on parliamentary questions are evident in the literature as noted by Hazama et al (2007) and Rasiah (2007) in their studies related to the Turkish and the Australian national parliaments respectively. The study confirmed that questions from Opposition are either not answered or evaded during Question Time in Australian House of Representatives (Rasiah 2007). The study by Hazama et al (2007) shows that almost all (95%) the questions come from opposition members and these questions are taken seriously by the government. The other studies, which have been conducted, focus on national

parliaments and often only consider oral questions or questions directed to the Prime Minister (Franks 1985; Shephard 1999; Surya Prakash 2003). Also, these studies have been too general to make any specific conclusions. In this light, little is known about the nature, aim, usage and effectiveness of parliamentary questions – both oral and written - in provincial parliaments. Only limited scholarship is available on the parliamentary studies in India and even less exists on Uttar Pradesh (UP). Furthermore, the previous studies on the UP legislature (Sayeed 1972, 1973; Jain 1972; Dwivedi 1985; Masand 1998; Pai and Sharma 2005) do not focus on parliamentary questions. Because the members of state parliaments are closer to the people and their problems, the effectiveness of legislative devices in state parliament is as important to investigate. The present study aims to fill this gap by analysing parliamentary questions in the Uttar Pradesh (UP) State Legislative Assembly in India in general as well as with reference to the questions raised by the Opposition.

According to May ([1844] 1971: 323), a question must relate to the matter for which a minister is responsible and should aim to seek information or press for action. Further, a question should be 'concise, factual and free of opinion and argument which might lead to debate' (Kornberg and Mishler 1976:28). The other functions of a parliamentary question include the 'criticism of the executive government; bringing to light abuses; ventilating grievances; exposing and thereby preventing the government from exercising arbitrary power; and pressing the government to take remedial or other action' (Pettifer 1981: 479).

Parliamentary questions are asked for a number of reasons; however, evidence suggests that ministerial accountability is the most important. This finding was concluded in the study by Franklin and Norton (1993:109), in which more than 90% of the Members of Parliament (MPs) surveyed in the British Parliament cited accountability as the main reason for parliamentary questions. Accountability was followed by the defending or promoting of constituency interests and the influencing of government policy and actions as the second and the third principal causes respectively. Almost 85% of the members surveyed, confirmed Chester and Bowring's (1962) theory that 'personal publicity' was also one of the motivations behind asking questions as it improved their image both within their party and their constituency. Despite there being some debate as to the extent of executive accountability achieved by parliamentary questions on the floor of the House, it must be acknowledged that this legislative device does seek to ensure answerability from the executive to the legislature (Chester and Bowring 1962; McGowan 2008).

Parliamentary questions in Uttar Pradesh

With its 166 million strong population, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India. The state legislature is comprised of the Governor, the Legislative Assembly (403[1] members) and the Legislative Council (100 members). The term of the Legislative

---

[1] Uttaranchal became the 27th state of the Republic of India from Uttar Pradesh on the 9th of November 2000. Before the formation of Uttaranchal, there were 425 members in the UP Assembly.

Assembly is five years.The right to ask questions to ministers in the Indian federal and provincial legislatures was granted to the members by the Indian Council Act of 1893 (Mukherjea 1958: 53) during British colonial rule. Based on this right, the first question was asked in the provincial Parliament of UP on 6 December 1893 (Dwivedi 1985: 179). Further, the right to ask supplementary questions by the original questioner was incorporated in the Indian Council Act of 1909. A similar right was agreed for all members apart from the original questioner in the Indian Council Act in 1919. Subsequently, the procedure of asking questions followed by supplementaries was well established in UP.

Since, the roots of the Indian parliamentary system are based on the Westminster system, most of the parliamentary procedures, including parliamentary questions, have been derived from the procedures of the British Parliament. Stated under rule 26 of the 'Rules of the procedures of the UP Assembly', a 'question must relate to a matter of administration for which the government is responsible'. Questions can be divided into three categories: (i) short notice questions, (ii) starred questions and (iii) unstarred questions. Only short notice and starred questions are answered orally in the House. The unstarred questions are not asked orally in the House and receive written answers from ministers. Supplementary questions can be put to short notice and starred questions but not to the unstarred questions. The first one hour and twenty minutes of every sitting of the House are devoted to questions. During this period, supplementary questions are common. Unlike in Australia (Redenbach 2000) where the Speakers in the Commonwealth and the state parliaments are reluctant to allow follow up questions to

6

probe the executive, in 'India, generally, the practice is to allow six or even more supplementary questions and supplementary questions may often continue for about 10-15 minutes' (Morris-Jones 1957:225).

