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Public Broadcasting and the Politics of Media in Ghana: A Case Study of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)

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Public Broadcasting and the Politics of Media in Ghana: A Case
Study of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis tells the story of an African, national broadcaster, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, GBC, and its efforts to transition into a public service organization. Since its inception in 1935, GBC has morphed through many forms: from a small, regional radio station, to a “giant media organization” with national footprint broadcasting across several platforms. Having lost its “privileged,” state-sponsored, monopoly status after Ghana’s fourth Republic, GBC is forced to chart a new course as competitive market forces and new communication technologies combine to exert new and unfamiliar pressures on its operations and editorial practices.

This thesis focuses on how GBC has fared within this multi-party, competitive market environment, by focusing on the legislative regime that establish and guide its operations, and how through its institutional practice and “culture,” it has responded to the new media ecology. Within such a liberal regime where “public interest” is often interpreted as what the public is interested in, and the marketplace as the place for meeting individual preferences, how GBC is funded becomes an important component to how it conceptualizes and executes its public service mandate. How GBC’s funding sources affect its public service mandate constitute an important question for this study.

Through the theoretical lens of political economy, this thesis analyzes institutional texts, interviews and other secondary data to gauge the extent to which GBC has lived up to its constitutional, public service mandate, and concludes that while it has fared well in some sectors, a lot remains to be done. It observes that although geographical and language access has improved, GBC’s scope of programming has not due largely to its excessive reliance on advertising and sponsorship revenue. It concludes that GBC could

lose its editorial control over externally generated programs and dilute its public service brand unless it adopts modern day broadcasting practices of commissioning such programs.

The study recommends that a leaner, media organization, with a responsive management and technology, driven by well-trained human resource will transform GBC into a communicative space that truly serves as the avenue for democratic expression for its “audience, as citizens, players or consumers” (Syversten, 2010).

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Modibo and Modibo.

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List of abbreviations

DONCA	Director of News and Current Affairs
DDTV News	Deputy Director of Television News
D-G	Director-General
DD-G	Deputy Director-General
DOF	Director of Finance
DOR	Director of Radio
DTV	Director of Television
GAA	Ghana Association of Advertisers
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
GTV	Ghana Television
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
MOI	Ministry of Information
NBDF	National Broadcasting Development Fund
NCA	National Communication Authority
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NMC	National Media Commission
NMP	National Media Policy
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NTA	Nigeria Television Authority
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Committee
Radio-vision	Radio and Television Newsroom
SABC	South Africa Broadcasting Corporation
URTNA	Union of Radio and Television Networks of Africa

Chapter one - Introduction

Background

Very often, when the question of the public's role in democratic governance is raised, the issue of representation and universal access to state institutions follows closely. The point is often made that the benefit and quality of such democratic governance could be threatened if the public is unable to stay in constant interaction with their elected representatives, and more importantly, hold them to account. In such a governance system, the media constitute an important space within which such deliberation between the electorate and their elected representatives occur.

The assumption is that since the electorate is unable to engage with their representatives directly, such a communicative space, albeit mediated, provides opportunity for interaction and engagement. The media under this arrangement is, therefore, seen as an important democratic tool that facilitates close engagement between the electorate and their representatives.

However, such conceptualization of the media and their role in the democratic process is purely normative since in practice, their performance is contingent on the legislation and policies that create them and the practical conditions under which they operate. The definition of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) as a publicly owned and funded media institution, mandated to generate diverse program content, especially for minorities, without being commercially minded should therefore be seen as an effort to create such a communicative space. Thus historically, PSB has been conceptualized as a communicative space that is publicly owned and funded through licenses, and universally accessible both geographically and through diverse programming. This means that PSB

was mandated to have national footprints, cater to the needs of all within the nation-state, and be noncommercial in its programming considerations.

Funded by the public or state as monopolies, such state or national broadcasters were owned by the public and operated editorial philosophies that privileged the building of nationhood, and in some instances, served as the vanguard of patriotism and development (Ansah, 1982, 1985; Bakardjieva, 1996; Jakubowicz, 2004; Rodriguez, 2003). For these reasons, such PSB quickly gained the reputation, rightly or wrongly, as surrogates of the political elites whose activities it sometimes covered uncritically, and increasingly came across as government cheerleaders who spoke for the status quo, and “manufactured consent” through their reportage.

Calls for its revision and dismantling grew louder as proponents of free market presented corporate and commercial broadcasting as an alternative to PSB (Croteau and Hoynes, 2004). Speaking with a clear neoliberal accent, such proponents called for cuts to public funds for PSB, and lobbied for it to compete with other commercial media within a free, unregulated market where public interest was defined as what the individual wanted and was willing to pay for. Additionally, corporate bodies’ huge investments in the development of communication technology raised the stakes for media ownership and control (Bagdikian, 2004; Herman and Chomsky, 1989). As such corporate bodies vertically and horizontally expanded to include media in their operations, the prospect of commercializing the hitherto public communicative space became clearer, and with it, restricting access to such media space; privileging elite voices and blunting the deliberative punch of democratic interaction through exclusion.

As many, including Taras (2001) have argued, in the midst of profound advances

in communication technology, access to such technology seems to be a shrinking especially for purposes of advancing democratic engagement (Dahlgren, 2009, Jacka, 2003). Calling it “a paradox”, McChesney (1999) argues that democracy has become impaired and deficient as such corporate and commercial interests continue to own and control the media, including the Internet. The resultant fragmentation of PSB’s “national audience” (Scannell, 1993) due to such technological advancements, and the resultant lack of interaction among such users, has been described as “bowling alone” (Putnam, 1992).

This metaphor of “bowling alone” far more than captures the isolation that such audience fragmentation and viewing ghettos generate due to technological advancements. It also presents “narrowcasting” as an alternative to “broadcasting”, further undermining the latter’s taken-for-granted assumptions of a “one message for all” model that is foundational to traditional PSB. Furthermore, implied in this distinction was the logic that while commercial broadcasting viewed its viewers as consumers in a marketplace, public broadcasting on the other hand “derives its legitimacy from the role its viewers play as citizens,” engaging one another in public discourse and contributing to the building of nationhood (Smith, 1991, cited in Raboy, 1996: 7).

As the state is contrasted with the market, and PSB is contrasted with private sector broadcasting, the debate seems to have shifted from what should be the public function of broadcasting to whether or not PSB is still relevant. Jacka’s (2003) reference to “arguments for PSB as impotent” should therefore be understood as more than highlighting how inadequate the concept of PSB has become in the face of neoliberal and free market logics. It is also a loud call to review and strengthen PSB’s *raison d’être* to

make it better reflective of changing times and new media ecologies. Achille (1994) proposes that this endeavor will mean addressing Public Service Broadcasting's "triple crisis of identity, financing, and functioning" (cited in Raboy, 1996: 9). By this, Achille is highlighting the continual confusion public service broadcasting seems to be facing not only in definitional terms, but also in operational terms where it is forced to rely on advertising and subscription support.

The often cited adage of the piper playing to the tune of its payer has come to underline the definitional confusion that confronts public broadcasting, its potential lack of editorial independence, and ultimately its increasing irrelevance as it is forced to compete with more powerful media conglomerates with far more economic and technological resources.

This leads us to the question of how to define PSB and what its prospects are within contemporary times, especially as an important democratic and communication tool. Raboy (1996: 10) sets the tone when he argues that "independence from politics and autonomy from the market have become the leading criteria for the definition of public spaces", including broadcasting. For this to occur, efforts to make public broadcasting remain accessible and independent from both market and politics will remain foundational to its definition. Intricately woven around this vision is the question of who owns and funds such media, and more importantly, the role of such media as either a democratizing agent or a facilitator of commercial and corporate interests.

While these issues might differ in emphasis from place to place, their relevance and concerns are global. Raboy is right when he points out that

National peculiarities apart, questions concerning the structures of broadcasting are increasingly global ones. In the new broadcasting environment, the issue of

public service broadcasting can be reduced to this: what social and cultural goals attributed to broadcasting require a specially mandated, non-commercially driven organization, publicly owned, publicly funded to the extent necessary and publicly accountable (1996: 2)

He is also right in pointing out that while the diagnosis of public service broadcasting is global, the prescriptions are necessarily context-specific. What Raboy's insights underline is that while globally, public service broadcasting may be struggling to redefine its identity and justify its relevance in the twenty-first century, the factors that account for its evolution differ from context to context. This means that notwithstanding that most broadcasting systems in the 1980s were tied to their national political systems, and operated as monopolies, they have over time moved in different directions in response to both global and peculiar national forces.

While such state broadcasters in former communist and African countries focused on forging and supporting their new democracies, their counterparts in the more advanced democracies were focusing on other priorities. As a result, while the former focused on transiting its national/state broadcaster to become more representative of diverse national interests and build a unified nation, their more developed counterparts were asking different questions generated by the conditions of their respective democracies.

Apart from these differences, it is important to underline the fact that according to Raboy, three principal forces have determined the direction of public service broadcasting globally. These forces are

the explosion of channel capacity and the disappearance of audiovisual borders made possible by technology; the disintegration of the state broadcasting model with the collapse of the socialist bloc and the move toward democratization in various parts of the world; and the upsurge in market broadcasting and the

introduction of mixed broadcasting systems in countries with former public service monopolies (Raboy, 1996: 3).

Needless to say these three factors have exerted different pressures on various state/national broadcasting monopolies, redefining them differently and assigning them with different roles. It is for this reason that a state broadcaster in Ghana mandated to operate within a new democratic and media ecology could both share and differ significantly from its South African or Nigerian counterpart. Fleshing out some of these global and national differences, the next section focuses on what about the media and public service broadcasting constitutes the problem of this study within the Ghanaian sociopolitical context, and subsequently, why the research questions the study seeks to address are important both for the institution under study, and as a crucial contributor to the debate to redefine public service broadcasting as a democratic tool.

The study problem and objectives

Questions about media ownership, access, funding and democratizing communication are contested all over the world (Curran, 2005; Herman and Chomsky, 1989; McChesney, 1999; 2008; Schiller, 1982; 1996;). This is due largely to the realization that the nature of the roles media play is not only dependent on what society assigns them but also on who owns, controls and funds them (Ansah, 1985, 1994; McQuail, 1997; Murdock & Golding, 2005; Raboy, 1995). As Raboy has aptly argued, while the problems confronting media and public service broadcasting in particular are global in nature, their prescriptions are often context-specific and vary from one society to another.

In contextualizing these relationships on the African continent, Ansah (1994: 28) strikes an important chord when he posits that

if the march towards our *second independence* is to succeed, and give us access to all that modern communication technology can offer so that we can ‘receive and impart information by any media regardless of frontiers’, then we should closely examine how to democratize access to the resources and possibilities offered by modern mass communication technology (emphasis in original).

In Africa, the critical problematic of state-public media relations is the extent to which the ‘public’ in public service has traditionally been defined by the political elite instead of media managers and practitioners. Public and the state have often been conflated resulting in privileged voices, mostly political elites and their hirelings having unfettered and disproportionate access to state owned media. “Public service” which in the case of the media connotes editorial independence from both political and economic influences, has come to mean the dutiful execution of the agenda of the political elite and the state.

Although lately, industry and economic power brokers have become strong players due to their growing influence, public service/state-owned and run media even after independence, have tended to be wired to function as “cheerleaders” of the political and economic elites. This propensity has deepened in the wake of larger media freedoms that have resulted in known political figures owning a chain of media businesses. The concern is often that such cross media ownership, sometimes converged, could constrict access especially for minorities and opponents, thereby affecting the openness and quality of national discourse.

It is within this context of public broadcasting’s traditionally close attachment to political power, and its penchant to be put to the service of the elite that this study uses Ghana’s “state-owned” Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) as its case study. Within a new

democratic space and plural media ecology, it problematizes public service as GBC's capacity to forge and maintain its editorial independence from political and economic capture by staying neutral in its editorial choices, and publicly relevant by the quality and impact of the programs it mounts. This is foundational to this study's central question of how GBC, one of "the state-owned media" (1992 Constitution of Ghana) interprets and executes its constitutionally stipulated public service role within Ghana's wider social, legal and democratic regime.

The Fourth Ghanaian Republican Constitution did not only place multi-party elections as the cornerstone of democracy, it also opened up the country's communicative space and established Parliament and an independent judiciary as important national institutions. Liberalism was to be achieved in both political and economic terms: multi-party elections and rule of law represented the former, while the latter was marked by an economy that was largely deregulated, subject to demand and supply, and integrated into the global market.

The concomitant freedoms that followed a competitive, liberal market economy and a multi-party representative democracy had implications for state institutions, including the media, by forcing former media monopolies to compete within such markets. In more specific terms, how GBC as a result redefined its mandate and institutional complexion as it negotiated its transition from state to public broadcasting within the new democratic and market economy assumes critical significance. This central concern is expressed in such issues as whether GBC's ownership and subsequent funding enables it to perform its democratic function of informing, educating and

entertaining the citizen within a deregulated media and market regime.

This study will accordingly be guided by the following research objectives:

1. To examine how the “new” Ghana Broadcasting Corporation is rebranding and situating itself within the new media ecology;
2. To gauge the extent to which GBC’s readjustment is facilitated or stalled by state legislation and policy as well as its internal institutional practices; and
3. To investigate the extent to which the new GBC is forging and maintaining the most vital part of its public service mandate: its editorial independence.

The above objectives seek to highlight how GBC positions itself within Ghana’s liberal democracy by looking out for moments when such responses result in changes in its institutional practices, especially its efforts to achieve editorial independence, cultural relevance and program diversity. It is with the above objectives in mind that I pose the following research questions.

Research questions

The study’s research questions will focus on three broad concerns that relate to GBC as a state-owned broadcaster transiting to become a public broadcaster. GBC’s capacity to stay editorially independent from both government and economic interests under such circumstances could be interpreted as an effort to achieve its constitutional public service mandate. How its funding regime affects this imperative sits at the heart of its capacity to distance itself from vested interests and represent minority groups through

fair access and diverse programming. In trying to distill how GBC has fared so far in this quest, I am guided by the following research questions:

1. What policies and laws (regulatory, technical, etc.) have been promulgated to guide GBC in its operations as a public service broadcaster?

2. In what way(s) does its ownership type and funding model impact its editorial independence and institutional operations?

3. In what ways, if at all, is GBC reorienting its preexisting journalistic and institutional practices to reflect its public service vision as stipulated in the 1992 Ghana Constitution and other legislations?

These questions are important not only because they probe into what is legally acceptable for a media institution to do to meet its public service mandate, but also because they highlight how such a media institution conceptualizes its “public” as well as what practices it adopts to reflect it. Its funding model, organizational and editorial choices are some of the practices Murdock and Golding (2005) highlight when they point out that “different ways of financing and organizing cultural production have traceable consequences for the range of discourses, representations and communicative resources in the public domain” (Murdock and Golding, 2005: 60). For a public broadcaster, its capacity to uphold its mandate is ultimately judged by its editorial independence even as it is forced to compete with others for resources within a liberal market place. The central question of this study, therefore, is how successfully GBC, and for that matter any public service broadcaster, can fulfill its given mandate, considering the economic and political logics a liberal, democratic environment imposes on it.

Theoretical and methodological choices

Because what constitutes public interest has traditionally been defined and managed by the political elite especially in new and emerging democracies, the centrality of government and the possibility of its continual control of such media are crucial to its study. How power is conceptualized and exercised by the media, and by the political and economic interests, is, therefore, are foundational to how the public in public service media is understood and operationalized. Critical Political Economy (CPE) which isolates the interactions between the state, market and the individual as well as how economic and political resources affect their interaction provides the theoretical lens with which to interrogate this study's questions.

Critical Political Economy speaks naturally to the questions of this study because it highlights legislation as a highly contested activity often favoring those with access to political and economic power (McChesney, 1999, 2007; Wasko, 2010). CPE of the media, therefore, tends to focus on the relations of the larger media organization with its external stakeholders including the state (such as its legislation regime) and the economic systems that support it. For CPE, therefore, the media is a social and democratic tool whose successful use calls for constant interactions, even struggles, between the public and those with access to political and economic resources. Because of its emphasis on achieving social change, the standpoint of CPE is often that of the ordinary individual whose lack of power often positions him or her in a disadvantageous position within a well-oiled corporate and commercially run system, including the media.

It is for this reason that the resultant institutional politics embedded in the operations of media provide another theoretical filter for this study. Critical political

economy of media institutions and practices, therefore, focuses on the larger media institution and its relations with its external pressures as well as the politics that govern its internal resource collection and allocation. It is this philosophical standpoint that aligns CPE with Institutional Ethnography (IE) which is my methodological tool for this study.

Described as “a sociology of people” (Smith, 2004), IE outlines a persuasive way of studying the larger institution through close engagement with workers, texts and practices. IE proposes close onsite observation that creates opportunities for the larger institution to be defined and studied as a series of decisions and practices, created and regulated by institutional texts and speech. Critical Discourse Analysis and Institutional Ethnography provide me with the critical tools to both collect the relevant institutional and personal data, as well as analyze them within the larger research questions of how editorial and operational “power” is conceptualized and activated by media workers and their stakeholders. Interviews, (participant) observations, textual and qualitative analysis of institutional data and transcribed interviews constituted the main tools of data gathering towards this end.

Significance of study

Although there is a growth in the literature that focuses on media and democratization in Ghana (Ansah, 1985, 1986; 1994; Gadzekpo, 1996; Tettey, 2001, 2003, 2004; 2008, Amoakohene, 2010) there is a disproportionate focus on radio, print and more recently, the World Wide Web (Tettey, 2009). There seems to be a yawning gap in the literature about television in Ghana and the political economy of public

broadcasting in particular. As the global debate continues to heat up about the future role of public broadcasting within the neoliberal regime, this work, hopefully, will provide some insight and set the minds of both policy makers and practitioners thinking about the extent to which GBC has performed its role as an independent, public broadcaster in Ghana's new democratic dispensation.

This is an important social duty considering the paradox of how democratic culture grows anemic as communication spaces explode through technological advancements. These asymmetries, particularly acute in sub Saharan Africa (Berger, 2009) make the issue of the type and role of public media more important than ever before. In the more specific case of Ghana, this study hopes to make a case against the ever increasing litany of voices that seem to be pushing for the sale and privatization of state owned media, arguing that such calls are at best uninformed and at worst, a deliberate effort by such private interests to take over state assets for private, commercial uses under the erroneous assumption that commercialism will provide public service through demand and supply.

As Ghana prepares to enact its decade old Broadcasting Bill into law, and its parliament passes a law to resume the collection of a compulsory television license (2015), the debate about how to fund the GBC, and whether or not such a funding regime would guarantee its public service performance continues to rage within the Ghanaian public sphere. This study should therefore be seen as playing a contributory role to that debate in the more specific context of Ghana while seeking to resonate with other African countries with both similar and dissimilar PSB histories. This study's importance is in its capacity to speak directly to these questions.

Outline of study

This introductory chapter is followed by a review of the empirical literature, laying out in detail some of the prevailing arguments about the evolution of Public Service Broadcasting, from its inception to contemporary times. The chapter traces PSB as an ethos, underlining its normative role and makes an argument for why it is under pressure to reform in contemporary times. It isolates some of PSB's core issues such as who owns and funds it, as well as how technology, convergence and corporate capital exert pressure on its mandate to be socially representative and all inclusive. In outlining the key directions that public service broadcasting is taking in various regions of the world, the objective is to provide some comparative case studies against which the African and Ghanaian cases could be analyzed.

“Chapter Three” shifts focus from PSB and its evolution from the global to the regional. It focuses on the evolution of Africa's former state-owned and run broadcasting into PSB, situating them as instruments of right to free expression and, therefore, efforts to deepen Africa's democratic frontiers. The chapter argues that although public broadcasting could normatively be designated as democratic space, specific sociopolitical and economic factors translate the space in various and very specific ways. The chapter ends with a short history of state/public service broadcasting in Ghana, underlining some of the reasons that predispose it to government and state interference, and its efforts to redefine itself to be editorially and operationally relevant in the face of competition and neoliberal pressures.

“Chapter Four” focuses on the theoretical framework for the study. Using Critical Political Economy and Institutional Politics of media as theoretical approaches, it

interrogates the delicate balance the media as an institution is forced to navigate.

Typically, it navigates between such contending forces as the neoliberal logic of the market, and the political forces of the state, including civil society organizations and professional bodies. The twin concerns of this chapter are to use CPE as a theoretical lens to explore the politics that shape public broadcasting's operations and how they influence its capacity to remain faithful to its institutional mandate to be all inclusive in access, and diverse in its programming.

The fifth chapter, which is devoted to methodology, fleshes out Institutional Ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis as approaches, and speaks to how they inform the design of the study: data collection methods and protocols; and data analysis methods. The concluding section outlines the limitations of the study. The study's findings and analysis constitute chapters six and seven. "Chapter Six" focuses on findings, analyzes and discusses data collected. It focuses more substantially on the question of Legislation/policy and their possible impacts on GBC's editorial practices and general operations.

"Chapter Seven" discusses GBC's operational capacities and funding models more specifically. It fleshes out ways in which its human, technological and economic resources (funding) undermine or put GBC in good stead to fulfill its operational mandate. The chapter rounds up with GBC's response to its funding challenges and their likely impact on its PS mandate.

Chapter eight draws conclusions and makes operational and editorial recommendations for GBC going forward. It also devotes some time to outlining possible areas for future inquiry.

Chapter Two

The evolution of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) from World War 1 to contemporary times

Introduction

The concerns of most western countries after the Second World War went beyond rebuilding shattered economies to consolidating liberal democratic systems where the citizen's rights were respected and protected. Coming out of a war which had broken economies and also suppressed the rights of citizens, protecting the citizen's rights against the State's coercive and dictatorial powers became central to governance and the media's watchdog role was foundational to the realization of this vision. The point was made that the citizen's right to participate in democratic governance was better enhanced if (s)he had access to balanced information as of right. In Britain and in most parts of continental Europe, this right did not only involve expanding the right to vote to include hitherto disenfranchised voters, but also meant culturally integrating the ordinary citizen into the national fabric of society (Arnold, 1877, cited in Scannell, 1991).

Social spaces such as coffee shops where citizens could meet and engage with one another came to represent both an ideal, and the practice of expressing citizenship through such interactions. The public sphere as an ideal is conceptualized as a communicative space where social actors could meet without restrictions as equals and, through rational, critical debate, build consensus among themselves on matters of governance (Habermas, 1972). This public sphere ideal is characterized by face-to-face, unmediated interaction between social agents, and places premium on critical, rational debate as a means of engagement. However, over time, the spatially bounded nature of

the public sphere was disrupted by technology and the process of interaction became mediated. Upon its invention, radio was conceptualized as a public service and, therefore, assumed the role of mediating among such former spatially-bounded interactants.

It was perceived that in pursuit of these social objectives, public service broadcasting through its programming, was best equipped to inform and educate its national audience in order for them to actively and efficiently perform this democratic right to vote and subsequently partake in governance. The “definitional trinity of most public broadcasting organizations to inform, educate and entertain” their audiences rested on these normative social roles at the time (Tracey, 1996: 162). As Scannell (1996) outlines in his social history of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), this task to public service came out of a convergence of factors, some of which preceded the World War two period.

One of them was the birth of the technology of radio in the 1920s and the sociopolitical and economic conditions that gave birth to it. At the introduction of radio, the state run Post Office was instrumental in the early definition of broadcasting. In addition to providing broadcasting licenses to broadcasting operators, it had to arbitrate between rival interests in the British radio industry where radio manufacturers cum operators had seen the commercial value of the new technology. Determined to “avoid the chaos that had arisen from unrestrained broadcasting in the United States” (Scannell, 1991: 5), the British Broadcasting Company was formed first as a monopoly, and secondly as a means of ensuring some form of state control over broadcasting. Relations at this initial stage were between the manufacturers of radio who were interested in the commercial side of the technology, the post office which regulated licenses of such

technology, and the newspapers who saw the “program monopoly” status of the British Broadcasting Company as harmful to their circulation.

Thus, right from the beginning, the operators who also manufactured the radio receiving sets became important players for the control of broadcasting at the time (McChesney, 1999; Raboy, 1996; Scannell, 1991, 19956). The ensuing battle for control led the Post Office in 1923 to set up the Sir Frederick Sykes Committee to deal with the confusion that had arisen “over the collection and distribution of licenses and royalties”, as well as consider the future of broadcasting (Scannell, 1991: 6). The Sykes Committee argued that broadcasting should be seen as a “public utility” and the “wavebands available in any country be considered as a public property” (6). In addition, due to “its cheapness and convenience” the committee saw the social and political benefits of radio and recommended that its operations as “a national service” were so important that “it ought not to be an unrestricted commercial monopoly” (6).

In advocating an indirect form of control over broadcasting through licenses from the Post Office, the report rejected direct *government* control over broadcasting and instead, placed “the control of such a potential power over public opinion and the life of the nation [...] with *the state*” (6, emphasis added). It is from these happenings that Scannell (1991) rightly argues “the definition of broadcasting as a public utility to be developed as a national service in the public interest came from the state” (6).

In underlining the historical factors that defined public broadcasting in Britain, I am guided not only by the fact that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) that it gave birth to is considered by many as the service closest to the public service ideal, but also the fact that this variant of broadcasting served as a model for most British colonies

in Africa. By tracing such historical forces and their impact on public service broadcasting in Britain, therefore, I seek to draw attention to the connections that have traditionally existed between broadcasting and the socioeconomic and political factors that have defined its formation and social role, as well as its influences on later democracies, such as in Africa.

But the struggles to define and make radio broadcasting a public good was global and took similar forms in other parts of the world. In North America, McChesney (1999) recounts the running battles that occurred between the Canadian Radio League, economic interests such as the Canadian Pacific Railway, and state control. In the United States, a broadcasting reform lobby was already in place challenging the overly commercial nature of radio broadcasting. Unlike the British who had tried to avoid the “chaos” of the American broadcasting system by establishing the BBC, the American broadcasting system of the 1920s was commercially run. As McChesney (1999) puts it, “with the support of the newly established Federal Radio Commission, the US airwaves were effectively turned over to NBC and CBS and their advertisers” (230) and by 1933, [US commercial broadcasting] “had sprang from nonexistence to full maturity” (231).

The NBC and other powerful American stations in Montreal and Toronto had established relations with the CBC which was broadcasting their content in Canada. In view of this, Canada had to quickly decide whether to “have Canadian independence in radio broadcasting or to become dependent upon sources in the United States” (231). The Aird Commission,¹ set up in 1928 to determine the direction of broadcasting for Canada

¹ “In December 1928 the Canadian government appointed a royal commission to make a thorough study of broadcasting and report to the House of Commons on the best system for Canada to adopt” (McChesney, 1999: 231). In the spring of 1932, Sir John Aird, its

strongly recommended “Canada adopt a cross between the BBC and the German public service, which (unlike the British) gave the provinces greater control over broadcasting” (231). The expectation was that “commercial advertising would be severely restricted, perhaps even eliminated; the broadcasting service would be supported by license fees, as in Britain” (231). Notwithstanding the fact that the Aird Commission’s recommendations received continuous resistance from some economic interests championed by the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Canadian Parliament finally approved the “complete nationalization of broadcasting with the elimination of direct advertising” (McChesney, 1999: 238).

The lessons these historical events from Britain, Canada and the US teach us is that as far back as prior to the Second World War, the power to define and control broadcasting has historically been a fiercely contested battle between those who tended to see the medium as serving a public good (such as Graham Spry and John Dewey) and those who saw it as any other product subject to the market dictates of demand and supply. More importantly, the history of broadcasting “places the fight for public service broadcasting necessarily in the broader context of the fight for a more social democratic society” (McChesney, 1999: 239).

Even in comparatively advanced democracies, the outcome of these continual rifts between various broadcasting interests soon gave birth to a recognizable broadcasting form, albeit with minor differences dictated by specific political, social and economic conditions. In most cases, a state owned and run broadcaster operated as a monopoly,

chairman testified in front of the Canadian House of Commons that “[T]he broadcasting medium in Canada should be protected from being reduced to the level of commercial exploitation as it had been reduced in a neighboring country” (237).

often funded by direct or indirect licensing and mandated by law to serve all members of the nation-state (Scannell, 1991, 1995).

Under this arrangement, such a broadcaster operated with the understanding that it should be geographically accessible to all within the nation-state as well as generate programs that cater for the needs of all, especially minorities. If such a broadcaster is mandated through its programs to provide a universal service for the citizens of its nation-state, and reflect their diversity, it is anchored on the principle that such a broadcaster should be accountable to those who fund it: the people. This philosophy underpinned broadcasting as a “national service to be operated on a national scale by a single national authority” (BBC, 1933: 14, cited in Scannell, 1991: 15).

In the opinion of Raboy (1996), this understanding of public service broadcasting as a state- owned and run monopoly, and serving the general public through universal programming began to change from the late 1960s to late 1990s. He points out that three overlapping factors accounted for these changes. They include

(1) The explosion of channel capacity and the disappearance of audiovisual borders made possible by technology; (2) the disintegration of the state broadcasting model with the collapse of the socialist bloc and the move toward democratization in various parts of the world; (3) and the upsurge in market broadcasting and the introduction of mixed broadcasting systems in countries with former public service monopolies (Raboy, 1996: 3).

Scannell’s reference to “national, popular and pluralistic” as the three stages which define the trajectory of PSB in Britain and parts of Europe resonate with these factors that Raboy outlines in the sense that they highlight how these factors impacted upon PSB, as well as how it reacted to these pressures. In the remainder of the chapter, I focus on the political, economic and technological factors that affected, and still affect the raison

d'être, mandate and operations of PSB, and the issues that such pressures raise for the continual relevance of PSB globally.

The nature and impact of political forces on PSB as a nation builder

After World War two, the democratic right to choose was not only political, but also economic and even social. The immediate concerns of states after the devastation of the war was to first and foremost, rebuild their shattered infrastructure and economies, restore the faith of the electorate in central government once again, and to institute a legal regime that will ensure that such wars were avoided in the future. The effort to rebuild shattered nation-states naturally placed central governments in the centre of the rebuilding effort. But while efforts to restore the state and its institutions were ongoing, lessons learnt from the war period also necessitated a revision of the individual's role in society. All over the world, calls for individual rights to be entrenched in new national constitutions were viewed as an effective way of minimizing the coercive state apparatus as was seen during the world wars.

These rights went beyond the right to vote and be part of the decision making process of such democracies. It also meant the rights to assembly, information, and free expression, were considered as crucial pillars that supported such democratic vision of living in dignity. While rebuilding efforts were ongoing at the national levels, the United Nations was also putting in place treatise at the global level to ensure that such guarantees were respected amongst its member states. To this end, the United Nations encouraged good governance, transparent and accountable governance amongst its members, and information and communication were considered as important tools for the

achievement of this democratic goal globally. But more importantly, this reorientation in the individual-state relations highlighted a developmental role for public service broadcasting.

McChesney (1999) rightly draws the links between these rights when he pointed out that like universal adult suffrage was to multiparty politics and democracy, so was public service broadcasting to social and economic development at the time. The quest to build “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983) of the nation-state, as well as the creation of representative democracy meant that government and its institutions had become complex in nature and vast in scope. In addition to being central to the life of the citizen in the nation state, the complexities of governance required a central, mediated interface between the people and their representatives. This mediated space was therefore conceptualized as a universally accessible communicative space to be placed to the benefit and use of the general public, and its interests.

Viewed as a political product, therefore, the “public service” epitaph of broadcasting served on the one hand as an adjective, qualifying the aspirations of broadcasting at the time, while on the other, underlining the central role of the public in its operations. Conceptualized as a political tool, public service broadcasting as this kind of broadcasting came to be known, was intended to serve a political purpose: create a communicative space that is universally accessible to all the members of the nation-state, engender free and rational interaction between the people and their representatives in their collective effort at nation building.

Understood as such, public service broadcasting came to be seen as an important democratic tool and institution that required the full involvement of the entire citizenry of

the nation-state. Its political objective was to serve as the cement of the nation, forge nationhood and support the developmental efforts of governments while holding those in government accountable to the people.

It is for these reasons that all over the world, central governments had historically regulated the licensing and operations of broadcasting from its inception. Because of the political role it was meant to play, many earlier proponents, such as Dewey and Aird called for the regulation of the frequency spectrum of broadcasting as a public good, to be put to the collective and noncommercial use of all. In the opinion of Van Cuilenberg and McQuail (2003), media policy between the Second World War and 1990 was “dominated by sociopolitical rather than economic or national strategic concerns [...] the ideal of public service broadcasting was at its height, notably in Western Europe” (2003: 181).

Consequent to this, Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) was characterized as a service for all members of the nation state and to be funded by them through levied licenses. On their part, PSB was mandated to be universal, both in geographical reach and access to such members of the nation state, as well as generate programs that reflect the diversity of opinions and interests within the nation-state. Such an expectation called for a certain style of journalism practice that was neutral in its orientation, objective in its fact-finding and coverage, and independent of both government and other personal and economic interests.

Flowing from these expectations, the public service ethos of broadcasting, especially as a democratic tool came to be identified by such characteristics as being (1) universally accessible geographically; (2) have a universal appeal (general tastes and interests); (3) pay particular attention to minorities; and (4) contribute to a sense of

national identity and community. It was also expected to (5) distance itself from vested interests; (6) benefit from direct funding and universality of payment; (7) compete in good programming rather than for numbers; and (8), operate with guidelines that liberate rather than restrict programme makers (BRU, cited in Raboy, 1996:6)². McChesney's (1999) definition of PSB is largely in sync with these tenets. For him, PSB is "a system that is nonprofit and noncommercial, supported by public funds, ultimately accountable in some legally defined way to the citizenry, and aimed at providing a service to the entire population - one which does not apply commercial principles as the primary means to determine its programming" (226).

Although these definitions of PSB largely underline its normative aspirations as a social and democratic tool, it is important to bear in mind that broadcasting within more authoritarian and "nondemocratic" societies also conceptualized a different version of broadcasting. For such societies, government and the state were often conflated and the state-owned media, including broadcasting was often under the operational and editorial control of the government/party/state.

As Jakubowicz (2004), Bakadjieva (1997), Kolstova (2001) and Zhao (2003) point out, broadcasting under such Communist regimes in Poland, Russia, Bulgaria and China was firmly under the control of the government/state, and largely seen as an

² This list closely resonates with the nine points the Council of Europe outlines for PSB in Europe. The nine points could be summarized as (1) a common reference point for all members of the public; (2) a forum for broad public discussion; (3) impartial news coverage; (4) pluralistic, innovative and varied programming; (5) programming which is both of wide public interest and attentive to the needs of the minorities; (6) reflection of the different ideas and beliefs in pluriethnic and multicultural societies; (7) a diversity of national and European cultural heritage; (8) original productions by independent producers; and (9) extended viewer and listener choice by offering programs not provided by the commercial sector (Council of Europe, 1994, cited in Raboy, 1996: 7).

extension of the political elite, propagating its ideology and forging its version of statehood and good governance. It is not only Zhao (2003) who points to the use of such broadcasting media as tools of public control rather than participation. Kolstova (2001) also highlights how media workers in Russia imbibe the editorial culture of non-confrontation in their reportage and dealings with the political elite.

In addition to restricting access to the exclusion of the general public, editorial interference of government and the state often led to a type of journalism that was often “politically paralleled” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) to the narrative of state, and therefore largely seen as uncritical. From the multi-party democratic point of view, such state owned and run broadcasting could not be considered as PS since its access was limited to the elite, lacked program diversity through exclusion of minorities, and largely excluded the public in its programming except to reach them as consumers.

Since the fall of Communist Russia, Bulgaria, Poland and other societies viewed as “undemocratic” by western standards, the political landscape of such countries has changed. They have largely expanded participation in governance, liberalized their markets and opened up the media landscape to include private operators, thereby ending the monopoly of the state owned and run broadcaster. Like their Western democracy counterparts, such post-communist European countries have had to redefine the role of their state broadcasting to reflect the changing times of market liberalization, a more central role for the individual in governance, as well as situate such broadcasting monopolies as a competitor within a new media landscape. Notwithstanding the differences in how PSB was conceptualized or operated within different nation states with varying political and ideological orientations, a couple of things are still common to

the trajectory and operations of PSB in the time leading to a full blown liberal, multiparty democratic setting.

Before PSB came under attack from proponents of the market and deregulation, it was largely seen as non-commercial, acting as the national glue, and generating general interests programs that served the entire population of the nation-state, especially minorities. In simple terms, the Reithian trinity of educating, informing and entertaining its audience defined it. PSB was considered to be serving the public good, and expected to cater to the varied and diverse interests of its national audience. In the absence of competitors, it became the central public square where all the citizens of the nation-state were exposed to the same media content; the classical definition of broadcasting as generating and transmitting information from one source to many.

In order for it to be more effective and independent from government, independent statutory bodies were instituted to regulate the operations of broadcasting including the issuance of licenses and in some cases, its content. The Federal Communications Authority (FCC) in the USA, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in Canada, and the BBC became regulatory bodies that ensured that legislation for broadcasting was complied with and standards were maintained (Horwitz, 2005; Raboy, 1996). Raboy (1994) outlines the lessons the world can learn from the Canadian policy experience where the Canadian public was widely consulted, and participated in the process leading to the formulation of its broadcasting framework.

In its ideal state, PSB served as the watchdog of the political elite, exposed social ills through investigative reports and generally informed the population at large about the

workings and conduct of government. It also reflected the nation's cultural life to its audience and energized interaction among its audience, as citizens engaged in nation building and national discourse. Under the circumstances, PBS managed to address its national audience through such content as documentaries and children's, entertainment and sports programs. Notwithstanding its successes, PSB was considered to be too close to the political elite, in some cases being its lapdog and not general enough in its programming. It was critiqued in its journalism practice for being too dependent on official sources and not adequately reflecting the standpoints of the ordinary person. Besides its over reliance on such official sources, it also tended to assemble representatives from think tanks as experts during news and other current affairs, further reinforcing the narrative of the political elite and their cohorts.

Together with the perception that PSB was serving the metropolitan, blue-collar, white, adult in London rather than the entire United Kingdom (Scannell, 1996), the BBC in this instance, was seen as being too narrow and high-brow in its programming, and therefore unworthy to represent the ordinary person. The personification of this perception is best captured by Nixon who argued that the unrepresentative media pushing their individual interests do not qualify to speak on behalf of the people against politicians who the people had duly elected to represent them in governance.

But more than anything else, it was the perception of "public interest" as what the public is interested in, that is, what people are prepared to consume in the market that redefined PSB (Raboy, 2006: 294). The corollary to this thinking was the imperative to expand the communicative space through deregulation to allow private and commercial interests into broadcasting. Within the liberal market, multiparty democratic setting,

private and commercial broadcasting was being pushed as an alternative to PSB, and the logic of compulsory public funding for PSB was under constant attack.

The next section focuses on PSB not as a monopoly, licensed and regulated by the state to perform a developmental role of building national cohesion and reflecting national culture, but as one of many media operating under a liberalized, multi-party democratic regime. As Scannell (1996) rightly points out, PSB is forced to transform from being “national” in orientation from its inception to being “popular”, and ultimately, “multicultural” (29). For him, the transformations PSB is forced to undergo reflect the global setting where the boundaries of the nation-state no longer define the reach and operations of national and global broadcasting conglomerates.

PSB within a multi-party democratic system

Richeri (2004) argues that during the course of the 1980s, the ideological and cultural climate changed considerably as a result of a combination of three factors: on an individual level a "return to the private", on the economic level the ideology of competition and the company, and on the social level the crisis of the welfare state. This helped weaken the idea of public broadcasting based on its role as a service and as a cultural and social promoter and based on public financing (180).

There were calls for the state to deregulate public institutions generally, including public broadcasting (Wasburn, 1995).

This meant that the state's control over licensing broadcasting's finite frequency spectrum, as well as legislations and policies that shielded PSB from the pressures of commercial interests were under attack. The involvement of private, commercial and corporate interests in broadcasting policy marked a shift in thinking. The central question

was whether “public interest” which had all along justified state ownership and regulation of media, especially broadcasting, could not be expanded in operation to include commercial and non-state media.

Pressure to expand the media landscape to more private and commercial interests resulted in new legislation and policies from the state. Such legislation in addition to opening the media landscape to more competition, also created conditions where PSB had to compete with its commercial counterparts for survival.

No longer a state-owned and run monopoly, and catering to a more fragmented audience due to such competition, PSB’s capacity to cater to the general tastes of its national audience began to suffer. In trying to stay competitive, PSB increasingly resembled its commercial counterparts in its programming, targeting a wider market share rather than audience reach (Blumler, 1993). This shift in its orientation went beyond the necessity to create more “popular” programs rather than engaging and enlightening ones (Olof, 1996; Scannell, 1996). It also resulted in a redefinition of its audience. Increasingly, PSB was engaging its audience less and less as citizens because it was no longer mounting controversial and socially relevant programs.

As Blumler (1993, 1995) and Bagdikian (2004) show, tried and tested program formats such as entertainment and reality shows increasingly replaced investigative reports due to the effects of such deregulation on its operations. Blumler argues that as PSB was forced to cut back on children, documentary and investigative programming, it was reneging on one of the pillars that supported its mandate: to create a public space for rigorous debate and facilitate the shaping of national dialogue. Very quickly, therefore, PSB failed to be conceived as national in both programming diversity and access. It was

fast becoming like one of its counterparts on the larger media landscape, losing its *raison d'être* and its distinctive edge as the space for the formation of critical national discourse. By extension, such a shift in PSB's orientation affects its journalism and vice versa.

As McChesney (2000) points out, the journalism ethic of objectivity, fairness and balance had become an important cornerstone in American journalism by the mid-1950. This was even more so in PSB and Media, where journalists were expected to perform a crucial watchdog role of holding government accountable and unearthing wrongdoing. This is the point Curran seeks to underline when he distinguishes PS journalism from other forms. He points out that "journalists working for market media are increasingly entertainers; those working for civic media are advocates; while those in public service broadcasting are constrained by an obligation to mediate a 'balanced' perspective" (Curran, 2005: 142).

If this is the case, then Bennet (2005) and Blumler (1993) are among those who point to PSB's lack of editorial clarity within the liberal democratic setting. If the news, for instance, is becoming decontextualised and lacks a critical edge, it is because it is increasingly mimicking entertainment as a format because news managers prefer to stick to tried and tested formats (Gitlin, 1970; McChesney 2007, 2008). Bennett (2005: 137) describes this phenomenon as a "display of infotainment (consumer trends, fashion, sports, celebrity gossip), [and] sensationalism (sex, scandal and violence)," such 'soft news' is cheap to produce, and it works reasonably well for the commercial purpose of grabbing audiences and delivering them to advertisers.

By pointing out that the news lacks context, focuses on outcomes rather than processes, the spectacular rather than substance, on trivialities rather than important

events, Blumler (1993) seems to be reinforcing Bennett's observation, and arguing that Curran's earlier typology is under threat. Although commercial pressures play a contributory role to this shift in editorial practice, what I am underlining here is how the mandate to provide engaging, diverse and relevant programming gets undermined due to the type of legislation and other conditions created by the state and its political elites. The prescription that democratic society generally requires journalism to perform a rigorous "watchdog role of those in power, ferret out truth from lies, and present a wide range of informed positions on the important issues of the day" (McChesney, 2000: 25) is largely undermined by such conditions.