Interestingly, in order to improve the effectiveness of parliamentary questions, the UP legislature has been pro-active and innovative through its formation of a Questions and Reference Committee in 1984 (Sinha 2007). This committee is chaired by the Deputy Speaker, who is invariably a member from the Opposition. If a member is not satisfied with the answer provided to his or her question on the floor of the House, the Speaker may refer it to this Committee for further consideration.

Parliamentary questions, like any other legislative device, are to a large extent controlled by the Speaker in the UP Assembly. Although the guiding principles regarding admissibility of questions are governed by the rules of the House, their interpretation rests with the Speaker. Supplementary questions on short notice and starred questions cannot be asked without the permission of the Speaker. The Speaker is able to waive the rules regarding the notice of questions and allow a question to be asked at short notice when it is deemed to be of an urgent character. It is also within the Speaker's powers to decide whether an answer should be oral or written in nature. The Speaker has the discretion to allow a half an hour discussion on a question related to a matter of sufficient public importance. Furthermore, the Speaker allots days to ministers to provide oral answers to questions. The Speaker also has the power to change the class of a question such as the conversion of a short notice question into a starred or unstarred question and a

starred question into an unstarred question. Thus, the role of the Speaker is crucial in making parliamentary questions an effective tool to ensure the accountability of the executive.

Data and Methods

Adopting some of the features of the above-mentioned studies, in particular Chester and Bowring (1962), Franklin and Norton (1993), Masand (1998), and Hazama et al (2007), the following framework was developed to assess the effectiveness of parliamentary questions in the UP Legislative Assembly. The time period selected for the study was the thirteenth Assembly (1996-2001). It may be noted that during this period the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) had only 174 members, out of the total 425, in the UP Assembly after the 1996 state elections. The party came into power forming a coalition with the support of the 'defected' MLAs from the Congress Party (INC), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the independents. In the light of the Anti Defection Bill 1985, their membership was disputed and the matter was under consideration of the Speaker during the period selected for the study. Therefore they are considered to be part of their parental parties in this study.

During the five year term of the thirteenth Assembly, a total of 50,387 questions were asked. It was not feasible to analyse all the questions, therefore, as a sample, the longest session (18 June 1998 to 23 July 1998) in terms of working hours, was selected for an in-depth study. During this period, a total of 4023 questions were asked by the members. However, 559 of the questions were excluded for technical reasons such as the same

8

question having been asked and replied to earlier; the issue having been referred to a parliamentary committee; the matter being considered sub-judice or the question being too long, unclear or related to various departments. Therefore, only 3464 questions and their answers were analysed according to the following method.

 Each parliamentary question, as it appears in the Hansard, was categorised according to the name of the questioner; the questioner's constituency; his or her party affiliation; whether the question was starred (oral) or unstarred (written); the concerned government department to which the question had been put; the purpose of the question (to seek information or to press for action); the constituency relevance; and the nature of the question (highlighting corruption issues, demanding infrastructure development or social welfare etc. as shown in Table 1).

The answers were analysed qualitatively according to the purpose of the questions and categorised into a scale of 1 to 10. If the answer fulfilled the purpose of the question, then it was allocated category 10 on the scale. If the required information as demanded in the question was provided then it was allocated 10A. If a minister provided assurance that action would be taken on the matter, it was allocated category 9 on the scale and so on. On the other side, if a minister seemed ignorant of the matter and simply answered that the information was being collected, the answer was marked as least effective and allocated category 1. Details of each category are shown in Table 2.

The data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel software version 2003. The first

step consisted of preparing a master file containing the names of all the members of the

thirteenth Assembly, their party affiliations and constituency. The members were also

coded with a unique number so that this information could be recalled from the database

by typing that particular number in the database. Then each question and answer from the

Hansard was read, analysed and categorised into different variables, which were

tabulated in 11 columns of an Excel spreadsheet. Thus, the final database consisted of

4023 rows and 11 columns (4023 multiplied by 11 equated to 44,253 cells). A sample of

10 rows of the database is shown in Table 3. With the help of the 'pivot-table' and 'sort'

commands in the software, the necessary results were obtained.

FINDINGS

Use of parliamentary questions by the members

It could be argued that the capacity of a legislature to scrutinise the activities of the

executive is enhanced if an increasing number of members compel the executive to

provide information and an explanation of their actions and inactions through the use of

parliamentary questions. In this context, the device was found useful as approximately

half of the members of the Assembly made use of parliamentary questions (220 out of

total 425 members). As expected, the opposition parties raised about 60% of the total

number of questions. The main Opposition party, Samajwadi Party (SP) constituted only

26 % of the total membership of the House but asked 33% of all the questions. However,

the members of the ruling party were not far behind in the use of this device with 41% of the members of the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) asking 39.5% of the questions.

During the period of the study, 481 questions were answered orally. Out of this number, 40% of the questions were raised by the ruling party members with none of them being considered Dorothy Dix[2]. The remaining 60% of the questions came from the Opposition. There were many instances when ministers experienced difficulty in responding to questions from their own party back-benchers. Unlike Australian parliaments, there is no pairing of oral questions i.e. alternative questions from the ruling and the Opposition parties. Questions in the UP Assembly were selected by the Speaker on merit as most of them were urgent matters of public importance requiring the government's attention.

The number of questions asked by the members varied from one question (43 members) to more than 100 (9 members). On average, 18 questions were asked by each member. Out of the nine members who asked more than 100 questions, five were from the ruling party and four were from the main Opposition party.. A government backbencher, through his questions, repeatedly highlighted the issue of widespread corruption in the Kanpur city council. It was alleged that council land worth millions was missing in the records and was sold to the land mafia by the council officials.[3] Thus, it can be noted that the most active questioners were from the Opposition as well as the ruling party.

---

[2] A question asked of a Minister by a member of his/her own party to give the Minister the opportunity to promote the government's work, criticise the opposition, etc. The term is named after US columnist Dorothy Dix (1870-1951).
[3] UPLAP, 424(2), 23 June 1998

The content analysis revealed that none of the questions from the ruling party members were Dorothy Dix nor the questions from the Opposition were evaded. It confirms that Question Time is used neither for rhetoric purposes nor for party attacks. Similarly, it does not serve to publicise the achievements of the government in UP. It is mainly devoted to the discussion of matters of public importance as well as to draw the attention of the executive to issues of malpractice in the administration. This is an important finding as Question Time is generally considered to be the most ineffective parliamentary tool in the Australian House of Representatives as it 'not only provides little information but also does great damage to the image of politics and politicians. It is mostly blatant and rather vulgar electioneering. Both Questions and Answers do not keep the point' (Hammer 2004:255) and questions from the opposition are evaded (Rassiah 2007). Similarly, Coghill and Hunt (1998) have remarked 'Question Time in Australian Parliaments is undoubtedly in crisis. In a number of parliaments it has degenerated almost to a farce'.

The nature of questions

The nature of questions was analysed into the broad categories of social welfare, infrastructure development, maladministration or corruption issues and the welfare of government employees (details in Table 1). Indeed, the array of issues covered by the questions was very wide. Issues ranged from the kidnapping of a poor and low class woman, to a demand to stop the construction of an illegal building on a common road in a

village, to the matter of closing a cinema hall as well as to the issue of paying superannuation and other funds to the family of a deceased policeman.

The results shown in Table 1 suggest the majority of questions (62%) were directly related to public welfare. Within this category, almost one third of the questions were linked to the development and maintenance of physical infrastructure such as the construction of roads, bridges, hospitals and the installation of power transformers. The next third was related to issues of social welfare such as the interests of women, minorities, disadvantaged low classes and ex gratia payments to victims of floods or fires. The remaining third of the questions was related to issues of government machinery such as the establishment of a new police station, school or primary health centre in a given area. These questioning trends are reflected in the relatively higher number of questions falling into the jurisdiction of departments such as Rural/Urban development, Education, Irrigation, Home and Public Works. Table 1 also indicates that in this category, the share of questions raised by the Opposition is much higher than that of the ruling party. It could be argued that ruling party members use their party channels and ministerial link to get public welfare work in their electorates.