McLean's (2005) study of the CKCK (TV) in Regina, Canada, opens up new vistas for both the operations of media institutions, and editorial processes more specifically. Besides the corporate interference in the daily editorial choices of CKCK after it was merged with a bigger station, McLean points to cuts in editorial staff as a familiar side effect of globalization. Beats such as community news that ordinarily defines such community television stations are the first to be cut, while editorial choices of what constitutes relevant news is ceded increasingly to headquarters in faraway Toronto. For the journalists, the likely loss of jobs associated with PSB's effort to respond appropriately to a liberal, competitive, democratic setting is worsened as he/she is forced to multitask, and therefore, assume more responsibilities for the same income.

The imperative of multitasking subsequently affects the more established routine of specialization of news by reporters and creates a condition where the news is conceptualized like a "snack"; processed quickly in sound bites, without depth and served repeatedly around the clock. Clearly, such a perception of news affects the editorial

practices that support it, and in the case of PSB, undermines its capacity to provide socially relevant and politically engaging content.

But it is not only the policy and legislative regimes of the times that redefine and provide a new stimulus for PSB to respond to. As I will show in the following section, the belief that the market is a more reliable source of providing content diversity for those who want it exerted a different kind of pressure on PSB. Advances in technology is the other factor that continues to exert relentless pressure on the operations of PSB. The next section looks at the toll advances in technology have had on PSB within the new economic setting of globalization, advertising and sponsorship driven media, their consolidations and mergers, all within the backdrop of the decline of the nation state's power to regulate the fast changing media landscape.

The deregulated market and its impact on the mandate and operations of PSB

Multiparty democracy did not only ensure the right to vote, it also brought, in its wake, the right of the individual to own and dispose of property as he/she deems fit, and an unregulated market subject to very minimal control from the state. In addition to the individual's right to own and dispose of property, this liberalism meant that the state was expected to withdraw direct involvement in the operations of public services such as broadcasting. Such withdrawal was not limited to issues such as broadcasting regulation. It also included withdrawal of public funds for other public institutions including broadcasting, and subjected their operations to the laws of supply and demand.

The new economic regime of the market called for a redefinition of the public interest to mean what the public wanted and was willing to pay for, rather than what was

good for the public and the collective. This shift in emphasis from the collective represented by the state, to privileging individual rights within an unregulated market meant a complete shift in how PSB and other state institutions were to be perceived. Such thinking articulated the market and its workings as an alternative to the monopoly of PSB as state owned and run organization, funded through public license.

This orientation, coupled with calls on the state to deregulate broadcasting licensing led to “the upsurge in market broadcasting and the introduction of mixed broadcasting systems in countries with former public service monopolies” (Raboy, 1996: 3). Private, corporate and commercial interests owned media including broadcasting, and more importantly, operated them for purely commercial benefits. This phenomenon, according to van Cuilenberg and McQuail (2003), marks the final stage of communication policy evolution which occurred after 1990; characterized by “governments retreating from regulation where it interferes with market development and giving more priority to economic over socio-cultural and political welfare” (198).

This stage which is characterized by deregulation and convergence (technological and economic), also shows the highest instances of concentration of media ownership, the rise of media empires and the consolidation of corporate ownership (Bagdikian, 2004). Critics of PSB had positioned the market as a more efficient means of meeting the public’s needs, public funding for PSB as unfair, and deregulation as a more equitable means of ensuring private participation in media organization.

Run as businesses for profit making, such media conglomerates often expanded in size and operations from single media interests to a chain of other interests. Such vertical expansion enabled media interests to expand their operations to the point of owning the

entire media process from production of media content through its transmission to distribution. But as Bagdikian (2004) demonstrates, horizontal media expansions also make it possible for non-media institutions with huge capital outlays to own media and bank roll their operations, a point which Herman and Chomsky (1988) had earlier argued.

In outlining their propaganda model, Herman and Chomsky identified “size, ownership and profit orientation of the media” (13) as one of the principal filters that affect both the editorial output and operational conduct of such media. Their point is that due to their ownership type, their size and profit orientation, such media institutions which are often integral to transnational, corporate capital and politics, possess the capacity to formulate and frame US foreign policy issues in a manner that aligns with the interests of its corporate owners and their political agents.

Although Herman and Chomsky’s work has since been critiqued for focusing exclusively on news and being too purposive to the point of being self-serving (Martin and Knight, 1997; Rai, 1995), the overarching argument of how consent is manufactured by mainstream media, due to its ownership type and size resonates with Murdock and Golding’s (1973) categorization of “the consensus”³ that is often produced by news media in the United Kingdom. Their various observations underline the central role ownership and media size could have not only on content, but also its impact of either constricting or opening up the communication space.

³ “The Consensus” meant for Murdoch and Golding (1973) the normal framework of news that (1) ignored, condemned, or politically trivialized strikes and other challenges from below; (2) defined the limits of debate as “those of the existing predominant political spectrum” (229); (3) emphasized the adequacy of existing channels for grievance negotiation; (4) covered international news mostly within the confines of the former Empire; (5) promulgated a notion of Britain as a healthy meritocracy; and (6) projected as a given that the public and media firms’ values and priorities were one and the same” (228-30, cited in Downing, 2011” 150).

The issue of diversity is central to the question of how media ownership impinges on the media product and, ultimately, quality of democratic access. When Bagdikian (2004) argues in his seminal work that although there are thousands of companies involved in the media business, the number of corporations that control half or more of the broadcasting, newspaper, and film industries in the USA has fallen from 50 in 1984 to 23 in 1990, to just 5 in 2004, he was not merely underlining the inherent dangers in such oligopolistic media ownership; he was drawing attention also to its possible effects on media content through lack of diversity.

McChesney (2001) echoes this claim from his observation that

as at 2004, the global media market was dominated by as few as seven giant corporations that have grown at astonishing speed into vertically and horizontally integrated behemoths: Disney, (AOL) Time Warner, Sony, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi Universal, and Bertelsmann (cited in Bennet, 2004: 131).

Kunz's (2007) data is similar. He concludes that "Six conglomerates- Disney, NBC Universal, News Corp., Sony, Time Warner, and Viacom- owned all of the major broadcasts networks and motion picture studios at the start of 2005" (219).

Others such as Croteau and Hoynes, (2004) and Taras (2001) have argued along similar lines that the creation of such behemoths is a result of "the relaxation of media concentration rules and the communication and media industries' pursuit of greater vertical and horizontal integration in the belief that doing so will help them to realize significant economies of scale and scope" (Wimseck, 2008: 35). Such mergers, they argue, do not only result in the consolidation of all the factors of media production and their distribution, a negation of the hitherto separation between the producer, product and its delivery; it also creates a situation where non media organizations own and control

media as part of their Conglomerates (van Cuilberg and Saal, 1993).

Bagdikian's (2004) apt example of how a typical consolidation plays out deserves to be cited in full. He observes that

A magazine owned by the company selects or commissions an article that is suitable for later transformation into a television series on a network owned by the company; then it becomes a screenplay for a movie studio owned by the company, with the movie soundtrack sung by a vocalist made popular by feature articles in the company-owned radio stations, after which the songs become popular in a record label owned by the company and so on, with reruns on company cable systems and rentals of its videocassettes all over the world (2004: 243).

This is a stark reminder of the effect owning all the production, transmission and distribution facets of media content could have on product diversity, democratic access, and ultimately, a more equitable communicative space. Using Canada and America as their settings, Skinner et al. (2005) focus on one such concentration of ownership in the case of CanWest Global and how such concentration enabled it wield significant control over the Canadian media market as a result of the political muscle it acquired. For Skinner et al., the CanWest example is telling because it is "illustrative of trends in vertical integration, wherein a firm in one industry acquires a subsidiary in another stage of the same industry [...as well as] cross-media ownership trends wherein a firm in one media industry acquires a firm from another industry" (108).

In the case of the former, CanWest, owned by Asper and his family, acquired "Mobile Video Production Inc, a firm that provides mobile production facilities for sporting, entertainment, and news events" while the latter is illustrated by CanWest's "acquisition of newspapers" (108). Skinner et al. point out that the direct consequence of such "media concentration, and convergence, rather than expanding the range of media the public receives, restrict the access available to diverse voices, [muting] community

and regional news and viewpoints, [and erasing] the autonomy of local community content" (109).

Bagdikian (2004), McChesney (2000), Schiller (1982) and Wimseck (2008) are among those who have eloquently argued that the question of diversity is central to the democratic project because conglomerates, through their mergers and oligopolies, make entry into the media market substantially high rendering access supremely difficult for alternative, local and low income media organizations to compete. The consequent fusion of editorial and business interests and the resultant constriction of divergent voices in a given media market is the focus of McLean (2005) when he studies the effects of convergence on the editorial practices of a television newsroom in Regina, Canada.

However, as Kunz (2007) eloquently argues, the dangers inherent in such consolidation reside in the possible loss of editorial integrity in the interest of the bigger institutional profit-making vision, especially in the case of horizontal consolidation. The loss of local content and voices become the direct consequence of such consolidation (McClean, 2005; Kunz, 2007). Perhaps even more important is the argument that such consolidations create oligopolies in the various markets which do not only collaborate among themselves, but also succeed in raising the stakes to such a level as to make it impossible for smaller, local, alternative and independent media to enter the media market and effectively compete. For Turner (2004), this phenomenon results in a “triple blight” - the loss of quality, loss of localism and loss of democratic debate” (cited in Kunz, 2007: 234).

Although McLean (2005), like Rodriguez (2003), was concentrating on the effects of consolidation and mergers on the editorial practices of a television newsroom, the

overriding ambit under which their observations are situated are the effects of media concentration on the production, distribution and consumption of media content, as well as on the democratic enterprise. Taras (1999) fears such a phenomenon will result in “individual media, independent voices, and local and national expressions ... [getting] submerged - drowned in a deadly sea of conformity” (61) because consolidated corporations “can guarantee themselves a captive audience” due to their ownership of “both the production houses and distributors of media images” (Hoynes, 1994: 30). Turner (2004) puts it even more starkly thus; “the only way for media companies to survive is to own everything up and down the media chain...Big media today wants to own the faucet, pipeline, water, and the reservoir. The rain clouds come next” (cited in Kunz 2007: 224). Perhaps McKnight’s account of Rupert Murdoch and his Fox media empire’s political and social influence serve as a telling coda to the orchestra of global concentration and its clear neoliberal instrumentation.

Bennett (2004) positions the entire global, concentrated media ownership and its transnational expansion rationale within a new frame when he argues that undue emphasis on such correlation fails to account for the existence of equally powerful, albeit subtle localized forces. Using the regime model to clarify his claim, Bennett argues that while there could be merit in Schiller’s description of transnational media organizations’ mindset as “imperial in aid of territorial conquest”, such a conclusion does not account for the rise in civic culture and alternative localized voices in their struggles for self-identity and agendas across local, national and transnational spaces. While admitting that Bennett’s prescription sounds a cautious note to the tendency of seeing consolidation and its agents as a monolith, he also reechoes the homogenizing potential such a trend could

have on the production, distribution and consumption of media content. At the heart of this regime sits advertising, sponsorship and corporate capital.

Once again it is Bagdikian (2004) who sets the tone with the extent to which such media mergers are supported by corporate funding such as bank loans and concessions, cross funding from more profitable entities of the conglomerate, advertising, sponsorship and merchandise sales. The metaphor of the “payer of the piper calling the tune” has often been used to drum home this possible correlation between the advertiser and his/her imprints on the symbolic content (s)he funds (McChesney, 1999; Turrow, 1997).

If public levy by all users is considered the ideal funding type for public service broadcasting (Garnham, 1983; Scannell, 1996), it is because the expectation was that such a general source of funding will ensure editorial independence by guaranteeing regular income flow and, ultimately, insulate it from political and economic control. Underpinning this preference of funding, needless to say, is the recognition that the source of funding- advertising, sponsorship, corporate underwriting- could influence the type of media content produced. It is for this reason that Blumler (1982) refers to advertising as a “vulnerable value” and an “implacable foe” in the pursuit of PSB’s ethos; and cautions against its insidious effects on the production of content (Altschull, 1995; Croteau and Hoynes, 2006; Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

The general relationship between the advertiser, program and audience amounted to the sponsor of the program overtly bringing him/herself to the attention of an audience guaranteed by the media organization at the point of transmitting the funded media content. The advertiser, therefore, was seen as someone whose quest for publicity translated into influencing the production of the media content in such a manner as to

create an atmosphere conducive for the generous reception of his/her message. The general thinking of an advertiser publicizing his/her message through funded programs aired to a captive audience held sway until Smythe (1972) redefined the relationship between the advertiser and the audience.

Smythe's argument was that advertising was more an attempt to deliver the audience to the advertiser through the programs he/she sponsored with the hope that purchases will follow such publicity. In this paradigm, Smythe was not only underlining that audience had become a commodity in the new arrangement; he was also arguing that the audience in consuming the "free lunch", was actively working at no cost for the benefit of the advertiser.

This was an important shift in conceptualizing the relations between the program's production, transmission and consumption. The significance of Smythe's review of the advertiser-audience relations first and importantly, underline the audience as a commodity to be pursued by the advertiser. Additionally, it also allowed for a more nuanced evaluation of the conditions under which audiences consumed media content as well as loosen the public-advertising supported media binary.

This binary of whether the marketplace of ideas is best achieved through advertising supported media, or public media is foundational to the funding question. The known argument that the market is the best provider of program diversity for the audience fueled the rationale for advertising as a central source of funding media content (Owen, 2001). Over time, a multichannel media environment largely brought about by new technology, corporate consolidation and convergence, has resulted in a shift in thinking and the recognition that both positions –advertising and licenses- need not be

mutually exclusive. Different mixes of funding, therefore, occur on the advertising-license continuum.

When McChesney (1999) argues that “public service broadcasting [in America] has officially become nonprofit, although it is no longer noncommercial”, he was drawing attention to the delicate balances that even public broadcasting has had to pull to survive in a multichannel media environment. The status of being officially nonprofit or (non) commercial gains meaning largely to the extent such media’s funding regime is likely to impact its program type, range, quality and its overall editorial independence. If Blumler’s (1993) observation is true that “broadcasting systems which are most dependent on advertising also schedule the narrowest range of programming” (411), then one can make a strong case for lack of program diversity as a more than likely consequence of funding from advertising and sponsorship.

Both Bagdikain (2004) and Kunz (2007) proffer sufficient evidence to ground their analysis that consolidation has a telling effect on the production, transmission and consumption of media content due largely to the funding and corporate practices of such media. Kunz (2007) shows that the impact of “horizontal integration is evidenced in the market share of six conglomerates, which averaged ... over 90 percent in 2003” (219). With such command over reach due to volume of subscription, it is not surprising that dollars spent to advertise on cable television alone at the local and national levels in the United States of America had increased from “just under \$400 million in 1983 to just under \$20 billion in 2004” (185).

The point that bigger conglomerates stand a far better chance of making deals with banks and stocks because of their size and credibility as well as the interconnection

between their board members underline the extent to which big media organizations have become an integral part of transnational corporate business conglomerates. In addition to these “board linkages,”⁴ the large media companies all do business with commercial and investment bankers, obtaining lines of credit and loans, and receiving advice and service in selling stock and bond issues and in dealing with acquisition opportunities and takeover threats” (Herman and Chomsky, 1989: 10).

The intrinsic advantage such big media organizations have over smaller ones is not only in the possibility of cross subsidy where more profitable sections of a conglomerate will fund less successful ones; it is also due to their sheer reach in the market. By virtue of owning all the means of content production and its distribution across multiple platforms, such media organizations transmit to a network of subscribers (local, national and international), thereby attracting a larger audience share than smaller media organizations. The battle for program ratings, an index for advertisers in making advertising choices, has understandably reoriented media organizations to the advertiser’s messages and subtle controls.

Shedding more light on some complexities involved as media form alliances in their pursuit for a common market, Wimseck (2008: 41), argues that

[T]he consolidation of media markets also occurs through the web of alliances that exist among the media companies. Such alliances do not reduce the number of media players, but they do substitute cooperation for the sharp edge of a truly competitive marketplace.

⁴ Herman and Chomsky (1989) argue that in 1986, the 95 outside directors of the board of ten large media companies had directorships in an additional 36 banks and 225 other companies (aside from the media company and their own form of primary affiliation” (10).

Napoli (2010), however, has argued that the Nielsen index for measuring audience ratings and reach is inexact by disregarding the quality of exposure of the audience to program content. His call for a closer look at the quality of exposure is driven by the realization that “the mass media are interested in attracting audiences with buying power, not audiences per se; [but] affluent audiences” (Herman and Chomsky, 1989: 16). Such audience, referred to as the “right kind” [of people are typically] “affluent consumers eighteen to forty nine years of age [...] with above-median family income” (Bagdikian, 2004: 223). Media operators, according to Bagdikian, “fear [attracting] ‘the wrong kind’ of audience - too young or too old, or not affluent enough” (230).

He observes that advertisers are not only interested in attracting the right kind of audience through advertising on carefully selected programs; but they also “are increasingly interested in the context of their ads in the medium - the surrounding articles in newspapers and magazines and the type of broadcast program in which their commercials are inserted” (230-1). The point Bagdikian seems to be stressing is that “both the ‘quality’ of an audience and the nonadvertising content around the ads have become dominant in the thinking of major advertisers” (231).

The critical question to pose is what does this mode of funding symbolic content portend? Herman and Chomsky (1989) hit the nail right on the head when they conclude that the lack of program diversity and the marginalization of dissenting voices in mainstream US media can largely be attributed to access to unequal resources, including advertising. This is because such advertising supported media tend to shy away from risky, controversial, untried program content and formats (McChesney, 1999, 2001). But more than that, the tendency to uphold professional integrity tends to be compromised

since “news reported by professional journalists tends to be influenced by the business interests of [such media’s] business department and advertisers” (Bagdikian, 2004:104).

This position seems to gain more traction if one considers that in “Canada, 11 of the top 12 firms are still owner controlled” [and] “four of the top-10 global media firms – News Corp (Rupert Murdoch), Bertelsmann (heirs to founder, Carl Bertelsmann), Viacom (Sumner Redstone) and Comcast (Roberts family) – are still owner controlled” (Winseck, 2008: 43). Closely linked to this phenomenon is the stark conclusion by Project in Journalism (2006) that “media workers in the USA, Canada, Britain and many other countries report that bottom-line pressures now have a greater impact on their work than in the past, that the influence of owners, managers and advertisers is increasing and that their trust in media executives is declining (Cited in Winseck, 2008: 45).

But contrary to the well-established claim that ownership and advertising have direct impact on symbolic content, Demers and Merskin (2000), for instance, argue that institutional routines tend to constitute more formidable constraints to the production of media content than ownership and advertisers (cited in Winseck, 2008). Murdock (1982) seems to think so when he argues that the elevated role of finance in media markets has been translated into greater *potential* for control within media corporations, largely in “allocative” terms or overall corporate policy and strategy rather than “operational” day-to-day conduct of media professionals or content (cited in Winseck, 2008: 40-1). This distinction does not only question the constraining effects of ownership and advertising on media content production; it also enforces the agency of media professionals in the production process, especially in “publicly traded media conglomerates” (Winseck, 2008: 43).

The inherent paradox is that while media owners exercise subliminal control over media content through such strategies as recruiting like-minded editorial staff and clever funds management, there is sufficient evidence to support an alternative claim that media workers even in such corporate minded media settings, can still exercise reasonable levels of professional agency.

McLean's (2005) account of the direct effects of consolidation on the editorial processes of CKCK (CTV) television in Regina, Canada, as well as McKnight's (2010) of Rupert Murdoch's role in the workings of Fox stand as two examples of how consolidated ownership and corporate funding exercise "allocative" and "operational" control strategies on editorial outcomes. While the former results in a complete reengineering of newsroom practices that subsume local decision making in news selection and operational practices to Headquarters, the latter is exemplar of the ways in which an owner's political muscle serves as a means to leverage his/her economic quest for deregulation and more importantly, his/her influence in the critical decisions of his/her media empire. The overarching effects of such forms of ownership and funding types are not merely the cumulative decrease in source diversity, or a media logic that is integrated into corporate capital and its market dictates. Its impact is equally felt on the type of journalism that supports such a media system. The ultimate result is the constriction of the democratic public sphere to the whole range of social interests.

The rapid transformations broadcasting has undergone have, without doubt, been made possible by the legislative and policy regimes put in place by the state and other political forces. Equally importantly, the increasing demand by organized social groupings and individuals to seek fairer and more equitable ways of self-expression

enabled PSB to be assigned a specific social and democratic role. In as much as proponents of the liberal market contributed in reshaping the debate about how PSB should be conceptualized and operated under a free market, multiparty regime, this level of transformation could not have been achieved had it not been supported by huge advances in communication and broadcasting technology. Major leaps in communication and broadcasting technology changed the way media content was produced, transmitted and consumed. It also changed the media landscape in a manner that both democratized information production and consumption while making possible for such media content to be accessed on other non-traditional platforms at the convenience of the user. In the next segment, I provide a short overview of the role technological development played in the redefinition of PSB, as well as what such advances have meant for both PSB and advertising supported media.

How advances in technology changed the mandate and operations of global PBS

In the opinion of van Cuilenberg and McQuail (2003), the first of three paradigms that defined the direction of communication policy was driven largely by technology. They argue that this policy paradigm, which occurred before World War II, tended to deal primarily with the emerging technologies of telegraph, telephony and wireless. In addition, such policies were mainly pursued for reasons of state interest and financial corporate benefits. The role of the radio manufacturing companies in the definition of PSB in England during the mid-1920s is a notable example of such interactions (Scannell, 1996).

McChesney's account of corporate involvement in the development of telephony,

radio and television in the USA is similar. Various scholars argue that, right from the beginning, the state and corporate interests have had to negotiate their interests in the funding and use of technology, and the pendulum of preference has swung in one direction or the other depending on specific socio-cultural, economic and political factors that affected legislation and policy (van Cuilenberg and McQuail, 2003; Raboy, 1996; McChesney, 1999). The relationship has typically been that corporate interests and capital invest in the development of such technology, with some degree of government support. Whether the state acts “as architects” by creating the needed environment for such development; or “as engineers” (Raboy, 1996) by getting directly involved as active players, it exercises a supervisory and regulatory control over the use of such technology through legislation and the relevant public policy (Curran, 2012).

The state regulated and legislated broadcasting spectrum as a national resource, and this defined broadcasting, especially PSB as a national resource: in access, orientation and vision. Typically, broadcasting was different from other telecommunication services such as telephony and the postal services. The broadcasting institution generated content and transmitted its signals to its audience. The receiving set of radio or television, as the case might be, was to be acquired differently by the user for that specific purpose of receiving the broadcasting signals of the broadcaster.

The Video Recorder changed the ways traditional broadcasters interfaced with their audience. For the first time, audiences could record programs and play them back at their convenience. This feat meant that regular live program schedules of traditional broadcasters could now be received asynchronously through such recordings, thus giving the audience more control over how and when to consume such content. The introduction

of the remote control further placed control of the multichannel broadcasting setting in the hands of the consumer: making it possible and much easier for multiple channels to be flipped and compared.

When satellite technology was introduced later, it further disrupted how traditional broadcasting operated. Being digital, it allowed large data to be saved nonlinearly and recalled at the click of the button. It also introduced new ways of transmitting and receiving broadcast content with higher audio and audiovisual fidelity. But in addition to the convenience of navigating through multiple channels, the technology at the time had converged and made it possible to, in addition to recording and playback at one's convenience, receive text on the same television set.

The merging of telecommunication and broadcasting technology together saw the development of another phenomenon. Telecommunication operators who did not by themselves generate broadcasting content began providing broadcasting content to their subscribers. Not only did this effectively shift the exclusive delivery of broadcasting content from the broadcasting institution to others, it also meant that for the first time, traditional broadcaster's audience had been fragmented through channel diversity, and technology had made it possible for such providers to offer their subscribers niche programming within a multiple channel setting (Napoli, 2010). Such broadcasting service supported by cable and satellite also allowed telephony and text to be accessed by the same subscriber. As Horowitz (2004) points out, a multichannel broadcasting environment meant channel diversity as well as how to access them.

The introduction of the Internet and the World Wide Web further expanded such communication and broadcasting opportunities. The Internet allowed individuals to meet

and interact instantaneously in cyberspace through audio, video, and text. The technology enabled its users to post their own images, generate and share their own content, and through instant texts and other interactive means, engage one another in conversations. Internet “celebrants” saw this breakthrough in technology as an opportunity to deepen democracy through better engagement amongst citizens in cyberspace (Fukuyama, 2002; Poster, 2001). Such “celebrants” argued that bypassing such economic and public institutions, including mainstream broadcasting, the Internet and its associated social media would enable direct and uncensored interaction between citizens of a nation-state, and their global counterparts. This, in the opinion of Grossman (1995), would install a new form of democracy.

Besides the difficulty of state control over such a resource, Toffler and Toffler (1995) argue that the Internet would also empower the ordinary person with the technological tools to be better able to control government through unparalleled access to information (cited in Curran, 2012). By “empowering previously excluded groups” (Poster, 2001), and extending horizontal channels of communication between social groups, the Internet was undermining top-down communication between elites and the general public, and elite control of politics. In the words of Agre (1994), this was a “renaissance of democracy” (cited in Curran, 2012: 13).

The “skeptics” on the other hand preached caution and argued that access to the technology did not automatically translate into effective use. They argued that although the technology has promise, it stood the chance of being captured by corporate interests in just the same way as it had done with previous technologies. They pointed out too, that access to the technology was difficult for some people in some parts of the world, and the

competence to use it effectively in itself could serve as a barrier to effective and democratic use. Differences in language, social, cultural, political and economic conditions of users are some of the other constraints that Curran (2012: 14) outlines as “powerful influences in the real world that can keep people disempowered, as well as create “deliberative enclaves” (Sunstein, 2001). Failing to take these variables into account often result in the “emollient generalizations about the ‘empowering’ technology of the internet” (Curran, 2102: 14) and its democratic role in society.

This is a view Mansell (2004) seems to share. He argues that there are dangers involved in overlooking the subtle ways access to new media could conceal asymmetries of power and, therefore, proposes that a critical study of new media “should pose questions that seek to make transparent, the unequal power relations that are embedded in the technology of new media, and the institutional and technological conditions that perpetuate those assymetrical relations” (214). But Di Genarro and Dutton (2006) go as far as to conclude that the internet seems to be promoting political exclusion rather than inclusion (cited in Curran, 2012).

Notwithstanding the contending claims that continue to surround its use and value, this technological breakthrough made the institution of traditional broadcasting more redundant since audiovisual material could be accessed without resorting to traditional broadcasting institutions. Equally importantly, the Internet redefined the traditional roles between the broadcaster as the generator of content and the audience as the receiver of such content. Negroponte (1996), Dahlberg (1997), and Napoli (2009) refer to the once traditional audience as “prosumers” or “netizens” to reflect their dual capacity as content generators and consumers within the Internet age.

By the time the Internet had taken hold, the model of PSB as generating the same content for a national audience in real time had been distorted. It had been replaced by another model that emphasized “narrowcasting”, supplying its audience with niche programming to meet their specific individual tastes. Such content was to be accessed at their convenience, and through several devices ranging from Internet enabled smartphones, tablets, and most digital devices. Needless to say such technological advances exerted new pressures on traditional broadcasting to reconceptualize its social role and its audience, and in between, how to collect, process and transmit its content.

In the opinion of Horwitz (2004), Kunz (2007), Mansell (2004), and Raboy (1996), the full impact of such technological advances on traditional broadcasting, especially as a model defined by, and anchored within the nation-state, is better appreciated when such technological convergence is seen as part of an economic logic of consolidation, globalization and commodification. In short, technological *and* economic convergence, when viewed together, present better opportunities in appreciating the politics of media as social, political and economic players (Skinner et al., 2005).

Their observation is important in the sense that it sheds light on the ways such technological advances are supported by an economic logic of deregulation, which is championed by conglomerates whose interests in media are only as a business. The sheer economic and technological force of “missionaries” of such media logic (McChesney and Herman, 2004), therefore, presents formidable challenges to the *raison d’être* and operations of national PSBs.

As businesses, some media conglomerates are richer than some nations and by riding on the backs of such technological advances, transmit media content across

national borders, flattening the boundaries of such nation-states in the process.

Benefitting from greater economies of scale due to their size, such conglomerates' unit costs of production is generally lower, not to talk about enjoying greater economies of scope based on the sharing of services and cross promotions. Typically, such corporate Goliaths freely mixed their news content with generous portions of soap operas, sports, reality programs and other light entertainment and transmitted to a global audience through a "denationalized communication infrastructure" (Fraser, 2007: 18).

Besides the allure of providing superior media content at comparatively lower prices to such national audiences, the convenience of its audience being in control of what to consume, as well as how to consume it, made such international media conglomerates a formidable competitor to the national PSB. At the same time, the overhead costs of production for the catapult-wielding PSB David, was on the increase even as its audience size was continuously dwindling. PSB, therefore, found itself having to compete for its national audience with international media conglomerates with far better economic and technological resources.

What does such technological and economic convergence mean specifically for the mandate and operations of the PSB? For the purposes of this research and its immediate questions, I intend to conclude this chapter by highlighting four crucial things that speak to how PSB is responding to some of the issues raised above. Namely, the critical role of legislation and policy to such changes; the "trivialization" of PS journalism; the pressures for PSB to resort to other commercial sources of funding; and finally, the imperative to extend itself onto other new media platforms. Although I have earlier pointed out the role of politics and the unregulated market on the mandate of PSB,

the concluding part will tease out how together with technological advances, the three factors overlap to pose formidable challenges to the PSB at important junctures.

Advances in communication technology, coupled with legislation that favored neoliberal market logic, resulted in the expansion of communicative spaces across national borders. Paradoxically, this situation also created fragmented national audiences, forcing national PBS into a position of complementing their commercial counterparts (Raboy, 1996; Raboy and Taras, 2005). In the process, journalism as practiced by trained professionals in newsrooms gave way to a version that included content generated by citizens with modern technology. Some of these issues have provided reasons for the Senate of Canada⁵ to review the role of the CBC/Radio Canada.

In their view, “the role of CBC/Radio Canada has become less clear” within the context of “a highly fragmented landscape [characterized by] the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunications enterprises, and the introduction of internet-based video and audio” (2015: 1). Their conclusions take into account the realities of post 1991 “Smartphone, multi-platform era” and the necessity to address the role of PSB to “reflect the realities of providing public broadcasting services in the new world of Netflix, iTunes and YouTube and other sources of information and entertainment” (1). Such a “digital mosaic” (Taras, 2015), which reflects various tastes and interests, also exert different pressures on the conduct of PSB (Avery, 1993; Breen, 1996; Dahlgren, 1995, 2009).

For instance, although the recommendation⁶ that the CBC should “discontinue all

⁵ “Time for change: CBC/Radio Canada in the Twenty-first century” (2015) presents the most recent update on the technological-PSB question in Canada.

⁶ “CBC/Radio-Canada discontinue all in-house production of non-news and current affairs programming, and instead emphasize the broadcasting of performances by Canadian artists and cultural events, such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the

in-house, non-news and current affairs” might sound limiting, it must be seen as an effort to refocus its attention to what it can do best. While this could be seen as shrinking its scope of programs, it could also present opportunities for independent producers to complement CBC’s bouquet by providing other “non-core” programs. This call on the CBC to stick to news and current affairs programming could refocus it to maintain a national character and advantage, while making room for better resourced commercial media and conglomerates to serve other programming needs. This is a way of forcing CBC to focus on providing content “unlikely to be offered by commercial broadcasters” (xii)⁷. The fallout from this emphasis is not only registered by lack of “internal diversity” (McQuail, 1993: 101) of CBC programs and, for that matter, other PSBs. It is also that such PBSs are forced to play a complimentary role to commercial media, focusing on areas that commercial media find unattractive and economically unprofitable to cover.

In the opinion of Raboy (1996), this arrangement of PSB playing a complimentary role to commercial media has grave consequences. He argues that the quality of media content is generally higher when the commercial broadcaster is mandated to provide some public service content to compliment the programming efforts of the PSB. When PSB is conceptualized as complimentary to commercial media, the overall output of the entire broadcasting system is far inferior because PSB tends to be viewed as marginal, consigned to generating programs unlikely to attract advertisers and, therefore, operating at the periphery (McChesney, 1999). Rather than expand PSB’s

Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, the Edmonton Opera, and the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal” (Recommendation 21, xii).

⁷ “CBC/Radio-Canada focus on showing high-quality programs that are unlikely to be offered by commercial broadcasters” (xii).

program horizons, such legislation restricts its programming range, and undermines a crucial imperative to be divergent in programming and universally accessible.

Restricting its programming range does not only undermine a critical pillar, it speaks also to modes of funding and their likely consequences on journalism. Restricting PSB through its programming scope and ultimately its capacity to be attractive to advertisers becomes a double bind and impoverishes the range and diversity of programs the broadcasting system offers. If Blumler's (1993: 411) observation is correct, that "broadcasting systems which are most dependent on advertising also schedule the narrowest range of programming", then rather than expand the media landscape for a more diverse range of programming, the CBC Senate recommendation, soon to become law, rather turns the various media into ghettos, addressing specific and narrow programming needs in the process.

In the face of such formidable constraints facing PBSs, it is curious that a PSB such as the CBC will be expected to, "in consultation with the Government of Canada, explore alternative funding models and additional ways to generate revenue to minimize the Corporation's dependence on government appropriations" (Recommendation 15, xii). As the literature indicates, "explore alternative funding models" has become a familiar euphemism for advertising and sponsorship revenue (Blumler, 1993; Croteau and Hoynes, 2004; McChesney, 1999, 2008). Such an advertising and sponsorship regime, Blumler (1993) argues, has a preponderance for light entertainment programming instead of critical, engaging social issues.

Coupled with its tendency to view its audience as consumers in the marketplace instead of engaged citizens, advertising and sponsorship "should be seen as an implacable

foe to PSB because it imposes a hedonistic value on its programming” (Blumler, 1993: 411). The current state of PSB is similar to the child in a Ghanaian proverb who is spanked and yet is prohibited from crying out of pain. Per its recommendations, the CBC seems to have been consigned to stick to non-commercial programming, and yet, it is required to attract advertisers and generate alternative revenue with content which typically do not attract advertisers and sponsors.

Caught between a rock and a hard place, PSB will most likely continue to “mesh money with its PS mandate” (Blumler, 1993). In the process, as it extends itself online in a desperate bid to attract more revenue, “popular” journalism by its audience will continue to operate alongside its “professional” newsroom variant. This “trivializing” of journalism (Curran, 2005; Bivens, 2013; Trappel, 2008) is not only due to the fact that converged technology allows media users to be content generators as well. The imperative of a 24-hour news cycle also exerts additional pressure on journalists. Sustaining a 24-hour news cycle within a competitive media environment means journalists, both in PSB and commercial media settings, have to generate more stories at shorter intervals.

Job cuts, in addition to traditional news expanding online, exacerbate these pressures and converged newsrooms require another type of journalist who is both capable of multitasking across multiple platforms and generating more content at shorter intervals (Dahlgren, 2005). All in all, the “stereotypical and decontextualized news” (Blumler 1993) such corporatized news media produce is facilitated by the dissolution of the “firewall between the news divisions and the corporate structure” (McChesnsy, 1999: 178); and the effects of technological expansions on editorial processes. In the words of

Bennett (1988), such news “is superficial, narrow, stereotypical, propaganda laden, of little explanatory value, and not geared for critical debate or citizen action” (cited in Hoynes, 1994:26). For Gitlin (1990), journalism within such corporate news spaces tend to produce content that is “simplified, personalized, decontextualized, with an emphasis on action rather than process, visualization rather than abstraction, stereotypicality rather than human complexity” (cited in Curran, 2005: 130). This “crisis in news and journalism” as Taras (2015) calls it leads to the decline in citizen engagement with one another and their political representatives.

It is ironical that in the face of expansions in technology, and the enabling opportunities such advances present to its users, McChesney (2013) argues that technological expansion and the internet has largely resulted in the promotion of trivial journalism. Considering the celebratory arguments the technology of new media and the Internet in particular was supposed to offer through citizen journalism, this claim is curious. But as Bivens (2014) points out, notwithstanding the many opportunities citizen journalism and other online journalism tools the technology presents, there is still some concern to their originality and worth.

For instance based on the 2009 Excellence in Journalism report, Compton and Benedetti (2010) observe that

While blogs and other online sites assemble information produced by citizen journalists, they offer very little original reporting. Instead, much of the content is repurposed from mainstream news organizations, and overall, the majority of news production by the public is merely opinion any way (cited in Bivens, 2014: 6).

Curran makes a similar argument when he points to the fact that much of the news found on content aggregators and online news channels are originally repurposed from

traditional news channels. If this is accurate, then such a conclusion points to the increasing pressures on journalists to write across multiple platforms as well as underline the fact that “television is still the most important source of news in most countries” based on an Ofcom (2010b) survey of six countries (cited in Curran, 2012: 18).

As Curran (2012) points out, eventually, it is still the established and traditional news sources that are able to repurpose their original content online through cross subsidies and greater economies of scale. As he puts it “the dominant news organizations have entrenched their ascendancy because they have gained a commanding position in both the offline and online production and consumption of news” (2012: 21). What clearly shines through these contending arguments is that mainstream or traditional media is adopting technology, and in the process, using its established presence to repurpose original content online.

The process of extension and the pressures inbuilt into the logic of such technology forces traditional media to review its original journalism ethos. In the opinion of Dahlgren (1996), the review by mainstream, institutionally-based journalism has to deal with a new media protocol that blurs the core distinctiveness of journalism in a space where roles are fluid, indeterminate, fragmented and multiple among cyber interactants (70). It has to, for instance, negate a professional mindset which “thrives on a linear producer-consumer model” (70).

With all its setbacks, the Internet still provides real opportunities for PSB to reach a far larger audience in a more engaging manner than traditional media alone could provide. In this sense, some of the above instances provide exemplars as to what can be achieved if this technology is well harnessed and integrated into the activities of PSB

(Bivens, 2014; Curran, 2013; Dalhgren, 1996; Fenton, 2010). The only setback left for PSB to surmount in order to stay competitive and relevant in the face of the pressures it faces will depend to a large extent, on its capacity to shift from its all-knowing patriarchal and paternalistic posture, to being an engager with its publics.

This shift will require more than the right legislation, reliable funding and efficient technology to execute. It requires more importantly, a new shift in its mindset in how it perceives its role within the new media landscape, and how it intends to engage with its traditional audience who have grown more demanding and insist on having a say in the programs PSB generate (Suine and Hulten, 2003). One way of demonstrating PBS' relevance within the technological labyrinth is to appreciate that "instead of the media which carries the report, [PBS] will open up the spaces for democratic participation [if it finds] new ways of reporting and defining what is politically useful (in contrast to the trivial and distortions associated with most political reporting) (Barnett 1997: 231). Ultimately, this will not merely show that content is still king irrespective of the media deployed, it will also be giving true expression to its PS mandate in the process.

In the following chapter, I outline the genesis and trajectory of national-state broadcasting within the African context, highlighting against its western counterparts, its similarities and differences as a political tool in the beginning, and its later evolution. Out of these contours, I will highlight the political and social conditions that gave birth to "PSB" after what has become known as Africa's "second wave" (Kasoma, 1995). With this as context, I focus on the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) as a state-owned media institution, teasing out the contours that have and continue to define its laborious transition from state-ownership to public service.

Chapter Three

PSB in Africa: its political origins before the Second Wave

Katz and Weddel (1977) provide an important insight into Africa's encounter with mass media when they argue that unlike the western mature democracies, media, especially broadcasting, preceded Africa's independence and the formation of its nation-states. Africa's first encounter with mass media on a sustained, organized basis happened during colonialism. Katz and Weddell (1977) point out that unlike in "many Asian countries [who] instituted radio broadcasting in the period between the two world wars, in Africa most radio services were inaugurated during or after the Second World War" (44). Although they attribute "the history of the colonial relationships" to this, they also contend that Asia's "more advanced social institutions as well as higher level of urban development" served as additional factors for this difference (44).

Armour (1996: 463) recounts that because of radio's capacity to reach large audiences, colonial powers introduced broadcasting as a mobilizing tool during the World Wars. In order to whip up support from the Africans who were serving as soldiers for the "Allied Forces", the British colonial government expanded radio across its colonial territories in Africa and deployed it as an important propaganda tool towards the war effort (Ansah, 1995; Mytton, 1968). Per this argument, radio was introduced into Africa primarily for political reasons of mobilization and propaganda before all others. In order to effectively deploy this tool, therefore, the British for instance did not only expand its footprints across its colonies⁸, it also decentralized radio through the individual territorial

⁸ Governor Hodson of the Gold Coast reported to the Legislative Assembly of Britain that "our transmissions are clearly received in our sister colonies of Nigeria and Sierra

systems, “broadcasting much in major local African languages” (Armour, 1996: 436).

This is in contrast to other colonial powers such as the “French [who] concentrated on a few powerful stations [in selected colonies] and [resorted to] the preponderant use of French” (Armour, 1996: 436). Matheson (1935) points out that in all of Africa, broadcasting in Apartheid South Africa most approximated the BBC model at the time because it provided entertainment to white South Africans as well as serve as an educational agent in native reserves and mine locations. On the continent, there were “transmitting stations in Kenya and the Belgian Congo [...] relay services in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and on an experimental basis, in Nigeria” (Matheson, 1935: 389). For a shilling a week, subscribers to this radio wired service received BBC Empire programmes with occasional local additions (Matheson, 1935). These stations did not produce their own content, but rebroadcast content through wired service to their subscribers.

In addition to galvanizing support for the war effort, radio also served the important function of reconnecting and maintaining contact between the colonizer and his/her home country, “providing a new and living link with events and ideas at home” (Matheson, 1935: 388). By the time the war was over, radio was not only expanding quickly within the colonies, its propaganda role was established while its entertainment content was largely considered as an antidote to the African’s “restlessness of mind” and tendency to “turn all too frequently to agitation and anti-governmental, not to say, communistic activities” (Hodson, 1945, cited in Ansah, 1995: 4).

As Sir Hodson’s above comments signal, the British colonial administration

Leone [...] as far afield as Cape Town” (Legislative Debates, 1941: 13, cited in Ansah, 1995: 6).

conceptualized radio to be in the service of the administration as well as serve as a controlling influence on the African population. Hodson was convinced that radio broadcast could serve as a valuable means of “conveying information or urgent propaganda to an intelligent and level-headed section of the community which is capable of exercising a strong influence for good on public opinion” (cited in Ansah, 1995: 5). Furthermore, entertainment, especially music as well as other programs were conducted in local languages, aimed at the local audience.

It will be erroneous to give the impression that broadcasting was the only medium that was in use by various interests during this period. As Bourgault (1995), Faringer (1991), Hatchten (1972) and Ansah (1985) point out, newspapers were also playing a critical role especially in galvanizing support for self-government and independence within the colonies. However, because of the colony’s largely illiterate population and the high costs of publishing newspapers at this time, the colonial government did not see newspapers as a threat to its grip on power, although paradoxically, local newspapers owned and operated by nationalist leaders became instrumental in calls for independence. As Ansah (1985) points out, such papers as Kwame Nkrumah’s *Evening News*, Jomo Kenyatta’s *Mwigwithania*, Azikiwe’s *West Africa Pilot*, and Herbert Macaulay’s *Daily Lagos News* served as important rallying points for political agitations for independence in their various nations.

It is noteworthy that the owners of such publications after independence became Heads of States or leading political figures in their countries. The later unwillingness of such African governments to relinquish their hold on the mass media of their nation-states could largely be attributed to the association of such leaders to newspapers and the

role such newspapers had played in the battle for independence (Bourgalut, 1995). By the late 1960s when most African countries achieved independence, radio was not only the predominant broadcasting medium in Africa, it was a licensed service, completely controlled by central government, and largely in its service (Armour, 1996; Faringer, 1991; Katz and Wedell, 1972).