It could further be stated that, according to Table 1, the government employees concerned, whose interests were raised equally by ruling and Opposition members, were working as a pressure group in the state. Indeed, approximately 11% of the questions asked were directly related to the employees' welfare such as promotions, new pay scales, medical and other facilities and confirmation or regularisation of temporary staff.

Despite their numbers being less than 1% of the state's total population, it emerged that members showed a great deal of concern regarding their (employees) welfare compared to the wellbeing of the citizens they were representing. Similarly, the analysis also reveals members' interest in the transfer and posting of government employees. This suggests that in the general running of the government machinery in Uttar Pradesh, a favourable administration can help politicians to get things in their electorates done more quickly.

About a quarter of the total questions were based on lapses in the administration due to various types of irregularities, corruption or misuse of the government machinery. Often, ministers were not aware of such lapses and this parliamentary device served to draw their attention to the issues. For example, a member was informed through a question that the agricultural land owned by the city council of Kanpur had been leased to rich farmers. However, the Minister answered that the land was allotted to landless poor farmers. The member was confident that his information was correct and based upon documentary evidence. Ultimately, the Minister asked the member to supply the list of the farmers who had benefitted. In addition, the Minister assured the member to initiate disciplinary action against those council officials who had violated the rules. Questions of this nature were raised almost equally by the Opposition as well as the ruling party members.

Further study of the parliamentary questions reveals that members have devised an innovative way to circumvent the limitations, which exist regarding the length and content of questions. Indeed, it emerged that members sought to ask a number of

questions without providing much detail. Instead, they simply wrote a letter to the minister to request that an issue be resolved. In this way, members were able to brief the minister regarding the issue in detail, providing facts, figures and suggestions and, subsequently, effectively using the parliamentary device to press the government to take suitable action.

 It was interesting to find that the members also asked a substantial number of questions about their own welfare such as regarding increases in pay, travel allowances, pension, medical and other facilities. In a similar vein, one member requested the provision of [4] an extra armed policeman and a bodyguard, at state expenses, for the MLAs . To be sure, the issues of illegal encroachments and the increase in the cases of thefts in MLAs' residences were raised by members on several occasions.

Answers to parliamentary questions

The analysis shows that 31% of the total questions asked by the Opposition members were intended to seek information and in 95% of the cases, the government provided the required information. But of the remaining 69% of the questions pressing for some action, only 37% forced the government to take any action or assured that action would be taken. The corresponding data for ruling party members is substantially similar to the

---

[4] It is worth mentioning that a bodyguard and an armed policeman are already provided to the MLAs in Uttar Pradesh at tax payers' expense. If they require an extra facility, they are required to pay 25% of the total expenses.

Opposition figures. Therefore, parliamentary questions, in general, appear to be more effective in seeking information from the government than pressing for action.

It can be inferred from Table 2 that almost 56% of the questions were able to draw positive responses from the government (category 9, 10 and 10A). For example, in answering a question, the Minister for Labour committed that the Labour Department would take steps for the prevention of child labour in the state. When a member asked a question to the Minister for City Development to provide a drinking water facility in a suburb, action to do so was taken immediately.

In order to further probe why some questions received favourable treatment by the executive and some did not, further analysis of all effective questions and answers was carried out. The results indicate that almost 50% of the questions from all political parties were effective as they achieved their intended goal as reflected in the answers. Although Table 2 shows a relatively higher percentage of ineffective questions raised by the Opposition, this is counterbalanced by similar trends (relatively higher percentage) in effective questions. Further, keeping the fact that ruling party member's share in the total questions was only 40% compared to 60% of the Opposition, therefore as a whole, it is concluded that the questions raised by the Opposition appear to have an influence similar to those raised by the ruling party. This confirms that ministers are not biased in favour of or against the party affiliation of a questioner. However, the data shows that if the question is related to the social welfare or transfer–posting of government employees, it is more likely to receive a positive answer compared to other categories. Further, the data shows that the government took action in 37%, 22% and 12% of the questions relating to

individual matters, local issues and policy matters respectively. Therefore, parliamentary questions appear to be more useful and effective in solving individual grievances and least effective in matters related to state policy with no partisan bias demonstrated against the Opposition.