However, according to Armour (1996), two predominant versions of broadcasting existed on the continent. While the British encouraged the use of local languages in programming in their colonies, the French favored the use of French, and tended to broadcast from metropolitan France into their Sub Saharan and Magreb colonies. The need to underline this is because besides reflecting the respective doctrines of British “indirect rule” and French “assimilation”, it also left a lasting legacy on how French and British African colonies conceptualized and managed their broadcasting institutions after independence.

Just before independence while the British set up committees⁹ across their colonies to transform broadcasting organizations into public service institutions, the French on the other hand, maintained a system in their colonies that was very dependent on Metropolitan France both for its programming and outlook. Compared to their British counterparts, this French variant later resulted in the creation of deficient local production capacity in their colonies, and a far more dependent relation between these former colonies and France (Armour, 1996; Bourgault, 1995).

Ansah (1991) hits the nail right on the head when he points out that for historical

⁹ The British in 1953, four years before Ghana’s independence, set up the Gold Coast Broadcasting Commission to see to the successful transition of the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service into a Public Service. The commission did not only advise against commercial radio, it also called for a decentralized broadcasting service.

and political reasons, state owned broadcasting in Africa was a monopoly, immediately after independence, and largely “seen as necessary and inevitable at this stage of national development” (3). This is an opinion that is largely shared by Bourgault (1995) and Kasoma (1995), and surmised by Armour (1996) thus: “after independence, emphasis went towards nation building, promoting the interests of the political party in power and creating the image of the national leader as a father figure” (436). In most African countries, this duty was carried out by the new state-owned and run broadcasting service, managed very closely along former colonial lines as an extension of the state, and typically under the direct supervision of a Minister (Mytton, 1968)¹⁰.

Domatob and Hall (1983) reiterate this fact, arguing that “a common pattern in most African countries [after independence] consists of a central government Ministry of Information with radio and television senior personnel being civil servants who report to the Minister for Information” (13). In some rare cases, the President also exercised direct oversight over broadcasting as in the case of Nujoma of Namibia or Nkrumah of Ghana, who personally monitored its performance and controlled key appointments.

The resultant effect of such government and state control was an almost exclusive power by the political elite to define what the broadcaster came to understand as “public”, and through editorial controls, articulate the world view of the citizenry who remained largely disengaged from national discourse. Under the guise of forging national unity and speeding social and economic development, views that challenged the dominant state version were either disregarded or suppressed. In the opinion of Ansah,

¹⁰ Mytton (1968) identifies “radio Tanzania as a department of the Ministry of Information and Tourism which took over broadcasting from the Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation. The latter was an independent, though publicly owned authority created on the lines of the BBC” (96).

the ensuing “developmental journalism” (1985) conceptualized views contrary to the dominant state narrative as undermining national unity, tagging them as dangerous and invariably excluding them from national discourse.

Over time, this “developmental journalism” originally meant to foster national cohesion through economic, social and human development, morphed into “dreary news bulletins” filled with “tedious reportage of acts and speeches of the national leader” (Armour, 1996: 436). For Bourgault (1995), this state of broadcasting media was brought about by the “presence of an alienated managerial class” which was ably supported by a “system of political patronage” (xiv). Armour (1996), Bourgault (1995) and Hasty (2004) are among those who argue that the penchant for African journalists to praise sing their leaders could be traced back to Africa’s pre-colonial oral tradition, and the cultural imperative to defer to authority.

While this claim could be contested, the effects such political and editorial choices had on the texture and impact of broadcasting are undoubted. “Gradually, the radio [and television] in Black Africa showed all too obviously the features of ‘narrowcasting’, directed to an urban elite and neglecting the rural masses” (Armour, 1996: 436). Consequently although broadcasting, especially radio had demonstrated promise to act as a national glue due to its pervasiveness and relative cheapness, its monopoly status and centralized governmental control resulted in less content diversity, thus morphing into a mouthpiece of the political elite (Fourie, 2003; Kasoma, 1995; Katz and Wedell, 1972; Mytton, 1983).

The paradox for most African broadcasting stations was that although they had national footprint in reach, their lack of content diversity, especially regional/local

content made them “narrowcasters”, targeting largely the urban city dweller and actively serving the interests of the political and economic elites (Kasoma 1995; Phiri, 1999).

Little wonder that “music, not speech content, attracted audiences” (Armour, 1996: 436).

In some instances as in Ghana, Zambia and Tanzania, the adoption of a one party state soon after independence tightened government’s control over media content and significantly emasculated dissenting views. In the absence of alternative media sources, citizens either became more reliant on external sources of news because they were generally considered more credible (Armour, 1996), or became adept at reading “in between” local news stories for subtexts.

Military coup d’etats worsened this tendency to tighten media control since in the absence of a constitution, political control was exercised by decree and the media, especially broadcasting was central to attaining such political control. By the mid-1990s when most of Africa was experiencing a democratic “rebirth”, the various nation states had variants of broadcasting monopolies in place. Owned and funded largely by governments exercising strong editorial controls, such broadcasting stations had by this time lost credibility as independent sources of news and information and, therefore, largely perceived as cheerleaders for governments.

The transition from such autocratic regimes to democratic ones in the mid-1990s in Africa meant greater access for democratic participation and the opening up of the communicative space to private and commercial interests (Hasty, 2005; Heath, 2001, 1999; Kasoma, 1995; Nyanmjoh, 2004; Tettey, 2001). How such state owned and run media negotiated this transition in their bid to live up to their democratic functions is the

central question of this study, and what the rest of the chapter hopes to flesh out into some more detail.

Transition to Public Service Broadcasting after the second wave

As a direct offshoot of the spectrum scarcity argument, broadcasting in Africa, like the rest of the world, was owned and controlled by the state, perceived as a public utility and obliged to serve as an agent of national development (Ansah, 1985, 1988; Heath, 1988; McQuail, 1983; Raboy, 1998, 1994). Broadcasting under this regime was often a monopoly; owned and operated by the state, and its personnel generally considered as being in the employment of the state as public servants. Structurally, such a state owned broadcaster was under the direct supervision of a Ministry of state whose powers ranged from providing broad policy outlines to determining editorial policy to hiring and firing CEOs either directly or in the name of the President (Chiumbu, 2009; Chirwa, 2010; Faringer, 1991; Lugalambi, 2010; Teer-Tomaselli, 2010).

Because this era of broadcasting predominantly occurred under one party states or under authoritarian regimes, government's involvement in its operations was direct and opinions considered hostile to the predominant government position were either suppressed or disregarded. Typically, such a state owned broadcaster is not only a monopoly; it was centralized in structure and operations, fully funded by the state and with an editorial policy largely uncritical of government. Although private and commercial broadcasting were not prohibited by law in most African countries, the huge capital layout required for its setup as well as a heavily patronized licensing process made

it impossible for competition to blossom. This was the state of broadcasting ownership on the continent when most African countries, either by internal agitations or pressures from external donors, embraced constitutional government and multi-party democracy in the mid-1990s.

The “African Charter on Broadcasting”¹¹ (ACB) (2001) and the “Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa”¹² (DPFEA) (2002) also committed African Union members to their core tenets which included the expectation that “[S]tate and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, accountable to the public through the legislature rather than the government” (DPFEA, 2002: subsection VI). This aspiration required government to relinquish its control over broadcasting editorial policy and more fundamentally, its regulation and licensing. The regulation and licensing of broadcasting were perhaps, two of the last vestiges of state control over dissenting voices and so governments were unwilling, even hostile in some cases, to give up this control (Chiumbu, 2009; Githaiga, 2013; Ogundimu, 2002; Van de Veur, 2002).

Legislation, licensing and ownership of media in Africa after the second wave

“The Second Wave” of democracy, as most have called the political landscape of Africa in the mid-1990s, was marked by the promulgation of new national Constitutions, the reintroduction of representative democracy, with the legislative and judicial arms

¹¹ African Charter on Broadcasting (ACB) (2001) was promulgated in Windhoek as a blueprint to guide African states to see communication as an intrinsic human right, and broadcasting as a critical component in its expression.

¹² Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, (DPFEA)

acting as checks on the executive. All in all, the political terrain at the time could be described as one that regarded the citizen's right to free expression and the democratic right to association as fundamental rights to be respected under a state ruled by law. What this meant for most African countries which were either under a military, one party or authoritarian rule, was to give this political aspiration true expression through the institution of a multi-party democracy, a universal adult suffrage, and expansion of the media landscape to include non-state actors.

The Constitutional mandate to open up the media landscape was not merely to reinforce and give true expression to the individual's freedom of expression, it was also to make it possible for divergent, even dissenting views to find avenues for expression. This invariably meant that hitherto state-owned and run broadcasting monopolies suddenly found themselves competing with private, commercial media and broadcasting institutions. Such state-owned and run broadcasting institutions became one of several private commercial and community media all competing for the same national audience and revenue (Cottle and Rai, 2008).

As many point out, various governments were at best either unwilling or very reluctant to cede their control over their monopoly of the airwaves. After several struggles, sometimes involving court rulings to compel such recalcitrant governments to act, the African media landscape has seen significant changes in numbers. The media landscape of most African countries consists of state/public broadcasting, private-commercial, and community media. Both the African Charter for Broadcasting (2001) and "Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa" (2002) outline that in order to promote "freedom of expression, diversity, and the free flow of information and

ideas”, African countries should strive for a “three-tier system for broadcasting: public service, commercial and community” (African Charter, Part 1: 1).

Tanzania stands out as one of the first African countries to pass its Broadcasting Act in 1993. By 2003, “eight private television stations and eleven private radio stations” had been granted licenses (van de Veur, 2003: 95). Mali displayed a similar trend where private radio stations grew from 15 in 1995 to 30 by 1997. By 2003, “the country had 15 private radio stations in Bamako and an additional forty independent broadcast facilities in operation throughout the country” (van de Veur: 94). The pattern is similar in South Africa (Tomaselli, 2003), Senegal, Uganda (cited in van de Veur, 2003: 94), and Ghana (NMC, 2010).

In 2012, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) awarded “fifteen new radio and TV licences to prospective broadcasters, who had applied for the licenses two years ago” (www.osisa.org). The minister of Information, Moses Kunkuyu, said the move was “Government’s way of ensuring diversity of views in the media”, as well as “empowering Malawians through information knowledge” (Lugalambi, 2010: 45). He emphasized that “granting of broadcasting licenses to independent television and radio stations,” is one way of ensuring democratic growth. Bussiek (2010) reports of similar trends in Cameroon¹³, Benin, Mali and Namibia¹⁴.

¹³ The situation in Cameroon has improved significantly compared to previous times. The state owned broadcaster Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) as at 2013 operated “one TV channel, 10 regional/local stations and 10 commercial FM stations. [In addition], there are six privately owned national and local TV stations, at least 80 private radio stations and quite a number of rural, religious and university radio stations” (Bussiek, 2013: 82).

Chirwa (2010) observes that in terms of numbers and reach, the Zambian Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) still dominates the Zambian media landscape with its three radio stations, ZNBC Television and TV2, a commercial channel it launched in 2010. Additionally, there are “ten privately owned television stations, 29 community radio stations, and 17 religious or faith-based stations” (103). Compared to Namibia’s 1993 when broadcasting monopoly was broken, in Zimbabwe, it was only recently in 2011 when BAZ, the broadcasting regulator gave licenses to two commercial radio stations which started operation a year later. It is expected that the government’s invitation to interested broadcasting operators to apply for licenses in October 2013 will open the media landscape even further. To date, there is no data to suggest that the situation has changed.

While there is cause for celebration regarding these efforts to open up communicative spaces, some concerns still linger about the possibility of a shift in the locus of power from State to private/corporate commercial interests through concentration of media ownership. There has, therefore, been calls for cross media ownership laws to be built into licensing regulations to ensure both diversity of ownership, as well as guarantee local participation in media, including content production. This call seems to be in line with best practice in such advanced western democracies as Canada where the broadcasting legislation precludes the CRTC from issuing broadcasting licences to non-Canadians, or amending, or renewing broadcasting licences held by non-Canadian applicants (Salter & Odartey-Wellington, 2008).

¹⁴ As at 2013 in Namibia, 13 private commercial radio operators and seven community radios were licensed to operate in addition to the state controlled Namibia Broadcasting Corporation’s (NBC) one television station and ten radio services (Bussiek, 2013: 92).

Bussiek (2013) points out that in many African countries such as in Benin, Namibia and Nigeria, foreign ownership of media is restricted by law such that nationals must hold majority shares in a broadcasting company. “In South Africa, Mali and Mozambique, no foreign person or entity may own and control more than 20 percent of any broadcasting license” (Bussiek, 2013: 25). Zimbabwe stands out as the extreme in the sense that it forbids foreign ownership of media altogether “although the minister in charge of broadcasting has absolute discretion to grant exemptions” (45). In Kenya and Uganda on the other hand, foreigners have been granted licenses to own and operate both radio and television.

If diversity of media content is considered critical to the formation of democratic culture, then source diversity, ensured by limiting media concentration and ownership becomes one means of achieving such content diversity. In pursuance of this, some African countries such as Namibia have regulations that limit cross media ownership. Namibia disallows persons from controlling more than one radio and one television station, while in Mali, Cameroon and Kenya, “no person is allowed to hold more than one license in the same coverage area” (Bussiek, 2013: 56). The South African situation disallows one person from controlling more than one commercial television channel or more than two FM or two AM commercial radio stations, with the caveat that such stations should not have similar license areas.

While applauding the rationale for such legislation seeking to promote source diversity in media ownership, examples from Kenya and Cameroon demonstrate that they are not always effective. In Kenya, a high degree of media concentration had already developed by the time that legislation to limit ownership was promulgated and,

understandably, it has become difficult to unbundle the conglomerates because of the enormous economic and political muscle that they wield. Notwithstanding legislation in Cameroon, cross media ownership is on the increase (Tanjong, 2012).

Although the trend of having plural media outlets does not always reflect in content diversity, let alone quality content (Kunz, 2007), one of the recurring issues that are often raised is whether or not regulation or deregulation offers better opportunities for correction, and if so, which agency should oversee it. In most African countries, the preference to institute an independent licensing and content regulatory bodies can be traced to the great suspicion governments are held, and the precedence of history. Consequently, the trend in most African countries show that independent licensing and regulatory bodies are instituted as a means of ensuring that government control over the state owned and run media and broadcaster does not recur in the future.

In some countries, separate bodies performed the regulatory and licensing roles while in others such as South Africa¹⁵ and Kenya, the same body performs both roles. Irrespective of its configuration the relevant point is that both roles should be performed by a body/bodies independent from both political and economic interests. Clause VII of the DPFEA outlines some critical expectations in this regard. Under subsection 1, it states that “[A]ny public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications regulation should be independent and adequately protected against

¹⁵ The ICASA Act was promulgated in 2000 when the then broadcasting and telecommunications regulators (the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority) were merged in recognition of the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunications and the resultant need to streamline regulatory frameworks affecting the two industries (Lloyd et al., 2010: 97).

interference, particularly of a political or economic nature.” Sub-section 2 states that “the appointments process for members of a regulatory body should be open and transparent, involve the participation of civil society, and shall not be controlled by any particular political party.” Read together, the above subsections mark regulatory independence as involving public inclusion in the appointment of their boards, transparency in rules governing its operations, and the absence of both economic interests and government’s hands in the appointment process.

In extreme cases such as in Zimbabwe, the President has the free hand in appointing the board members to the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) which regulates broadcasting in the country. The act only requires the President to “consult with the minister in charge of Information and the parliamentary committee but not to obtain their consent. The nomination and appointment process is not subject to any public involvement or input (Chiumbu, 2009: 105). This is in stark contrast to the South African situation where although concerns have been raised about the increased role of the Minister of Communications in its affairs, the nine-member ICASA is constituted through public involvement and operates under transparent guidelines. From the list of public nominations, Parliament approves a shortlist of nominees who are appointed by the Minister of Communications “who also selects the chairperson of the council” (Lloyd et al., 2010: 104). This is a significant improvement considering that “previously the president appointed the councilors and the chair” (Lloyd et al., 2010: 103).

In between these two extremes are various state/government/civil society permutations establishing broadcasting regulatory bodies. In Kenya, the Kenya Communications (Amendment) Act of 2008, which set up the Communications

Commission of Kenya (CCK), “does not protect the body against control by government and political interests” (Bussiek, 2013: 84). This is especially clear when one considers the fact that the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC)’s Board of Directors is appointed by government and includes government officials, while “the minister responsible for broadcasting and information appoints the managing director and is entitled to make regulations on how the broadcaster is to carry out its work” (Bussiek, 2013: 85).

Tanjong (2012) argues that in Cameroon, instead of broadcasting regulation being under the responsibility of an independent body, it is firmly under government control.

The minister of communication in collaboration with the National Communications Council (NCC) is in charge of both regulation and licensing of operators. The NCC is merely an advisory body under the authority of the Prime Minister who has the last word on all decisions. The council’s members are appointed by decree and most of them, including the chairperson, are progovernment individuals (Tanjong, 2012: 81-82).

In Mali (Djourte, 2013), Zambia (Chirwa, 2013) and Namibia (Taylor, 2013), the broadcasting regulator still finds itself under some form of governmental control, lacks transparency and often operates without any public input. In cases where the same body oversees licensing and broadcasting regulation, broadcasting councils and commissions often regulate media content as in the case of Kenya and Zimbabwe. In others, such as Ghana, the 12-member National Media Commission (NMC) regulates broadcasting conduct only after a different authority, the National Communication Authority, issues the license.

Although the independence of the regulatory authorities has largely been seen as a prerequisite for insulating the operations of media from governmental interference,

crippling criminal libel, sedition and sometimes, antiquated laws such as imprisonment for insulting the president, or for spreading false rumors, still act as last vestiges of control over editorial independence. In order to enable not just accountability to the public but also ensure editorial independence, calls for the repeal of such laws criminalizing speech have been incessant and grown louder after the third wave. This has resulted in the repeal of such sedition and libel laws in some countries, while others are in the process of repealing them.

Furthermore, the promulgation of the right to information laws in countries such as South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya have made it possible for journalists to access information that was hitherto considered classified, and thereby increased their chances to hold public and political officers to account through rigorous and investigative journalism. As Bourgault (1995), Hasty (1996), Kasoma (1996) and others point out, the previous institutional practice of journalists deferring to authority through “the president said” (Ogundimu, 1995), or “he-said-he said” journalism (Bourgault, 1995) will hopefully give way to a more rigorous and professional reporting style, guided by the professional ethics of neutrality, objectivity and balance. In the next segment, I focus attention on the effects of economic reforms on the media generally and broadcasting more specifically, highlighting ways in which state broadcasters have responded to it, as well as how private, commercial media are competing fiercely with such state owned media organizations.

Economic reforms and their impact on media in Africa

The Second Wave of Africa's democratization manifested itself in many ways. It was not only political, it also called on African governments to embrace new economic and social programs. Tangri (1995) points out that

The late 1980s and early 1990s have seen more vigorous pressure emanating from international organizations [led by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank] for African governments to prosecute privatization in a more resolute fashion. Most governments have embarked on quite extensive privatization programmes (173).

However, the process of changing Africa's economic profile was not only to be achieved through the privatization of state assets. The withdrawal of public capital from such state run organizations, re-profiling of such organizations to be leaner in structure and more efficient, as well as opening up its national markets to foreign competitors also constituted important pillars of this economic reform. This resulted in economic structural adjustment programs for such African countries. Acronyms such as PAMSCAD (Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment), SAP (Structural Adjustment Programs), NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development), and many others soon became regular in the lexicon of African economic literature.

Irrespective of their nomenclature, all such economic and social "interventions" set out to liberalize African markets for foreign competitors, integrate their economies into the global economy and, by so doing, redesign the economic framework of these African states. Referring to this trend as "disciplining democracy", Abrahamson (2001) argues that multi-party democracy and the imperative to liberalize African markets for free trade and external competition should be seen as two sides of the same coin.

This assertion is based on the intricate connection between the political choices African states had to make and their attendant economic cost, and raises the question of whether such a politico-economic regime amounted to real choice for such African countries. She concludes that the political and economic reforms that characterized the third wave and their dominant narrative of good governance as a condition for any form of economic aid disrupted the economic and political development of African countries that adopted it. She blames the one-size-fit-all economic prescriptions of the Bretton Woods Institutions and “their consensus” (Murdock and Golding, 1973) for this disruption.

But the program to divest and privatize has not been uniform across the continent and has therefore, met with varying degrees of success and resistance. Political and ideological factors have accounted for these differences. In Zimbabwe for instance, Mugabe has resisted sweeping privatization of state assets by multinationals, insisting that the only way to mitigate capitalism's 'venomous head' is to keep state control in key economic sectors (cited in Tangri, 1995: 174). In Ethiopia, Tanzania and Mozambique, with strong socialist governments, the trend had been the same. While the Zambian opposition resisted and blamed Chiluba's government for selling off state assets to South Africa, in Kenya, the opposition saw the Asian and Kikuyu businessmen as profiting from the government's divestiture program and offered resistance against the political ruling class. Although such protests failed to prevent the privatization process, it slowed down the process in significant ways.

Political pressure from civil society and local interests in some cases led to “the retention of many strategic parastatals in government ownership, including inefficiently

run public infrastructural enterprises” (Tangri, 1995: 179). Irrespective of the extent of privatization, and whether or not there is any veracity to the claim that the “logic of patrimonialism”¹⁶ shaped the privatization decisions of state assets (Tangri, 1995), the point remains that with comparatively smaller economies, Africa central governments remained a central participant in economic activity (Tangri, 1995).

It is within this context of whether government and the state should play the role of an “architect”, or remain an “engineer” in the economic sphere that the media, especially broadcasting should be situated. As an architect, the state was expected through legislation, to create an enabling environment for the media to operate. As an engineer, the state was to play an active role in the ownership and running of its own media within this new plural media ecology (Teer-Tomaselli, 2013). This meant that, in addition to the state owned and run public broadcaster, private and commercial broadcasters were to operate alongside as business entities. The central question is: how are such media, be it public, private or commercial to be funded?

Traditionally, public broadcasting has been funded through viewer licenses mainly, advertising and sponsorship. The argument put forward has been that its universality of access should translate into a universal license that allows all who benefit to bear the cost of program production and distribution (Raboy, 1996; Scannell, 1996). The logic of the market which drives commercial and corporate broadcasting on the other

¹⁶ Agbese (1992) points out that in Nigeria in the late 1980s, military officers under the military regime are alleged to have acquired the majority of the shares in four fifths of the 100 state-owned firms that were privatized (cited in Tangri, 1995). In Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Zaire, there is much evidence of public assets being dispensed to supporters and allies of political leaders while in Senegal public enterprises were privatized to the relatives and clients of the political elite (Commander et al., 1989, cited in Tangri, 1995). These reports serve as the basis for Tangri's conclusion of “patrimonialism” in the divestiture of state assets.

hand make a case that it is through competition in the marketplace of ideas that pluralism can be guaranteed, and symbolic content like any other commodity, should be quantified and sold to anyone who wishes to buy (Croteau and Hoynes, 2004; Herman and Chomsky, 1989). Very often, what is left out in the deregulation argument is the recognition that who has the resources to buy and who has access to this resource serves as a demonstration of power to define and formulate media content (McChesney, 1999).

Most African countries have laws requiring their public service broadcasters to collect user license fees. Such license fees are typically collected through a third party such as the electricity company (in Mozambique), the salary of public workers (in Benin), or as in the case of Namibia, through the Post Office. While the collection of such licenses has often proven to be difficult, due to poor data on television and radio users, such licenses still rake in revenues ranging from 14 percent (in Namibia) to 76 percent in Cameroon (Bussiek, 2010). In Kenya, Githaiga et al., (2011) observe that support from government is ad hoc, inadequate and irregular resulting in KBC's current condition of being hugely indebted. The Kenyan case is reflective of most African broadcasters. Thus, almost all African national broadcasters, like their private commercial counterparts, are forced to rely on alternative sources of funding such as advertising and sponsorship. Some have taken the extra step of expanding their footprints by providing exclusive commercial services in addition to their public channels.

In the case of South Africa, its 1999 Broadcasting Act (the fourth) "divides SABC's service into 'public broadcasting services' intended to pursue socially desirable goals, and 'public commercial broadcasting services' intended to pursue business goals" (cited in Sparks, 2009: 206). The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has

operationalised this by expanding its operations, offering three commercial channels out of its 18 radio stations. Two of its television channels are public (SABC 1 and 2) with the third, SABC 3 operating as a commercial channel¹⁷. In Mozambique for instance, 60 percent of the 2009 budget of Radio Mozambique (RM) and TV Mozambique was from government subsidy. While radio Mozambique makes up for the shortfall through annual radio license, advertisements and sponsorship, TVM had to rely exclusively on advertisements and sponsorship to make up for its 40 percent shortfall since it does not benefit from user license fees (Mario et al., 2010: 95).

In their survey of 12 African countries and their funding models, Bussiek et al., summarized their findings as follows:

The percentage of income from audience fees¹⁸ varies between 14 per cent (in Namibia), 18 per cent (in South Africa and Zambia), 30 percent (in Mozambique), and 76 per cent of the total figure (in Cameroon). Government funding brings in just 2 per cent (in South Africa), 15 percent (in Zambia), or 24 per cent (in Cameroon), and goes up to the very substantial shares of 55 per cent (in Namibia), 60 percent (in Mozambique), and two thirds of overall income in Mali. Income generated from advertisements and sponsorships account for between 13 per cent (in Mozambique), 21 per cent (in Namibia), 61 per cent (in Zambia), 77 per cent (in South Africa), and 85 per cent (in Uganda) (Bussiek et al., 2013: 43-44).

The trend of increasing reliance on advertisements and sponsorship is similar for the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) which is reported to be relying almost entirely

¹⁷ As at 2004, the SABC was made up of the public radio division with 11 full spectrum sound services, a regional sound service KFM, a community sound service X-K FM, Lotus FM, Radio 2000, as well as two full spectrum multilingual channels SABC 1 and SABC 2. The public commercial arm comprises of three sound services 5 FM, Metro FM and Good Hope FM and one television channel SABC 3. The SABC also operates SABC Africa which is a pay television channel accessible on the DSTV digital satellite platform (ICASA, 2004: 16).

¹⁸ Annual audience fees vary between US\$ 1 per radio set and US\$ 6 per TV set (in Benin) and US\$ 28 per household in Namibia.

on advertising and sponsorship (Githaiga, et al., 2011).

What stands out of Bussiek et al's summary is not only the various funding permutations opened to African state/public broadcasting; but also the increasing role of advertising and sponsorship in its operations. While most national broadcasters are funded through a mix of audience fees, grants from government, advertising revenue and other services, it is also true that the rationale for the extension of such national broadcasters into commercial activities is to cross subsidize their less profitable channels. The expectation is that the commercial channels will cross subsidize the public channels as a means of reducing commercial influences on the latter's programs.

Bussiek et al (2011) point out though that this model, where the commercial cross subsidizes the public, does not seem to work in practice. The picture that is created, therefore, is that such national broadcasters still rely substantially on government funds even as they are forced to compete on the open market for advertising revenues to supplement their operational and programming shortfalls. This condition in which broadcasters rely increasingly on a commercial logic in order to better perform their PS mandates have consequences. Referring to this condition as "chronic schizophrenia," Teer-Tomaselli (2004: 25) argues that one of its offshoots is the provision of inexpensive programming that seek large market share rather than better audience reach which PSB should aspire to.

The response of commercial media to PSB's reliance on government grants has been predictable. They have often called for government-funded media not to compete on the advertising market, arguing that such continual reliance on advertising compromises diversity since it endangers the sustainability of the commercial sector and limits the

number of other viable broadcasters joining the competition. To this, national broadcasters are quick to point out that they cannot live up to their public service mandate if they are to rely exclusively on the hugely insufficient subsidies and fees. The likely consequence of this funding regime is that the state/public broadcaster is increasingly mimicking its commercial, private counterpart in operations and programming (Alhassan, 2005; Avle, 2013; Heath, 1988).

Like their commercial counterparts they offer more and more entertainment-heavy content that attracts listeners and viewers and sells easily to advertisers, and less and less innovative and unique programming for all that would justify public funding. They also opt for cheaper programmes (either foreign products or less costly local formats) and/or genres that will raise maximum advertising proceeds (such as programmes targeting those with higher incomes) (Bussiek, et al., 2011). The rebroadcast of news from foreign media organizations and wire services such as BBC, VOA, DW, RFI, Associated Press, prominently and regularly fill the airtime of such state owned broadcasters, often displacing more relevant local content (Moehler and Singh, 2011; van der Veur, 2003).

Additionally, sports, entertainment (such as foreign telenovelas and soap operas), and reality shows which are either cheaper to produce or tend to have larger audience reach have increasingly filled programming schedules of most state/public broadcasters. Such cheaper, tried and tested, less risky formats have not only resulted in less diversified programming; they have displaced human and public interest local content from broadcasting program schedules. Consequently, advertisers find it safer to sponsor and advertise on such “generic” less risky programs rather than locally produced versions

such as documentaries and investigative reports that could be critical of government or the status quo. Additionally, boundaries between advertorial and editorial content are getting increasingly blurred and this undermines not just the quality of programming, but also the professional credibility of staff/journalists (Bussiek et al., 2011; Maweu, 2014).

Maweu (2014) reports that in the National Media group of Kenya, content considered damaging to major advertisers may routinely be left out or glossed over. In some countries it has become standard practice for NGOs and even government agencies to pay for talk shows which focus on their activities – exclusively, uncritically and without viewers being advised of the fact. In Nigeria, for example, paid-for news are broadcast without alerting viewers by clearly indicating them as such (Bussiek et al., 2011). Another popular source of income is the sale of airtime to organizations or influential individuals for live coverage of events. At times interviewees will be charged for appearing on air. This state of affairs has led some to conclude that had it not been for the private media, Africa's second wave of independence would have been a fleeting illusion (Kasoma, 1995).

Such a conclusion tends to pitch the commercial media against the national, state-owned and run media, and defines commercial media as independent because they are largely seen as not being under government control or influence. But Ansah (1995) and Tettey (2001) caution against equating commercial media with independence since a close look at their programming shows them to be under other influences rather than political. They argue that being under the influence of commercial advertisers and sponsors affects the content of commercial media in ways similar to the influence of government grants and subventions on the content of state owned and run media. This

“mere shift in the locus of power” from political to economic players (Ansah, 1995) still endangers the editorial integrity of broadcasting, whether commercial or public.

If such commercial media keep their eyes glued to the profit margins more than the diversity of their programs, it is due in part to their mode of funding, while the other part reflects a mindset which defines its audience as consumers rather than citizens. For the PSB, the pressures of resorting to advertising and alternative sources of funding to stay competitive in the media market presents a “vulnerable value” (Blumler, 1993) which undermines one of its central mandates: the imperative to engage with its audience as citizens rather than consumers. In its pristine form, this normative of engagement with its public has been interpreted from the perspective of the broadcaster as providing education to its public. Similar to the Swedish version of “*Folkbildning*” or “to improve the minds of the Swedish people” (Hulten, 1995: 47), the public broadcaster generated program content with the primary aim of educating its audience for their own enlightenment as well as for national development.

While the difference between providing general education and uncritically propagating the policies of governments of the day after the second wave is difficult to distinguish, the fact remains that public broadcaster assumed a paternalistic posture, the teacher who taught its public. Under the guise of developmental journalism, this posture of broadcasting was encouraged and guided the editorial decisions of state/public broadcasters. In Uganda (Chibita, 2009), Zambia (Phiri, 1999), Kenya, (Heath, 1986) Ghana (Ansah, 1985), South Africa (Berger, 2004) and other parts of Africa, the public broadcaster mounted special programs, sometimes targeting illiterate adults. It is at this point in its development that the accusation of being “high minded” in its programming

strikes the loudest chord.

As Scannell (1995) points out, over time, just like their western counterparts, African broadcasters had to move from a “national” mindset, which reflected high-mindedness and elite tastes and definition of “public interest”, to being “popular, then pluralistic” (31). This meant paying greater attention to programs that reflected more the diversity of thought and cultures within the nation, and providing access to such voices to be part of the national discourse. This shift in the editorial mindset of public broadcasters was necessitated by the expansion of the media landscape, and the compulsion to address the needs of its audience if it is to attract advertising revenue which it still needs so badly to stay afloat. But, more importantly, as a democratic tool, such media could not possibly perform their constitutional mandate of permitting free expression unless they reflected the variety of opinions and beliefs in society. The response of public service broadcasting to this shift in its editorial mandate has oscillated between dogged paternalism, to unabashed commercialization of its airtime.

Some argue that PSB’s lack of attraction to its audience is due to its inability to shift from its all-knowing, high-minded, paternalistic posture of educating its audience. They point out that PSB has to include the interests of its audience in their programs even if such interests are sometimes considered banal or low. For such proponents, PSB has failed to stay relevant by its unwillingness to shift and be more engaging and reflective of the tastes of its audience. The dominant critique of PSB is that it has swung from providing socially relevant programs to being increasingly commercial in their programming to the point where it closely mimics its commercial counterparts. As the Nigerian example clearly points out, commercial considerations have come to play a

more prominent role in the editorial choices of PSB. In a similar vein, the capacity of SABC to export some of its programs to other parts of the African continent has not only been seen as an effort to commercialize and raise more capital, it has been interpreted by some as veiled neo imperialism (Ndlovu, 2010)¹⁹.

Whether or not funding is primarily to blame for this shift from high-mindedness to commercialization, the fact remains that PSB will be reneging on an important social and political duty unless it finds a balance between attracting advertising revenue and still providing socially relevant programming that reflects the diversity of society. The rest of the chapter focuses on how advances in technology have helped redefine the mandate of broadcasting in Africa, and equally importantly, if such advances have helped expand the frontiers of democratic interaction between PSB and its audience.

How advances in technology redefined and impacted on PSB's mandate and operations.

The Second Wave of Africa's independence coincided with the third phase of van Cuilenberg and McQuails (2003) media policy paradigm. This period, which began in the late 1980s onwards is marked by changes in the context of media policy driven by "technological, economic and social trends. In most countries, governments opted for policies of breaking monopolies in media and communications and privatizing as much

¹⁹ According to Ndlovu (2010), in the early 1990s, SABC launched Channel Africa, a radio service aimed at audiences in Africa and Indian Ocean Islands. Channel Africa is said to be providing radio programmes with a specifically African content. It broadcasts programmes in English, French, Kiswahili and Portuguese. In September 1995, the SABC implemented a DBS service offering more than three channels (Paterson 1998). Continuing with its advance into Africa, in 1998, the SABC, in conjunction with Multichoice Company, launched its two Africa-orientated pay channels: SABC Africa and Africa2Africa, on the DStv bouquet (299-300).

as possible”(200). This period differs in its emphasis from the “sociopolitical”, which marked the second period, to the current economic and other strategic concerns.

Due to the historical attachments of Africa to its colonialists, and how such relations affected the course of broadcasting after independence, there is a close relationship between the western world and its colonial satellites. Katz and Wedell (1977) point to the fact that most of the countries in Africa adopted broadcasting models developed from the USA, France, the United Kingdom or “one of the other colonial nations of Europe that were able to influence or even dictate the pattern of broadcasting in their dependent territories” (65). If their claim is true that the “factor that most determines the structure of broadcasting is technology” (67), then Africa’s dependence on western technology for its broadcasting could be said to have guided and defined its broadcasting systems.

At independence, the technology at the time defined broadcasting as a limited spectrum and a scarce national resource that should not only be controlled by the state, but also put to the benefit of all its citizens. This technology largely engendered a broadcasting system which was a monopoly, owned and run by the state with national footprints. The technologies that powered radio and television in the African states were wholly imported from the West. So pervasive was this dependence on technology from the west that some began to question if that situation did not amount to another form of colonialism. At a time when Africa’s development was linked to the availability of communication and its use, the (dis)-enabling role of communication technology ignited a debate in the 1970s about the need for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which ensured that the yawning gap between the information rich and

poor is reduced.

What stands out from the debates of the time was more than a mere recognition of information and communication as important components of development. It also set the tone for African media, especially broadcasters, to redefine their social and cultural mandate, as well as raise the need for new technology to be integrated into their operations to meet that aspiration. This period is characterized by the expansion of broadcasting technology, and global enthusiasm to supply such (communication) technology to Africa to aid in its development. The direct offshoot of this regime did not stop at debates about whether or not such imported technology automatically changes cultural traditions and attitudes of those who import them. It also raised concerns about how such expensive technology was likely to take a toll on the budgets of African governments and, more importantly, whether the expertise that came with such technology was not going to raise a new set of problems for the importing nations (Katz and Wedell, 1977).

By and large, the transfer of broadcasting technology from the West raised questions about Africa's preparedness to adopt "the implicit set of assumptions upon which the model of transfer is based" (Katz and Wedell, 1977). This went beyond the methods and systems of working associated with the technology to constraints of training engineers for its maintenance, and the cycle of relying on manufacturers for spare parts. It could be argued, therefore, that aside their historical linkages with their colonialists, and the broadcasting systems that African countries inherited or adopted at independence, the type of technology that powered Africa's broadcasting systems are influential determinants of how African broadcasting has fared over the period since independence.

From analogue to satellite, to digital to new media

In order to appreciate the chronology of broadcasting technology development and its impact on African broadcasters, it is helpful to differentiate the broadcasting process and its technology into production, transmission and reception stages. This is because technology for each stage developed at different times, and impacted on how other parts of the broadcasting chain operated in different ways. Initially, African broadcasters used analogue technology. Although this technology was workable, it was not the most efficient since it posed specific problems for African broadcasters. According to Katz and Wedell (1977), the specific geographic conditions of Africa with higher isotopes made the transmission of media content across entire nations a herculean task as signals quickly weakened across distances.

At the production front, most broadcasters produced local content and telecast sometimes at selected times of the day ranging from four to eight hours daily. Because radio was cheaper and a more established medium than television, it enjoyed a larger following and a deeper penetration in Africa. In view of its deeper penetration, radio in the beginning was the more patronized electronic medium.

The arrival of television might have taken the novelty from radio but radio still retained its prominence with deeper penetration and access throughout Africa (Open society Institute, 2005). Needless to say, due to the limited possibilities analogue technology offered, compared to the more recent digital, broadcasting was a one-to-many model where the broadcaster generated content and transmitted it to all who had the requisite sets to receive its signals. African broadcasters largely generated programs that targeted their national audiences and their focus was to act as a national glue, reflecting

the diverse nation to itself through careful programming. Not only was broadcasting linear, from one source to many without the possibility of feedback, but programs were scheduled and transmitted in real time, without the possibility of retrieving missed programs other than when broadcasters repeated such content.

The setting up of Union of Radio and Television Networks of Africa (URTNA) and Afrovision, its news exchange service, constituted a decisive landmark in the evolution of broadcasting in Africa (Eko, 2000). It marked for the first time, an African effort to share media content amongst its national broadcasters on the continent. According to the coordinator of Afrovision and chief Editor of Ghana Television news operations, the objective of Afrovision was "to break the vicious circle in which Africans learn what is happening on their continent from reports prepared by Northern news agencies, radio and television networks" (cited in Holmes, 1992: 24). Not only was this likely to expand the diversity of its programs through its exchange program in Kenya, it also meant that members of the association had to adopt satellite technology that enabled them to send and receive live news feeds from Algiers at appointed times (Holmes, 1996). Algeria, according to Dziekpor (1992), was selected because of its experience as a member of EUROVISION and the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) (cited in Holmes, 1996:142).

Once again, this project could not have been possible without the financial and technological assistance of Fredreich Ebert Foundation, in Germany; the Asian, Caribbean and European Broadcasting Unions (ABU, CBC, and EBU); and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (Holmes, 1996). Even with support, some of its 48 member countries either struggled or could not raise the resources required

to pay for the lump-sum rent of \$1,800 that INTELSAT charged for 40 minutes of satellite space per day, for five days. As Holmes (1996) points out, even with “financial and moral support from international agencies like FES, UNESCO, EBU, PANA, CRDI, and ASBU, the daily cost of the program (approximately \$100) has already become a burden for some member states (147).

Notwithstanding these difficulties, African broadcasters adopted satellite technology that enabled them to open up their programming scope, as well as improve upon their signal transmission to other member countries. For example, URTNA coordinated the broadcast over INTELSAT of the 1990 World Cup Soccer series to different African countries, thereby enriching their programming experience.

The introduction of cable, and later satellite technology, changed the ways in which audiovisual content was distributed. If the “focus of regulation in traditional terrestrial broadcasting was frequency allocation and content, then in the new technology context, both content and technology issues” are equally relevant since satellite communication made it possible for audiovisual signals to travel across national borders (71). In the 1990s, when the African broadcasting landscape was opening up to private and commercial players, such technology also fragmented the national audience, and opened up new markets for other broadcasting competitors.

Cable and satellite technology, especially for television made it possible for affluent markets to be reached by private operators since their larger economic base allowed them to operate such a capital intensive venture. For instance, an African digital multichannel TV service, MultiChoice DStv, could by 2003, “reach around 700,000 subscribers in Africa through four satellites, [...] catering for niche markets and pre-

empting the spread of cable TV in some of the more affluent urban centers” in Africa (Nyman-Metcalf et al., 2003: 74).

Technologically, broadcasting at this point could be defined to mean “radio frequency, satellite or cable TV transmission of program content (information) to a uni-directional electronic communications system open to the public, through subscription, [license] or otherwise” (Nyman-Metcalf et al., 2003: 74). What this definition points out is that while African national broadcasters were resorting to analogue technology for both the production and transmission of their content, their better resourced commercial competitors were broadcasting across national borders to their subscribed audience.

The attendant improvements in the audio and video quality of satellite transmission exerted pressure on national broadcasters, just as a wider bouquet of programs and the convenience of choice that subscribers enjoyed did. The national broadcaster, therefore, had to confront the fact that it was now competing for its national audience with better resourced commercial operators who also provided their subscribers with superior audiovisual reception and a wider programming range to choose from.

Equally importantly, for the first time, content generation and distribution on the African continent was carried out by different entities, thereby changing dramatically the definition of traditional broadcasting. Still dependent on government funds for the purchases of equipment, national broadcasters could not afford to acquire new technology to improve on their content collection and delivery channels and still resorted to outmoded equipment which had become prone to break downs. These perennial break downs made such national broadcasters slower, compared to their commercial counterparts, in transmitting local content; focusing more on maintaining their range of

programs instead of expanding their access and diversifying their content. As their transmission schedule became increasingly irregular, such national broadcasters lost their national audience in droves to their commercial counterparts who offered a wider range of programming for its subscribers.

Digitisation, the Internet and convergence exacerbated the situation for national broadcasters. With video, audio and text converging to form a data stream to be accessed on platforms other than traditional television and radio, their interactive value is threatening to make the word “unidirectional” redundant. The outcome of this technological development which Richerri (2004: 181) refers to as “internationalization and multimediality,” further fragments local broadcasting audiences into markets, as well as presents a wide variety of sources where such content could be accessed. But more importantly, African broadcasters no longer wield sole control over the generation, processing and transmission of broadcasting content to their hitherto “captive” national audience.

Although there is evidence that some African public broadcasters are expanding their access through new technology (Olorunnisola and Lugalambi, 2011; Teer-Tomaselli, 2004), their efforts pale in comparison with their better-resourced commercial counterparts who are cashing in on such technology. Considering these setbacks, it is admirable that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) exports content to other parts of the African continent. Besides the direct sale of their programs to other African broadcasters, the SABC also broadcasts on South African based MultiChoice DSTv subscription bouquet that reaches most parts of Africa (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 2009). Although Ndlovu (2003) sees this effort as expansionism, and an effort

by the SABC to transform itself from a national to a regional media organization, it is commendable that it is reaching a larger African market through such technology.

As Tomasselli argues, it is through such digital and converged technology that subscribers of M-Net in Africa could watch *Big Brother Africa* live and through text, contribute to the program by determining which of the participants should be ejected from the Big Brother house (2009). Their insights underline both the use of text as a viable means of raising revenue and, by extension, the emphasis such program content places on market share rather than audience reach. The force of Teer-Tomasselli and Tomasselli's (2009) argument is also evident in the ways technology is bringing to an end, "the old dominance of state-structured and territorially bounded public life" (191), while underlining the fact that with all the gutter sensationalism that the internet presents, it reignites the possibility of citizen participation and interaction in ways that traditional media alone could not have. They point out that "*Big Brother Africa* and other programs like it, may contribute in some way to the democratic process [by] mobilizing audience (ultimately comprised of citizen's) interests; encourage mass (virtual) participation (both voyeuristic and voting); and reward socially preferred patterns of choice (via electronic voting) (Tomasselli & Teer-Tomasselli, 2009: 197). This observation brings to the fore the contentious dilemma of the internet's access and democratic potential while on the other hand, questioning if access translates to use and if so, the nature of interaction between such users.

Keane (1996) points out that "the multiplicity of networked spaces of communication not tied immediately to territory" is eroding the hegemony of state structured and territorially bounded public life (cited in Teer-Tomasselli and Tomasselli,

2009: 199). The internet and the world wide web play a central role in this deterritorialization process globally and as Tettey (2009) points out, through the use of the internet, Africans in the diaspora are able to connect with home, building online communities that allow them to interface with one another in ways that they could not do in the not too distant past.

Phiri (1999) Moyo (2009), and Frere (2012) all give various instances in different parts of Africa where internet use has contributed to interactions between citizens of African nation states. Sheik (2011) for instance envisages that

whether on mobile phones or tablets, being online is rapidly becoming the norm in Africa. [...] boosting the continent's information and entertainment business and allowing African media houses such as the Nation Media Group (in the east) and Media24 (in the south) to expand their businesses around digital content tailored to local languages and markets (72).

But while these instances are useful and engender better online interaction and better democratic opportunities, the optimism that greeted the internet has proven to be hyperbolic in the view of “cybersceptics”. Preaching caution, “cybersceptics” argued that since life offline tends to replicate itself online, disparities in social conditions (political and economic) offline often find expression online among internet users (Dahlberg, 2010, Napoli, 2010). Consequently, where access to the internet is still very low as it is in some parts of the world, especially Africa, such limited access engendered by lack of economic power and illiteracy, do not automatically translate into effective use. In the midst of these contending claims, what is doubtless is that the advent of the internet and media convergence have made it possible for Africans to participate more actively in national discourse.

As Tettey (2001), Frere (2012) and others point out, the use of SMS, emails and

phone ins into live media programs have all expanded opportunities for active interaction between content generators and their consumers across multiple platforms. So whether it is during live radio phone ins in Ghana (Tettey, 2001), or in Uganda (Mwesige, 2009), or in Rwanda, Burundi and Central Africa Republic (Frere, 2012), or the use of new media during elections in Kenya (Nyabuga and Mudhai, 2009), there are clear instances where mobile telephony and other internet based technologies have facilitated inclusion of voices that otherwise were silenced in the formation of national discourse.

Notwithstanding the fact that technology infrastructure is largely to be provided by governments and African societies lag behind their Western counterparts (Teer-Tomaselli, 2004), African broadcasters have like their more advanced Western counterparts, taken advantage of this technological invention in various ways.

Through online streaming of their content, such broadcasters have expanded their coverage to others, especially their diasporan audience who would not have received such content otherwise. Additionally, the use of other online tools such as “viewers’ tweets now feature in a dedicated social media slot on the public broadcaster’s (SABC3) prime time television news broadcast” (Walton and Hyde-Clarke, 2013: 117). As Bosch (2010) reiterates, due to increased access to the Internet, digital journalism in South Africa has spread to include a strong focus on user-generated content, with traditional news media using Twitter and other social media to generate reader feedback.

It has become quite common for public service broadcasters in Africa to allocate portions of their news and current affairs programs to citizen journalists who post

audiovisual footage onto their websites²⁰. In addition, such broadcasters repurpose their traditional broadcast content as text with additional audiovisual links online. Such multimediality both provides better opportunities of engagement as well as provide readers with the chance for feedback. Although the opportunities internet technology provides African broadcasters have been celebrated, particularly in enabling better engagement between broadcasters and their audience, there have been instances when such citizen journalism has given cause for concern.

Pressure to keep up with a 24-hour news cycle has often resulted in slack gatekeeping and, ultimately, the broadcast of content from such citizen journalists, which has raised ethical concerns. Additionally, the quality of discourse from citizens is often trivial and opinionated, leading scholars to the conclusion that online journalism fails to meet the rigorous standards of professional journalism and, therefore, falls short of the democratic promise the technology offers to its users. Other reasons, such as the high cost of internet access²¹ and illiteracy can explain this seeming lack of quality engagement. A key concern, from the perspective of newsrooms, is that extension into online activities exerts undue pressure on in-house journalists as they are compelled to multitask across multiple platforms in order to run and sustain a 24-hour news cycle.

As newsrooms in African broadcasting organizations shrink in size, merge, and

²⁰ By June 2012, mobile teledensity in Rwanda had reached 44.4 percent (against 0.41 percent for fixed lines).

²¹ According to Frere (2012: 183), infrastructural shortcomings mean that the cost of access remains high, even if it is falling steadily. In 2007, 24-hour internet access cost US\$85.95 monthly in Burundi and US\$79.74 in Rwanda. It is now down to US\$36 in Burundi and US\$27 in Rwanda. A monthly subscription via mobile modem still costs US\$120 in the DRC. The size of the market remains limited because the poor and mainly rural population cannot yet participate as viable ICT consumers.

are forced to live up to a 24-hour news and content delivery, the PSB finds itself having to adopt the requisite technology to keep up, even if the acquisition of such technology depends on central government. Be it as it may, new media have impacted African broadcasters in three important ways. First, they have forced the organizations to repurpose their original broadcast content to larger online audiences across the borders of their nation states. It has also forced a shift in posture from a patriarchal, matronly educator to another that accommodates its audiences as both consumers and generators of media content. Not only have these developments highlighted and deepened a culture of online social interaction between interactants, thereby sidestepping the hitherto central role of PSB as the unavoidable communicative space for such interaction, this social condition has, in return, forced the creation of new editorial practices within such media organizations and the ways of interacting with their audiences.

Even before African broadcasters have had the chance to expand their hold and more fully integrate new media and the Internet into their operations, the global call to migrate to full digital reception by June of 2015 is exerting enormous pressure on the budgets of African governments and, by extension, public broadcasters (Bussiek et al., 2012). Except South Africa, Kenya, and Rwanda, all other African countries have not been able to meet the statutory requirement of full digital migration by June 2015 deadline. Considering the capital-intensive nature of this infrastructure, African broadcasters await with abated breath for their central governments to provide the resources for a successful migration. Even when such broadcasters have fully migrated digitally to be able to generate and transmit their content, the receiving technology required to complete the “broadcasting” cycle could remain a headache for them and their

audience.

Ultimately, the new digital migration policy sounds like a replay of the effects of previous technologies in societies: its diffusion and acceptance vary from society to society depending on such variables as culture, economics, the political climate, and the individual choice to adopt such new technology. Without the economic means to afford such expensive digital reception technology due to the high poverty rate in Africa, it is reasonable to forecast, using the density of telephony and other internet driven technology in Africa, that the television set as a preferred viewing option will become increasingly obsolete. PSBs in Africa will have to invest their resources in the development of online applications that allow their audience access to their content through cheaper mobile devices. If PSB fails to adopt such new technologies to reinvent itself from content generation through to reception, it stands the chance of being asphyxiated due to its inability to navigate the technology jungle.

In the concluding segment of this chapter, I situate my case study, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) within the larger African media narrative outlined above. I do so by drawing parallels and highlighting differences that might account for its (in)-ability to fully operate as a PSB, as envisioned by the Constitution of Ghana.

How the GBC fits within the larger African media narrative.

Like most of its other African counterparts, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) is also a colonial invention, having been established as Radio ZOY in 1935 by the colonial Governor Hodson. Although a couple of local newspapers with smaller circulation were in existence, the colonial government did not particularly pay them any

attention since they did not see them as posing any threat within a population that was largely illiterate. When radio was established, it immediately gained the attention of the local population, and served as an important source of entertainment and a propaganda tool of the colonial government of the time. As a wired, relay service, radio ZOY rebroadcast content from the BBC to its Ghanaian subscribers, and except in few instances, listenership was communal. As Ansah describes it, when the voice of King George of England was heard on radio ZOY during its inauguration, the crowd in Palladium, a suburb of Accra was thrilled at the invention. This meant that from its inception, radio was not only under the control of the government, it also served as a rallying point for communal interaction among its listeners.

I underline the active newspaper culture that existed alongside radio because as Holmes points out, in addition to serving as a crucial rallying point for protest and agitation for independence, the first generation of African leaders, including President Nkrumah of Ghana were either notable owners or journalists who used these newspapers for their political agitation. It is this first-hand experience of the mobilizing capacity of mass media that many believe hardened the resolve of such African leaders not to decentralize broadcasting after independence, but to continue to deploy it in much the same way as the colonialists who introduced it: as a propaganda, political tool (Bourgault, 1995).

At independence in 1957, central government changed the name of Radio ZOY to Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). It also inherited a report by the Grenfell Commission set up by the colonial government in 1953 to advise government on how to transform GBC into a PSB (Grenfell Commission report, 1953). Under three subheadings

of “structure”, “organization” and “finance”, the Grenfell Commission produced a 12-point recommendation towards GBC’s transformation. The relevant highlights of the report include” (1), that the status of the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service having the status of a government department, with its staff appointed through the Public service Commission; (2) a commitment by the government to fund the broadcasting service; (3) the partial control/oversight of the broadcasting service by minister of state; (4) levying of “wireless receiving licenses;” and (5), decentralization of the service and promotion of local languages; and (6) not shying away from generating controversial program content (Grenfell commission, 1953).

If I highlight these recommendations it is because in addition to very clearly setting out a blueprint for the establishment of a public service broadcaster, it also, structurally, places the broadcasting service under the supervision and control of a minister of state. It comes as little surprise that except to continually fund its operations and tighten its controls, almost all the recommendations of the Grenfell Commission were ignored by the government after independence.

At the inception of Television broadcasting 30 years later in 1965, the now Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) focused on propagating government policies, and was guided in its editorial decisions by “developmental journalism”. Editorially, GBC was closely aligned to the government by propagating its messages and ensuring that it was not put in bad light. As Ansah (1992) and Banda (2007) argue, the state of government monopoly on broadcasting in Africa and its attendant “developmental journalism” focused on educating and informing the people more than engaging in a rigorous discussion of government programs. This was the predominant thinking at the time in

Africa and government monopoly was “seen as necessary and inevitable at this stage of national development” (Ansah, 1991).

One ought to be reminded that “developmental journalism” was not merely an editorial stance but a philosophical position anchored in the creation of a “revolutionary press” which articulated an alternative form of social justice for Africans, or as Nkrumah puts it, “establish a progressive political and economic system upon our continent that will free men from want and every form of injustice” (cited in Banda, 2007: 156). This ideological position entailed greater state control of the media, and a departure of private ownership of media evident during the colonial period” (Banda, 2007). It is this position that shaped the post-independence media, especially broadcasting as instruments of this revolutionary ideology where journalists and politicians alike saw the media as forging national and continental unity, encouraging economic development, and serving formal and social education including adult literacy” (Banda, 2007: 157). The operations of GBC were, therefore, guided by the philosophical and editorial aspirations of “developmental journalism” until Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966 by the National Liberation Council, a military junta.

The National Liberation Council Decree 226²² of 1968 still, largely, serves as the

²² The mandate of GBC, according to Ghana Broadcasting Decree 1968 (NLCD 226), is as follows:

1. To broadcast programmes in the field of culture education, information and entertainment to reflect national progress in the main Ghanaian languages and in English.
2. To provide as a public service, independent and impartial broadcasting services (sound and television) for general reception in Ghana.
3. To, in collaboration with such departments of state as may be appropriate, provide an external sound service through transmission for general reception in Ghana.
4. The Corporation may engage in commercial broadcasting through the sale of paid advertisement scheduled at prescribed spots in its programme service.

statutory basis for the governance of GBC. In addition to formalizing GBC's role as the mouthpiece of government, it also for the first time, allowed paid advertising on the service. The direct consequence of this was the introduction of "an important and popular service: commercial broadcasting on both radio and television" (GBC Brochure, 12). GBC Radio Two was instituted as the commercial service of GBC, and advertising became an important source of revenue for the organization. But above all else, this decree signaled government's intention to cede its role as the dominant financier of GBC, considering that radio licenses constituted only a paltry sum of the organization's revenue stream.

Equally importantly, the External Service of GBC, which transmitted in seven²³ languages to a worldwide audience, was discontinued due to "technical and financial difficulties" (*GBC Newsletter*, 2010: 41). What the discontinuation of the external service and the introduction of advertising and commercial broadcasting shows, is a change in the direction of GBC. From a national broadcaster playing a continental role of

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5. In its public service broadcasting the corporation is expected to provide for
- a) Government pronouncements or speeches by members of the National Liberation Council (the then military junta in 1968)
 - b) Party political speeches dealing with the views and policies of the various political parties.
 - c) Speeches expressing different points of view on matters of controversy;
 - d) Matters of any kind (including religious services or ceremonies) representing the main stream of religious thought or belief in the country.

²³ Launched in 1961, the "External Service of Radio Ghana beamed information, propaganda, and messages of support to peoples struggling for freedom and self-determination in all parts of Africa. Programs were broadcasts in Arabic, Bambara, English, French, Hausa, Portuguese, and Swahili. [...] Beyond Africa, the service reached North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia" (GBC Anniversary Brochure, 2010: 41). The Short Wave service relied on four 100-Kilowatt transmitters at Tema, and two high powered 250 Kilowatts transmitters stationed at Ejura.

propagating revolutionary content to freedom fighters on the continent, GBC's focus was shifted to being a national broadcaster with a more national focus, expected to rely on the market for part of its funding.

From 1968, till the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1992, successive governments have continued to withdraw their financial support from GBC while their interest and control over its operations remain unchanged. Sometimes such controls got tighter under military governments which, typically, introduced or activated colonial decrees that criminalized speech as well as resorted to extra judicial killings of critics (Gadzekpo, 1995).

Needless to say, the GBC at the dawn of the Fourth Republic of Ghana was a typical state owned and run monopoly broadcaster, structurally and operationally integrated into the state, and largely perceived by its audience as its mouthpiece (Ghana Broadcasting Study, 2005). Like its counterparts, the "second wave" of democracy presented GBC with formidable challenges that forced it to respond to a changing regulatory landscape. The loss of its privileged position as a state owned and funded monopoly; the imperative to redefine itself as a public broadcaster serving the needs of all; as well as perform this mandate by relying on advertising revenue have defined the contours of GBC since 1992.

The impact of the 1992 constitution on the mandate and profile of GBC

The fourth Republic of Ghana ushered in a multi-party democracy with a Constitution that guaranteed freedom of association and expression as entrenched rights, and the institution of the rule of law as the cornerstone of Ghana's Republic. While the

institution of a multi-party democracy meant the freedom to choose, and by extension, the right to participate, it also underscored the right to free expression and deliberation as important pillars upon which Ghana's democracy rested (Gyimah-Boadi, 1998).

Liberalism on the other hand, promoted the right to private ownership, including the media. The expansion of the media landscape has been seen as a direct result of these democratic aspirations.

By the end of 2011, GBC had a national presence of two national short-wave networks, 10 regional FM stations and one national television station broadcasting various programs in different languages from different parts of the country. According to the National Communication Authority, there were 247 licensed FM stations (with 29 not in operation) and 28 authorized television stations during the period (NCA Report, 2012: 1). Additionally, the constitution put in place such institutions as the National Communication Authority (NCA), to regulate licensing and operations, and the National Media Commission (NMC), to regulate the conduct of media. As the preamble of the National Media Policy developed by the NMC points out, changes in the media landscape necessitates changes in the regulatory regime of media in Ghana to reflect changes in technology, media ownership, and journalistic practice among others.

Constitutionally mandated to perform a public service role within a competitive media landscape, the GBC found itself in an unfamiliar position of competing for both advertising revenue and a portion of a now fragmented audience. Using new technology and establishing a stronger regional presence with 10 FM stations in each regional capital were some of the ways GBC responded to the new media landscape (Heath, 2001; Ghana Broadcasting Study, 2005). Both technologically and operationally, therefore, GBC was

responding to the competition by adopting FM technology that ensured better audio quality while, at the same time, decentralizing some of its operational and editorial powers to the various regional offices which operated the FM stations. By stationing a television crew in each of the 10 regional stations, GBC was also spreading its production and news net to enable the regions to be better covered in its programs and “be closer to the people it broadcasts to” (Owusu-Addo, 2013, personal communication).

Equipped with a digital Electronic Newsgathering camera and accessories in each of the 10 regions, GBC also positioned itself to change how it gathered, and processed its content. By acquiring such lighter Digital Electronic Newsgathering cameras with microchips instead of tapes, with digital audio and nonlinear video editing suites to match, it was faster and easier to gather and process content, although such content was still transmitted via satellite to analogue television receivers. Through a careful deployment of latest technology and decentralizing its operations into the regions, GBC signaled its preparedness to meet the competition by expanding access and integrating its audience more into its programming through more local language use and interactive programming.

Structurally, the Ministry of Information continued to exercise oversight responsibilities over GBC. Till date, the GBC routes its requests for government funding through the Ministry of Information to Parliament for approval. But even in the face of such “remnants” of government control, one is reminded of the fact that it took two court actions to clarify GBC’s public service mandate as well as strengthen its editorial and operational independence. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) sued the GBC in 1992 for failing to live up to its obligation of providing “equal access to divergent views” (Article

163, 1992 Constitution of Ghana) when it refused to cover its press conference to rebut claims the incumbent National Democratic Congress (NDC) had made on the economy. In its ruling, the Supreme Court pointed out that GBC, the defendant, had erred by not granting the NPP the same amount of airtime as the NDC since the mandate to ensure “equity and fairness to divergent opinions is not discretionary” (Chief Justice Archer, 1992)²⁴.

In the second court ruling, after the appointment of the 9th Director General of GBC by the President, the National Media Commission (NMC) went to court to seek proper interpretation of the constitutional provision that, it believed, gave it authority as the appropriate body to appoint chief executives of state owned media houses and not the President (*Media Monitor*, 1996)²⁵. The Commission contended that

such an authority (by the President) would not only do violence to the clear language of the Ghanaian Constitution, which named the Commission as the appointing authority acting in consultation with the President, but would also set at naught and frustrate the Constitution's commitment to guarantee the independence and freedom of the media (Article 19).

If the NMC today appoints both Chief Executives and Governing Board members of state owned media including GBC, it is thanks to the 2000 court ruling that empowered it, and in the process, reinforced its role to insulate the media from “governmental control”. The two court rulings are significant in recounting the forces that defined public broadcasting in Ghana because, while one emphasized editorial

²⁴ In this case numbered GBR 522, Chief Justice Archer pointed out that 'Equal access' means the “same or near-identical terms and conditions for gaining entry into the state-owned media for the purpose of presenting their political, economic and social programmes to the electorate, and persuading them to vote for them in both parliamentary and Presidential elections. This means that the same time or space must be given to each political party, large or small, and if fees are payable, that they should be the same for all. The officers of the state-owned media have no discretion in the matter” (536).

²⁵ National Media Commission vs. Attorney General, WRIT NO 2/96, 20-1-2000.

impartiality and program diversity, the other underlined the need for a public broadcaster to be independent of governmental control. That notwithstanding, if Ansah's caution is true that absence of government control without a corresponding freedom from advertisers amounts to a mere shift in the locus of power, then GBC's increasing reliance on advertising must be seen as little comfort.

The incompatibility of commercial imperatives and public service broadcasting ideals has been well demonstrated (Barnett, 1998; Blumler, 1993; Engleman, 1996; Herman & McChesney, 1997; Raboy, 1996). The inherent contradictions in this arrangement and their likely effects on the programming of GBC is aptly surmised by Duodu, a former Director of Ghana Television who points out that

[i]n the end, a nation deserves the kind of public service that it gets. When we devise an infantile system where a party in power pays the salaries of all the employees of the GBC (via the Minister of Information) and furnishes it with expensive cameras and other sophisticated satellite devices and then expect the station to have nothing to do with the party that feeds it then we are simply being naïve (*Daily Graphic*, 2004).

What this extensive quote points to is not only the effects such state-media relations could have on the editorial integrity of GBC, it also gains ominous significance if one takes into account the emergence of cross media owners whose political affiliations are well known, either by their conduct, or because they are elected politicians such as members of Parliament.

As it prepares to be digitally compliant, the GBC has increased its transmission onto 6 other digital television channels, increased its presence online, and is making efforts to merge its radio and television newsrooms into a single one. As stakeholders consult among themselves to pass a broadcasting bill into law, it is envisaged that the broadcasting landscape will be better structured and regulated to reflect the concerns of

public service broadcasting within a very fluid media environment where commercial players often speak with a clear neoliberal accent (Ghana Broadcasting Study, 2005).

GBC describes itself as a

giant electronic media (radio and television) organization. [...] GBC has one National television station and three [sic] digital terrestrial TV channels, which are currently being piloted in Accra and Kumasi as well as one national radio and 15 FM stations spread over the length and breadth of the country (GBC Newsletter, January, 2015: 28).

Like its counterparts on the African continent, it continues to bear the remnants of history as it struggles to stay true to its public service mandate even as it is forced to rely increasingly on commercial sources of revenue. Richerri (2004) attributes this conundrum to high production cost and lower revenues through licenses; fragmentation of audiences due to digital technology; and the shrinking of audience shares due to fragmentation. All of these factors coalesce to undermine PSB's *raison d'être* and continual relevance. How to address this remains a central question, and this study is seeking to explore its resolution in the context of GBC.

Chapter Four - Theoretical Framework

Critical Political Economy of Media Institutions and Practice

Two dominant issues that continue to gain the attention of media scholars are (1) whether, in the face of media pluralism and technological convergence, PSB in its original form is still relevant; and if so, (2) what changes it has to undergo to maintain its social and political relevance. Answers to these questions differ, sometimes markedly. But in the midst of the differences, Raboy is right in pointing out that while these concerns are global, specific sociopolitical conditions necessitate different approaches to their resolution. For these reasons, whether in more developed democracies or in emerging ones, the question about the continued role and relevance of already established PSB, or former state-owned ones transiting into PSB, remain similar. So that whether it is the impact of high production cost and lower revenues through licenses, the fragmentation of audiences due to digital technology, and the necessity to resort increasingly to advertising due to such audience fragmentation (Richerri, 2004), the same issues translate in different forms in different regions of the world.

Political Economy's principal focus on how the state, the free market and the individual's interests intersect in social relations is grounded in the conviction that institutions such as the media have the capacity to be put to the service of the political elite to the exclusion of sections of society. The legislative role of the state and the extent of (de)-regulation of national institutions such as the media, ultimately affect how the media are owned, funded and used. Typically, political economy has focused on the central issue of social justice and the need to see information and media as a public resource by critiquing who owns the media, how it is funded and operated, and as Wasko

(2010) puts it, whose interests it serves. This study's research questions about what legislative and policy initiatives define and regulate the operations of a public broadcaster as well as how its funding could facilitate such a media institution to perform its public service mandate, therefore, sit at the heart of critical political economy and its concerns.

The extent of the state's intervention in (de)-regulating a former "state-owned media" such as the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation within a liberal, multiparty democracy therefore speaks to political economy's interests in how political and economic resources are harnessed and shared to ensure social justice and collective emancipation. While other approaches might speak to similar concerns, they differ importantly from political economy in the weight the latter puts on power, be it access to social, cultural, political and economic resources, as well as the huge role it plays in how society is organized and run. The options opened to a media organization in its efforts to operate within such a society are, therefore, seen as a contestation between forces and interests (institutional politics), out of which the choice of one over another either facilitates or stymies outcomes, and ultimately, social justice.

In the remainder of the chapter, I will tease out the defining characteristics of critical political economy as a theoretical approach, focusing on its preponderant focus on history, the need to transcend methodological borders, and the centrality of morality and social justice as outcomes to which research should aspire. The epistemological and ontological implications of critical political economy will show the advantages of engaging with both "privileged" and experiential knowledge, as well as demonstrate how lived experience and worldviews are the result of negotiations among interactants with unequal resources. It is within this specific theoretical context that the response of a

media institution such as GBC, to the social, political and economic forces that regulate and operate it, will be assessed.

Critical political economy: its tenets, epistemology and ontological assumptions

Like most theories, Political Economy has evolved over time. From being a way of studying relations within the Greek household, or the *oikos*, it evolved from this original meaning into other variants such as Classical and Neoclassical Economics. When Economics later detached to become a “science” that measured its variables and insisted on empiricism as an important basis of its knowledge, political economy came to be seen largely as the interaction between state institutions, or public life, and the conduct of the individual. Over time, political economy came to represent a way of examining the conduct of the individual within public life, including the market, and the state’s role in facilitating and regulating the interaction.

The rationale for pointing out the evolution of political economy is not merely to show that its present tenets will unavoidably reflect these shifts, it is also to underline the fact that political economy is not monolithic. If Political Economy has become an umbrella theory that describes various concerns about the confluence of the market and the state, it is because it speaks to a wide range of social issues, and the choice of one form or another depends on where emphasis is laid, and the type of questions one seeks to address.

Critical Political Economy (CPE), according to Murdoch and Golding (2000: 73), is “interested in the interplay between economic organization and political, social and

cultural life. [...] It traces the impact of economic dynamics on the range and diversity of public cultural expression and its availability to different social groups” (2000: 73).

These interests point to important areas where Critical Political Economy differs from other disciplines such as Economics: classical, neoclassical or mainstream, and for that matter where it places its emphasis as a research endeavor. Unlike other approaches such as Media Economics, which echoes the concerns of mainstream (Neoclassical) Economics and tends to avoid political and historical analysis, Critical Political Economy is characterized by four definable features namely: emphasis on the historical; a holistic view; concerns with moral questions of justice; and a focus on praxis or practical efforts, to seek social change (Golding and Murdoch, 1991; 2000; Mosco, 2009). In other words, Political Economy’s concerns go beyond a search for “balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention, [...] to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good” (Mosco, 2009: 72).

In addition to contrasting CPE with other approaches with which it shares a common stock, these features also shed light on the epistemological and ontological assumptions of CPE and underline critical areas that set it apart. For instance, by attempting to address the “power blindness” charge often leveled against mainstream Economics and its over emphasis on the empirical, the holistic approach of CPE serves as an effort at studying not only structures and their formations, but also the centrality of power as an unequal resource which affects how such institutions operate within their social and political milieu. It is in respect of addressing such “inadequacy” that CPE, for instance, conceptualizes the social not as an already existing structure, *a priori*, but as constitutive and negotiable among active social interactants.

Because power played a central role in its definition and orientation, Critical Political Economy, in its epistemology, places a huge premium on the individual's experiential knowledge within his/her social context. What informs this position is not simply that power is an important social resource which, depending on how it is allocated, affects access and an individual's place in social relations, it also signaled Critical Political Economy's readiness to go beyond the objectivist and positivist demands of empiricism to examine the factors that bring about such social conditions. The four tenets earlier outlined should, therefore, be seen both as philosophical underpinnings and methods by which CPE engages with its concerns and interests. Critical Political Economy's emphasis on the role of history in scholarship is informed by the recognition that "rather than concentrating solely or primarily on immediate events, [...] a full understanding of contemporary shifts must be grounded in an analysis of transformations, shifts, and contradictions that unfold over long loops of time" (Wasko et al., 2011: 2).

The goal of understanding social change through a careful study of both present and the historical constitutes an important pillar in CPE. CPE's emphasis on history, as a theoretical foundation, is due in large measure to its intrinsic effort to consider both context and patterns as valuable definers in the study of epochs, human agents and the institutions they create. The objective is to "identify both cyclical patterns of short-term expansion and contraction as well as long-term transformative patterns that signal fundamental change in the system" (Mosco, 2009: 26). This involves the "analysis and critique of existing society across its span [...] making it] necessary to think afresh about the overall historical record." (Schiller, 1996: vii). In the opinion of Clement (2001), this

fundamentally historical nature of political economy springs out of the approach's efforts to "seek understanding of the social transformations, including the agents and forces of change" (cited in Mosco, 2009: 28).

This is exactly what McChesney (2008) does when he reviews the "historical record" of journalism in America, by outlining the social, commercial and political forces that over time, shaped and chiseled journalism into a paid profession. By chronicling key journalistic developments beyond the past two decades, McChesney (2007) demonstrates both the importance of history in "understanding how media systems are established and changed" (xv), as well as argue that such transformational moments, or "critical junctures" provide opportunities to change communication regimes. Such a process requires both a critical review of existing communication systems as well as the historical forces that gave rise to their existence.

Bagdikain (2004) and Olorunnisola and Tomaselli (2011), rely on history to show respectively, the shifts in the editorial choices of giant media in America and the structural transformations of the media in South Africa during and after Apartheid. Like McChesney, they recognize that "a full understanding of contemporary shifts must be grounded in an analysis of transformations, shifts, and contradictions that unfold over long loops of time [...] rather than concentrate solely or primarily on immediate events" (Wasko et al., 2011: 2).

It is not only in history and long loops of time that CPE looks out for social formations, shifts and contradictions, it does so by also examining the "social whole or the totality of social relations that make up the economic, political, social and cultural areas of life" (Mosco, 2009: 3-4). This is the point Wasko et al. (2011) seem to be

underlining when they argue that CPE expresses this “holistic” mindset by focusing on the relations between economic practices and social and political organizations rather than see the economy as a bounded and specialized domain.

The epistemological implication of examining the social in its totality is that such an approach reflects inclusiveness and rejects essentialism, “which would reduce all social practice to a single political economic explanation, in favor of an approach that views concepts as entry points or starting points into a diverse social field” (Resnick and Wolff, 1987, 2006, cited in Mosco, 2009). If CPE deploys triangulation in its data gathering and analysis method, it is due to this philosophical underpinning to reject any form of essentialism and to use concepts as entry points to a diverse field. In commenting on how Mamdani’s study of life in rural India merged Political Economy and Ethnography, Pendakur (1993) highlights this political economy feature, and encourages a mesh between the two approaches since “political economists see communication, not as a general, abstract phenomenon, but as a bond between real people taking place in real time and real place (cited in Pendakur, 1993: 88).

Unlike mainstream Economics that increasingly decoupled from moral philosophy in its quest to be more objective and “scientific”, CPE shares its attachment to moral philosophy through its continual focus on issues of social justice, and equitable distribution of resources aimed at building a fair and democratic society. In the context of developing nations, this quest is reflected in efforts to correct, especially, the economic and information asymmetries between the more advanced capitalist democracies of the North and emerging democracies. This orientation was largely manifested in two ways: by “forging a critique of modernization approaches” and presenting “a spectrum of

perspectives, best known as dependency theory” (Mosco, 2009: 97).

For this reason, political economy had over time developed a vigorous agenda seeking solutions to immediate social problems. The debates of the 1970s around the formation of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) are lasting examples of what political economy sees as necessary for correcting social injustice. For the political economist, the issues at stake go beyond simple questions of access, to how such access translates into effective tools of inclusion and/or exclusion of disempowered voices from exercising their human right to free speech and association. If there is lack of political engagement with the audience of such a communication system, it is due largely to how it conceptualizes its audience as consumers rather than as citizens (Dahlberg, 2005, 2007; Dahlgren 1995, 2005; Mansell, 2004; 2010; McChesney, 2012; Smythe, 1981). Ayish’s (2005) “From ‘many voices one world, to many worlds one voice’” is exemplary in the ways it articulates an alternative, Third World view of social justice engendered through fair and equitable communication access.

Closely linked to its quest for social equity and a fairer, more democratic society is the CPE tenet of praxis, what Adorno referred to as the “emancipatory” objective of critical research. By seeing praxis as the “fundamental unity of thinking and doing” (Mosco, 2009: 4), CPE viewed “intellectual life as a means of bringing about social change and social intervention as a means of advancing knowledge” (Mosco, 2009: 4). It is this “obligation to follow the logic of their analysis through into practical action for change” (Wasko et al., 2011: 2) that gives CPE its critical edge and defines its philosophical attachments with the Frankfurt critical tradition.

In several respects, the epistemological concern of praxis or forging for social change is premised on a recognition for moral philosophy which places the underprivileged not only at the centre of its enquiry, but also as a knowledgeable, non-expert subject whose experiential and knowledge systems constitute important facets of society. The corollary to this is the implicit obligation CPE places on the researcher to be reflexive in his/her encounter with such social realities since, according to Garfinkel, (1967), “ways in which s/he portrays social realities simultaneously describe and constitute the realities” (cited in Silverman 2004: 36).

The adoption of a “social totality” was not restricted only to epistemological questions of how knowledge was generated and its place in society; it also pointed to a new orientation of what constitutes the social. Ontologically, political economy saw the world as socially constructed through the active interaction, even contestation amongst subjects with unequal resources. Without disregarding the role power plays within this interaction, it underscores the active involvement and contestation inherent in social relations and how the social is a product of such a process. For this reason, political economy sees the world not as a structure existing a priori, but as a process that various stakeholders with unequal access to resources, including political and economic power, constantly negotiate (Mosco, 2009).

I deploy CPE to the study of media and communications due to its capacity to “link the media and communication systems to how both economic and political systems work, and social power is exercised, in society” (McChesney, 2008: 12).

Institutional politics

In his critique of Political economy, Garnham (2005) pointed out that while it has the capacity to describe “broad patterns of cultural output, distribution and consumption,” it tends not to place equal emphasis on what Golding and Murdoch (2005:61) call the “micropolitics of everyday meaning making,” (cited in Havens et al., 2009: 238).

Garnham points out that paying attention to some of the “micropolitics” will require a “detailed analysis of the production process and a focus on cultural producers as a status or class group, on the labour process, and on the relationship between producers and consumers” (cited in Haven et al., 2009: 238).

In making reference to this important observation, I seek to draw attention to the need to focus on both the larger media institution with all its subsidiaries, while remaining alert to the possibilities of tension and contestations that operate at specific sites of production within the larger institution. Garnham’s suggestion is particularly important because it offers a view that pays attention to inner workings of the media institution. Considering that GBC’s response, especially its editorial and operational conduct, constitutes an important question of this study, a focus on its institutional politics allows such a concern to be adequately addressed since it recognizes the institution as made up of parts contending for scarce resources.

I underline the relations between political economy and institutions (read here as a sociocultural, economic and political entities) only to emphasize the peculiar nature of the media institution both as a recognizable organization, and as an entity defined by a set of rules. In this regard, the view of institutions “as determinate sets of rules, resources and relations which have some degree of durability in time and some extension in space, and

which are bound together for the purposes of pursuing some overall objectives” (Thompson, 1995: 12-13) is a good starting point for comparison. For Huntington (1965), institutions are identified as "stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior” (394) within what Bourdieu (1996: 40) sees as “structured social space, a field of forces, a force field”.

In their analysis of media institutions’ effects on content, Shoemaker and Reese (1992) operationalized media organizations/institutions as

the social, formal, usually economic entity that employs the media worker in order to produce media content. It has definite boundaries, such that we can tell who is and who isn’t a member. It is a goal directed, composed of interdependent parts, and bureaucratically structured- members perform specialized functions, in standardized roles (144).

In addition to their key characteristics such as the presence of professions, formal procedures and longevity, institutions tend to possess inbuilt “hierarchies of employees” who perform specific organizational roles guided in most cases by formal rules of conduct (cited in Moe and Syversten, 2007: 149-150). Institutions, therefore, tend to be defined by a set of rules; the interactions that constitute their operations as well as their stability.

In contrast to their “stable and lasting” nature, institutions also possess “immaterial aspects - norms, interpretations, values, discourses and ideas circulating within and around specific social practices” (cited in Moe and Syversten, 2007: 150). Therefore, in conceptualizing a media organization as an institution, and underlining the politics that give rise and meaning to its existence and operations, Institutional Politics allows a public broadcasting entity to be seen as both a specific organization with boundaries, or as part of a sphere.

Conceptualized as a sphere, media institutions are studied along the lines of what

authorities, practices, and discourses [are] common to the media industry at large—the cultural and democratic functions of the media, its legal and normative framework, journalistic norms and conventions and so on. [As] specific organizations, media institutions are looked at in a more limited way: specific newspapers, media enterprises, advertising agencies and broadcasting corporations (Moe and Syversten, 2007: 150).

Although this distinction is helpful in terms of their various foci, it is important to underline that the politics that govern a media institution, such as a public broadcaster, is better appreciated if it is seen with both lenses, as spheres and specific organizations.

For this reason, institutional politics is conceptualized as both the permanent, material and immaterial tenets of a broadcasting corporation not only in the specific organizational sense, but also as part of a larger sphere with which it shares commonalities and differences. As many have demonstrated in earlier works (Bagdikian, 2004; Herman and Chomsky, 1989; McChesney, 1999, 2000, 2007; McChesney and Herman, 1997; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996), the media institution is constantly evolving within an economic and sociopolitical environment in its quest to survive. While institutional politics implies the media organization's relations with its external stakeholders at the macro level, it also focuses even more on how the various parts of the bigger complex work towards the attainment of a collective and corporate goal. But as Haven et al., (2009) demonstrate, it is not always that the strategy of the larger institution squares with the tactics of its workers, thereby underlining how power gets exercised at diffused sites, within the bigger organization.

McLean (2005) points to one way in which such institutional engineering could manifest. His study of CKCK Television in Regina, Canada, showed that after the organization's concentration, editorial decisions did not only cede to headquarters, but were increasingly linked to commercial considerations that often resulted in severe

reductions in the coverage of regional stories by an ever-dwindling editorial staff. His findings, therefore, underscore, on the one hand, CKCK's internal workings amongst its various components, including its new editorial practices. On the other hand, it also traced the rationale for CKCK's redefinition as a response to competitive economic and political changes.

Klinenberg's (2005) analysis of Metro news, after it horizontally converged, is another example of the several ways hitherto strict editorial routines get redefined, resulting in more collaboration between journalists and other "(non) artistic staff". Additionally, he concludes that the "consequences of the emergent journalistic and managerial practices" have created conditions where

convergence news companies expect their journalistic staff to be flexible and fast, and both editors and corporate managers are already revaluing their workers, considering multimedia skills in their story assignments as well as in hiring and retention decisions (59).

As the McClean (2005) and McKnight (2010) studies show, the "new" converged organization often involves the introduction of new technology, the imposition of a new corporate logic, and significant levels of control from media owners. For the workers, acquiring new skills, such as the ability to multitask, becomes a potential constraint that exerts pressure on editorial staff and often results in contestations over how such skill should be used and rewarded.

Like McKnight's example, which highlights some of the ways ownership (e.g., Rupert Murdoch) could strongly impact on editorial policy and direction of a media institution (e.g., News Corporation), Edge (2007) traces the conditions that led to the creation of the powerful Asper Media group. He sees the group's "tight media control" as symptomatic of the "current concentration of media ownership [in Canada which] has

resulted in an increasingly centralized perspective" (Edge, 2007: 8). The preceding findings from McKnight (2010) and Edge (2007) are significant exemplars of how media power is acquired and exercised through careful corporate engineering. While the media institutions in both cases wield great resources to leverage political power, they also display subtle and sometimes overt tensions that could occur within the various units of the institutions as they struggle to be both economically viable and politically powerful.

Squires (1993) is right in pointing to the blurring of the wall, and oftentimes conflicts, between editorial and advertising units as a likely consequence of such institutional reengineering as "corporate managers and advertisers [become] active participants in editorial decision making and their interests now structure the form and content of news to an unprecedented degree" (Downie and Kaiser 2001, cited in Kellinberg, 2005: 59). In the opinion of Shoemaker and Reese (1996), the study of the politics of media institutions either as a sphere or a specific organization, often reveals such "lateral turf conflicts between departments" as they strive to work within the constraints of their various routines and "distinct occupational cultures" (156).

More specifically, I deploy institutional politics to focus on how a public broadcaster reinterprets its mandate within a competitive media landscape, and how it harnesses its human and capital resources in its bid to remain editorially independent, politically relevant and economically viable. Although such an emphasis is largely subsumed under the bigger political economy approach, it still provides useful opportunities for the internal workings of such a media institution to be analyzed, by emphasizing how power becomes an essential tool in formulating corporate vision as well as how various departments articulate such a vision. By so doing, the complex

hierarchical levels of bureaucracy between editorial workers and middle to top management, for instance, could be isolated and examined. This is the chord van Gastell (2005) strikes when he argues that the “power to define” is central to institutional politics as “policy making [becomes] a process of continuous discursive argumentation” between “subjective knowers” (Fisher, 2003) located at various sites within the institutional hierarchy.

The media institution is a composite made up of various sites of resistance. Hughes (2003) observes how such resistance was expressed in the Mexican media landscape. Her study focuses on Mexican journalists and media workers and how their resistance, as both active agents and “subjective knowers”, resulted in “the transformation of organizational cultures and professional identities” (Hughes, 2003: 110). Set against an authoritarian political landscape of Mexico, with a “politically parallel” media, Hughes (2003: 95) observes that “change agents [such as publishers, editors, and groups of reporters] within [some] news organizations was key to the transformation of news coverage...[as a way of] responding to alternative visions of journalism and society.” The resultant transformational change that occurred was powered by media “owners [who] pushed change from above” as well as “new cohorts of journalists who pushed from below” (Hughes, 2003: 100).

Her conclusion is significant in the ways in which she acknowledges the larger sociopolitical, cultural and economic conditions of Mexico as constitutive of the activities of the media both as a “sphere” and in their specific forms, thereby acknowledging that micro changes within Mexican media would not have occurred “without changing economic and political incentives at the macro level” (112). One of Hughes’ central

arguments is that through civic journalism in alternative media and active resistance to mainstream political pressures, institutional transformations within specific and/or the larger media “sphere” takes place when a “window of opportunity” or a “critical juncture” (McChesney, 1999), such as Mexico’s transition from authoritarianism to a democratic government, is taken advantage of.

Ghana Broadcasting Corporation found itself at the cusp of such a critical juncture when multiparty, liberal democracy changed the sociopolitical and economic character of governance as well as imposed a new mandate on the operations and role of “state-owned media” (Constitution of Ghana, 1992, Article 163). The corollary to this redefinition of roles and functions were drastic transformations within the media institutions which had, like their Mexican variant, been seen largely as “cheerleaders of government” (Bourgault, 1995) and largely integrated into the government bureaucracy.

Used to being controlled by government through appointments of its chief executives, Boards and funding, such prolonged dependence on and legitimacy from the political elite creates not just an institutional culture, but also an active agent (manager, editor or journalists), adept at reading signs considered dangerous to the interests of the political elite. The resultant macro (political economic) and micro (institutional politics) forces that this critical juncture throws up affects the media both as a socio political and economic entity and also as an institution struggling to realign its internal components in response to a new regime/stimuli which, by its very nature thrives on contestation and “agonism” (Mouffe, 1996).