A large number of the questions (about 12%) were not answered on the pretext of 'the information is being collected' or 'the matter is being investigated'. This occurred even in the policy based questions. A member inquired about the policy adopted by the Government to resolve the problem of decreasing water levels state-wide. The Minister for City Development replied that the information was being collected in this regard. The member regretted that the underground water level in the state was decreasing and, consequently, the state was facing severe drinking water problems. Despite the urgency of this serious issue, it appeared that the attitude of the Government was blasé. Indeed, the questioner alleged that the executive did not have any plans to resolve the problem. Finally, the question was suspended by the Speaker for a future date pending the provision of the required information.

In some cases, no satisfactory answer was provided despite the same question being asked repeatedly. This was evident when a member continued to ask a question through the course of the year without obtaining a satisfactory response. He expressed regret in the Assembly that even after a year had passed; his question remained unanswered and was being transferred from one session to the next for no valid reason (UPLAP 1998:14).

However, the number of questions receiving unsatisfactory responses was relatively insignificant.

The role of the Speaker

On 23 June 1998, a starred question was raised in the House that private educational institutions were charging students higher fees than state educational institutions. The member wanted to know if the government had any plans to regulate fees charged by educational institutions. The Minister for Secondary Education accepted that increased fees had impacted on the students but that there were no plans to regulate the fees structure and make it the same for public and the private institutions. The members were not satisfied with the Minister's answer and wanted to know why if the government could make laws to regulate private business, why it could not regulate private institutions in the same manner. The Speaker interfered during the supplementary questions and explained that, according to the provisions of the Constitution of India, the state government could actually regulate the fees structure. The Speaker further asked the minister to reconsider the matter and provide an update to the parliament in the future (UPLAP 1998:7).

On July 3, 1998, a short notice question was asked to the Minister for Food and Supply. The questioner demanded that some action be taken to regulate the rising price of edible oils, an essential commodity in India. The Minister answered that the regulation of prices was under the jurisdiction of the Central Government and that it had nothing to do with the state government. The state government had sent a letter to the Government of India

in this regard. The Opposition was highly dissatisfied with the answer and alleged that

the state government was not taking sufficient steps to remedy this issue. They

maintained that writing a letter was not an adequate solution to the problem. The Minister

failed to explain what additional steps were being taken. In protest, several members

from the opposition parties walked out of parliament. At this stage, the Speaker had to

intervene and tell the Minister that additional steps could be taken in the form of

supplying greater quantities of the item to the market. The speaker proceeded to point out

that if the supply was more than the demand, prices would automatically be controlled

(UPLAP 1998:1).

From the above examples, it is evident that the Speaker does not act in a partisan manner

regarding matters of public interest. There was evidence of many rulings given by the

Speaker, which resulted in inconvenience to ministers. However, it should not be

construed that the Speaker always acts impartially. There are other instances when the

Speaker acted in a blatantly partisan manner, such as when the survival of the

government was at stake[5]. However, from the analysis, it can be inferred that, in the day

to day workings of the House, the Speaker conducted business in a largely impartial

manner. Indeed, the neutrality of the Speaker during Question Time has greatly increased

the effectiveness of parliamentary questions providing equal opportunities and shelter to

Opposition.

---

[5] For example in the matter of defection of MLAs from the Congress Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party
(BSP) in 1998 to support the BJP government.

Conclusion

From the data, it can be summarised that parliamentary questions in Uttar Pradesh are more effective in seeking information than pressing the executive to take action. The required information was provided in almost all questions but only one third of the total questions succeeded in bringing the government to take the required action. Forcing the executive to provide the information is another way of making ministers accountable and, in this respect; parliamentary questions appear to be an effective legislative tool in Uttar Pradesh.

The study confirms the prevalence of questions based on the ventilation of public grievances in the UP Assembly. The results also reiterate the previous findings by Franklin and Norton (1993) and Hazama et al (2007) that parliamentary questions are more effective in solving individual and local grievances than in changing policy outcomes. The other important findings in the case of UP are that parliamentary questions do not operate along party lines and that the role of the Speaker remains largely neutral during Question Time. The results are in contrast to the effectiveness of parliamentary questions in Australia where questions are regularly evaded due to partiality on the part of the Speaker (Rasiah 2007; Coghill 1998) and questions from the Opposition are less likely to be answered (McGowan 2008).