Political economy of media institutions and practice, therefore, provides this study with the appropriate conceptual lens to examine the larger social, economic and political

forces that define and control the media in all its variations, including how legislation, funding and ownership impact its activities. It also allows examination of how media institutions respond to such pulls through their internal reconfigurations and “politics.” Thus, if I seek to study the practices of a media institution through the theoretical lens of political economy, it is in recognition of the ways it provides a useful framework for understanding the power dynamics that shape the structures, policies, processes and orientations of such a media organization. Additionally, it helps to interrogate the organization as a social grouping that is embedded in, and shaped by, society’s history, continually focusing on the unequal distribution of, and access to, resources, including power and the implications for social discourse formation.

Chapter Five – Methodology

Institutional Ethnography (IE) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Introduction

What constitutes the social, the researcher's role in relation to the phenomenon under investigation, the objective of the inquiry, what data, and whether the enquiry is descriptive or seeks social change, are some of the important defining features that differentiate one methodology from another. Whether the research pursuit follows an administrative or critical "tradition", therefore, depends on how these questions are answered (Craig, 1999). In settling for a qualitative approach for this study, I recognize the historical and philosophical underpinnings that guide and inform its choice, as well as its epistemological and ontological implications.

In seeking answers to how successful a former state-owned and run monopoly broadcaster is reinterpreting its "new" public service mandate within a competitive media ecology, Institutional Ethnography (IE) provides a useful methodological framework that enables such a media organization to be explored through its practices, texts and social relations with its critical stakeholders. It does this by the way it conceptualizes the institution as made up of "actionable deeds" (Smith, 2005) between knowledgeable subjects whose work is coordinated and regulated through text, discourse and practice. Thus conceptualized, Institutional Ethnography enables such actionable deeds within an (media) institution, as well as the forces and practices that formulate its texts and guide its conduct, to be teased out and studied. IE stresses the fact that larger institutions define the daily routine experiences and practices of its workers, which in turn, defines such institutions. IE's emphasis on the role and place of power in this institutional process is

one of the reasons for its justification in this study.

By focusing on the social as negotiated by active agents and a context within which social outcomes such as texts and practices are embedded, IE provides an important framework that allows a media institution to be studied through its daily workings and its products. The epistemological implications of conceptualizing “work knowledge” (Smith, 2005) as an important resource for study, therefore, places equal value on the experiences of informants and transforms the research journey into a collaborative process of discovery (Smith, 2005). It is from its ontological base of perceiving the social as a constant process of negotiation between agents with unequal resources that IE resonates with political economy, and places premium on interviews and participant observation as effective methods of studying the social (Pendakur, 1993).

The use of Institutional Ethnography, therefore, allows a media institution such as the GBC to be perceived and studied through close attention to “actual people’s doings under definite material conditions” (Smith, 2005: 70) at its production sites including its newsrooms. If the relations between the daily workings or “doings” at such sites and their impact on the larger institution is to be mapped as I seek to do in the case of GBC, then the role of institutional texts is critical to the process, and IE enables this process to be fleshed out and studied through interviews and observation of such work processes.

In the rest of the chapter, I flesh out the characteristics of Institutional Ethnography as a methodological approach, as well as demonstrate its use and application in the specific instance of a media institution. I use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical tool to enable the power relations inherent in the formation of such institutional texts, practices and discourse to be constantly focused on

and analyzed as an important part of answering how GBC formulates its institutional discourse as well as interpret its mandate through such discourse and practices. I deploy both Institutional Ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis at different phases of my methodology: the former providing the conceptual basis and, ultimately, justification for my methodological choices while the latter ensures that the analysis does not suffer from the “power blindness” charge that political economy had traditionally leveled against its parent discipline, Economics.

Since this study’s central question revolves around the response of a state owned media organization within an emerging liberal, multiparty democracy, its access to economic, political and cultural resources could become strategic tools for an effective response. The choice of Critical Discourse Analysis and Institutional Ethnography as methodological instruments is informed by this awareness and the methodology’s capacity to answer the overarching research question of “how public is public broadcasting in Ghana”?

I argue that the answer to this question will be adequately answered through the deployment of qualitative methodological approaches because of their ability to highlight the forces that formulate and regulate media institutions. Since such “forces” invariably shape the media as a communicative space, how they support or hinder the media in the performance of its normative, democratic role can then be highlighted. This study largely benefits from the advice of Pendakur (1993: 88) to “mesh the two approaches” of political economy and ethnography in seeking answers to “communication, not as a general, abstract phenomenon, but as a bond between real people taking place in real time and real place” (Mattelart & Siegelau, 1979: 11).

What this advice highlights, is the usefulness of natural settings as sites where social phenomena could be studied through active participation and/or observation. It also underlines context and personal experiences as knowledge and therefore, important and useful sources of data (Smith, 1987). This understanding also envisions the social as coming about through constant interactions amongst active “collaborators” including a reflexive researcher who, within the natural setting of the phenomenon under study, interacts through observation and participation. Whether one chooses such a qualitative approach, a quantitative variant or a combination of both is often arrived at largely by the researcher’s philosophical orientation, the overarching question s/he seeks to answer, as well as the use to which s/he intends to put his/her findings (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Jorgensen, 1989).

Institutional ethnography and critical discourse analysis: their characteristics and making a case for their use

Institutional Ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis are critical approaches to the study of mediated texts and discourse, focusing on unequal access to social resources as a powerful definer in the formation of social discourse. In conceptualizing the social as a series of actionable deeds among social interactants with unequal access to discursive resources, both Institutional Ethnography (IE) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) see discourse as an important definer of social reality. What constitutes the social far from existing *a priori*, is dependent on one’s access to discursive resources and ultimately, the competencies he/she deploys in relation to other social agents.

Institutional Ethnography’s focus as “a sociology for people” contrasts it with

mainstream sociological approaches “in which people were the objects, and whose behavior was to be explained” by the knowledgeable researcher (Smith, 2005: 1). Instead of seeing people as subjects of study in themselves, IE conceptualizes such subjects as people whose personal experiences and daily doings constitute knowledge and, therefore, as research collaborators rather than objects of study. Per this understanding, personal accounts and experiences of such knowledgeable subjects constitute an important part of the ethnographic process of discovery.

Epistemologically, this understanding vests knowledge in personal experience and does not privilege elites’ voices or those in authority over ordinary people. Personal standpoints and experiences of both the researcher and his/her collaborating subjects form a useful basis of engagement with the research project (Smith, 2005). It sees personal narratives and experiential means of knowing as important tools through which the researcher encounters the daily happenings of the social phenomenon he/she is examining. For the institutional ethnographer, closeness to the subject under study could serve as a useful standpoint from which the entire research could proceed.

Ontologically, such experiential, actionable deeds become one of the ways in which the social is constructed. The role and place of power becomes evident if the process of construction is seen as a process involving active agents with different levels of discursive resources and competencies. Taking socio-cultural, economic, linguistic or political forms, such resources or “capital”, then become effective tools to be deployed by social agents who possess them in the formation of social discourse.

Personal interviews, often in-depth and open-ended, as well as onsite (participant) observations are a corollary to IE’s conceptualization of the social and the role of social

agents. It is for this reason that in-depth interviews and observation strategies are often used by institutional ethnographers, whether it is Wilson and Pence's (2006) study of how the US judicial system responds to the social needs of abused native women in Duluth or Griffith and Smith's (2004) investigation of how single mothers in Toronto are coded by their children's schools.

Whether through close onsite (participant) observations of institutional practices or through eliciting personal experiences through interviews, language and text play important roles in the ethnographic process. If the objective of institutional ethnography is to study the workings or "ruling relations" of institutions (DeVault and McCoy, 2006), and local, individual actions serve as entry points into understanding the logics of such institutions (Spicer and Sewell, 2010), then language and text constitute effective means of gauging how such an institution formulates its discourse, and above all, how such discourse coordinates and regulates its conduct. As Smith rightly points out, if Institutional Ethnography places great emphasis on language and text it is because the "distinctive forms of co-ordination that constitutes institutions are *in* language" with the text as its principal vehicle (Smith, 2005: 94, emphasis in original).

For these reasons, Institutional Ethnography enables complex social formations, interactions and mappings to be isolated as actionable deeds, with the text playing a coordinating, regulatory and hierarchical role among such social interactants or institutions. In short, text and language map out, coordinate and regulate institutional behavior.

Very often when Institutional Ethnographers talk about texts, they usually mean

some kind of document or representation that has a relatively fixed and replicable character, for it is that aspect of texts - that they can be stored, transferred, copied,

produced in bulk, and distributed widely, allowing them to be activated by users at different times and in different places - that allows them to play a standardizing and mediating role (DeVault and McCoy, 2006: 34).

As Pence (2001) found out, it is the constancy of the text and its capacity to be replicated and engaged by different institutional actors “translocally” that makes it such a powerful coordinator and regulator of institutional conduct. In her study of how domestic abuse cases are processed through the judicial system in the US, Pence found out that “the prescriptions of the law do not exist in an abstract theoretical space; they are locally incorporated into people’s work and [are] coordinated [by text] as a sequence of action” (Smith, 2005: 67). In the realm of media institutions, the text as a coordinator, is seen in such instances where a request for news coverage is formatted as a particular text into the news diary, and the production of non-news media content is processed and acted upon by various institutional actors along the production circuit.

Besides coordinating, the institutional text of the news diary standardizes the request for news coverage from an official invitation letter into a recognizable institutional version that allows different actors to read and act upon it. For instance, a request for television news coverage at GBC newsroom will typically be entered into the news diary by date of entry, initials of person doing the entry, the nature and venue of event, reporter and crew assigned to the beat, source of story - internal or external-, and remarks. This is how one news entry read:

Date- 4th Jan, 2014; Time: 10 am; Source: an invitation from “National Society of Black Engineers – Ghana at 15 years”; Venue: Accra Poly. SAA²⁶ entered the request and Crew assigned is BS/Leticia. Remark: DTV wants it covered. No time indicated. Pls call Billy on 020835964 (Field note from GBC News diary, 2014).

A 3rd February, 2014 one is similar and reads thus: “6 am; Demonstration on land

²⁶ SAA are the initials for Selikem Acolatse Apaloo.

encroachment at Kwabenya; venue: Atomic Filing Station, invitation; Remarks: Team should assemble at atomic shell. RADIO REPORTER TO JOIN TV PLS” (Field note from GBC news diary, 2014, emphasis in original). With occasional minor deviations such as absence of initials of person doing entry, these two excerpts show how GBC’s newsroom diary standardizes a request for news coverage as the starting point for production.

The filling out of “Production bookings” at GBC presents an example of how texts also “activate” processes and organizational hierarchies. Eight copies of already formatted production bookings are filled out by production assistants and signed by their respective producers and heads of departments. Details such as name of production, equipment required (studio or outside broadcast), time and duration of recording, number of recording tapes required, names of designer and technical producer, nature of properties and costumes required, as well as transport required must all be meticulously provided. Once filled and authorized by the appropriate department head, the production manager then approves filled out text to enable various institutional actors to “activate” it through appropriate responses at various stages of the production circuit.

The two examples show both the coordinating and regulatory/hierarchical functions of language and text in the conduct of institutional actors (Smith 1990; Pence, 2001; DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Such functions of language and text occur as either generalizing/standardizing or regulating institutional conduct. This is what Smith means when she points out that “texts transform the local particularities of people, place, and time into standardized, generalized, and especially, translocal forms [through the] coordination of people’s activities” (2005: 101). These “social relations” which such

language and text engender, for the institutional ethnographer, are embedded in social interactions and ought to be seen as outcomes of such interactions. What this points to is that it will be an error to overlook the processes and factors (discursive strategies), such as language, that give rise to institutional text and simply conceptualize it as a value neutral product.

For the institutional ethnographer, the process of formulating the text is often achieved in two ways. The author either “orients” both personal experiences and text to fit into a known institutional logic, frame or way of conduct; or a larger institutional logic subsumes such personal experience, knowledge, and events. Just like Pence’s observation in which police officers in Ottawa inscribe the private activities of gay men in a bar (“bawdy house”) having sex (“acts of indecency”) into a criminal frame, I found subtle power undertones within the GBC news diary through ways requests for news coverage are oriented to fit into newsroom logic.

Remarks accompanying news entries such as “DOCA²⁷ wants it covered”, “Receipt #: 42211, paid for”, or “DG wants it covered” (notes from GBC news diary, 2014) become effective ways of putting weight on the request, and making it harder for the assignment editor to exclude such an entry from the day’s selected stories. The point here is that a person who is savvy about newsroom operations and the logics governing news selection and coverage could orient his/her entry by deploying additional textual “cues” as a way of making its coverage highly probable, even inevitable. Smith’s (2005: 120) observation that “institutional discourse is designed, and the process of design are essentially political” is reinforced in these instances. The flip side of how such frames

²⁷ DOCA stands for Director of Corporate Affairs and is one of the eight executive directors who constitute GBC’s management.

impose a preferred meaning on its readers and the process of interpreting those cues embedded in the texts is also important. It involves “agency” or “active reading” of the text by its reader (Smith, 2005; Fairclough, 1999). In a complex production setting such as a broadcasting organization, the text’s function as a rallying point around which symbolic content developers coalesce becomes an important index of how policy gets translated into daily professional practice. Laws translate into policy documents, into institutional documents and, ultimately, routine production protocols within a media organization.

By focusing on the content and trail of relevant texts, one gets the opportunity to see how meaning is explicated as practice, especially in routines. To the extent that texts (laws, policy and institutional documents) frame and coordinate routine practices that ultimately inscribe the artifact (program), the text becomes a critical index of GBC’s transformation from state to public broadcaster. However, for the Institutional Ethnographer, it is the conversation that occurs between the text and its reader; the “text-reader conversation” that activates the process (Smith, 2005). This conversation activates the text, and turns it from a passive document into an active one through the agency of its interpreter and the ensuing act the text engenders and coordinates. I highlight this point for two critical reasons, namely the role of embodied subjects and their interactions in institutional ethnography, and the “intertextual” references that could occur during the formulation and interpretation of texts.

Although I will demonstrate how such intersubjectivity and intertextuality affect the ethnographic process in my data analysis segment, suffice it to say they reinforce IE’s epistemological and ontological assumptions as I earlier outlined: in conceptualizing the

social as a process that involves constant negotiations instead of existing a priori, and the centrality of experiential, daily knowledge as useful data for the understanding of institutional regimes. It is these philosophical underpinnings that give IE its methodological definition, and enable embodied subjects and their texts to be isolated and studied through personal conversations or interviews, and close (participant) observation of their work within their natural settings.

Notwithstanding its strengths, IE is not without weaknesses. Institutional Ethnography is often perceived as overtly political in its standpoint due to its feminist origins and orientations. It has also been criticized as too exploratory and lacking rigor in its method. For instance the Institutional Ethnographer interviews people as an initial exercise in formulating the study's standpoint. Although their opinions enable the researcher to hone in on the study's problematic, the population is not considered a sample (Smith, 2006). There is the possibility, no matter how inadvertent, for the researcher to interview people who will reinforce her/his standpoint. While Institutional ethnographers consider this as an important part of the exploratory process and an epistemological, collaborative effort, critics see it as lack of rigor.

To this charge, IE respond that rigor goes beyond a study's ability to quantify its variables and replicate its results under controlled settings. It points out the natural settings within which such subjects are observed and studied provide important cues that cannot be quantified in numerical terms. Its ability to conceptualize "working knowledge" as important experiential data, clarifying how power gets registered in texts, and the ways social interactions including language produce and reinforce power are vital contributions to social research.

Due to the crucial role of the researcher's "standpoint" in the research process, the personal experiences of the ethnographer could be particularly useful especially at the problematizing stage of his/her research (Wilson and Pence, 2006; Smith and Alison, 2004). While such "situatedness", or close proximity could also act as a useful filter through which relevant data could be generated and analyzed, there is a danger that such attachment could compromise the critical distance the researcher requires to ensure reasonable objectivity in data collection and analysis.

The mixing of IE and CDA is an attempt to balance the weaknesses of IE with the strengths of CDA, bearing in mind that they both share common research objectives even if their methods differ in some important ways. In this regard, CDA shares with IE the objective of research for social change, the role of power as a resource that enables and deprives social agents from being engaged in the formation of social discourse, and the central role of discourse in supporting some truth regimes and not others. They largely share common epistemological and ontological objectives where access to discursive tools such as linguistic competence and other socioeconomic, cultural and political resources constitute power, and ultimately play a huge role in how the social comes about.

So the central question is why is CDA a useful addition to IE since they share so much in common? The strengths and justification for the use of CDA as an analytical tool, in relation to my central research question, is in the approach's capacity to focus on the institutional text and through its close linguistic reading, including what it excludes, attempt to identify and make sense of the power dynamics that authored such a text. Seeing the text as an active mediator, CDA examines how a text could be related with

others before it, and through such “intertextuality”, probe how hierarchies between author and addressee are established and maintained. How an author combines genres, shifts positions or points of view within the same text, as well as what details are excluded from the narrative, are some of the ways in which CDA compensates for IE weaknesses. It analyzes the content of the text and through such indicators as its intertextual reference and hybridity, probe the context that produces the text in question.

Smith’s (1990) analysis of a protesting professor’s textual account of a fall out of a demonstration and the disproportionate use of force deployed by the California police, is reanalyzed by Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) to show how CDA complements IE. In their reanalysis, Chouliaraki & Fairclough demonstrate the ways in which the professor’s careful use of different genres in the same text is deployed as a tool to perform a particular social function of protest. As a discursive strategy, the “hybridity” in the professor’s response, seen in the different genres he assembles enables him to switch his vantage points from an observer using “factual” discourse to a storyteller who uses “fictional” discourse, as a way of reinforcing his authority as a protester. Chouliaraki & Fairclough show how the protesting professor deploys such discursive strategies to mount an efficient protest about a social event against the California Police. As I will show in the data analysis stage, such “hybridity” as is demonstrated in a GBC committee of enquiry’s report and its intertextual references become efficient discursive strategies to both frame and organize institutional discourse.

Fairclough and other Critical Discourse analysts recognize the complexity of research into social practices and rightly recommend that “discourse analytical research work together with other social scientific methods, particularly ethnography” (61). In a

clear sense, this call for collaboration resonates with Pendakur's call on Political Economist to "mesh the two approaches of political economy and ethnography" if they are to see communication "not as a general, abstract phenomenon, but as a bond between real people taking place in real time and real place" (1993: 88). The benefit of such a mixed method is not only the diversity of vantage points it presents to the researcher as well as the complementary analytical strategies it offers, but also the practical meaning it gives to the imperative of shared knowledge, and the research obligation of critical research to seek social change through praxis.

Data collection and organization

Having outlined how IE and CDA conceptualize and map out social relations, what kinds of data can speak to their concerns as well as how such data are collected and analyzed become important ingredients of the methodology. It is for this reason that the rest of the chapter fleshes out interviews with workers within their production spaces, institutional texts, and onsite observation of GBC editorial practices as the central data for this study. It also maps out how such data were organized and analyzed. In addition to primary data, the study made use of secondary data. These included the 1953 Greenfell Commission on Broadcasting, the National Liberation Council Decree NLCD 226 (1968), the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, and the National Media Policy (2000). Others are the (revised) Broadcasting Bill of 2013, a collection of relevant laws and legislation on broadcasting in Ghana, newspaper publications and respondents opinions about the Ghanaian broadcasting legal regime.

Research site and access

Considering the prime question this study seeks to answer, two of GBC's eight divisions, radio and television are of crucial importance as sites where media content is produced, and for that matter where institutional practice could be observed against the texts that formulate or regulate such conduct. Because such production sites are often diffused and scattered across the institution's many arms, including the regions, I selected the newsrooms and some television production sites where programs were in various stages of production. Because both radio and television newsrooms are housed within the same editorial space, and in theory are expected to "harmonize the work of news staff of the corporation" (GBC Newsletter, 2006: 7), the newsroom is an important site to observe how GBC's editorial policies for both radio and television news get operationalized and the processes that transform such abstractions into news content. But more importantly, it is also one site where political interference, if it exists, is likely to be most noticeable considering the central role news plays both in the operations of GBC as a public service broadcaster and as part of its mandate to educate and inform its public.

Relevant sites such as the studios, editing suites and offices where preparatory production work take place also constitute important locales which provide some guidance about how GBC is operationalizing its mandate, and the kinds of "practices" it employs to meet it. In view of these, my data collection required physical access to such GBC sites to enable me observe as well as interview relevant subjects involved in the daily routines of the institution within the setting of their workplace. My onsite observation in GBC stretched from 3rd February 2014 to 6th March 2014.

Although I was initially given 14 days to observe "because of the busy work

schedule in the first quarter of the year” (GBC acceptance letter, 2014), once in the field, I was verbally given an extension until 6th March to enable me follow up on some stories and conduct some informal interviews. I had indicated to the Head of News that I needed more time for observations and, after consulting with the Director of Human Resources who authorized my entry, he willingly obliged. This extra time allowed me the opportunity to observe such production practices as news studio transmission and video editing which, though closely related to the news production and transmission circuit, are outside the main newsroom.

Finally, entry to GBC’s production and public spaces allowed me access to other relevant data such as notices on its public notice boards, some of its in-house publications in its reference library, as well as life on GBC premises. It was during one of such visits that I stumbled upon the launch of its DTT channels, which it was transmitting live on air. The opportunity to sit in the outside broadcast television van was a rare one that enabled me to see at first hand, how GBC production practices have either changed or remained relatively permanent. It is within this institutional context that I gained entry into GBC, and began my data collection.

Interviews

For both the critical discourse analyst and the institutional ethnographer, the data collection and organization process involves a triangulation of methods. As a site where texts coordinate the local into the translocal through institutional discourse, the ethnographer studies both the textual and the intersubjective relations amongst the setting’s knowledgeable subjects (Smith, 2005). The choice of interviews as part of the

(participant) observation process is epistemologically grounded in the central role of workers as knowledgeable subjects who actively interpret and embody the institutional text, as well as emphasize the relevance of their personal histories and experiences as critical resources to filling in “institutional silences” (van Leeuwen, 1993).

Although informal interviews are an “especially useful strategy for discerning different viewpoints held by insiders” (Jorgensen, 1989: 88), it is when such informal interviews are in depth that both interviewer and subject get the chance “to explore particular matters in elaborate and comprehensive detail” (90). In view of this, most of my interviews were face-to-face, in depth, and semi-structured. Since the interviewing process is an active process in which meanings are produced (Silverman, 2004), a semi-structured format allowed for easy organization of subject matter and unexpected outcomes to occur within the exploration process.

The choice of purposive sampling helped to engage in in-depth interactions with an appropriate group of subjects who had the relevant institutional knowledge for exploring the issues at the heart of the study. The method resonates with Jorgensen’s observation that in depth interviews are particularly efficient when “informants” are “especially knowledgeable about a matter of interest” and “are willing to talk or be interviewed intensively” (91). 26 people were interviewed in-depth over the period. My sample was made up of four former GBC Director- Generals, two Former Directors of Television, two Former Directors of Radio; a current Director of Radio; two members of the National Media Commission; a GBC Board member; a former Minister of Information; seven former and current news and program managers; and four show editors and journalists. The remaining two out of the 26 was made up of an installing

engineer and a Client Relations Executive.

As the sample indicates, respondents are linked to the operations of the Ghanaian media and GBC in various capacities ranging from regulators, policy makers, implementers to content generators, or some combination. In order to reflect the timeline of this study, I looked for people who had worked at various stages of GBC's progress and at various levels in its hierarchy. This meant that I tried to balance out those on retirement with longer institutional memory of the organization with those still in active service. This careful selection made it possible to focus sufficiently on GBC issues without disregarding the broader policy and operational media context within which it is situated. The broad competences respondents brought to table made it possible for the study to benefit from their intimate media experiences, as well as point me in very fruitful directions where I could gather other relevant data.

Except in a few cases, such as when respondents provided written responses, most interviews were semi-structured and face-to-face. Engaging respondents as interlocutors and knowledgeable collaborators always presented the possibility of discovering new and unplanned things which, nevertheless, are relevant. A semi-structured interview format allowed both interview areas and more detailed questions to be formulated while still leaving the door open for further exploration. In two instances, I conducted informal, unstructured, telephone interviews because respondents were not physically available, while in four others, circumstances necessitated written responses from respondents for various reasons. Such reasons ranged from time constraints, to inability to be physically present for the interview after respondents had agreed in principle to grant me an interview.

Additionally, relevant portions of previous interviews about the inner workings of GBC's "radio-vision"²⁸ news merger, which I conducted from June 2012 to January 2013, were also used. This was necessitated both by some respondents' unwillingness to grant another interview with the explanation that they have nothing more or different to share from the previous one, and time constraints on their part. The sample was composed of six respondents made up of two senior editorial managers from radio; the acting Director-General who was also the substantive Director of Radio; the two most senior television news editors; the head of editing; an installation engineer; and a retired broadcaster contracted to oversee GBC's digital migration preparations. Their earlier responses provided important insights into the immediate, historical context within which current newsroom practices should be situated. They also provided personal perspectives and struggles from editorial staff charged to implement the policy, as well as focused on some of the institutional processes and technologies that were activated for the merger.

Typically, phone calls and informal meeting(s) preceded all in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Such phone calls and informal meetings allowed me the opportunity to describe in detail what my research was about, explain to the interviewee the rationale for choosing him/her as a research subject, and to engage in preliminary discussions about areas I intended to cover in the formal interview. Such encounters offered deep insights into areas that an interviewee might be unwilling or incapable of addressing as well as in some cases, suggest relevant documents and other

²⁸ Although the radio-vision merger has been put on hold, it is still relevant to this study in the sense that it presents a rare opportunity to determine how newsroom policies get set and by whom; to evaluate their implementation; and to assess shifts in newsroom culture, if any.

knowledgeable subjects for my consideration. Invariably, such meetings were followed up with a detailed email outlining areas to be covered together with a consent form for study ahead of time.

Each interview was preceded by an explanation to the respondent, detailing what the research was about. Before consent forms were signed, I assured each respondent of complete confidentiality and anonymity except in cases where they chose to waive their anonymity either because they so indicated on their signed consent forms, or spoke in their official capacity. Except in four cases, all interviews were conducted outside the premises of GBC, in Ghana, from the 13th of October 2013 to the 4th of December 2014. These locations, which ranged from homes to offices and hotel lobbies positively impacted the conduct of such interviews since it allowed interviewees to relax in their comfort spaces and gave the interview a more engaged and conversational tone.

Seen as “work knowledge”, or “people’s own ordinary good knowledge of their doings” (Smith, 2005: 210), such interviews conducted within such comfort zones allow personal narratives to be elicited from embodied subjects as they recount their daily work routines and the experiences they bring to those routines. For the institutional ethnographer, such personal narratives of working knowledge are important tools to explicate and describe subjects’ relations to the larger institution with the objective of making visible such knowledge which “ordinarily remains unspoken” (210). It is for these reasons that I adopted a mixture of informal interview techniques with formal ones.

This blend is important since informal interviews accommodate the busy on-the-move lifestyles of working journalists and production staff while serving as a valuable filter and preparatory stage for a possible follow up in-depth interview. One such

informal interview led to a formal, semi-structured, in-depth interview later on. Two journalists were informally interviewed in the newsroom as they went about their jobs. Although I had intended to interview two frontline business workers because of their role as interface between GBC and advertisers, due to time constraints, I had to make do with only one through an informal telephone interview.

I interviewed the Producer/Director of *Talking Point* in-depth with the view to elicit what cues and institutional culture guide her practice, how and why some interpretative versions are preferred and, where possible, the likely effect of such editorial choices on the institution's effort to reposition itself as a public service broadcaster. *Talking Point* is particularly important because it is the first television Current Affairs program instituted in the early 1970s (retired Dep. Director, TV (News), personal communication, 2014). It has since its inception, especially during the monopoly days of GBC, served as one of the major platforms for the articulation of government views and policies.

During the early period of the Fourth Republic, it was the cause of a court suit against GBC by the New Patriotic Party, the largest opposition party, on the grounds that GBC had refused to grant it equal access to the airwaves as constitutionally mandated. A seminal ruling by the Supreme Court of Ghana in 1993 did not only favor the New Patriotic Party, it also clarified the meaning of "equal access", and changed the editorial philosophy of GBC and *Talking point* more specifically afterwards (Akoto Ampaw, 2004). *Talking Point* has, since then, served even more as a site where contending interests "demand" access and, therefore, best reflects the politics of GBC's interactions with state, economic and corporate actors.

Because the Directors of Radio and Television provide both editorial guidance and administrative oversight to their division's program content, they are a vital conduit between policy and program makers. They impact strongly, even if indirectly, program format and content as well as the factors that shape them such as the assignment of creative staff; program scheduling and production management; sponsorship and advertising. It is for these reasons that three Directors of Radio and two former Directors of Television were interviewed in-depth.

I made the decision not to interview the current Director of Television due to the fact that he was new to the position and had very little experience of television except as a set designer. In view of this, it became necessary to purposively sample and interview in-depth previous directors of Television, taking into account the relevance of their tenure to GBC's institutional development and the national politics of their times. Due to time and health concerns, one of the former Directors of Television was interviewed informally and off the record, and provided me with published newspaper articles as a response to my emailed interview questions.

The Director of Finance and his Business Development counterpart were to be interviewed in depth to provide better context and professional insights into GBC's financial expenditure. Because the latter was barely two weeks old in his job at the time, I made the decision not to interview him since he could not under the circumstances, speak to the concerns of the interview which hinged more on GBC's previous dealings with its clients and its advertising philosophy. The earlier Director of Business had a few months prior, been dismissed from his job and so, with so much suspicion and insecurity about their jobs in the days following, those whose opinions mattered were unwilling to speak

to me.

The Acting Director of Finance (DOF) preferred not to talk because she said she was in an acting role and, therefore, merely holding the fort until a substantive DOF was appointed. In a telephone conversation, a respondent from the Business Development Division provided some reasonable insight into financial and business choices of GBC, especially in relation to its external advertisers, thereby filling in some of the gaps, even if minimally. Although GBC Annual Reports traditionally have detailed portions for expenditure and, therefore, could provide a general picture of financial happenings within the organization, interviews with the Director of Business Development and of Finance would still have been useful considering this study's interest: in the possible impact of economic and business decisions on programming and institutional routines from a management point of view. However under the circumstances of being unable to conduct one on one in-depth interviews, GBC's annual reports still provide a reasonably good account of the corporation's financial status in relation to its spending and other operations.

I interviewed a former Deputy Director-General²⁹ (DD-G) who oversees both the Director of Radio and of Television, and is the highest official responsible for overall programming at GBC. Because all ten regional directors of GBC report to him directly, he oversees the bigger institutional narrative that gets operationalized into production decisions and, ultimately, program content. In interviewing him in depth, I sought to

²⁹ The current Deputy Director General was about 3 months old at her position when I started my field interviews (GBC Newsletter, issue 28: 12). For this prime reason, I felt that she was unsuitable to respond to my questions. I therefore got the immediate former DDG who had gone on retirement to provide written responses to my emailed questions. Because another former Director General I interviewed had also served as a DDG, it allowed me to compare periods in addition to their job profiles.

focus on GBC's editorial policy and how it gets operationalized into programs, as well as how the regional gets integrated into the national ethos.

My initial plan to interview at least three³⁰ out of the ten GBC Regional managers in order to gauge how the regional feels integrated into or alienated from the national was aborted due to limited resources and time constraints. However, this setback was minimally ameliorated by placing reasonable emphasis on the region's relations with headquarters in my interview with the former DDG who did not only oversee their work, but was himself a former Regional manager. Although I missed out on additional regional perspectives, this "absence" did not significantly affect my collected data and analysis since what I lost in scope was compensated for in responses from others closely associated with the regions.

Since the Director-General (D-G) constitutes a critical axis of power in the operations of GBC and serves as its interface with all state agents, four previous D-Gs were interviewed in-depth to elicit how their various roles had been interpreted and executed under different social, political and economic regimes. The D-G, who is also the Editor in Chief, is GBC's highest official. Until a 2000 court ruling, appointment to that position was the exclusive preserve of the President (Akoto Ampaw, 2004). Since then, the power to appoint the D-G has been vested in the National Media Commission "in consultation with the President" (1992 Constitution of Ghana: 114). The D-G's role typically centers on policy formulation, forging government-state-Corporation relations, and as a board member, formulating and implementing board decisions through the daily

³⁰ Regional Managers from Kumasi, Tamale and Cape Coast had been selected based on geographical spread, volume of economic returns to headquarters, and ethnic composition of region.

operations of the Corporation.

The NMC and National Communication Authority (NCA) are the two main regulatory bodies with which the DG interacts. Beside the NCA overseeing license issues and ensuring high technology standards, all other media content generation and regulation related issues fall within the remit of the NMC. These two bodies are, therefore, pivotal to gauging the extent to which GBC's public service mandate gets constructed and "managed" by "outside" statutory bodies. In view of this, the Chairman and Executive Secretary of the NMC were interviewed in-depth. I did not interview a representative of the NCA since most of the relevant data I required was posted on its website. It is worth noting, however, that they offered to make themselves available and to provide written responses if I needed further clarification.

The Ghana Advertisers Association, on its part, serves as a strong advertising lobby. Its decisions could, therefore, serve both as strong sticks and carrots for GBC's operations, especially in relation to its programming character. The Executive Secretary of the Ghana Association of Advertisers (GAA), which coordinates and oversees all the business activities of registered advertisers, indicated at our informal, initial meeting that there were no available statistics from their organization except individually commissioned market surveys conducted by some of their members. Because of the overtly market oriented nature of such surveys which focused on measuring market shares and product sales, I made the decision not to use them even if I was in a position to raise the requisite money to enable me pay for its access. Without the opportunity to elicit some context to the numbers in such surveys, I figured such numbers by themselves would serve little purpose for my study.

Although I left the field on 10th of March 2014, I sent a couple of emails to two of my earlier respondents, seeking clarification, but only one responded. Interviews lasted between forty five and ninety minutes, and were recorded on an audio device. On one occasion, a malfunctioning recorder 32 minutes into an interview necessitated another one which was done a week later. About 65 percent of all interviews which I deem critical were fully transcribed in long hand while the rest were partially transcribed and analyzed. With more than 40 hours of audio material to transcribe in long hand, I was constrained by time not to fully transcribe such material.

Observation techniques within GBC production spaces

To guarantee closeness to the phenomenon under study in its natural settings, observation techniques were deployed for the on-site stage of data gathering of the research. According to Wacquant (2003: 5), this technique ensures

the close-up, on the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do.

However, as Shenton and Hayter (2004: 223) point out, “for many qualitative investigators, one of the most pressing research concerns lies in gaining access” (cited in Mikecz, 2012: 483). They argue that “the researcher’s success in this regard will have a significant effect on the nature and quality of the data collected . . . and, ultimately, on the trustworthiness of the findings.” (cited in Mikecz, 2012: 483). If Shenton and Hayter’s caution is right, then how this crucial hurdle of access is navigated could have a telling effect on the entire data gathering process which

Observing workers within their natural settings as they go about their routines constitutes an important data-gathering tool. As Cottle (2007) rightly argues, “In the context of news study, participant observation or ethnography [...] involves the researcher spending considerable time in the field, observing and talking to journalists as they go about their daily tasks and documenting their professional practices and culture” (4-5). This ethnographic approach is the most suitable for this study because of its capacity to go beyond the daily “front-stage” happenings to reveal “backstage” occurrences (Goffman, 1959) as well as emphasize the “why” implied in such occurrences.

In seeking to tease out ways in which production and institutional practices reflect, react and orient to a media institution’s interpretation of its public service mandate, participant observation allows the “normally invisible realm of media production [to] be recorded and made available for wider consideration” (Cottle, 2007: 5). Participant observation under such a circumstance goes “behind the scenes of media output to help reveal the complex of forces, constraints and conventions that shape the selections and silences of media output” (5). Gaining access to GBC for these reasons constitutes an important entry point especially to the participant observation and interview phases of the data gathering process since a crucial component of my research question hinges on how institutional practice gets oriented to policy and, subsequently, interpreted by workers within an institutional setting. With this in mind, my access to GBC was overt by formally seeking written permission to conduct onsite observation within its newsrooms and production sites.

My status as a researcher was clearly declared to both management and the

editorial teams I interacted with. In making such a decision, I counted on my long association with GBC to make access simpler and easier. Additionally, I did not see how full disclosure of my status would negatively impact on the research process and, therefore, the fidelity of my data. Instead, my new role as researcher made it easier for former colleagues and subordinates in the institution to relate with me as an insider/outsider and, hence, were less likely to be reactive in their responses. Although this blurs the lines in terms of my “insider-outsider positionality” in relation to the institutional space (Jorgensen, 1989), it also provides the advantage of easy access and quick adaptation to the environment due to my personal insights into its workings as a former worker.

I recognize that, traditionally, gaining access to ethnographic sites as well as their material tends to be difficult since they are often labeled as institutional secrets and, therefore, considered ‘sensitive’ (Shoemaker and Reese 1989). It turned out to be even more so for a state owned media institution, such as GBC, which had lost its monopoly and finds itself in an unfamiliar position of competing with other private media institutions. Frequent management turn-over at GBC delayed the process of gaining access. GBC had over the years, undergone significant changes in its administrative and management structures and had brought new managers into the Director-General, Deputy Director-General, Directors of Human Resource, Television and Radio roles (GBC Newsletter, Issues 28: 15 and 26: 12). As a result, my letter entitled “Request to conduct research at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation” dated 17th May 2013 was favorably responded to 8 months later on the 30th of January 2014.

Being less than a month old in his role, the Director of Human Resource who was detailed by the Director-General to make the final decision was uncertain about the research and its implications and, therefore, unsure about how to deal with my request. Consent was finally given after two follow up meetings each with the Director of Human Resources and the Deputy Director-General to explain in detail what my research was about. As well as highlight some of the study's potential benefits to the organization, I explained to them why it was impossible to replace GBC as an organization of study because of its peculiar nature. It was after these meetings that I finally gained access into GBC newsroom for an initial two-week period.

During the period, I attended 14 general editorial meetings and 7 closed editorial meetings. The former is open to all newsroom staff and held in the mornings from 8.30 for approximately forty-five minutes. This meeting typically announces stories entered into the "assignment diary" for the day; each story's status, in terms of whether or not a reporter has been assigned to it, and if so, who the other production crew members³¹ are. It is also at this meeting that journalists on various stories and programs report on their progress and their challenges, and new beats are identified and assigned. The previous day's main bulletins at 1900 hours and 2200 hours are also closely reviewed, looking out for professional feedback and glitches that might have occurred. Finally, various desks³² report on stories they are working on and "story ideas" are elicited from anyone who has

³¹ A typical crew will consist of the reporter, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting technician (optional depending on the nature of assignment), and a driver. Sometimes a radio news reporter will also be included to cover for radio news as exemplified by this 3rd February, 2014 assignment entry : "RADIO REPORTER TO JOIN TV PLS." (Emphasis in original).

³² The desks are Business, Sports, Entertainment, Regional and Special reports.

one.

The closed editorial meeting is held at 1500 hours after the one hour long 1400 hours news bulletin, and is attended by the Head of News, the Deputy Head of News, the (incoming) afternoon and (outgoing) morning show editors, the Show Director, and Head of Production. At this meeting, a tentative news lineup for the 1900 news bulletin is read out by the outgoing show editor who indicates the state of preparedness for each story: edited, unedited, and/or used in any of the earlier news bulletins. Technical and production challenges experienced from earlier news bulletins are also identified and discussed.

These two daily editorial meetings typically punctuate the normal newsroom buzz of running to cover assignments, calling up other production crew members and resource persons, writing and rewriting scripts, voicing approved scripts and readying them for video editing, and finally submitting them for upload onto the news server for transmission. Because I was assigned a desk, I was embedded within the newsroom setting all through the period, observing and interacting with both radio and television journalists who share the same space.

I also sat twice in production meetings for *Talking Point*³³ and observed its production process ranging from choice of topic, panel selection, synopsis preparation, to studio recording. Attending production and editorial meetings within the production and newsroom spaces allowed for a close observation of who, what and to a limited extent,

³³ *Talking point* is a weekly Current Affairs program and considered to be GTV's flag ship program not only because it was the first news and current affairs talk program to be introduced outside the regular news (Dziekpore, 2014, personal communication), but also because over time, it had gained the reputation for being perhaps most sought after platform for political parties and their office holders. One of such contestations led to a court suit against GBC in 1993. I worked as its Producer/Director for two and half years.

how editorial processes include and/or exclude content as well as how frame choices are arrived at. But even in cases where unhindered access is granted, mere observation is incapable of leading to “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). Cottle (2007), therefore, suggests “attending to documentary sources” as an important complement to the participant observation process, in order to gain a more rounded picture (Silverman, 2004; Jorgensen, 1989). As the next section will show, gathering and analyzing available documents about GBC was, therefore, an effort at “thick description”, as such documents provided important insights into how GBC had operated over time, and more importantly, situates itself within the current competitive media ecology.

Institutional texts and other documentary sources of data

Although interviews are vital to my data collection, documents or “institutional texts” (Smith, 2005) also constitute an important part of my data. Due to their enduring nature, such documents or institutional texts tend to possess the imprints of the discursive forces that crafted them as well as signal how institutional behavior is coordinated and hierarchically ordered (Smith, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). The study of a profession such as media work which traditionally relies on and produces texts will, therefore, be jejune if attention is not paid to such documents in their own right, as well as their intertextual relations with others.

As Bloomfield and Vurdabakis (1994) point out, textual communicative practices “are a vital way in which organizations constitute ‘reality’ and the forms of knowledge appropriate to it” (cited in Coffey and Atkinson, 2004: 58). If texts are understood, on the

one hand, as “social facts” in the sense that they are “produced, shared and used in socially organized ways” and on the other, as not necessarily “transparent representations of organizational routines” (Coffey and Atkinson, 2004: 58), then the centrality of texts in tracing a “transitory” media organization’s production practices becomes clearer. While texts’ “place in organizational settings, the cultural values attached to them, and their distinctive types and forms” are important (Coffey and Atkinson, 2004: 58), it is the discursive forces that shape their formation and interpretation and their power to coordinate and hierarchically order institutional practice that stands out for Critical Discourse analysts and institutional ethnographers.

In view of this, documents related to GBC’s editorial/operational policy and programming; annual reports; organizational newsletters; some correspondence with its external stakeholders; and relevant media legislation affecting its operations constitute a vital part of this study’s textual data. Internal memos are especially useful because they act as the suture between the larger media policy – national or by the institution’s governing board - and the corporation’s operationalization of such policy into program content. Thus, they are largely controlled by both the authority that authors such texts on the corporation’s letterhead, and the limited nature of its circulation to specific institutional players and addressees. It is for this reason that internal memos are so difficult to come by and without the Right to Information Act to compel public institutions to provide such documents, they are seldom given away.

Although not much was collected, about fifteen of such documents (memos and reports) that speak to GBC’s operational and editorial policies and processes were collected from GBC sources and some interviewees who freely offered them. Such

memos provided insights into how the corporation, for instance, responded to “political pressure” about its programming schedule and how it internally sets about to rectify such concerns. These are in addition to other internal memos which were posted on the internal notice boards of GBC because they were considered non-confidential. Some reports from GBC to some of its regulators such as the National Media Commission were officially sourced from the recipient organizations, copied and studied. They include the Broadcasting Bill, GBC Annual Reports, and some general documents.

Due to its historically tenuous labor-management relations, the GBC notice board has become a site not only for informing the general work force, but also for dispelling rumors (2013, Personal communication). Texts about the corporation’s activities such as staff durbars, funeral announcements, and notices concerning immediate events often find their way to the corporation’s notice board. Additionally, important information that requires more explanatory detail often get published in the organization’s monthly *GBC Newsletter*. The *GBC Newsletter*, therefore, is a vital documentary data in its capacity to bear witness to corporate events in history as well as serve as a source for studying how organizational discourse is framed and communicated to its larger workforce. With the exception of two issues which were not available, the entire 28 issues of the *GBC Newsletter*³⁴ were studied.

Two anniversary brochures, (50 and 75 years), together with some related lectures

³⁴ The *GBC Newsletter* was first published in March 2002 as an eight paged newsletter. Although quite irregular at the beginning, it ceased publication between March 2003 to December 2005; and again from August 2010 until February 2013. After its 3rd edition, it oscillated between being monthly to being bimonthly. Except issues two and five, I accessed and analyzed all 28 issues spanning March 2002 to December 2013.

were also collected and studied. Issues of the Television newsletter *Team Vision*³⁵, as well as six available copies of *Media Monitor*³⁶ were studied. *Team Vision* was particularly useful since it contained historical material on television from the vantage points of its practitioners and management. Besides giving a glimpse of some of the important epochs in the life of Ghana TV, it also had personal narratives and interesting anecdotes from workers that captured how such workers conceptualized and played out their roles in TV. *Media Monitor*, on the other hand, contained useful stories about GBC.

For instance a story headlined “GBC Fracas: Threat to Press Freedom or Internal corrective measure?” (2005, (10): 9) speaks to the events that led to the dismissal of four TV journalists and the Director of Television. It records how the NMC finally dissolved the GBC Board for incompetence and provides a glimpse of GBC’s relations with its regulator. Another story headlined “Wranglings at GBC” recounts the misunderstanding between the Governing board of GBC and the Acting Director-General, Dr. Kofi Frimpong that led to members of staff wearing red bands and preventing Board members from attending their monthly meetings (GBC *Newsletter*, 1996).

Archival newspaper publications related to the administrative and editorial operations of GBC also served as a rich documentary source in the ways they recorded relevant historical events as well as the sociopolitical context such stories provided. In this specific case, *Jubilee Ghana: A 50 year news journey thro’ Graphic* served as a vital

³⁵ *Team Vision* was a GBC-TV publication which was sponsored by its advertising partners. Its 2nd edition published in November-December 1994 is the only surviving edition since the GBC reference library does not have back copies in its stacks.

³⁶ *Media Monitor* was first published in October 1995 as quarterly magazine by the School of Communication Studies of the University of Ghana for the National Media Commission, with support from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Ghana). Issues number 1, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 10 spanning from 1995 to 2005 were available and used for my analysis.

resource in collating in a single volume, major historical stories on its front page across 50 years³⁷. Headlines such as “Journalists urged to assist Kwame” (*Daily Graphic*, 1964); “Television comes to Ghana” (*Daily Graphic*, 1965); “Ghana Press Council formed” (*Daily Graphic*, 1968); “TV time for political campaigning” (*Daily Graphic*, 1969); and “Government wont fight media- President” (*Daily Graphic*, 2003); all provide a rich historical tapestry of happenings around media –government relations. Publications such as Duodu’s articles “Communication Policy: The TV industry in Ghana” (*Daily Graphic*, 1998); and “Power, Politics at GBC” (*Daily Graphic*, 2004); both present critical insights into GBC whiles Wereko-Brobby’s article “Wereko Brobbey exposes Totobi Quakyi” (*The Triumph*, 1994) speaks to the larger sociopolitical forces that shaped the issuance of private broadcasting frequency licenses at the time.

As Jorgensen clearly points out in his 1979 study of the taco occultists and their divination strategies, “documents in many cases are not restricted to only written materials” (1989: 92). This is especially germane to a media institution whose main operational outputs are audio and audiovisual content. In view of this, *Talking point*, which had over the period gained the reputation as a site for political contestation and GTV’s flagship program (GBC Audience Research Department Report, 1996: 12), was closely studied. Because older copies of *Talking Point* that reflect the period under study were no longer available on the stacks of the audiovisual library, I watched 6 live episodes of *Talking Point* while I was in the field, with the aim of ascertaining if there have been any editorial and production shifts from what pertained in the past. This was

³⁷ This 498-page publication comprises front-page stories carried by Ghana’s largest newspaper *Daily Graphic*, from 2nd January 1956 to 25th July 2006. It was published to coincide with Ghana’s 50 years independence anniversary.

particularly important as a way of monitoring how my observation of the program's editorial processes in the newsroom culminated into finished, on air programs.

In addition, I compiled three rotating weeks of GTV's program lineup from available archived, transmission logs as a way of gauging whether or not there have been shifts in its program profile. The choice of 1991, 2005 and 2010 was informed by availability of data, and an effort to roughly reflect the timeline of this study. Thus, 1991 is intended to reflect GTV programming at the tail end of its monopoly, with 2005 and 2010 reflecting different periods of its growth: a decade after the expansion of the media landscape; to the most recent past. Transmitted programs for a week, each from the fourth quarter of 1991, the third quarter of 2005, and the first quarter of 2010 constituted this sample. This three week rotational sample choice was intended to roughly reflect three different quarters since, typically, programs are maintained or reviewed on quarterly basis of 13 weeks.

511 programs constituting this sample were coded under genres such as children's, documentaries, sports, and entertainment. The rest are news, information and religion. Although far from representative, the sample was an effort to gauge the extent of Blumler's (1993) claim that children, documentary and general interest programs are some of the first content that get cut when advertising drives the programming logic of a public service broadcaster. Even though this unrepresentative sample is incapable of providing conclusive evidence, it activates an initial observation that gives credence to Blumler's claim, and enables some general observations to be made after analyzing GBC's funding sources.

I conclude my discussion of data collection methods by reinforcing how

observation, talk and interviews, and available documentary sources “together provide a stronger basis on which evidence and findings can be triangulated [because] claims and accounts produced from one source can be contrasted to those from another” (Cottle, 2007: 5-6). My decision to mix methods, therefore, should be seen as an attempt to mitigate participant observation’s often cited weaknesses that include its blind spot to external influences operating outside the immediate confines of the newsroom; a tendency to obscure the way in which managerial pressures are brought to bear on journalists (Curran 1989), and how convergence in ownership and operations make it increasingly difficult to grapple with the entire breadth of a newsroom which is spread across multiple countries on multiple platforms (Cottle, 2007). In spite of these setbacks, participant observation’s ability to cross reference and triangulate methods clearly provide a better attempt than any single approach, to study a social phenomenon with such breadth as a media organization’s operations.

Data analysis

I appropriate Fairclough’s (1995) “three dimensional” framework for my analysis. In doing so, I seek to “show systematic links between texts, discourse practices and sociocultural practices” (16-17). Although Fairclough borrowed this “multifunctionality” of text from Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, its aim is to draw attention to the fact “that the analysis of texts should not be artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discoursal practices within which texts are embedded” (9). Such an analytical strategy does not only benefit from the systemic view of texts as sets of options, but also from ‘intertextuality’, conceptualizing the text’s composition as made

up of both what is selected and excluded, its “absences” (van Leewen, 1993).

Towards this end, seventeen of the interviews were transcribed in full from their audio source while selected portions of others were partially transcribed. Due to the large volume of data collected, coupled with the fact that some were repetitive, I selected which interviews were crucial to warrant full or partial transcription due to time constraints and the insights they provided. As a first step, the analysis process involved data reduction; which identified key themes and patterns in the data collected (identifying both recurring and oppositional themes and ideas from the transcribed interviews). From these, more detailed thematic notes were created that provided a second layer of analysis.

The next stage involved allocating specific color codes to all items under the categories of legal, practice and funding, to reflect my three research questions. These codes/labels were further sorted and grouped under ‘broader, higher order categories or “main themes”’ (Ritchie et al. 2003:221, cited in Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo, 2010). The seven broad themes are public service broadcasting, journalism/editorial practice, resources [economic, technological and human], and editorial independence. The others are political influence, organizational/management policy and decisions, and finally, external legislation/policy.

Such broad themes reflect the relevant issues this study seeks to answer and through such relations, I began to make sense of how respondents define PSB, their personal editorial and journalistic experience, as well as how economic, technological and human resources impeded or facilitated their editorial independence. Personal experiences of political interference, how management decisions are arrived at and experienced, as well as how external policy and legislation regulate their conduct also

reflected in the data.

Considering that such data are a rich source of capturing individual experiences without getting them subsumed under larger institutional narratives, they provided a context for what to look out for during my field observation, highlighting critical moments, underlining silences, and pointing to some of the subliminal forces that account for institutional and personal decisions. In addition to providing context, therefore, such color-coded data in their own right enabled me to see concordance and disruptions in the various personal narratives of interviewees, and to analyze their causes. It is such shifts and disruptions over long loops of time that place history at the centre of political economy's theoretical ethos (Mosco, 2009; McChesney, 1999; Wasko et al., 2011).

In addition to closely analyzing the manifest content of transcribed data, I also focused on their “intertextual” references to see how individual responses bear the imprints of other previous texts, spoken or written. This allowed the extent of “permanence” or shifts in practices such as editorial and operational routines to be analyzed. In such cases, my use of discourse analysis went beyond the substantive content of such spoken narratives/texts, to studying institutionally authored texts, both referred to intertextually and on their own.

This phase of discourse analysis focuses on “textually analyzing” the text along its linguistic and semantic composition focusing on themes such as subject matter, date/period, author, addressee, register, stylistic tone and overall language style among others. Such an approach analyzes the linguistic tools that such authors harness as a discursive strategy to give expression to their intention, as well as provide a standard against which institutional practices are based, interpreted and codified. This is an

important component of this study since textual analysis serves as a crucial entry point into understanding organizational discursual culture, as well as mapping out organizational hierarchies and how they operate in relation to one another.

This stage of the analysis is “ideational” in that it focuses largely on how institutional reality gets symbolically represented through texts, by which author to which addressee. Whether it was minutes, a report of an internal enquiry, a memo, or an annual report, such texts serve as examples bearing clear institutional cues as to how GBC authored its texts, sometimes carefully orienting its message to suit the expectation of its regulator in its annual reports, or reporting the outcomes of critical meetings without pointing to the agents involved except in their roles. Phrases such as “the meeting agreed”, “the Director-General said” or “it was agreed that the political parties would pay for the cost of the translations at rates to be fixed by GBC” are reflected in a 1992 GBC minutes (Memo, 1992)³⁸. This is one of the three ways in which texts execute institutional reality, by “overriding individual perspectives and objectifying institutional realities” (Smith, 2005: 186).

Reading texts as an “interlocking web of texts” (Smith, 2005:120) or “intertextually” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999), explores ways in which other texts-genres and discourses- are incorporated into new formations within a present text, as well as focusing on the social/power relations that shape and are shaped by that discourse. In practical terms, this involves analyzing the genres of various texts. As Fairclough and Chouliaraki (1999) point out, the generic choice of a text bestows on its author an

³⁸ This is “minutes of the meeting between GBC management and representatives of registered political parties on party political broadcasts held on 25th August, 1992 at the GBC board room”.

expectation of linguistic competence since each genre comes with its own narrative format such as storytelling, agitation or simply factual. How an author selects, relies on and effectively deploys a genre/format (such as memo, query, announcement, report etc) as a discoursal strategy to represent reality constitutes a critical node for analyzing how power is reflected through such discourse.

The use of such discoursal strategies came through such internal memos on the GBC notice board where an unknown author is assumed to be speaking with authority on behalf of GBC “management” to a general addressee (Memo dated 20/1/14). In another example, the language of the committee of enquiry report is deliberately ambivalent and fails to name with certainty, preferring to define through “absences” (van Leeuwen, 1993) and inferences. Such a report does not only use intertextual references to justify its inferred positions, it also mixes genres as a discoursal strategy; freely mixing facts with narratives and through silences, leaving voids for the reader to fill in. A third example stands out for its hybridity, and the author’s familiarity with the institutional power grid of GBC. Dated 20/1/97, the report deploys effective discoursal strategies of mixing institutional facts with free narration, as well as frequent changes in the author’s point of view to conceal its “political” intentions of critiquing television management’s conduct, and calling them “ineffective”.

These are some of the ways in which CDA and IE enabled and guided my data collection and analysis, keeping to the qualitative research promise of studying real people within their natural settings, and keeping an eye at the analysis stage, on how power gets actualized through human interactions and their outcomes. As approaches that are grounded in the critical tradition, they allowed GBC as a media institution to be

conceptualized as both an entity, and a series of practices, thereby enabling its sociocultural context as well as its actions to be teased out and studied.

Limitations of study

Like all others, this study had limitations. They ranged from prospective interviewees turning down in-depth interviews, to lack of access to important institutional texts and some content production spaces. Two former Ministers of Information agreed to be interviewed but could not live up to their promise at the last minute. Due to time constraints, out of the three planned, I had to settle for only one who granted me in-depth interviews on two separate occasions. His competencies as a former legislator, a trained journalist and a media regulator enabled a wider scope of questioning to occur on both interview occasions. This advantage notwithstanding, responses from the other two would have offered experiences from different vantage points and provided richer data for a more rounded picture. Although the Ministry's role in the operations of GBC were gleaned intertextually from interviews of other media regulators/managers, and public records such as the *Media Monitor*, a quarterly produced by the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, I sought to further minimize my losses with another follow up in-depth interview to address some of the outstanding issues.

In addition, a former Director-General of GBC flatly turned down an invitation to be interviewed. Considering that it was during his era that GBC intensified its efforts at commercialization, his insights as the chief executive who oversaw this transition would have been very useful. Because out of the five Director-Generals I wanted to interview,

he was one of two who had not worked at GBC before his appointment, his perspectives as an insider/outsider could have offered unique insights. Fortunately, between the four former Director Generals, enough data was generated for the purposes of this analysis.

Other respondents preferred written responses to face-to-face in-depth interviews due either to time constraints, work pressures, or both. These written responses significantly minimized opportunities for follow up questions as it happened in an instance when a respondent failed to respond to follow up emails seeking further clarification. Bearing this disadvantage in mind, I tried to minimize the impact of such absences through a careful selection of respondents whose vast professional experiences enabled them address a wide range of issues as well as a restructuring of subsequent interview questions to address the gaps such absences presented.

For instance, one former Director-General had management and editorial experiences in television, radio and newspaper in both public and private environments. Another media regulator had extensive experience in newspaper publishing in addition to being a former diplomat. Another had not only been a founding member of the NMC, but had been a former Director General of GBC and a diplomat. These allowed them to speak to questions that span both “media politics” and “politics of media” with familiarity, personal insights and knowledge. That notwithstanding, the study would have been richer and more rounded if it had had the full complement of interviewees, especially the personal perspectives from more politician policy makers (such as Ministers of Information) and regulators.

GBC and the Ministry of Information gave very little of their institutional texts away. Notwithstanding the assurances to GBC that my work was for academic purposes,

its officials felt my work “was likely to expose” (personal communication, 2013) the inadequacies of the institution for which reason their cooperation did not go beyond rendering me general access to its production spaces. The Ministry of Information simply refused to make such data available citing them as “confidential”. I gained access to documents such as some Annual reports, GBC regular Newsletters, Television transmission logbooks, news diary and some internal memos through various individual and public sources with full disclosure of my research intent, and protection of their anonymity. Most of the textual data offered some insights into some specific workings of GBC and in some cases, its relations with other stakeholders. However, internal memos would have provided an opportunity to evaluate how texts frame and coordinate such actionable deeds, as well as gauge how media workers involved interpret such texts.

For instance, how management conceptualized and communicated the “Radio-vision” project to its managers through memos, would have offered better insights into how the project was managed, and provided opportunities to tease out how management’s “intention was misconstrued” as it kept saying (2013, personal communication). Better access to such textual data would have given me better opportunities to gauge how internal memos constrain or empower such media workers in the performance of their routine duties.

In the absence of such specific memos, I felt compelled to rely on personal insights of people who had worked closely on GBC’s policy without the benefit of adequately critiquing their positions through institutional texts. Under the circumstances, I had to make do with what limited internal memos were available which both limited my scope and minimized opportunities for intertextual analysis, especially in determining

how GBC's relations with the Ministry of Information was authored and managed through such texts. The GBC *Newsletter* which served the general purpose of recording and disseminating information between GBC management and its staff, and their various annual reports, by and large, became a useful, albeit inadequate, replacement. They, nevertheless, ameliorated the extent of the void. Ultimately, it is my hope that the Right to Information Bill, which is still awaiting parliamentary passage, will in future facilitate access and ease the constraint of accessing information from government and state officials.

Access to onsite locations presented clear examples of the politics inherent amongst the various divisions of GBC. Although I was permitted to observe newsroom practices within a shared newsroom space for both radio and television, my position as a former television staff presented difficulties for accessing radio spaces. While access to television spaces including their editorial meetings were unfettered, I did not experience the same level of access from radio. In view of this, I largely observed radio's operations from a distance, and asked questions from editorial staff when they were outside the radio newsroom.

Although I was not physically prevented from accessing radio spaces, there was a general atmosphere of disinterest from media workers anytime I found myself within radio spaces. Silence, and being told to see a "more senior person" became regular means of cutting short any effort at engaging editorial staff in face-to-face interactions within the radio newsroom setting. My relations with radio staff and their production spaces could best be described as insider/outsider: a former television worker who could not access radio spaces with the same sense of welcome and cooperation. However, judging

from previous experience with both radio and television newsrooms and their bulletins, I do not consider such lack of access a major setback.

Interviews from the Director of Radio and a former head of radio news who consented to be interviewed in their offices outside the newsroom largely reinforced the similarities between previous radio “backstage” newsroom practices, as I knew them, and current ones. To lessen the impact of such lack of access, I relied on relevant portions of earlier observations (in 2006 and 2012) of newsroom practices and interviews I had conducted with editorial managers from GBC radio newsroom for analysis.

In view of the above, my analysis and conclusions seem to be drawn more from the observational standpoint of television than radio. While this “situatedness” which is contingent on my onsite observations stands as a reminder of how institutional politics play out in a media institution, it does not undermine the integrity of my data or the analysis and conclusions that flow from them. Even if it makes a standpoint inevitable, sufficient data from radio made up of previous and current field observations and interviews, allow rigorous analysis and general conclusions about both radio and television to be made, albeit with different emphases.

Finally, opportunities to access audio and audiovisual material were limited. The limitation came in the form of shortage of tapes which, over the years, have created a situation where instead of keeping old programs on the racks, such programs are quickly erased to make way for new ones. This situation deprived me of the opportunity to revisit some of the old tapes of *Talking Point* in particular, as a site for tracking changes in editorial choices. As a former Producer/Director of *Talking Point* myself for two and half years, I was looking forward to critically reviewing some of my old programs; counting

on my familiarity with past production processes to compare with current ones, seeking to make sense of any differences that occur. Because the issue of recycling of taped programs came up during my early reconnaissance to GBC, I anticipated a situation where access to old programs was going to be difficult. I sought to minimize this setback by dwelling more on how the production processes of *Talking Point* have endured or changed, and through my interviews, ascertain potential political influences if they occurred. Towards these ends, lack of access to physical, recorded data made little or no impact on the depth of my findings, analysis and conclusions.

In all instances, I tried to minimize the extent of whatever limitation I encountered either in the careful selection of interviewees, or alter the focus of interviews to make up for such losses. The biggest limitation, however, remains the absence of relevant institutional texts, especially from the Ministry of Information, which would have provided original, officially documented insights into how GBC's relations with its oversight ministry was constructed and managed before the institution of the National Media Commission. Although newspaper stories and personal experiences provided some useful insights, they lacked the originality such institutional texts would have provided, had they been available. Under the circumstances, general conclusions about the possible extent and nature of government's influence, interference or control over GBC's operations were drawn from available data.

Chapter Six

Findings and Analysis of Legislation, Policy and Management Systems of GBC

Introduction

An overarching question confronting GBC is the extent to which it can call itself a truly Public Service Broadcaster. This problematic, or definitional crisis is as a result of both historical and practical factors. GBC's close historical relations with government, right from colonial times, have fuelled its perception as a state-owned and run media organization rather than a public service. The problem is further deepened by a National Constitution (1992) which, although assigns GBC a public service role, still describes it as "state-owned" (Article 163). The resultant state-owned/public service uncertainty is a central issue in this study's bid to ascertain the extent to which GBC has successfully transitioned from being state owned and operated to a truly public service media organization in both orientation and performance. It is in the context of these concerns that this study seeks to investigate GBC's specific responses to the issues that continue to define the character and operations of PSB globally. Issues such as the likely consequences of existing broadcasting legislation and policy on GBC's institutional and journalism practice, as well as its mode of funding must be seen as three important pillars upon which GBC's transition from state to public service can be gauged.

As Raboy (1996), McChesney (1999), Avery (1993) and many others point out, the successful and permissible execution of any media organization's mandate, most of all public service media, rests on whether or not legislative and policy regimes are hostile or friendly to the performance of its core mandate. The nature of such legislation and

policy, and how they enable media to operate in particular ways, therefore, constitute an important index of the society's democratic health, and by extension, the value it places on free expression, public service and access.

The impact of legislation and policy on a state-owned medium and, more importantly, how it responds in practice to such regulation provide some concrete evidence of how it conceptualizes and executes its assigned public service mandate. Furthermore, the assertion that advertising and sponsorship are “an implacable foe” to public service broadcasting (Blumler, 1993: 411) means GBC's mode of funding constitutes a core (dis)enabler to its operations. GBC's funding and revenue generation streams, therefore, impinge directly on its capacity to live up to its *raison d'être* as a public service broadcaster.

The following analysis addresses these issues, based on findings from my fieldwork and some secondary data sources. Although far from exhaustive, both the scope and depth of data collected provide sufficient pointers to the political, cultural and economic factors that have guided broadcasting legislation in Ghana and offer sufficient grounds to interrogate GBC's Public Service status.

The chapter is organized along two broad headings. The first part focuses on the relevant legislative, judicial and policy contexts that underpin GBC's status and operations. From these, the second part fleshes out GBC's administrative structures and practices, its attendant internal politics and, by extension, possible external influences that impinge on its operations. As will be evident, the rationale for this organization is to determine if there is any alignment between its normative vision (set out by legislation and policy) and operational performance (dependent on its institutional capacity), and if

not, draw out possible reasons for such dissonance.

Organizational mandate, structure and processes

As I have tried to highlight earlier, GBC as a media organization is very much like its counterparts all around the world: they reflect the shifts and developments in the societies within which they operate. In view of this, the mandates, structures and processes of such media organizations often change to reflect larger societal changes. From its initial vision as a radio relay station, concentrated in the capital and connecting the Gold Coast colony to metropolitan London (Ansah, 1985), GBC has transformed over the past 80 years into a giant media organization providing both radio and television service over more than 95 percent of Ghana's landmass (Annual Report, 2005). Currently, GBC's national footprint is carried by "one National TV station, three Digital Terrestrial TV channels (undergoing test transmission in Accra and Kumasi), one national radio channel, and 15 FM stations spread over the length and breadth of the country" (*GBC Newsletter*, 2014).

As in the case of any significant transformation, the process could be fraught with tensions and uncertainties, even disruptive shifts. Like most media on the continent and, indeed, globally, GBC as a sociopolitical and economic product bears the imprints of such shifts at three critical levels of local, national and transnational (Teer-Tomasseli, 2005; Tracey, 1996). The direction such a media organization travels depends on how successfully it navigates the contentious political, economic and social winds that blow it (Carpentier, 2011; Jakubowicz, 2011, Price, 2011; Raboy, 1996).

A historical perspective: relevant legislative, judicial and policy contexts

The 1953 Grenfell Commission on Broadcasting provides the initial foundation upon which future public broadcasting was to be built. As part of an earlier effort to streamline the media in Ghana, the Grenfell Commission³⁹ of broadcasting experts was mandated with a general terms of reference to “advise the Government on the ways and means of improving and developing broadcasting” (14). The commission was to determine, among others,

(i) [T]he composition, status, powers and functions of the body to control broadcasting in the Gold Coast and the tenure and conditions of office of its members, (ii) the best way to set about establishing a comprehensive broadcasting service, its cost and the means by which it can be financed, [...] (v) advisability or otherwise of commercial broadcasting and, [...] (viii) the means by which the broadcasting service may be utilized for educational and social welfare purposes (cited in Commission’s Report, 1953: 14).

With such a wide ambit, the Committee’s recommendations are significant for three principal reasons: what kind of broadcasting they envisioned, how it would be funded, and its role in the social development of the Gold Coast as it prepared itself for independence four years later.

The Gold Coast Broadcasting Service, (GCBS), as the radio service was called at the time, was to be a government department with staff appointed through the Public Service Commission with oversight from a Minister of state. Notwithstanding its government-appointed Council which was to act both in an “advisory and executive

³⁹ The Grenfell Commission was made up of four members with three of them being BBC staff. It was made up of Grenfell Williams, head of BBC Colonial service, J.B. Millar, a Senior Administrative Assistant, W.A. Roberts, a senior member of the BBC Engineering Division, and R.P. Baffour, a Ghanaian Mechanical Engineer nominated by the Gold Coast government. J.B. Millar later served as the first Director General of the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service in 1954. It is sometimes referred to as the BBC Committee of Experts

capacity” (Commission’s Report, 1953: 12), the aim of the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service was to be “an independent broadcasting corporation” (12), with the “supply [of] accurate and objective news broadcasts, [considered as the] most important duty of the service” (Commission’s Report, 1953: 8). In order for broadcasting to “play its full part in the development of the Gold Coast,” regional stations were to be established, in addition to the national service to broadcast in local languages (Commission’s Report, 1953: 12).

Considering its colonial status, coupled with its largely agrarian and retail economy, which was monopolized by expatriates, the Committee concluded that advertising and sponsorship were an unlikely source of revenue for any broadcasting organization within such a monopolized economy since there was very little incentive to advertise. In view of this, the Committee discouraged advertising and sponsorship as sources of revenue for the broadcasting service and ruled out commercial broadcasting altogether. The quintessential elements of this report are captured in Paragraph 92:

If the object of the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service is to give the people a balanced programme of news, information, education and entertainment, if, in fact, it is to perform a *public service* which will help the country in its forward march; then we have no hesitation in saying that commercial broadcasting cannot, by its very nature, fully achieve these ends (Commission’s Report, 1953: 10, emphasis added).

I underline these recommendations mainly to point out that the Committee was not only unequivocal about its choice of public service broadcasting as the ideal model for the Gold Coast, it also strongly discouraged commercial broadcasting at this stage. In pursuit of this vision, the Commission recognized that while the creation of an independent broadcasting service was the ultimate vision, such a service could not

possibly stand on its own without some form of government support. As a first step to this crucial intervention, a 12 member Broadcasting Council⁴⁰ was to be created to manage its operations. Additionally, government was obliged to “provide the necessary capital” for its operations, and “make provision for the annual recurrent cost of the service for the first five years” (12).

If the Commission had “no doubt that the ideal broadcasting system for the Gold Coast would be an independent corporation organized and controlled on the lines of the British Broadcasting Corporation or similar broadcasting bodies like the Australian Broadcasting Commission or the Canadian Broadcasting Company” (4), then the Commission’s recommendation that “government should retain some control over the Broadcasting service” (5) was meant to be temporary. Understandably, the exigencies of lack of qualified broadcast staff and infrastructure, coupled with an economy that depended almost exclusively on the state meant the state’s continual involvement for the survival of any form of broadcasting was critical.

To a large extent, the uncertainty about the state/public status of GBC traces its genesis to how this delicate balance has been struck between the state’s critical support for GBC on the one hand, and maintaining its editorial and organizational independence

⁴⁰ The Council was made up of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and 10 members from four regions (Tamale, Kumasi, Takoradi-Sekondi, and Ho where regional stations were to be set) outside Accra, and representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Communications, Defence and External Affairs. Its main duties included (i) “accepting responsibility for the program policy of the service [by] ensuring that programs broadcast were in the national interest, (ii) control the finances of the service and to present these estimates to Government for approval, (iii) to consider the selection of all staff, and (iv) to maintain an overall interest in, and supervision of, the service without interfering with the rights and duties of the Director of the Service” (6). Since its inception, the broadcasting service was part of the Information Services Department and was controlled by the Director of Information Services under the Minister of Defence and External Affairs (1).

on the other. In a sense, the original transitory role of government in GBC's forward match to public service broadcasting has become permanent.

Judging from its composition to its duties, the Governing Council was intended to provide broad policy for the service while insulating it by ensuring that "government's control be as light as possible" and temporary. But more significantly, its membership and function indicate an attempt to reconceptualize information not as a controlled, dangerous commodity under the Ministry of Defense and External Affairs, as was the case, but as a public good to be shared and managed by all citizens. The creation of four 30-member advisory councils in each of the four regions to advise the Governing Council of the GCBS must, therefore, be seen as an effort to reflect this shift in orientation.

Bearing in mind that this change in orientation resonates with the dominant thinking of the 1950s and 1960s, when communication was considered an essential component of development (Ansah, 1985; Katz and Weddell, 1977), the Committee's insistence on the establishment of regional stations and, more importantly, broadcasting in local languages could be read as a means of giving this new thinking practical expression. Access, therefore, becomes an important definer of the GCBS right from its inception.

The relevance of the Commission's blueprint for broadcasting in Ghana is that it clearly mapped out a public service mandate for the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service, and integrated it into the State's public service with the hope of benefitting from the latter's more developed human resource base. It was, thus, under the supervision of a Minister of State. Under the circumstances, as a colony readying for self-rule, this was a reasonable proposition. However, recognizing the dangers inherent in this arrangement,

the Commission created a Governing Board to oversee the Service's operations, even if administratively. Clearly, aside forging an unambiguous public service mandate for the service, these interventions were meant to ensure that the GCBS was given the chance of "developing a spirit of independence from the beginning" (5), notwithstanding its reliance on government support.

In summary it could be argued that the GCBS showed its affinity to the BBC through its internal structure, the function of its Governing Board (to insulate it from government's control), and its programming philosophy and language use (diversity of programs, promoting local language and access through local participation). So also did its funding preference (through user license fees mainly) and even its training model (in "which a small staff organizes courses and call upon other members of the staff to give lectures and demonstrations" [Commission report, 1953: 7]). It could be inferred that, under the circumstances with little expert knowledge and funding, this model of training was to engender knowledge sharing among its staff, as well enable the transfer of institutional culture. If the GCBS failed to become a full-fledged public service broadcasting by 1968, when the National Liberation Council Decree (NLCD) 226 was passed, it was because government had tightened its control over the service rather than loosen it over time.

The NLCD 226 both reinforces and deviates from the Grenfell Commission's Public broadcasting vision in some significant ways. Instead of deepening access to broadcasting by decentralizing its operations and empowering its Governing Council to be more autonomous of government, it achieved just the opposite. On the recommendations of the Commissioner responsible for Information, the Military

government appointed all 10 members of GBC's Governing Board, who in turn, appointed a Director General and his/her Deputy. Under emergency powers, the National Liberation Council could not only give directions to the corporation which it was obliged to comply with, but could go as far as "take over the broadcasting service of the corporation" (Article 18 (2) b). Notwithstanding the fact that the Board provided "the broad direction of the affairs of the Corporation" (Article 5 [1]), its mode of appointment and dissolution, in theory, compromised its independence and its capacity to insulate the corporation from government interferences.

However, it is in the decree's designation of GBC as providing "public service broadcasting" (Article 9 [1]) while asking it to "engage in commercial broadcasting through the sale of paid advertisements" (Article 8 [3]) that GBC's paradox becomes most vivid. For the first time, GBC found itself in an unfamiliar situation of having to "mesh money with its [public service] mission" (Blumler, 1993) under a non-democratic military regime. By permitting advertising as an official source of revenue, the military-led regime was also sending a strong signal that government and/or the state was no longer going to be the sole financier of public service broadcasting; a gesture that "diluted to a large extent, the pristine state of public broadcasting as Nkrumah envisaged" (Amihere, 2014, personal interview). Although the introduction of advertising as a source of revenue is not necessarily the same as introducing commercial broadcasting, as Article 8 (3) argues, the two could be seen as coterminous considering that one (advertising) affects the other (program content) and how such a program conceptualizes its audience.

But more importantly, the military government argued that GBC's lack of editorial independence under the previous Nkrumah regime, perceived or actual, was due

to its almost complete reliance on government funding, implying that resorting to paid advertising was somehow going to loosen any such dependence. Even if there was any merit to this argument, the proposition of paid advertising as remedial was flawed since it was only going to shift the locus of power from government to advertisers, at best. By failing to provide a ceiling beyond which GBC could not solicit advertising revenue, the decree had given it a blank cheque with the increasing likelihood of advertisements affecting its programming. This scenario looked increasingly likely since the intended effort to differentiate advertising from editorial by “scheduling [such adverts] at prescribed spots in its programme” (Article 8 [3]) could still prove inadequate.

As the country oscillated between military and civilian regimes, subsequent Constitutions (1969, 1979) in various ways, expanded the frontiers for free expression and, by extension, the public service ethos of GBC (Twumasi, 1980). Unlike the 1969 and 1979 Constitutions, which framed Press and media freedom as a derivative of the general right to freedom of expression and movement, the 1992 Constitution, for the first time in the historical developments of Constitutions in Ghana, directly guaranteed Press and Media Freedom. The Committee of Experts for the formulation of the 1992 Constitution had argued that as one of the “pillars of democracy,” the media could only play its essential role of propagating ideas and providing the requisite space for the discussion of core national issues if it is free and unfettered.

In the opinion of George Sarpong, the Executive Secretary of Ghana’s National Media Commission (NMC), it is for this principal reason that the 1992 Constitution of Ghana both instituted the NMC and made the task of insulating the state-owned media from governmental control its primary task (2014, personal interview). The NMC, like its

other African counterparts such as the Independent Commissions Authority of South Africa (ICASA), the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), and the Broadcasting Council (BC) of Uganda, was created as a constitutional body that insulates the media from governmental control, and by extension, give true expression to media independence and the guaranteed right to free expression. It is important to underline that these different African Constitutions signaled a shift in their various societies. They signal an effort to return to liberal democratic values, often closely linked with an expansion of the market and a roll back of government funds for public institutions. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana was written to reflect such an economic and sociopolitical orientation.

However, considering that a Constitution, by its very nature, can only frame the broad outlines of public policy, its job is considered to have been done “once it guarantees the independence of the media, recognizes the role of the state-owned media, and creates an institution to safeguard the freedom and independence of these institutions” among many others (Sarpong, 2014, personal interview). The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, therefore, stands out as the document that not just explicitly guarantees freedom of the press and other media in article 21 (1) and the right to information in 21 (1) (f), but also devotes chapter 12 to the independence of the media, the guarantee of freedom of expression, and the establishment of the National Media Commission (NMC).

For the purposes of my analysis’ focus on the impact of legislation on GBC’s status and operations as a PSB, the relevant provisions of this Constitution are four fold: the freedoms of the press and media; the independence of the media; the guarantee of the

freedom of expression and the subsequent right to information; and the establishment of the National Media Commission. Read together, the listed provisions define the broad policy outlines for the “state owned media” to offer public service with no interference from either government or other vested interests.

The GBC is, therefore, one of the state-owned media⁴¹ that is obligated by article 163 to provide a forum for the expression of alternative views. More specifically, article 55 enjoins it to afford all political parties equal and fair opportunities to present their messages to the electorate. It is my view that the two articles could be read together as obligating state-owned media, and for that matter GBC, to provide program diversity guided by the principle of fair and equitable representation.

Although the spirit of equitable and fair access to state owned media including the GBC is quite explicit, it took a court action from an aggrieved political party to activate this very important provision. The Supreme Court of Ghana ruled in 1993 that the GBC had erred in its refusal to grant the aggrieved party equal access to its airtime and that its action amounted to the denial of a guaranteed and fundamental Constitutional right. Similarly, the NMC resorted to court action (NMC vs. Attorney General) to seek reliefs to exercise its constitutional right to appoint the Chief Executives of state owned media organizations as stipulated in the Constitution. If today GBC’s programming scope is a better reflection of divergent national opinions, and its Governing Board and Director-General are appointed by the constitutionally mandated NMC, it is due largely to these important, groundbreaking judicial rulings. I cite these two instances not only to highlight that the actual practice of translating normative constitutional provisions into action have

⁴¹ The other state-owned media are *The Daily Graphic*, *Ghana News Agency*, and *The Ghanaian Times*

been fiercely contested in the past, but also intimate that future successes will depend on continual vigilance by media managers, citizens and all stakeholders.

If Sarpong's (2014) earlier observation is true that the Constitution can only frame the broad outlines of public policy, then the National Media Policy (NMP) (2000) and the Broadcasting Bill (2013) are the other documents that go beyond broad policies "to elaborate and set actual pieces of legislation in detail that address questions about the broadcasting and media industry" (Apenteng, 2013, personal communication). The former was initiated by the NMC to serve as concrete guidelines on media conduct more generally and political reporting more specifically.

Meant to serve as a "yardstick for which media standards are to be measured" (National Media Policy, 2000: v), the NMP ought to be seen as an effort by the NMC to actualize its crucial mandate to "take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media" (1992 Constitution of Ghana, chapter 12). Unlike legislation, which possesses an implicit binding force, even punitive consequences in the event of breaches, the NMP is described and largely seen by the NMC as "hortatory guidelines" (National Media Policy, 2000: v). It is this lack of enforceable muscle that rings in the NMC Chairman's remark that "so far we have been issuing guidelines, guidelines, guidelines. Guidelines are guidelines. You can use it or not use it. But when we come out with an LI, it will be binding" (2014, personal interview). The Broadcasting Bill (2009) and its three revised versions (2011, 2013 and 2014)⁴² must, therefore be seen as an attempt to rectify this perennial practice

⁴² The entire chapter two of the revised 2013 version, and made up of 27 articles (95-122) is devoted to GBC. They define, mandate and operationalize GBC as a PSB. However, the revised 2014 version after a stakeholders meeting, completely deleted GBC as an

of issuing “hortatory guidelines” without the legal muscle by the media regulator to enforce them.

Drafted by some of the core experts who authored the NMP, and informed by the need to set and enforce coherent standards, the Broadcasting Bill should be seen as building on the quintessential spirit and vision of the NMP. For instance, Article 63 sets up a 9 member Broadcasting Standards Committee responsible for the maintenance of broadcasting standards with clearly spelt out penalties (administrative sanction of two hundred and fifty penalty units) for failing to appear before it. In the case of repeated offenders, the bill proposes sanctions that include “withdrawal of authorization and refusal to renew authorization” (Article 68 [6]). These examples hint at the bill’s intention to streamline a broadcasting landscape many consider chaotic, fluid, and with minimal controls.

Largely grounded on the principle that all broadcasting should be seen as “public trust regardless of ownership” (NMP, Article 5[1]), both the NMP and the Broadcasting Bill espouse common provisions that include universal access, program and ownership diversity, a redefinition of public service as a collective duty by all three tiers of broadcasting (community, public and commercial), and the establishment of a broadcasting development fund. It is instructive to bear in mind that these provisions

organizational entity from the bill, subsuming it under the generic category of public broadcasting. This is how the report captures it: “Part 2 of the Bill on GBC has been removed and all references to GBC in the memorandum have been deleted. The Minister of Information and Media Relations proposed that GBC’s establishment law should not be included in the bill and should remain on its own. [...] Following the removal of the provisions on GBC from the Bill, it is proposed that the Ministry starts work as soon as possible to review the GBC law and bring it in line with the fast moving changes in the sector” (2). This essentially deinstitutionalizes GBC and consigns it as another, not the PSB.

resonate with various efforts by other African media regulators. The 1999 Broadcasting Act of South Africa similarly provides three tiers of broadcasting in South Africa (Fourie, 2003), just as Section 46 B(i) of the Kenya Communications Act (2008) (Githaiga, 2011) and the National Media Policy (2004) of Uganda (Lugalambi, 2010).

Underpinning the need for three tiers of broadcasting is the recognition that broadcasting at all levels should perform the critical duty of forging national unity and development. For most African countries with a long history of over-centralized, state-controlled broadcasting, a public- private-community broadcasting system reflects an effort to break the monopolies of such state-owned and run media as well as ensure that true access, both in terms of geographical reach and citizen participation, are guaranteed. This is the objective that drives both South African and Kenyan broadcasting legislation.

Like the Broadcasting Bill, the NMP of Ghana defines access comprehensively (from exposure, to participation, to ownership) and identifies it as an important imperative for broadcasting. In addition to ensuring that it is “promoted at all levels and in various forms, access shall be taken to mean not only consumption of the media but also participation in their ownership, management, production and distribution” (Article 6.1.5). It is when this definition is juxtaposed against the geographical and linguistic constraints faced especially by disadvantaged sectors and groups that its meaning is underscored and its function as a prerequisite to national discourse appreciated.

In reacting to the question of access, the GBC, like its South African Broadcasting Corporation counterpart, expanded its (radio) footprint in 1994 into other regions in its bid to decentralize its operations (Heath, 2001). The expansion was also to enable GBC to get closer to its listeners and, through such closeness broadcasts in more local

languages. It is important to note that although GBC takes after the SABC model in terms of its regional footprint, they differ in some important respects. While GBC's regional offices continue to carry out GBC's administrative and public service programming philosophy in the regions, the SABC on the other hand, operated commercial radio stations in such regions. Regional stations such as NPR radio, Radio Zulu, and Radio Lotus in Kwazulu Natal compete as SABC commercial channels with privately owned commercial radio (Tomasselli and Teer-Tomasseli, 1994). The point here is more than the fact that the SABC operates a dual broadcasting system under this arrangement, in contrast to GBC's model which merely replicates its national administrative and programming philosophy at the regional level. It is also that irrespective of how well GBC strives to retain its public service programming philosophy, it is competing against privately owned commercial stations both regionally and nationally.

To the extent that GBC generates some programming content that is commercial in nature, and privately owned commercial broadcasting is mandated to at least have "significant amounts of Ghanaian content, [including] news and discussions on matters of local, national, regional and international significance" (National Media Policy, Articles 21 [b, c]), both the Broadcasting Bill and the NMP effectively deinstitutionalizes public service broadcasting and operationalizes it as a duty to be borne by the entire three-tier broadcasting system. As Raboy (1996) puts it, the entire broadcasting system (made up of public, private and community media), instead of an institution, is mandated to execute a public service mandate.

Additionally, Raboy proposes that profits from more successful parts of such a broadcasting system (commercial) should fund less economically viable sectors (core

public service and community) to ensure both program diversity and a balanced distribution of programming burden. By setting up a National Broadcasting Development Fund (NBDF), the Broadcasting Bill (Clause 71) seeks to centralize funds from various sources and to make it available to all media seeking to do public interest content. However, the Ghanaian context is unlike the Canadian situation in which the CBC can still rely on some regular, albeit insufficient funds from parliament for its programming. This is because receiver licenses, which had traditionally been given exclusively to GBC will, under this new arrangement, be part of the NBDF to be accessed by all.

In the face of recent (2015) increases in television licenses and heated debates surrounding how the accrued money should be shared (“Suspend TV licence fee, it’s a BAD law”, July, 2015, emphasis in original; “Wereko Brobbie sues AG, GBC, NMC over TV licence fee”, July 2015; “The imperative case for a national conversation on TV licence fees”, August, 2015; “Court allows GBC to collect TV licence but stops it from sharing”, August, 2015), such increases provide little comfort for GBC’s capacity to rely on regular and adequate funds and, therefore, focus on public interest programming as its core mandate. Although I intend to focus on the NBDF into more detail under GBC’s mode of funding, suffice it to say that as it stands, without a clear cut plan about how to share the television license, GBC’s public service focus is likely to be distracted by continuous reliance on advertising revenue.