The study finds that a number of factors increase the effectiveness of parliamentary questions in UP. These include the presence of supplementary questions, the Questions and Reference Committee, the active participation of ruling as well as Opposition alike,

20

the impartiality of the Speaker during Question Time and the absence of Dorothy Dix

questions. It was also noted that several important issues raised during Question Time

forced the government to engage in a longer debates or matter was escalated to Question

Reference Committee. There were seven questions in this category during the study

period. Often, members were also able to obtain assurances from the government. There

were 125 questions in this category during the study period. If this did not occur, the

questions served to expose the weaknesses of the administration with the further benefit

of ventilating public grievances. In sum, the study revealed that parliamentary questions

generally serve as an effective tool in the UP Legislative Assembly and that the

difference between the number, nature and influence of the questions from the

Opposition and those from the ruling party members is negligible.

References

Chester, D.N. and Nona Bowring. 1962. *Questions in Parliament*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

Chester, D.N.1977. 'Questions in the House'. In *The Commons in the seventies*, eds.S.A.Walkland and M. Ryle. London: Fontana/Collins.

Coghill,K. and A.Hunt. 1998. 'Reforming Question Time'. *Legislative Studies* 12(2):36.

Crick, B.1964. *The Reform of Parliament*. Anchor Books: New York.

Dwivedi, S.K. 1985. 'Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Ka Karya Sanchalan'. Lucknow: Sulabh Publication.

Franklin, M. and P.Norton. 1993. 'Questions and the Role of Parliament'. In *Parliamentary Questions*. ed, M. Franklin and P.Norton. Oxford: clarendon Press.

Franks, C.E.S. 1985. 'Debates and Question Period in the Canadian House of Commons: What purpose do they serve?' *American Review of Canadian Studies* XV (1): 1-15.

Hamer, D. 2004. *Can Responsible Government Survive in Australia.* Canberra: Department of the Senate.

Hazama, Y., O.F. Genckaya and Selma Genckaya. 2007. 'Parliamentary questions in Turkey'. *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 13(4): 539-557.

Jain, C.K. 1972. *State Legislatures in India: Rajasthan Legislative Assembly; A comparative study*. New Delhi: S.Chand

Kornberg, A. and W. Mishler. 1976. *Influence in Parliament: Canada*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Masand, A. 1998. 'The control of administration over the executive'. PhD thesis. University of Lucknow, UP, India.

May, T.E. (1844) 1971. 18th ed. *Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament.* London: Butterworth & Co. Ltd.

McGowan, A. 2008. 'Accountability or Inability: To What Extent does House of Representatives Question Time Deliver Executive Accountability Comparative to other Parliamentary Chambers? Is there Need for Reform?' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 23(2): 66-85.

Morris-Jones. *Parliament in India.1957.* London:Longmans.

Mukherjea,A.R. 1958. *Parliamentary procedures in India*. London: Oxford University Press.

Pai, S. and P. K. Sharma. 2005. 'New Institutionalism and Legislative Governance in the Indian States: A Comparative Study of West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.'CSLG Working Paper Series. Delhi: JNU.

Pettifer, J.A. 1981. *House of Representatives Practice.* Canberra:A.G.P.S.

Rashaih, P. 2007. 'Evasion in Australia's Parliamentary Question Time: The case of the Iraq war'. PhD thesis. University of Western Australia.

Redenbach, S. 2000. 'Lost opportunities: The Australian House of Representatives, its Speakers and immediate supplementary questions'. *Legislative Studies* 14(2): 79-90.

Sayeed, S.M.1972. 'Role of the Speaker in the U.P. Assembly: A Case Study of the Relationship Between the Speaker and the Assembly Since 1952.' *Indian Journal of Political Science* 33 (2): 218-230.

--------------1973.*The Committees of the UP Legislature.* New Delhi: ICSSR publication.

Shephard, M.P. 1999. 'Prime minister's question time; Functions, flux, causes and consequences- a behavioural analysis'. PhD thesis. University of Houston, USA.