But it is not only financial independence that is crucial to the performance of a public broadcaster. Its editorial and operational independence are as crucial and the NMC as a media regulator has a central role to play towards this end. Besides insulating media and GBC from governmental control, formulation and monitoring of media policies is

another way of ensuring such independence. However, the formulation of media-specific operational policy to guide their conduct is largely left in the hands of their governing boards as a way of ensuring their independence from the NMC (Sarpong, 2014, personal interview). As he puts it, the expectation of the NMC is that “the independent board that the independent NMC has independently put in place will independently act to produce the right policies that independently chart the course for GBC” (2014, personal interview). The Executive Secretary argues that the constitutional change that placed media regulation and oversight in the NMC was “not to change GBC’s masters,” hence it will be counterproductive if the “NMC replaces government by itself and begins to issue instructions to GBC” (Sarpong, 2014, personal communication). Guided by this frame, one expects that operation-specific policies will be undertaken by governing boards of the various state owned media, including GBC.

But that is not the case, as a Board member of GBC points out and a former Director General corroborates. Because the Board “prefers to leave GBC’s management to its managers, [what it does mostly is] provide general guidelines to guide it. That’s all” (Moffat, 2014, personal interview). This is not very different from a former Director-General’s observation that rather than formulate policy, the Board approved or disapproved policy generated by GBC’s eight-member Executive Directors. Under such circumstances, the Board cannot be said to be providing policy guidelines in any active sense.

More appropriately, it could be said to be merely approving or disapproving what is brought to its attention and at best, ensuring management’s strict enforcement of agreed upon policies. In some respects, this is due to the fact that board members of GBC

do not necessarily have competences in the operations of media and, under such circumstances, not only “could they make wrong decisions”, but also “fail to protect the organization from external pressures” including government (Lokko, 2013, personal interview)⁴³.

All in all, as one respondent rightly observed, “GBC has been left to formulate its own policy and interpret its public service mandate all by itself” (Apenteng, 2013, personal interview). This perception which the NMC interprets as creating an enabling environment for media freedom, has fed into the public perception that apart from insulating the state owned media from government control, the NMC is largely ineffective. Taking into account GBC’s historical antecedents and reflexes as being cheerleaders of governments, one would have expected the NMC to show more direct involvement in its operational policy formulation to help align it with its expected public service role. Ensuring that board members have relevant broadcasting competencies, ensuring that GBC documents and lives up to a known editorial code of conduct, as well as facilitating professional training are some of the ways the NMC could help GBC transition more seamlessly into its public service role.

If past state-media relations have forced the NMC to focus disproportionately on how to insulate the GBC from government interference, the current Broadcasting bill has

⁴³ In 2004, 3 reporters in TV newsroom and the Director of Television were fired for breaking a damning story about government’s handling of Ghana Airways, the national carrier. Citing editorial independence and the fact that the story was accurate, the reporters appealed to the NMC who after hearing their case, instructed the GBC Board to reinstate them. The Board reinstated the 3 reporters, but not the DTV. When it refused to reinstate the DTV after a second prompting, the NMC responded by reinstating the DTV and dissolving the Board. It turned out later that the government had expressed its disappointment to the GBC board for allowing such editorial indiscipline to occur.

clarified the NMC's role, especially in its relation to the National Communication Authority. The Broadcasting bill has resolved the confusing and sometimes overlapping roles between the National Communication Authority and the NMC by empowering the NMC with the needed legislation to transform it into a more efficient media regulator. More like ICASA, the remit of the new NMC will range from authorization of broadcasting licenses, formulating policy, holding broadcasters to their performance declarations, managing the broadcasting fund, ensuring high broadcasting standards and whipping offenders into line through such measures as withdrawal of licenses.

With such a wide range of putative powers, the NMC will be placed in a position to not only ensure that the rules of media engagement are complied with, but also that offenders are sanctioned. Its image as a toothless bulldog would be repaired if it is able to carry out this mandate satisfactorily. Considering its skeletal staff, low professional competences, insufficient funding support from government, and a board of commissioners whose appointments are based more on the interests they represent rather than the competences they possess (World Bank Study, 2005), it is unlikely it has the required institutional capacity to take on these responsibilities. Ultimately, how well these constraints are addressed will have an effect on the efficient conduct of broadcasting organization in Ghana, including GBC.

Administrative structures and practices

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), like any other state institution, has been molded and engineered by legislation and policy. From a small radio relay service in 1935 through short wave service in 1958, to a full radio and television station in 1965,

GBC has grown into a “giant electronic media (radio and television) organization” with staff strength of 1764 as at December 2014 (*Newsletter*, 2014). It is headed by a Director-General and a Deputy who are accountable to a 9-member Governing Board (GBC Annual report, 2010). Eight directors who supervise the operations of their respective divisions⁴⁴ assist the Director-General in the day-to-day administration of the corporation. This is in addition to 10 regional directors who manage the affairs of the regions⁴⁵.

Within the hierarchy of GBC, the eight divisional directors, the Director-General and his/her deputy constitute the Executive Directors Committee which is the highest management body in the organization. It is directly accountable to GBC’s 10- member Governing Board through the latter’s four subcommittees⁴⁶. Ultimately, this is the structure that runs and oversees “one national television channel, one national radio channel and 15 FM stations spread across the country” (*Newsletter*, 2013). Over the past three years, GBC has extended its service to include five digital terrestrial television channels that are received through subscription⁴⁷.

GBC also retains 50 percent ownership shares in Metropolitan TV, (Metro TV), a commercial television station with footprints in selected parts of the country.

⁴⁴ The eight divisions are: Administration, Marketing, Corporate Affairs, Engineering, Finance, Radio, Technical production and Television.

⁴⁵ Each region operates an autonomous FM station supported by one or more transmitting stations. The regions are Upper East, Upper West, Northern, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Eastern, Volta, Central, Western and Greater Accra.

⁴⁶ The four subcommittees of the governing board are Finance and Audit; Human Resource; Programs and Business; and Project Implementation. They oversee various aspects of the organization’s operations.

⁴⁷ The channels are News24, Sports+, GTVLife, GTVGovernance, and ObonuTV.

Furthermore, it owns 7 percent shares in the ownership of a private, Accra-based FM station, Joy FM. Apart from the Board Chairman of GBC doubling as the board chair of Metro TV to protect GBC's interest, GBC exercises very little or no administrative and editorial control over the affairs of the two commercial stations⁴⁸. In reality, therefore, GBC has extended itself horizontally, through such ownership structure, without exerting proportionate control over their administrative and editorial policy. But more importantly, what this ownership arrangement suggests is that GBC has not maximized the benefits of its extensions. As a way of freeing its only national television channel from getting more choked, GBC could, for instance, generate and mount commercial programs on this sister station not only as a means of generating revenue⁴⁹, but also to provide a broader range for its programming.

GBC, by this ownership structure, both in theory and practice, effectively ceases to be a purely public service "institution", and has become a hybrid that operates public service and commercial arms. Unlike the SABC which completely owns and operates its commercial radio and television stations (Teer-Tomasselli, 1995), GBC's control is restricted due to its shareholdings. One expected outcome is that such ownership structure could confuse the conceptual and operational relations between the fully

⁴⁸ The 2007 GBC Annual report captures "[2006] dividend paid by Joy FM" as 103,083,500, and "dividend paid by Metro TV" as 60,000.00 Ghanaian Cedis (4).

⁴⁹ "Metro TV presents cheque to GBC" (p. 5). "The cheque is part payment of revenue generated from the adverts in the upcoming world cup fiesta (Germany 2006) scheduled to kick off in June, 9" (GBC Newsletter 7: 5). "GBC received dividends" is a headline story in a 2008 GBC Newsletter. The story's lead points out that "for the first time since the establishment of Metro TV, GBC received two separate cheques totaling 120,000 being dividends from its management. The money covered full dividends for the year 2005 and the interim dividend for 2006" (18:7).

commercial satellite Metro TV and its mother public service GBC as occurs sometimes during program syndications.

Because they operate with different logics, it is not easy, especially during program syndications, to strike a balance between their divergent public service and commercial goals. At the point of negotiating for transmission rights, especially during international sports events, it is common for GBC and Metro to each put in separate individual bids, rather than approach such negotiations as an entity. In addition to weakening their individual chances of success, there have been times in the recent past when Metro TV has been unwilling to partner GBC to telecast programs whose rights it has secured, and vice versa. This situation has come about because, notwithstanding its 50 percent ownership of Metro TV, GBC has not been able to exert the needed administrative and editorial control over its operations, to the point where the two sometimes operate as competitors.

This conceptual and operational confusion between Metro TV and GBC has to be resolved to enable GBC better integrate its commercial portfolio into its public service operations, both at the levels of revenue generation and programming. For instance, GBC could promote Metro commercial programs on its network and transmit same after Metro has aired such programs. Under the current arrangement, minimal contact is achieved between the two boards because the GBC Board Chairman and its Director-General also sit on the board of Metro.

Moreover, GBC's part ownership does not result in collaboration in such crucial matters as direct involvement in the monitoring of Metro's revenues, joint generation of content and/or transmission of selected programs from each other to cut down cost. A lot

depends on how the Governing Board and Executive Directors of GBC engage with Metro's operations at the levels of revenue generation, program production, scheduling and transmission. For a public institution largely perceived as bloated, wasteful and hugely inefficient, (media managers, 2013, 2014 personal interviews), the already overstretched GBC Board may not have the appetite to take on extra responsibilities.

Accountable to the Governing Board's four subcommittees, the 10-member Executive Directors Committee of GBC acts as the body that takes operational and "policy" decisions subject to the governing board's approval. It typically meets once every week to review, evaluate and plan for their respective divisions within the larger institutional goals (GBC Annual Reports, 2009; 2010). It is important to underline that the DDG directly oversees the operations of the 10 regions as well as overall television and radio programming. For this reason, this meeting serves as the platform where the two key managers (the Director-General and Deputy Director-General) meet with their respective divisional directors to discuss, debate, review and plan issues that range from programming, technical, financial, human resource to corporate affairs concerns. It is here that the bolts-and-nuts of program content as well as its business and ancillary issues get decided.

Considering the role of the Executive Directors Committee in relation to the operations of GBC, it is to be expected that Directors will possess in-depth understanding about the practical workings of broadcasting in order to be efficient. In an organization with a high attrition rate for both Director-Generals and divisional directors⁵⁰, with most

⁵⁰ From 1954 to 2013, GBC has had 17 Director Generals, 10 since 1992. Five out of the ten post-1992 DGs are products of GBC, with two of them in acting positions. TV has since 1990 till date, had 7 directors, out of which three had acted. Three Directors of TV

recruited either from outside of GBC or running divisions that are non-core to broadcasting, this lack of continuity could be debilitating to the committee's efficiency. But even more worrying is the grave possibility that lack of in-depth knowledge about the workings of broadcasting could negatively affect the quality of decisions such a committee makes regarding GBC's core mandate.

The failure to successfully merge GBC's radio and television newsrooms into a single "Radio-vision" unit has been blamed on the lack of broadcasting competence of the three Directors who were mandated to oversee its implementation. In quick succession, all three were unable to coordinate the effort and failed to get the support of television journalists/managers and as one manager told me, "[GBC] management has no clue about real broadcasting" (personal interview, 2014).

On his part, a former Director General thinks the problem is more than directors with insufficient broadcasting knowledge taking critical operational decisions. He points to GBC's "weak management systems" which have evolved out of insufficient training for its critical managers and an opaque promotion system that supports cronyism, nepotism and patronage (2013, personal interview). As many respondents pointed out, promotion over the years to higher ranks are both haphazard and uncertain; a narrative that is supported by stories in various GBC annual reports and Newsletters⁵¹. And when

were former staff members of GBC at the time of their appointment, while one had had no previous dealings with GBC. All three acting are products of GTV.

⁵¹ "497 staff promoted" is a headline story (*GBC Newsletter* (2008), 2: 9). Under the larger heading of "New GBC", an item subheaded "Promotions" "assures staff that 2005 promotions would commence soon and those *who deserve it would get their due*" (*GBC Newsletter*, (2006), 4: 5, emphasis mine). Under the heading of "Human Resource Management", the 2011 GBC annual report identifies "human resource management as one of the key areas to work on" (7). The solution of "Rationalizing the staff situation" is a euphemism for sanitizing both new recruitment and staff promotions.

they occur, such staff members are seldom ready for their new roles due to lack of training (Apenteng, 2013; Lokko, 2013; retired DDTV-News, 2014, personal interviews).

While the effects of this may be minimal in the lower ranks, it could significantly affect the quality of decisions made by managers higher up the management ladder, such as Directors and their deputies. A respondent aptly sums up this situation thus: “when you look at how people even move up, there is no rationale for getting good people to the top. Anybody can get to the top. And so it has made management very weak” (Apenteng, 2013, personal interview). It is not only an inflexible civil service mentality of promotion, which is characterized by bureaucracy and longevity, more than competence that is underlined here. The remark also points to a likely disconnect between program makers and decision makers whose limited competences affect programming policy decisions and frustrate producers.

At the root of the widespread belief of inadequate training and an opaque promotion system is a recruitment regime that is no longer competitive. From the 1970s right to the 1990s, recruitment into GBC was competitive. Each batch of recruits underwent a compulsory eight-week intensive course in either television or radio, depending on one’s division. In the past decade or so, however, the organization has simply recruited to fill available vacancies. As jobs got scarce, cronyism and patronage replaced merit and competence as the guiding principles for recruitment (Apeah, 2014, personal communication; retired DDTV-News, 2014, personal interview)⁵².

⁵² This sentiment is captured in an annual report thus: “Many of the new recruits [700 from the beginning of 2010 to the early part of 2011] had qualifications from unaccredited institutions and were alleged to have been employed through nepotism and cronyism, leading to disaffection among some sections of staff” (GBC 2011 Annual Report: 7).

GBC's 2012 Annual report disclosed that "because of unauthorized recruitment of 131 staff members by Management over the years, and government's refusal to place them on its payroll", the corporation has had to pay them "from its internally generated funds" (2012: 7). It was in an effort to stem this tide of "overstaffing and bad recruitment practices" that "the GBC board suspended the recruitment of new staff on assuming office" (Annual Report, 2012: 7). The effect of such recruitment is additional pressure on its internally generated funds since both programs and salaries of these recruits are paid for from the same source. Needless to say less available funds for programs will ultimately affect its quality while more pressure to attract more advertising revenue to make up is likely to translate into doing less public interest programs.

Relative to its output and compared to its competitors, GBC is generally considered to be over bloated with staff⁵³. In the eyes of government, it is a drain on state resources. It is within this context that since the 1990s calls from government to restructure GBC into a leaner and more efficient organization have been consistent. It is insightful that the concluding item in its 2007 Annual Report observes that

The restructuring exercise with a strong and competent management team remains the anchor and pillar of re-engineering the Corporation into a self-sustaining entity that should ultimately bring about effectiveness and efficiency in the management of the human and material resources of GBC (15).

If government has so far failed to trim GBC into the "leaner, more efficient organization," as it almost did in 1996 (Lokko, 2013 personal interview), it is due to how the narrative of restructuring has been framed, largely by workers unions: as dismissals

⁵³ Staff numbers from its Annual reports and Newsletters are: 1,441 (2007); 1,761 (2008); 2,282 in (2010), in 2012; "a little over 1,900" (2012 Annual report: 7); 1,893 (2013); and 1,764 (2014). The objective by management and board to reduce staff numbers through natural attrition while waiting for the right opportunity to carry out a full scale staff rationalization exercise" (2012 Annual report: 7) seems to be on course.

rather than job re-profiling (Lokko, 2013). Interviewees indicated that aside from government's unwillingness to pay huge compensations for such workers to be laid off, the GBC workers union was sticking to the dismissal narrative as a subtle means of exerting pressure on management not to push for "restructuring" (Apenteng, 2013, Lokko, 2013, personal interviews). The effect has been a piecemeal approach to resolving a historical human resource problem that continues to linger on.

Notwithstanding the foregoing context, the 16th Director General of GBC, upon assuming office in 2012, made it his immediate mission to stabilize GBC's fiscal indiscipline and to put in place stronger management and accountability systems (Apenteng, 2013, personal interview). Such interventions included, among others, the introduction of a new program schedule on television; installation of a computerized finance program to improve revenue collection; a computerized "Air watch system" that facilitates scheduling and monitoring of advertisements; as well as a credit policy to recoup lost revenue (Annual Report, 2013).

These efforts are, however, constrained by a 2008 recruitment legislation that obliges GBC and all state institutions to seek approval from government before recruiting. Unlike in the past when GBC filled available job vacancies with the assurance of government paying their salaries, the Single Spine Salary Structure, as the legislation is called, has shifted approval from GBC to government as a way of "sanitizing" and monitoring its central payroll. While government's rationale for such controls is understandable, the legislation opens up the recruitment process to government interference in the recruiting process since it could disapprove recruits GBC needs to attract.

Clearly, the subtext of a weak management system that superintends over an over bloated human resource is obvious even to the managers of the Corporation. However, until the restructuring is done, the inherent dangers in the new approval system, which rests with government, have the potential to undermine the organizations' independence, at least, operationally if not editorially.

Coupled with a management system struggling to cope with competition within the larger media landscape, GBC's internal structures seem to have fragmented instead of consolidated. Its News and Current Affairs Units, which used to be under one Director split into two "solitudes"⁵⁴ that more often than not see themselves as competitors rather than collaborators. The carving out of a (TV) Technical Production division from its Engineering mother division in 2006 is yet another example of such fragmentation.

As it sets about to extend its television presence onto five more digital channels, this fragmentation, both in its operations and its audience, is likely to increase. This is because as each unit struggles to meet its programming timeline, the tendency is for such units to operate independently of one another. In the face of not expanding its equipment base, the internal politicking for access to equipment and other production resources is likely to increase, thus exerting more pressure on a management that is already reeling under strain to meet operational challenges, and therefore, distracting its attention from

⁵⁴ During the AFRC military regime, the Head of state ordered that the common newsroom be dismantled into two separate units (radio and television) to be headed by their various divisional heads. He was angry about the fact that the Director of TV at the time had claimed ignorance of a news item on TV, arguing that news was an independent unit under a different Director. Since then, GBC has on several occasions, attempted unsuccessfully to merge the two units. Before the latest Radio-vision fiasco, an Intergrated television and radio news desk (Intrend) to enable stories from the two "solitudes" to be shared had been set up as a harbinger. It chalked modest success.

its core mandate.

While the rationale for such extensions are understandable in some cases, one gets the impression that GBC should be making more efforts at consolidating and merging some of these “solitudes” rather than stretching itself thin. In a few cases when it has attempted to consolidate, it had proven unsuccessful because of how such consolidations were managed. For example, all journalists and news managers interviewed agree that the “Radio-vision” experiment, which sought to merge radio and television newsrooms into one, is “crucial” for efficient news delivery (2012, 2013, personal interviews). It was, however, aborted because of the haphazard way it was conceived and implemented.

A golden opportunity to resolve one of GBC’s biggest editorial challenges caught a snag due to lack of sufficient consultation between journalists and managers, and the latter’s attempt to impose a new editorial regime without the requisite support systems in place, including training. Editorial managers, who should have been spearheading the process, resisted it, blaming management for “lack of consultation” in some cases⁵⁵, and in others, the fear that the measure was an effort “to take over our jobs” (editorial managers, 2013, personal communication).

The “Radio-vision” merger, which justifiably sought to ensure optimal resource use⁵⁶; synchronized news bulletins across its radio, television and online platforms; as well as generate additional revenue through online advertising, stands out as one example

⁵⁵ This sentiment is captured in the 2011 GBC Annual report, page 7.

⁵⁶ “Under the new expansion project of the GBC, the national radio and TV in Accra would be merged” (7). According to Mr. Oscar Nchor, the Ag Director of Technical Production, “this is to enhance and harmonize the work of news staff of the corporation” (*GBC Newsletter*, 4:7). Headlined “Radio and TV to merge”, this story is the first pronouncement on the “radio-vision” project by a divisional director.

where journalists and media managers blame GBC's weak management systems for its failure. For these reasons, I find Apenteng's proposed remedy logical, even insightful, when he observed that "in terms of priority [one ought to] look at the management systems, [...] at the people, and then [...] at the programming" (2013, personal interview). While there are grounds to agree with the observation that GBC's management systems are weak and this condition has historical antecedents, there are other debilitating factors that contribute to its present condition. Prominent among them is its "internal politics"; the divisional politics of suspicion and lack of cooperation that often play out amongst GBC's internal units.

Internal politics

A paragraph in one of GBC's Annual reports sheds light on the state of GBC at a point, as well as hints at some of its internal politicking. It recounts that

[T]he board assumed office in May 2011 at a time when the Corporation faced many serious challenges including unrest amongst staff and management, low staff morale, poor financial management, low revenue generation, weak and inconsistent programming on radio and television and a virtual breakdown in management systems (2012: 2).

In as much as the genesis of these problems date back several decades, it seems to have come to a head from 2006 onwards when most of the challenges outlined above coalesced into a relentless series of industrial agitations⁵⁷. While GBC's present structure

⁵⁷ "The board of directors has with effect from Friday, 4th November 2005 appointed Mr. Yaw Owusu-Addo Acting Director General while the substantive DG, Ms Eva Lokko proceeds on leave. STAFF ARE ENTREATED TO GIVE HIM MAXIMUM COOPERATION" (GBC Newsletter 4: 3, emphasis in original). Headlined "Why staff must support GBC" (p. 3), the lead to another story reads "Now that tempers have cooled down within the corporation, it is important and prudent for members of staff to join hands to raise GBC to the level which would be accepted [sic] to all" (p. 3). These two

and operations contributed to this industrial brouhaha, even lockouts in some cases, the principal causes are historical and have evolved over time.

By this, I am drawing attention to how GBC's growth and "institutional flows" have tended, historically, to revolve around its technology acquisition, human capital and economic resources management. The central issue here is how these three, among other factors, have defined the course of GBC's operations, especially in the ways its various units harness their individual advantages in their bid to access these resources. The implicit point I want to underline is that such institutional politics, around access and hierarchy, affect who gains access to the best cameras and logistics and who does not, and ultimately its overall outcome as a public service broadcaster.

Because radio is, globally, a much older medium than television, the latter benefitted from the former by relying on its technical and production expertise. In the case of GBC, personnel from radio constituted the first batch of TV producers and technicians when Ghana Television was set up 30 years after radio. Over time, as the institution grew, other departments such as administration, finance, marketing and corporate affairs were either added, or where they existed, expanded to reflect its vision and growth.

Initially, production staff who had come from radio to television directed TV news bulletins (retired deputy director, TV news, 2014, personal interview) and until the mid-1980s, newsreaders on TV were mostly radio newscasters working under the

stories reflect the industrial mood of GBC in 2006. Both sharing the same page, the lead to the second story is intended to reinforce the caps in the previous one for emphasis.

Director of News and Current Affairs (DONCA) who oversaw the operations of both newsrooms. Between the two media, therefore, radio has had a significant impact on the operations and general outlook of TV, although they now operate separately. In terms of hierarchy, more radio personnel have served in higher administrative and program positions than their TV counterparts. Additionally, managers in GBC's satellite regions have until recently, often come from administration (because the role was seen more as administrative rather than broadcasting operations) and radio.

As it quickly gained stature as the more prestigious of the two media due to its visual impact and popularity, TV sought to stay autonomous, arguing that as the principal source of the institution's funds, it deserved more resources than it was receiving (Bucknor, 2014; Lokko, 2013, personal interviews). In short, as the principal source of internally generated funds, TV saw the other departments as "parasites" that depended on what it generated without making its work easier. As the struggle for more program resources intensified, TV blamed management and non-core staff for their plight since they perceived that money it generated was being used more for operational (salaries, overheads, administrative costs) rather than editorial purposes, *id est*, news, current affairs and other productions (Bucknor, 2014, personal interview).

With particular reference to radio, TV generally saw radio as an older brother who brought very little to the table and yet, due to its longevity and numerical advantage in the higher echelons of GBC's hierarchy, wielded bigger influence in how such resources are shared and utilized. This perception has been expressed, especially by television personnel in various ways: through resistance to "unfair" management policies (as in the "Radio-vision" instance); in promotions; and in access to wider institutional resources,

including staff loans, staff housing and other incidentals. Besides the fear of radio staff “taking over their jobs” and “lack of consultation” (2012, 2013, 2014 personal interviews) some TV editorial managers are quick to point out that two of the three managers⁵⁸ mandated to oversee the “Radio-vision” merger were from radio, while the director of television was completely ignored in the process. For them, this was a sign that radio was trying to subsume television and, therefore, the process needed to be resisted.

It should be added that because promotions were based more on years served rather than competence (GBC Annual report, 2012), more radio, administrative and support staff had over the years, gained promotions to higher positions in the hierarchy compared to their television counterparts. This phenomenon expresses itself in access to resources such as financial loans to staff, occupancy of GBC housing and other incidentals which are based on seniority. This state of affairs has not only left a sour taste of neglect in the mouths of television editorial staff, it has also resulted in tensions and lack of cooperation between vital departmental players. This strategic, or “measured” collaboration manifests during interactions as radio versus television; and Radio and TV versus “support” departments. The intra institutional conflict can also be felt in Television where the Television Production unit, which produces all content except news and current affairs programs, complains of management’s preferential treatment of TV news.

⁵⁸ The Directors of Administration, Radio and Deputy Director General (DDG) are the three managers who oversaw the process. Prior to his appointment as the DDG, Anane Sarpong was a radio staff who also served as GBC’s Central regional manager. Kofi Bucknor, the Director of TV was completely left out of the picture through the entire process and was soon after dismissed by the DG and the board. He appealed his dismissal and won his case in court but chose not to return to his previous post.

As the competition for dwindling resources get fiercer and the duty of attracting revenue falls disproportionately on the shoulders of fewer and fewer departments involved in programming, the struggle for more resources manifests in such ways as the creation of alliances, lack of cooperation amongst divisions and industrial strikes. This is the context within which the earlier, opening quote from the 2012 annual report ought to be placed and appreciated as an example of the industrial politics that have on several occasions, distracted GBC from performing its core mandate. It could be argued that the resultant “low morale” best describes television news and production staff who feel short changed by non-core personnel who, in addition to unduly benefitting from resources that television generates, also make it difficult for them to perform their duties by denying them requisite resources. The impetus for the producer to go the extra mile under such conditions is minimal, and the general quality of programs suffer due to the urge to cut corners and the difficulty in sticking to professional standards. In short, quality of journalism suffers under such industrial conditions of discontent and lack of transparency.

In order to “survive” under such conditions of unequal resource allocation, critical editorial staff and units, both collectively and individually, leverage their professional, political and social advantages to their benefit. This is the reason why the TV newsroom tends to have better access to transport, cameras and other operational logistics since its reporters are generally perceived, rightly or wrongly, to be in close proximity with powerful politicians who count on them for coverage. It is for this reason that the widely held view by staff that the TV newsroom has the most resources, compared to their counterparts, has endured. So also has the view that the newsroom has become “highly

politicized,” populated by “activists reporters” (2012, 2013, 2014, personal interviews).

Duodu describes them as “confrontational and insufferable in their persistent advocacy of a particular party’s position” (*Daily Graphic*, 2005: 2).

In the opinion of critics, such “activist reporters” feel obliged to present their political benefactors in good light through their reports and are perceived to have direct access to such politicians. In fact, they are suspected of relaying happenings in the newsroom to their political patrons (2013, 2014, personal interview). The direct consequence of this phenomenon is that editorial managers feel pressured by such activists’ reports, which is often noted for their melodrama and uncritical adulation of the political patrons, with the ultimate potential to undermine newsroom culture and editorial independence.

Whether this perception is right or wrong, the most crucial point is its effect on the minds of those who allocate the institution’s resources, and their unwillingness to endanger their “peace of mind” (Vogbe, 2014, personal interview) by depriving such an important unit as the newsroom, especially, television newsroom of the required resources. Management’s lack of success in dealing with this creeping “political parallelism” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) in professional conduct is not the only issue that is underlined here. Also obvious is GBC’s reflex of perceiving government as still having a huge role to play in its affairs and, therefore, should being gentle with it.

But if this mindset still lingers within management, the reverse is the case if one examines the relations between government and the GBC workers Union, which seems to be aware of the premium government puts on GBC in relation to its image building and have persistently used it as leverage to push for better conditions of service and other

demands, including dismissal of Director-Generals. So prevalent is this “pressure” on both government and management that a former Acting Director-General pointed out that “as soon as you try to effect changes, the Union rises up, and then you get a call from the Castle⁵⁹ to say, “give them what they want” (2012, personal interview). In this regard, the GBC workers Union, which has built the reputation of instigating the dismissal of many Director-Generals, has demonstrated a keener political awareness in its relations with government and management.

Not only does it act as an effective check on management, albeit wrongly sometimes; it has on a number of occasions, sought to rely on the newsrooms’ political capital to leverage its position such as when it asked the newsroom to tone down on its criticisms of government at a time that it was in the middle of securing a new “conditions of service” agreement with government. It even went as far as approaching the newsroom to do a favorable story that would put a beleaguered Director-General in better light when he was involved in a standoff with the GBC Governing board over his conduct (2012, personal communication). Such examples demonstrate how various interests within the GBC institution perceive the newsroom and get it to cover their interests. The newsroom, on is part, has often felt pressured to cover such issues especially when its own interest is also at stake and, in the process, has built a reputation as a privileged space with enormous institutional power.

Counting on its own belligerent reputation and the likely support of GBC newsrooms, the Union has, on a number of occasions, lobbied government for one thing or another. Strangely, even under a constitutional regime, where the rule of law is

⁵⁹ Castle is the colloquial reference to the former seat of government at Osu, a suburb of Accra, the Ghanaian capital. It moved to its present location, Flagstaff House in 2009.

expected to be followed, the Union unsuccessfully lobbied government to retain an Acting Director-General whose term of office had come to an end, and was to give way to another. Again, it failed to lobby government to extend the term of office of another Director-General who they felt had performed creditably. At a time that the appointment of Director-Generals is the mandate of the National Media Commission, it is curious that the workers Union will attempt to circumvent the appointing authority to seek favorable action from government. While on the surface the Union action of lobbying government will sound simplistic, it shows a deep political nuance. Because in both cases the Union vehemently opposed the decision by the NMC, which is the rightful appointing authority of the Director General, the Union activated its long association with government with the hope of reversing the decision.

The newsroom's silence over the Union's agitations and lobbying regarding the two Director Generals is not accidental. Once again it underlines how such institutional politics play out in GBC. While one D-G was simply disinterested in extending his term, the other was not. The latter was, largely, seen by television newsroom as "an enemy" Acting Director-General who tried to disrupt their operations and impose unpopular decisions on them. The Union was, thus, unable to count on the support of the newsroom to make a case for the Acting Director- General in question. Without the huge "professional support" of television newsroom to his cause, the newsroom simply maintained an eloquent silence in the face of the brouhaha.

Within the institutional politics of GBC, therefore, the Union is a double edged sword, which cuts both ways by resolutely fighting management, sometimes to the point of "losing the bigger picture" (Lokko, 2013, personal communication) or springing to its

defense when the collective interests of GBC is at stake. Frequent stories about GBC management's interactions with the Union should therefore be seen in its proper light: on the one hand as an effort to ensure industrial harmony within GBC, whilst on the other, leaving open the possibility of deploying it to back up GBC's demands with government.

GBC's institutional politics also manifests itself in how and with whom members of management align themselves in the face of "queries". This is exemplified by the report of a 1993 committee of enquiry, which presents rare opportunity to simultaneously analyze GBC's internal politics; the likelihood of external political influence on its editorial choices; as well as management level dynamic regarding internal editorial processes.

On January 17th, 1993, Part one of *Talking Point* on the subject of the Ghanaian budget was telecast on GTV with its second part expected to broadcast the following week. However, on January 24th, the Acting Director General had, four minutes into the broadcast of the second part, ordered for the program's "arrest" (memo, page 1). It was taken off air and replaced by a forum speech by Dr Botchwey, the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning. A week later, on the 31st, the 2nd part of *Talking Point* which was truncated a week earlier, was telecast in full. It is important to add that the Deputy Director of TV and Head of news, who exercises editorial supervision over *Talking Point*, had spoken to, and received assurances from the Minister of Information that the second part of *Talking Point* could be transmitted on 31st January.

In a memo dated January 1993 and signed by the Acting Director-General, A 4-member committee was constituted to investigate

whether in the light of the experience and all the circumstances, including the replacement of the Part 2 Budget *Talking Point* by Dr Botchwey's forum speech

on 24th January, 1993, the Budget Part 2 *Talking Point* did not become stale and unnecessary, and whether anyone wishing to have it broadcast should not have consulted officers higher up in the GBC hierarchy before doing so (Memo: 1).

The Acting Director-General had asked the matter to be investigated “in the light of the circumstances and the political climate” (4).

It is significant that the Committee’s report, which is the text for this analysis, makes an intertextual reference to an earlier memo “D/G 20/V.2/454 dated 8th February, 1993” from the Director-General whose authority constituted the committee. It is not only the authority of the Director-General that is underlined here, but also his dual roles as D-G and Editor in chief. He thus negotiates his authority and positions in the manner he addresses subordinate committee members, invokes his overall “gatekeeping” duty, and imposes a preferred frame for their terms of reference.

Recognizing the power play involved in their choices, the committee deploys two main strategies: to operationalize their terms of reference, and in the process, reframe it to include whether or not any professional process regarding program transmission was breached in this instance. Secondly, its language strategy is deliberately ambivalent and fails to name with certainty, preferring to define through “absences” (van Leeuwen, 1993) and inferences.

For instance, instead of stating that the program in question was fit to be broadcast, it rather refers to it as “not a not-to-be-broadcast material”. Additionally, strong transitive verbs such as “arrest”, “summon” and “timeously withdrawn” are used to describe the actions of the Acting Director-General as “a brutal enforcer” by inference. The unwillingness to be categorical, therefore, is a clever way of blunting the fact that perhaps, the acting D-G, notwithstanding the exercise of his professional judgement, sidestepped the editorial hierarchy by “arresting” the program without recourse to the

Deputy Director of TV, the “principal figure under investigation”.

With this as frame, the report refers to the Acting Director-General’s “lack of knowledge” about the transmission of the 2nd part as a “surprise” granted the implied “chain of command” (one of the committee’s terms of reference), which would have informed him of any problems. By this, the committee was resorting to both the invisible hierarchies and internal logic of GBC and shifting the burden of having to conclusively determine on the matter to a higher authority: be it the acting D-G who is also the editor in chief of GBC, or his superior, the Minister of Information. Rather than focus on whether it was politically prudent to transmit the program, the committee focused on professional processes, and inferred, that since no institutional breaches had occurred punitive sanctions was needless.

The committee subtly activates the institutional hierarchy rather than prescribe punitive sanctions and recommends that “as much as possible instructions to subordinates should channel through the chain of command. This will help forestall some of the thorny and tricky situations officers may find themselves in during the course of their duties” (Report, page 4). By so doing, the committee members shifted the institutional discourse from the perspective of individuals to one that objectifies through nominalizations, thereby depersonalizing the act (Smith, 2005: 120). It is not only how GBC’s institutional politics could play out at the highest management and larger political contexts that this report highlights. It also offers a good insight into how players familiar with its institutional logic can act out their familiarity as a discursive strategy to impose a version of truth and not another.

Although these examples speak to how various divisions within GBC negotiate

their relations with management and to some extent government, it is worth reinforcing that they point more to the fluid nature of such institutional politics, which is anchored in how resources are generated, distributed and accessed by its various divisions. Central to this is both a management system that has traditionally operated a non-transparent system of resource allocation, and subtle external forces that have put pressure on GBC's internal conduct. Together, the above examples speak to GBC's sensitivity to the sociopolitical forces that molded it and continue to exert pressures on it as well as how, as an institution, it has responded to such pressures both collectively and through its internal divisions. The next section shifts focus and further explicates the nature of external politics that pressurize and impact GBC's operations both, editorially and administratively.

External influences

Due to its long relationship with governments and state institutions when it was a monopoly, GBC still reels under the perception of being an appendage of government, and is often seen by critics as its loudest "cheerleader" (Bourgault, 1995). Its structural and hierarchical relationship with the state has largely fed this perception. To date, its budget gets presented to parliament through its oversight ministry of Information and the Ministry of Finance while its recruitment requires government approval through the Ministry of Information. While this could be considered as largely administrative and regulatory, it has built a reflex of deferment to government to such an extent that, even under constitutional rule, media workers still consider government to be central to their conduct (Apenteng, 2013, personal communication).

In its dealings with the GBC, government and its functionaries refract this perception of government's influence in many ways: both subtle and overt. What I term the "discourse of reward" is one of the ways such subtle influences get enacted. Often, this discursual practice comes to the fore during presentation of equipment to GBC, the launch of newly developed infrastructure, or visits to GBC by government officials. Typically, in their addresses, high-ranking state officials such as Ministers of Information and members of Parliament Select Committee on Communication will thank GBC for doing a good job and assure it that as long as it continues to do so, a euphemism for putting government in good light, government will also continue to support it⁶⁰.

Considering that government single handedly funds all GBC's major infrastructure projects and its subvention to the Corporation's annual budget ranges between 50 to 60 percent of the total, (GBC Annual reports 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012), such remarks cannot be described as placatory or even harmless. Bearing in mind the consequences of default, they could even be interpreted as veiled threats. This perception is the most likely reason that, as I pointed out earlier, the workers Union will ask the TV newsroom to tone down its criticism of government at a time that they were negotiating for better conditions of service for GBC staff.

Perhaps the most subliminal external influence comes in the form of efforts to

⁶⁰ MPs visit Amedzofe transmitter" is the headline in newsletter. In it, the Chairman of the Parliament Select Committee on Communications said, 'that government recognizes the important role GBC is playing in the body politic of the country. That is why it has provided funds for the installation of the new SONY equipment in all the 10 regions' (*GBC Newsletter* 2006, 8: 2). Other headlines are "Parliament calls on management" (*GBC Newsletter*, 2008, 19: 2); "Information Minister visits Broadcasting House" (*GBC Newsletter*, 2009, 22: 2); "Parliamentary Committee visits" (*GBC Newsletter*, 2009, 23: 2) and "GBC celebrates 75th anniversary" (*GBC Newsletter*, 2010, 25:13).

shape editorial content⁶¹. Unlike in the past, especially during military regimes when such influences were overt, they play out differently under constitutional democratic regimes where the Castle will for instance give the newsroom a four wheel drive during elections to ensure uninterrupted coverage of the presidency, or a Minister for Information will summon a Director-General to a meeting (2013, personal communication). Although the latter might sound harmless, even procedural in view of the Ministry's oversight over GBC, it assumes significance when one juxtaposes the different treatments a D-G, who had earlier served at a different state-owned media institution received from his oversight Minister in the two contexts.

He points out that during his much longer term as a Managing Director of one state-owned media institution, the Minister of Information never summoned him to a meeting until he took over as the Director-General of GBC. For this reason, the gesture of being summoned to a meeting by the Minister serves as a symbolic reminder that unlike the other state-owned media organization, which is financially independent of government, GBC still depends quite substantially on government for funding.

The clearest instance of such influence is when the Presidency wants to be the one

⁶¹ Interviewees gave instances when some Ministers of Information asked for specific sound bites of news items to be selected. "Some listen when you advise them, but those who don't, it comes back to haunt them as it did in the case of a story of a former first lady" (personal interview). Her soundbite created uproar because it was seen as "tribalistic". As the show editor at the time in 1999, he had advised the minister against the sound bite but he had refused to budge. In another instance, another editorial manager was summoned in 1994 to the office of the Minister and chastised for failing to "read in-between the lines" and allowing a story to go on air. The story profiled a female Ghanaian entrepreneur for winning the Hunger award. According to the Minister, by showing the story of an award which "should have gone to the first lady" (Minister), the editorial manager had not demonstrated political savviness. He was chastised, told to "go and sin no more" and instructed to tell the "director of radio not to repeat the same mistake" (2014, personal interview) in the next radio news bulletin.

to pick and choose news reporters to cover Presidential assignments (Apenteng, 2013; retired DDTV News, 2014, personal interviews; editorial managers, 2012, 2014 personal communication). Such assignments normally would be accompanied by the name of a preferred reporter. Initially, the newsroom resisted this practice by rightly assigning reporters it considered suitable for the beat. Very often, such reporters failed to get clearance from the National Security bureaucracy, making it impossible to embark on the trip (editorial manager, 2013, personal communication). Lack of trust may not be the only reason why the Presidency may prefer some reporters and not others. A mentality by the political elite that such expensive overseas trips are a reward for “their people” could also be another reason; giving rise to activists reporters who “feel an obligation to a certain party” (2013, personal interview) by presenting reports uncritical of such governments.

Over time, the high professional and viewership cost of not covering the Presidency forced the newsroom to give in, thereby undermining the authority of news managers and their overall editorial independence. It is not just that this practice has created a pool of politically aligned reporters, it is also that the resulting “political parallelism” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) exhibited by such reporters undermines the central principle of balance and objectivity which Curran (1991) argues are two of the critical markers of public (broadcasting) journalism.

It is within this context that the article headlined “Be neutral” in the GBC Newsletter⁶² should be read: as management’s recognition of this canker of bias and a call to GBC journalists to return to core principles. If these “exhortations” are meant to

⁶² The article points out “that management has urged producers and presenters on both radio and television to try as much as possible to refrain from taking sides and demonstrate professionalism in the course of their work” (*GBC Newsletter*, 2006 7: 2).

curb what Teer-Tomasselli (1995) refers to as “a directly conspiratorial or manipulative model” in which the state is seen to intervene directly in the affairs of the public broadcaster, then they have not achieved their full and desired effect since such reports continue to be registered.

At the level of production, external influences register as pressures on production and creative staff to do old things differently. From more elaborate set designs to preference for outside broadcast events, with frequent audience involvements, the orientation of GBC programs seems to be shifting to reflect the trend more commonly associated with its commercial competitors. A casual look at the programs schedule shows that until around the late 2000s, GBC was doggedly sticking to its programs character which emphasized education, with a patriarchal posture. Both in subject treatment and feel of programs, it felt largely the same as in the past. In a sense, this observation reflects GBC’s mindset and its attitude to competition. 60 and 40 years of radio and television monopoly had created an attitude of security, and hardened a paternalistic model of broadcasting which educated and informed a disengaged audience from a centralized source (Ansah, 1982; Katz and Weddell, 1977).

Used to “broadcasting” in the traditional sense of transmitting from a central source to many, GBC struggled to tone down the posture of didacticism and moralizing associated with programs of this model of broadcasting. If it considered “accuracy rather than speed” as its principle in program delivery (Monney, 2014, personal interviews; Retired DDTV News, 2014), it is because, among other reasons, it has not been as successful in responding to changes in audience tastes and program trends as its competitors. Over time, this “ossification” is beginning to thaw and GBC is mounting

programs that are more in tune with its audience⁶³.

While it will be inaccurate to attribute all the changes to external competition, it is certain that as competition gets stiffer, GBC is trying to reinvent itself by doing old things differently. One can only come to the conclusion that it has recognized the need to reorient itself within a competitive media landscape where traditional audience assume multiple shapes as citizens, consumers, shoppers, and active programmers, sometimes all within a program.