Sinha, N.K. 2007.'The Questions and the Reference Committee'. *Sansadiya Dipika* (parliamentary Journal published by the UP Legislative Assembly Secretariat) 32 (1):1.

Surya Prakash, A. 2003. 'Parliamentary Questions as Instruments of Accountability'. In *The Indian Parliament: A Comparative Perspective*, eds. Ajay.K.Mehra and Gert W.Kueck. Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

The Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business of the UP Legislative Assembly, 1958, as corrected upto 2002. Lucknow: UP Secretariat.

Uhr. John. 1981. 'Questions Without Answers: An Analysis of Question Time in the Australian House of Representatives. Monograph No.4. Canberra: Australian Political Studies Association and the Parliament of Australia.

Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Proceedings. 23 July 1998. 426(4):14.
Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Proceedings. 23 June 1998. 424(3):7.
Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Proceedings. 3 July 1998. 425(1):1.

Table 1: Distribution of the questions according to their nature

Nature of questions		Total questions in each category	Questions by ruling party (%)	Questions by Opposition (%)
Public welfare	Public welfare other than that related to physical infrastructure	742	245 (33%)	497 (67%)
	Public welfare related to physical infrastructure such as roads, water, housing, power, etc	763	234 (31%)	529 (69%)
	Government department related	641	294 (46%)	347 (54%)
Related to public servants, their grievances and welfare	Welfare of government employees	328	139 (42%)	189 (58%)
	Transfer & posting of government employees	71	34 (48%)	37 (52%)
Lapses in administration	Irregularities / corruption / maladministration	884	363 (41%)	521 (59%)
Self or party interest	Self or party interest	35	8 (23%)	27 (77%)
	Total	3464	1317	2147

Table 2: Effectiveness of Answers on 1-10 scale for ruling party and opposition questions

Category of answers (1-10 scale)		Questions from Ruling Party	Questions from Opposition	Total	Over all government responses as % of total
1	Info is being collected / No information	104 (52%)	97 (48%)	201	Less effective (36%)
2	Matter under consideration	45 (55%)	37 45%)	82	
3	Enquiry pending / report awaited	52 (36%)	94 (64%)	146	
4	Answer in negative (but could have done easily)	7 (30%)	16 (70%)	23	
5	Answer in negative	288 (36%)	501 (64%)	789	
6	Outside state government jurisdiction	33 (41%)	48 (59%)	81	Neutral (8%)
7	Not possible due to lack of resources	41 (19%)	179 (81%)	220	
8	Initiated more debate	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	7	
9	Assurance given	49 (39%)	76 (61%)	125	Effective (56%)
10	Action taken	310 (41%)	451 (59%)	761	
10A	Action taken (information provided as required in the question)	386 (38%)	643 (62%)	1029	
	Total	1317	2147	3464	

Table 3: A sample of 10 rows taken from the master database of Excel spread sheet

SN	MLA No	Name	Party	Constituency	Oral/ written	Dept	Constituency	Local/ State	Nature	Purpose	Outcome
1	256	RAJDHARI	SAMTA	BALLIA	**	FIN	N	S	GD	1	10A
2	104	JAGDAMBIKA PAL	INC	BASTI	**	FOOD	N	S	PW	2	6
3	91	CHANDRA NATH SINGH	SP	PRATAPGARH	*						POSTPONE
4	149	NAREDNRA SINGH SISODIYA	BJP	GHAZIABAD	*	EN	N	S	GC	2	10
5	85	GOPAL KRISHNA	SP	PILIBHIT	*	H	N	S	GD	1	10A
6	370	SHYAM DEV RAI CHAUDHARY	BJP	VARANASI	*	UD	Y	L	PWD	2	10
7	49	URMILA DEVI	SP	MAINPURI	*	EN	N	S	GD	1	10A
8	320	LAKSHMI KANT BAJPEI	BJP	MEERUT	*	PL	Y	L	PWD	1	10A
9	369	SHYAM KISHORE YADAV	SP	LUCKNOW	*	H	Y	L	PWD	2	3
10	4	AJAY KUMAR POIYA	BJP	MATHURA	*	UD	Y	L	PW	2	5