⁶³ On February 2014, GBC mounted a hugely successful Valentine's Day program on its outside lawns. The Deputy Director General had had to come to the rescue of the program by advancing money on the evening of the 13th to prevent its inevitable cancellation. The producer, Soraya Ackuaku had threatened to cancel because money she had requested to pay for vital props and artistes had been denied. The DDG, acting as the DG argued that since GBC had been promoting the upcoming program on its channel, and other stations were mounting similar programs on that date, it will be a disgrace if GBC failed to do likewise (2014, personal communication).

Chapter Seven

The operational capacity and funding model(s) of GBC

Having positioned GBC within its relevant legislative and policy contexts, outlined its mandate and administrative processes, the remainder of the analysis sheds light on how GBC is operationalizing its mandate. As an organization aiming to be a public service, this section fleshes and analyzes how its technological choices, human capital capacity and funding sources are either in sync with, or oppositional to, the attainment of its PS goal. It emphasizes these issues due to their direct relevance to the key questions of access (both technology and programming), quality of human resource, and funding, knowing that they constitute important pillars upon which PSB rests.

Human capital resources

Besides economic and technology constraints, human resource constitutes one of the most telling weaknesses in GBC's operations (Heath, 2008; Karikari, 2012). This position is held by media managers such as Director Generals and editorial managers of GBC (media managers, 2012, 2013, 2014, personal communication). This situation has come about due to factors such as high economic and time cost of training staff and pressures to meet grueling program time lines within 24-hour news and program transmission cycle. These factors have increasingly put training beyond the reach of GBC (media managers, personal communications). Consequently, the hitherto stringent training regime, especially of production and engineering staff, has largely been relaxed, and sometimes completely ignored.

In the period leading up to the 1990s, a mandatory and “intensive eight weeks in-house training” was given to both program and engineering staff immediately after recruitment (GBC 50 year Brochure, 1985: 27). Regular ones also followed, built around the BBC model in “which a small staff organize courses and call upon other members of the staff to give lectures and demonstrations” (Grenfell Commission, 1953: 7). These training opportunities existed alongside accredited media and journalism schools such as the School of Communication Studies (SCS), the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), and National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), which trained journalists and industry professionals to degree and diploma levels. Except NAFTI, which is a professional school training industry professionals from the entire African continent, none of the schools offered courses in broadcasting production until in the late 1990s. Scholarships for GBC staff also came from other international institutions such as Japan’s public broadcaster Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), Deutsche Welle of Germany, Hilversum of Holland, the Thompson Foundation and, later, CNN among others.

Such academic, external and in-house training prepared program staff sufficiently for the organization’s content requirements and exposed producers/directors to international best practices. Because production and engineering were considered core and specialized to the business of broadcasting, their staff received far more attention than managers in non-editorial positions such as administration and finance who, nevertheless, also benefited from short courses⁶⁴. In a sense, this was GBC’s way of

⁶⁴ Traditionally, critical staff from these divisions came from state organizations on secondment to GBC. The Controller and Accountant General, the Audit Service of Ghana, and the Civil service all provided staff for GBC’s Finance, Audit and Administration divisions. Such staff were not trained by GBC since it lacked the

making concrete the Grenfell Commission's vision of training its own people with specialized broadcasting knowledge to take over from expatriates and the pool of civil servants who had been recruited as a stop gap measure at the corporation's inception.

Over time, as a result of high economic and time costs of training, as well as greater emphasis on academic qualifications for prospective recruits, GBC has slack in its in-house training, resulting in a pool of people with formal education but very little professional competence to meet GBC's immediate institutional needs and culture. A former Minister of Information hits the nail right on the head when he points out that "GBC is unable to generate the internal funds that will allow them to do comprehensive retraining of their people [...] and it's a big problem" (Former Min. of Information, 2014, personal interview). It is common to find active frontline producers and news reporters who have received little or no training at all doing programs ranging from simple discussions to live, Outside Broadcast multiple-camera productions⁶⁵.

In addition to adversely affecting editorial competences of such staff, this practice of lack of in-house training deprives them of the opportunity to imbibe the institution's culture of doing things. With very little or no sense of what standards and expectations their professional role impose on them, such staff members typically learn as they go

expertise to do so, and also considered them as "aliens" (2013, personal communication). Now the corporation itself provides training for such support staff.

⁶⁵ In late 2012, the Director of Television approached me to train 60 television staff members in television production techniques. Although I agreed to do so at no cost, the training was cancelled with the explanation that GBC could not raise funds to cover training cost. I learnt much later that the cancellation came about because money which had been quoted as my "fees" was considered too high. Further enquiries from the Head of TV training showed that my "fees" was a clever way of getting GBC to release money for refreshment and training resources since management would not do it otherwise. To date, the people have still not been trained (Trainer, 2014, personal interview).

along, resulting in lack of uniformity in the production process, and ultimately, inconsistencies in identity of the station. For instance, I observed in the field that image sizes of shots which ordinarily should be the same for both director and camera operator, varied from person to person, such that a director's call for a medium close up of a subject could elicit, from the camera operator, a range of shot sizes - from close up to medium shot. What this example demonstrates is a lack of alignment among the production crew, and a fundamental lack of communication amongst them over how to speak and interpret universally accepted television grammar. If there is lack of consistency over production components such as lighting, shot composition and general program identity, it is due to the absence of, or insufficient, training, which has resulted in the weakening of GBC's editorial culture.

A respondent who now works with GBC but has previous production experience in commercial television, remarked that "GBC directors can't speak the universal grammar of television language. Most of them can't work outside this place" (2014, personal communication). Without the requisite production and directing skills to interpret programs, GBC's program quality is likely to decrease, and subsequently, disengage from its audience, making it more difficult to attract advertising which it badly needs for support, as well as stay relevant to its already fragmented national audience.

Aside all these observations, the important point to underline is the shift in GBC's training philosophy. While in the past, a rigorous in-house training for core staff after recruitment was assured, supported by short courses both internally and externally, the current training regime does not live up to this standard. Unlike in the previous regime where such training was tailor made to fit its specific practical and operational needs,

GBC now tends to recruit more academically qualified staff with the assumption that “once you walk in here, you are a professional and should deliver” (media manager, 2013, personal communication).

Mentoring and continual training on the job which used to be a critical part of such training are no longer in place. For instance, until the 1990s, copies of all news scripts had to be deposited into a box called “The Pandora’s Box” (retired DDTV-News, 2014, personal communication). The Editor in Chief in the newsroom meticulously went through such scripts with their respective reporters “to point out areas where their story could have been improved upon”. According to the retired DDTV-News, “this was a way of forcing you to compare your original script with what your show editor has worked on for transmission, and to help you see your story with an editor’s eye” (2014, personal communication). Admittedly, meeting a 24-hour news cycle imposes its own logic of speed on its practitioners and is markedly different from the time when only two news bulletins were prepared for the day.

That notwithstanding, underneath the current training regime is a new orientation that conceptualizes human resource as a commodity to be recruited from the market instead of focusing on homegrown approaches to specialized training. While the former might be cheaper, the latter ensures that staff undertaking critical broadcasting assignments are sufficiently versed in the professional ethos of GBC, and well integrated into the institution’s vision and culture through shared “community rituals” (Ogongo-Ongong and White, 2008; Tuchman, 1978). Ideally, GBC should combine the two as a way of ensuring that its recruited staff are not only up to their assigned tasks, but also understand the institution’s culture.

Admittedly, this might not be a bad recruiting option for staff in support divisions such as human resource, corporate affairs and finance since such expertise tend not to be industry specific, and are more universal in their application. On the other hand, the same cannot be said for core production and engineering staff whose specialized knowledge of broadcasting impinges directly on program quality and delivery. For effective public broadcasting delivery to be achieved, specialized knowledge about its core functions, social role and ethos ought to be thoroughly grasped by its practitioners and managers (Avery, 1993; Scannell, 1996). Such a deficiency could account for why although newsroom editorial routines have endured, program quality has not. Program research, preparation, its interpretation and aesthetic values have dipped as is the case with *Talking Point*. Such instances create formats that are “simplified, personalized, decontextualized, with an emphasis on action rather than process, visualization rather than abstraction, stereotypicality rather than human complexity” (Gitlin, 1990: 1993). I cite Gitlin to underscore how it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate GBC’s program quality from its commercial counterparts, and the important role training its human resource could play in remedying this condition.

Perhaps this state of affairs is largely attributable to GBC’s overemphasis on strengthening its management and human resource systems in its bid to be leaner, more competitive and efficient within the new media ecology. Within the larger imperative for public broadcasting to efficiently operate within a competitive media ecology, training has come to be associated equally to not only editorial, but also to administrative, financial and other managerial competences. In certain cases, one gets the impression that training of managerial and administrative personnel is given preference over editorial

staff since some argue that editorial independence can only be achieved when a media institution is economically and managerially self-sufficient. This narrative has, over time, gained more traction as media organizations, including GBC are forced as a result of cuts in government subvention, to be economically self-sufficient without losing their public service ethos.

If this is the goal, then the deficiencies in GBC's human resource will become more obvious as it extends itself onto five other digital television platforms and the need to generate more programs within tighter timelines become compelling. As training costs skyrocket, in-house opportunities become more sporadic, and external training options trickle to occasional events, GBC might have to seriously consider a more balanced way of revamping its previous training model to ensure that recruited talents, especially core staff, receive some reasonable levels of in-house training in order to be efficient. Should it fail to do this, the likely impact on its operations will be that GBC will be forced to rely increasingly on external production houses with better resourced content producers for its programs, thereby ceding its in-house productions and losing significant editorial control over its production. As an outlet that largely transmits rather than produce its own content, GBC would at this stage lose its relevance as a purveyor of national content.

It is not only content production that suffers from this shift in training orientation. Technical and engineering staffs also lag behind in acquiring new expertise to enable installations, regular maintenance and successful repairs of technology to occur. Consequently, not only have equipment breakdowns remained frequent; GBC has not been an "early adaptor" of new technology, let alone equip its engineers with the requisite competences to enable them catch up with the breakneck speed at which

broadcasting technology evolves. This situation will become clearer as I explore GBC's technical systems and capabilities, and whether or not they support its public broadcasting efforts at making access universal, participation more local, and signal distribution better and reliable. As will become clear, it is not only in training that the neoliberal logic of mass commodification and cheap labor hold sway. It speaks with a clearer accent in how technology is acquired, installed and used.

How GBC's technical systems and capabilities support its mandate

In view of my earlier outline about the trajectory of African Broadcasting in relation to technology acquisitions and their impact on their operations, I will limit my analysis here to how GBC used technology, at important moments of its growth, to facilitate its operations. Since its history is already established, I begin my analysis from 1965 when Ghana Television, at its inception, used Ariflex Cameras and transmitted in black and white. GTV went from black and white to color in 1985 and 20 years later in 2005, upgraded its television studios, field gathering cameras and editing suites to digital technology.

By 1986, GBC radio had also began an Accra based FM broadcast, using a 500W FM transmitter donated by the Federal Republic of Germany to commemorate its Golden Jubilee a year earlier. In its efforts to improve upon its national footprint through the use of FM technology, GBC established an FM station in each of the ten regional capitals of Ghana⁶⁶. Acquiring FM technology in each of its 10 regional capitals, as well as

⁶⁶ These are Obonu FM in [Tema], Garden City Radio [Kumasi], Twin City Radio [Sekondi] URA Radio [Bolgatanga] and Sunrise FM [Koforidua]. The rest are Radio

advanced television technology, should be seen as efforts to go beyond expanding its footprints to improving the quality of its signals also.

Furthermore, as a former Director of Radio aptly argues, the rationale for going to the regions with regional FM stations was to put a stop “to the all-knowing monarch superintending over his subjects mentality of GBC, and to give the local people the choice to be involved in program making” (2012, personal communication). In some respects, this technology regime did not only enable GBC’s centers of operations to diffuse, it also signaled a shift in its programming orientation from a paternalistic one that sought to educate its audience, emphasizing development and nation building, to another that was willing to engage with its audience.

Although FM technology fragmented the “national audience” that short wave service enjoyed, it significantly improved reception quality, and enabled a closer (regional) audience participation in GBC’s programs. But even more importantly, it also signaled GBC’s readiness to compete within a changing, competitive media environment. Notwithstanding the challenges regional FM stations faced such as “unclear policy directives to the regional offices and scarce financial resources” (Heath, 2001), technology wise, it shifted the overconcentration from its headquarters in Accra to its regions, and enabled closer interaction between programs and local audiences. Interactive programming such as phone-ins and vox pops featured more actively in regular programming (Tettey, 2005).

In comparison, television’s regional footprint is minimal. It nevertheless,

BAR, [Sunyani], Radio Central [Cape Coast], Radio Savanna [Tamale], Radio Upper West [Wa] and Volta Star [Ho] (GBC Memo, 2014).

indicated its preparedness to cover the regions better, as well as through its new technology acquisitions, such as cameras, it is able to gather and process images faster. If till date, regional FM stations are better integrated into the national station than Television is, it is because, unlike radio, Ghana Television does not have regional television stations capable of generating and transmitting programs by themselves. Their ten regional bureaus have a skeletal news and production staff capable of only generating news and simple programs without the capacity to edit and transmit them.

This deficiency highlights the impact of the organization's failure to merge the two newsrooms, under the radio-vision experiment. Implementation of that plan would have better integrated the regions with headquarters from content production to transmission (Apaloo, 2013, personal communication). In fact, GBC acquired digital technology to support the merger while a national fibre optic system was to serve as the backbone for the delivery of live, digital, audiovisual feed from the regions to Accra (Apaloo, 2013, personal communication). In theory, a technology system was put in place to ensure that radio and television newsrooms would work together as a fully merged unit, under a "paperless" editorial regime where ink-on-paper routines would be replaced by an electronic, digital system (Apaloo, 2013, 2014, personal communication).

As a senior editorial manager puts it, "they said we were to operate a paperless system, but now we use more paper than before" (2013, personal communication). In the field, I found evidence of long paper trails that did not indicate the existence of a paperless editorial process. To a large extent, the technology's inability to deliver this editorial "culture" signifies a failure in both the technology system and its accompanying editorial practice. As I found out, a nonresponsive server has made nonsense of the initial

vision where uploaded audiovisual material would be edited and saved onto a digital domain, capable of being recalled at the click of a mouse for transmission (2013, 2014, personal interviews). It is very slow to upload, slower to edit and download, and unreliable to recall saved files as video inserts during transmission⁶⁷.

Additionally, cartridges for reporters are often in short supply and audiovisual footage from the regions, which should have been carried by a nationally connected fibre optic system still has to be transported physically to Accra to be processed. Due to this inability to deliver on its promise, the newsroom routine of newsgathering, processing and transmission has become laborious and needlessly complicated. Besides being unreliable, journalists are expected to meet the expectation of providing content for a 24-hour news cycle in the face of such technological glitches, which in turn, give room for uncertain editorial practices.

What this failure in technology reflects is a clear disconnect between a technology, and its implicit editorial practices. Instead of changing previous editorial practices to suit the inherent capabilities of the newly acquired Q series technology, content generators are forced in the face of failed technology, to doggedly stick to their old familiar ways. Old editorial processes persist even in the face of new and far superior technology, thereby undermining the original intention for acquiring that technology and the opportunity to better execute GBC's public service mandate.

While end users blame the slowness of the technology as the principal reason for sticking to their old editorial routines, engineers point to unwillingness of end users to

⁶⁷A media manager tells the famous story of an elections assignment which forced him to rely on betacam camera to gather material and transmit while digital material covered earlier was still downloading.

shed off old editorial habits. Both engineers and content generators have valid points because as the former continues to struggle to identify and resolve technological problems, they see the latter's sticking doggedly to old editorial habits as "an excuse not to give the system a chance to succeed" (Apaloo, 2013, personal communication). Journalists are quick to point out that they don't have the luxury of time. But notwithstanding these positions, I reckon that a more fundamental problem is lack of adequate training for both to enable them confidently manage the new system-technologically and editorially. Remarks from respondents such as "training was not very deep", "it [training] was not sufficient" and "it was skewed towards radio" seem to hint at, and reinforce, this conclusion.

As things stand, digital equipment that should have made newsgathering and delivery much faster and more interactive, has failed to achieve its intended results. If there is any doubt about this state of affairs, the latest backpack technology leaves one in no doubt. In 2014, GBC acquired one backpack. Intended to replace the bulky Outside Broadcast (OB) van, which is old and often not in good condition, the backpack technology has flexibility and speed. Unlike the OB van, which requires at least 14 crewmembers to function, the backpack requires a reporter, a camera person and a technician to relay live audiovisual feed from location. After just a single use, the backpack broke down and has not been repaired as at the time of writing. Considering that a freelancer from another television station was brought in to show GBC crewmembers how to use the equipment, there is growing conviction that the equipment malfunction was due to improper use.

This latest occurrence feeds into the long chain of others in which equipment is

often acquired before any measure of training is instituted for its users. For these reasons, even when GBC has made the right decisions in their technology choices, the use of such equipment is not maximized due to lack of training. As the GBC narrative has shown repeatedly, once its users and engineers fail to master its inherent protocols, it is unlikely that such equipment could be adopted effectively to serve the purposes for which they were acquired. Katz and Wedell (1977) are right when they pointed out that in considering transfers of broadcasting technology into developing countries, there is the need to be mindful of “less tangible” sociocultural factors that could affect its use. These “include norms, unwritten rules, styles of production, values, professional codes and expectations, beliefs, and attitudes” (Katz and Wedell, 1977: 67; Tuchman, 1978).

The biggest challenge facing GBC is how to infuse these “less tangible” factors into the implicit assumptions of the technology they acquire. Training and socialization are crucial factors in this regard. But more telling is the effect on GBC’s public service mandate. Such effects range from stymieing its capacity to guarantee universal geographical access to being more relevant to its viewers and listeners through closer interactivity. Consequently, the organization fails in its goal of “reflecting the nation to itself” through a greater representation of regional happenings, and ultimately creating a public sphere where as many Ghanaians as possible could partake in national discourse. Suffice it to say it is not only technology that plays a critical role in order for GBC to meet its public service aspirations. How GBC gets funded is another important factor that determines whether it is able to realize this normative goal.

Funding sources and implications

Very often, the issue of funding public broadcasting tends to be tied to how one funding type or another supports or undermines its editorial independence (Bagdikian, 1994; Blumler 1993; McChesney, 1999; Raboy, 1995). Whether such funding is derived from user fees by the public or through sponsorship and advertising sources from clients, it goes a long way to affect a broadcaster's programming quality and diversity (Scannell, 1995). It is for this reason that Blumler (1993) itemizes "program quality, diversity, and independence of programme sources from commercial influences" (31) as some of the values that are most at risk for public broadcasters within a competitive media ecology.

By this, Blumler was drawing attention to the strong pull of commercialization, including sponsorship and advertising, on public service broadcasters' programming and remit. Due to its effect on programming, advertising has often been seen as a problem, an "implacable foe of programme diversity" (Blumler, 1993: 411). If there is preference for public funding, therefore, it is because it better guarantees the principle of editorial independence in which programming is expected "not to be under the thumb of any social or political group but should be distanced from all vested interests, particularly those of the government of the day" (Blumler 1993:5).

It is curious that in the case of GBC, it was the government of the day (in 1968) that first pointed it towards commercial advertising not only as a means of generating extra income, but also as a way of editorially cutting itself free from governmental control. Per this reasoning, the objective was to get GBC to be more editorially and administratively independent of government, without guaranteeing it any such independence from other vested interests, including commercial ones. When

government's argument shifted in the 1980s and asked GBC to "take more and better care of itself" because it did not have the funds to support it, it had effectively "started putting more pressure on GBC to generate more revenue from advertising and also fund a lot more of its operations" (Apenteng, 2013, personal interview).

This pressure to seek alternative sources of funding increased after 1992 with the coming into operation of private broadcasting when the government argued that "if all these private people can operate and take care of themselves, why not GBC?" (Apenteng, 2013, personal interview). It is this rationale, anchored within the neoliberal logic of the market as the determiner of preference and choice, that has driven successive governments to cut down on subventions to GBC, thereby forcing the organization to look for alternative sources of funding to make up.

The necessity to seek alternative sources of revenue become clearer when one compares, from available data, the government subvention-advertising/sponsorship ratios:

Table 1. Table showing GBC's funding sources and their percentage ratios

Revenue sources	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Govt. subs	60.93%	53.19%	45.27%	38.33%	44.75%	54.91%
License	0.09%	0.27%	0.58%	1.07%	0.46%	0.065%
Sponsorship	13.56%	16.82%	24.29%	17.16%	13.10%	8.29%
Adverts	15.35%	15.77%	21.63%	21.19%	19.25%	17.78%
Others	9.03%	6.76%	2.15%	15.99%	15.01%	3.18%

Source: GBC Annual Reports

What is obvious from the table is that although government subvention is dwindling, it remains critical to GBC's operations, considering that it still constituted between 40 and 60 percent of the organization's resources between 2005 and 2010. This is additional to funding key infrastructure developments such as refurbishing its studios in 1985, buying 25 digital cameras and vehicles in 2006 (GBC Newsletter 4:4)⁶⁸, and putting up a new state of the art news complex in 2012. As GBC struggles to plug the financial deficit caused by dwindling government support and higher overheads by raising more internally generated funds, generating socially relevant and public interest programs could most likely be affected in the process.

By its own admission, "GBC's programmes are *funded wholly* from internally generated funds (IGF) mostly through advertisements, sponsorship, transmitter mast and space rentals, video billboards and license fees" (GBC Annual Report, 2007:1, emphasis mine). In addition to funding both radio and television programmes, the IGF is also used for "maintenance and repairs, refurbishment, vehicles (operations and official), utility and other operational bills" (2007:1). Bearing in mind that government subvention mainly pays for staff salaries, what this means is that GBC's key programming operations, upon which its public service mandate is expressed, depend almost exclusively on the shifts and pulls of the market. As Blumler correctly points out, "even on pragmatic grounds, public broadcaster dependence on advertising is risky [since] it fluctuates unpredictably and insecurely in response to business cycle developments" (1993:411).

In addition to spot advertising, GBC seems to have been shifting its emphasis

⁶⁸ Computation of these additional funds by government is based on "the corporation's budget submissions to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning through the Ministry of Information" (GBC Annual Report, 2007:1).

from co-productions to outright sale of airtime to independent producers since the mid-2000s. After paying for airtime, such independent producers generate and air their programs on GBC “often heavily loaded with adverts,” (Lokko, 2013, personal interview). Not only does this phenomenon signal a likely loss of editorial control over such content, it also means that airtime that ordinarily should have been filled by GBC programs is being squeezed out by such “independent productions which constituted 51 percent of GBC’s programs by the mid-2000s” and continues to rise (Lokko, 2013, personal communication).

Unlike co-productions where GBC could still exercise some editorial control because its production crew and/or equipment will be involved in the production cycle, outright sale of airtime to independent producers shifts such editorial control to the producer. Although in theory all independent productions are to be vetted and approved at least 48 hours before they go on air, vetting officers point out that such productions come too close to transmission times for any alterations, if any, to be effected (2013, personal communication).

In addition, the consequence for rejecting an independent production is grave. Besides causing financial loss to the corporation, such an officer bears the responsibility of finding a suitable program from the audiovisual library to fill the airtime. This double bind exerts subtle pressure on vetting officers to approve productions that otherwise could have been improved upon or rejected. According to one official, unless independent productions have clearly crossed the line of public decency by the use of indecent language, or contain nudity, they are almost certain to be passed (2014, personal communication). What can be deduced from these examples is that because advertising

and sale of airtime tend to be tied to business cycles, in addition to affecting program quality, they also impinge on programming planning and scheduling.

Compared to spot advertising, sponsorship for GBC programs seems to be on the decline according to available statistics and accounts from producers (2014, personal communication). For instance, based on its 2014 expenditure trends, GBC expects to generate a little over eleven million Ghana Cedis (11, 369,792.38) in spot advertising in 2015, compared to eight million (8,110,349.54) in sponsorship revenue (Newsletter, 2015). This trend is troubling for planning and quality control purposes, because program sponsorship in broadcasting is traditionally tied to quarters of 13 weeks, they are easier to plan and execute.

Additionally, because sponsored programs carry the brand of their sponsors, they tend to be more interested in the quality of such programs, and in most cases exert the needed pressure on the broadcaster to ensure that required resources for the program are available. Sponsorship, therefore, has an inbuilt quality control as well as being more predictable for the broadcaster. If sponsorship is declining in the case of GBC, it could signal either a preference for on the spot advertising, unwillingness for clients to be tied to GBC's programs, or loss of confidence in the capacity of such programs to reach the intended target of the sponsor.

GBC's inconsistent transmission schedule plays a huge role as far as worries about target audiences are concerned. Regular calls from government to GBC for free, live coverage, often at short notice, disrupts its scheduling in most cases and results in cancellations of some paid for programs. The 2009 GBC Annual Report captures "the live telecast of the "Ghana at 50" and "Public Accounts Committee hearings" (7) as

accounting for losses of about 15,200,000.00 Ghana Cedis that GBC could have raked in from advertisements and sponsored programs in 2009 (7). In 2012, GBC covered the entire Supreme Court proceedings of Ghana's election dispute and lost a colossal sum of money in the process⁶⁹. As a former Director General points out, government feels it has the "right to demand coverage and it can be bothersome because it can completely ruin your programming" (2013, personal communication).

Additionally, the fact that "GBC feels obliged to cover such events because they come from government" could signal some form of pressure on the organization (Apenteng, 2013, personal interview). It is this relationship that leads Duodu, a former Director of Television to argue that

When we devise an infantile system where a party in power pays the salaries of all the employees of GBC (via the Ministry of Information) and furnishes it with expensive cameras and other sophisticated satellite devices and then expect the station to have nothing to do with the party that feeds it then we are simply being naive (*Daily Graphic*, 2004: 8).

It is against this background that continuous calls from GBC management to government for increase in the television user fees ought to be placed and appreciated. A World Bank Study of Broadcasting in Ghana (2005: 28) makes similar calls to "parliament to take immediate steps to update the license fee to a viable level with a built-in protection against inflation".

Receipt of approval from the Parliament of Ghana, in 2015, for GBC to increase the TV user license fee from 30 pesewas to 15 Ghana Cedis annually should, therefore,

⁶⁹ "Out of the annual target of GHC26,152,678.13 for 2013, the Corporation was able to collect GHC21,364,110.63. The reduction in revenue could be partly attributed to the live coverage of the Supreme Court hearing of the 2012 election petition, halting the coverage of some programmes which were paid for" (GBC 2013 Annual Report: 18).

be seen as a welcome relief to the corporation's perennial financial difficulties. This development should, hopefully, should provide GBC with some regular independent funds as is the case with global best practice in France and BBC (World Bank Study, 2005). Notwithstanding the fact that a court action has been instituted questioning the legality of the fees, as well as its disbursement, this revenue source still provides, in principle, a more reliable means of funding GBC if it is able to put in place an efficient system of collection. Until the court ruling making GBC the exclusive beneficiary of the mandatory TV license is overturned by a pending appeal, GBC is likely to rake in some substantial sums.

Irrespective of the outcome, the important principle of a public broadcaster being supported by public funds, to ensure accountability and operational and editorial independence, has been restored in this case. As McChesney (1999) correctly points out, once public funds are no longer available to the public broadcaster, it ceases to be a public broadcaster. An increase in the license fee will likely bring some regularity and independence to its programming and schedule. It does not, however, necessarily guarantee improvements in the quality of its programs since GBC has traditionally reinvested very little of the monies accrued from sponsorship into programs but has used them to offset high operational costs. For instance, only 6 percent of its total expenditure was invested into programming, compared to 19 percent for "Travelling and Transport, (fuel, per diem, etc)"; 16 percent for "Utilities (Electricity and television sets); and 15 percent for "Staff Welfare (L.S.A. and Medicals)" (Operational Report, 2014: 3).

This leads to a central part of the ongoing debate as to whether or not GBC should continue to benefit from advertising and sponsorship revenue in the face of increases in

television licenses. While private broadcasting operators are asking for GBC to stay out of the advertising market, GBC is arguing that it still needs other funding sources to stay competitive. The Acting Director of Finance points out that

[i]n fulfilling our mandate of generating sufficient IGF for the provision of free radio and television broadcasting services for the general public, the corporation is expected to generate a total of 220,424,715.06 [approximately two hundred and twenty million Ghana Cedis] in 2015 from its traditional revenue sources (excluding TV license fees) and support from central government to undertake its projects, programs and activities for the year under consideration” (Newsletter, 2015: 7)

By this expectation, GBC is effectively sticking to the mixed model of funding its operations even if television license now provides them with a more predictable, regular and more independent source of funding.

But there are troubling times ahead if the Broadcasting Bill is passed into law in its current state, especially with respect to the institution of a National Broadcasting Development Fund (NBDF). Going by Article 72 of the Bill, all license fees and other specified funds are to be paid into the NBDF⁷⁰. By this arrangement, GBC will have to pitch for funds from the NBDF like any other station, including commercial ones, seeking to mount public interest programs. What stands out from this funding option is that it deinstitutionalizes public broadcasting and conceptualizes it as a genre to be carried by the entire broadcasting system, thereby forcing GBC to play a complementary role instead of focusing exclusively on, or assuming sole responsibility for its public service one. Under the circumstances, Raboy’s wise counsel that “it is private sector

⁷⁰ The monies to be paid into the NBDF include “television receiving license fees; monies approved by parliament; advertising revenue; programme sponsorship that is ethical in nature; grants and donations; fees from broadcasting service providers; and revenue generated from the commercial activities of public service broadcasters” (Article 73 [a-h]).

broadcasting that should be conceptualized as the complementary form, providing services that public broadcasting can afford to abandon, not vice versa” (1996:13) seems to have been ignored.

Bearing in mind Raboy’s claim that “there is a comparative rise in program quality if private broadcasting is pressured to do more public service programming rather than public service being pressured to serve as an alternative to commercial broadcasting,” the funding arrangement outlined by the NBDF will achieve very little on two fronts: it does not ensure that GBC has ready access; neither does it provide any guarantees that program quality will improve. By and large, such a funding arrangement fails to cushion GBC to adequately and independently, carry out its distinct public service role, because it “jeopardizes the distinctiveness and societal *raison d’être* of public television” (Blumler, 1993: 410) when it is forced to play a complementary role to commercial broadcasting.

As things stand, GBC is forced to rely increasingly on advertisements, sponsorships and other commercial sources of funding in the face of a user license fee which, aside the uncertainties surrounding its disbursements, is also coming under scrutiny from commercial broadcasters. Their argument that GBC should not benefit from both advertising revenue and television license seems to be grounded in best practices in other jurisdictions such as in DR in Denmark, and CBC Radio in Canada, NHK of Japan, and BBC. Without any clearly set out policy or regulation to cushion it from its funding vicissitudes, GBC will continue to swing between two options: either choose “adverts with news,” in which a 60 minute news bulletin could have as little as 4 stories, with the rest populated by adverts (Editorial manager, 2014, personal

communication); or simply buy cheaper soap operas, Telenovelas, African movies and other programs and fill them with adverts to recoup transmission cost.

The effect of such funding choices on programming is aptly captured by Blumler when he points out that

[A]dvertising is antagonistic to the public service mission [because] its evaluation of programme quality and effectiveness is essentially uni-dimensional, concerned only with audience size and composition, in contrast to that multi-dimensionality for which public broadcasters must aim. [...] To any system it influences, it imparts a hedonistic bias, privileging entertainment programming and its relevant programming values while correspondingly limiting or excluding emphasis on other program types and qualities or obliging them to conform to entertainment standards (1993: 411).

This is a stark reminder of the ways advertising tend to influence the conceptualization of the audience as buyers rather than active citizens, thereby compromising opportunities to engage them through socially relevant programming.

Additionally, this observation speaks to a constriction of scope for programming or program diversity, highlighting ways in which such programming values, (such as use of background music, developing shots, spectacular use of graphics and fast paced montages) bias other formats (such as news, current affairs, and documentaries). A very casual look at some of the transmission logs of GTV seems to support Karikari's observation that "in terms of scope I don't think GBC's scope has widened, it probably has narrowed compared to those days" when as a monopoly it was forced to do many things (2014, personal communication).

Perhaps what this signals is that instead of "internal diversity" in which GBC, as an institution, is expected to be as diverse in its programming as possible, such diversity has become "external" where the entire three tier broadcasting system is expected to generate different programs to cater for various tastes and audiences (McQuail, 1993).

Irrespective of the nature and extent of program diversity, the point remains that “broadcasting systems which are dependent on advertising also schedule the narrowest range of programming” (Blumler, 1993, 411). This seems to be the likely course of GBC’s travel due to its heavy dependence on advertising and sponsorship revenue.

Notwithstanding these challenges, it is important to underline that when funds have specifically gone into programs, GBC has demonstrated capabilities to live up to its public service remit, such as when it mounted two live national programs for four Presidential aspirants leading up to the 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana. With financial support from STAR-Ghana⁷¹, GBC telecast live debates among four presidential aspirants who had been excluded from an Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) funded one because their parties did not meet the criterion of having representation in Parliament. Not only did such funds make it possible for the presidential aspirants to present their manifestoes and programs to the public, it also paid for better and continual access to production crew and equipment all through the campaign and election process (Chairman, Political Broadcast Committee, 2013, personal communication).

Although an Election Broadcast Committee had been in existence since 1996, the financial support it had in 2012 enabled it to provide better coverage and programs than it had done in the past (Chairman, PBC, 2013, personal communication). What this demonstrates is that GBC, like most public service broadcasters, is more likely to mount socially relevant programs with “independent” finances rather than by relying on

⁷¹ Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana) is an umbrella organization that collects funds from UKAid, USAID, DANIDA and the EU and distributes them for various advocacy projects on their behalf. It also funded a 14-month (October, 2013 to December, 2014) documentary project called “same curriculum, different opportunities” which aired on GTV on Thursday at 8.30pm and Friday at 6pm (GBC Newsletter, 32:27).

advertising and sponsorship sources as it is forced to do at the moment. Having pointed out some of the ways GBC has responded to its current funding regime that relies heavily on government subvention and advertising-sponsorship revenue, the final part of this chapter will focus on three critical ways in which this has affected how GBC has executed its public service mandate.

Responses to funding challenges and their impact on programs and PS mandate

I have tried to establish that, as an organization that sources 40 to 60 percent of its funding from government, GBC's programming is under pressure in two crucial ways. First, government's reflex that it is entitled to live coverage, often disrupts GBC's programming schedule, and often results in the cancellation of paid programs and advertising commitments to its clients. Indirectly, this makes GBC unattractive to its clients since inconsistent programming drives away prospective sponsors who are unwilling to commit themselves to long term programming arrangements, and therefore, prefer one-off advertising which provides them with more control and time flexibility.

Secondly, I have also shown a shift in emphasis from co-productions with external producers to outright sale of airtime for independent producers since the latter ensures better financial stability than investing scarce resources into its own original in-house productions. That is to say, because it funds all its programs through internally generated funds, GBC prefers raising money through outright sale of airtime to investing its limited finances into original, in-house programs when it is not assured of any financial returns through advertising and sponsorship.

This reorientation limits GBC's capacity to mount socially relevant programming, resulting in more independent than in-house productions, and increased potential for loss of editorial control. It could also be indicative of GBC's loss of confidence in how well its own programs can compete with independent ones for sponsors and advertisers from the competitive market. Lack of adequate training largely accounts largely for this situation. If there is a bias for entertainment and other light program formats, it is due firstly to the compulsion to cut down cost by mounting safe formats that will attract large audience shares. The flip side of this argument is that the lack of production expertise to generate complex and controversial programming makes programs with mass appeal an attractive choice, if for nothing at all, for their better advertising prospects.

GBC has, over time, weakened its human resource base by simply recruiting academically qualified staff members without providing them the extra vital vocational/professional skills that will better prepare them to undertake their public service duties. It has, thus, departed from its precious stringent training regime that involved a competitive written examination and oral interview for all core production staff before regular in-house and external training sessions.

Closely tied to this is the fact that GBC is in the process of transforming its in-house Training schools into a fully accredited commercial Broadcasting University College that "would provide broadcasting professionals with a dedicated and specialized tertiary institution [that will run] topnotch tertiary programs [...] in various broadcasting disciplines" (GBC Newsletter 28:22)⁷². Indeed, the Head of Engineering Training

⁷² A GBC Newsletter reports that one of the issues that arose after a retreat involving the "Governing Board, Executive Directors and the Union" of GBC, is that "GBC's training schools shall be affiliated to University of Ghana, Legon through the National Film and

School⁷³ shows the “economic viability” of such a college by pointing to the success of a broadcast technology course that it run. In three years, the course raked in 85, 096.00 Ghana Cedis as revenue (GBC Newsletter, 28: 22).

What has so far pertained is that because of GBC’s commercial intent and its objective to raise revenue, its focus seems to be more on responding to the needs of external clients than training its own staff members and meeting the specific needs of the organization. According to the Head of Training, all the “five commercial courses organized between 2008 and 2011 were opened to staff of the Corporation” (Newsletter, 28: 14). This policy has, however, been discontinued. Because such paid-for courses were mounted exclusively for clients, the Head of Human Resource felt that including GBC staff for free was “unethical” and therefore called for the practice to discontinue. Even if GBC considers cross-subsidizing the program for its staff to be included, the question still remains about the extent to which such training, which is tailored to a variety of clients, would sufficiently serve the organization’s purpose of equipping its staff with both requisite professional skills *and* organization culture.

As things stand, GBC is unlikely to maintain the integrity of its institutional culture through a mixed training regime that simultaneously seeks to address the needs of external clients and in-house staff. But, even more importantly, training that runs on a new commercial logic is unlikely to put the same level of attention and premium on the

Television Institute to start awarding diplomas and degrees on a commercial basis” (27:2). The school is intended to provide “both practical and theoretical instruction in Broadcast Journalism and Broadcast Technology” (27:14).

⁷³ The new Head of TV Training, Mr. Richard Akpakli told me in a conversation that revenue from training is third only after TV and Obonu radio (January, 2016, personal communication).

training needs of its staff which it had provided in the past for free. This is because GBC simply does not feel the same obligation and urgency to train its staff as it used to do in the past. As one respondent remarked, “Once you walk in here, you are considered a professional and you are expected to deliver” (2014, personal communication).

Additionally, some respondents inferred that hectic program demands and limited production staff does not allow them to release staff for such training programs even if they wanted to, since such absences most certainly would affect their transmission output. The distant prospect exists that training will no longer be provided free for all production staff, but could become at best a subsidized resource to be paid for by staff who are in a position to do so. If this happens, GBC could be stretching its commercial logic to its elastic limit, hurt its human resource base by so doing, and erode one of the crucial ways of instituting and imparting institutional culture in the process. When this happens, its institutional culture as a public service broadcaster is likely to suffer both editorially and operationally.

Equally important is the argument that GBC is, by this conduct, stretching itself into other operational areas, which are likely to dilute its focus as a public service broadcaster. Considering the capacity of its production staff, equipment and other logistical challenges, I share the concerns expressed by some about the feasibility of GTV’s expansion into 5 other digital terrestrial channels. The extension onto a digital terrestrial platform has been framed as an opportunity to free a choked general-interest, national television channel; generate theme content for the various channels; and, through subscription, raise more capital for the organization (GBC Newsletters).

Wolton’s (1992) insights are profound when he points out that irrespective of

general-interest television's inability to satisfy everybody, it performs a crucial function of serving as a "social link" in society; obliging each viewer to admit that the program he or she does not watch has as much legitimacy as those he or she does (156). In addition to this spirit of tolerance, such programming also serves as a window on the world, opening other vistas to its viewers. Considering that "theme-oriented channels enclose each category of viewers in its own programming ghetto", it is unlikely to be able to fulfill the social link function that general interest television performs, with all its imperfections (1992: 156).

Coupled with the fact that access to these channels is on pay-per-view basis, through subscription, such theme-oriented channels will fundamentally undermine the crucial imperative of universal access to which all public service broadcasters must aspire. What stands out from these arrangements is that GBC's quest to stay viable and competitive has forced it to seek solutions from the open market. In the process, it is endangering such public service obligations as universal access, and programming that engages its viewers and listeners not as a market share, but as participants whose citizenship is expressed through dialogue and other social links.

The PSB "vulnerable value" (Blumler, 1992) of universal access and participation is also expressed in the ways GBC's regional stations relate with Headquarters in the capital. Except in instances where the regions' presence is felt either because they are hooked into the main news bulletin, or are the site for a national event, they largely function as solitudes. Because technology is overly centralized in Accra, it is more expensive to commit human and economic resources, especially to television programs in the regions compared to content generated from Accra. It is also faster to generate

programs from its Headquarters in Accra than from the regions. Higher cost of production and speed are the two main reasons why more programs are generated from headquarters than the regions. Clearly, this state of affairs does not inure to the public service ethos of reflecting the nation to itself, and actualizing the social link function which is so crucial to public service broadcasting.

In conclusion, it could be argued that GBC's status as a public service broadcaster is at the crossroads. Although its public service role and status as "state-owned" is undoubted, there has not been sufficient effort, either through sustained legislation or practical policy, to empower it to perform that crucial duty assigned to it by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Coupled with the fact that it has traditionally run like a civil service, both in operations and mindset, one of its central challenges is to restructure its staff and management systems. Such restructuring will make it leaner in staff numbers, efficient in its use of resources, better responsive to its programming needs, and more competitive within a market-driven media ecology.

In mindset, GBC's management and editorial staff must depart from the reflex of uncritically putting government in good light and serving as its cheerleaders. An independent funding source not tied to government or advertising and an improvement in its human resource capacity are two of the most crucial factors in attaining this goal. My recommendations in the next chapter focus on how to achieve some of these objectives.

Chapter Eight

After all is said, what is there to be done?: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) has had a close relationship with government and the state right from its inception. From its establishment as a small radio station in 1935 until the mid-1990s, GBC operated as a state-owned monopoly. As a result, it was perceived as a state-owned and run media organization that propagated government policies and, through its programming, tried to forge a sense of nationhood and development (Ansah, 1982, 1985). The central role governments played in the determination of GBC's economic, editorial and operational conduct fueled this perception of close ties with government. Funded almost fully by the government, and under the direct supervision of a Minister of Information, GBC was run virtually as an extension of government. Its editorial philosophy was "not to put government in bad light" (Former DG, 2013, personal interview). It is for this reason that some have described it as a "cheerleader" of government (Bourgault, 1995).

Admittedly, GBC has, over time, undergone many transformations, both structurally and operationally. As a product of sociopolitical changes in Ghana, it has been called upon to perform various roles under various political and economic regimes. However, GBC's state-owned and run character has been called into question by the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution in the role it assigns the media organization. Referred to as a "state-owned media" organization, the Constitution nevertheless defines GBC as a public service broadcaster, assigning it roles that range from universal and equal access, especially to minorities, to presentation of divergent views reflective of the Ghanaian

society. Within a liberal, multi-party democratic system, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana seems to be pointing GBC in a completely different direction from the one it is used to: a monopoly operationally; and “politically paralleled” editorially (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). It is now expected to operate within a competitive media ecology, as a public service broadcaster.

Understandably, without significant changes to its economic, human and editorial systems, many have raised issues about GBC’s capacity to transform itself into the public service broadcaster the Constitution expects of it. As it is forced to turn to the market to shore up dwindling government funds, and its recruitment, budget and infrastructure development become subject to state approval, to what extent can GBC be relied upon to perform its normative public service role under these conditions? The potential “identity crisis” such a situation creates for GBC is the focus of this study, which seeks to explore the merits of the above concerns and the likely impact of the transition on GBC’s operations as a public service broadcaster.

Regulatory, capacity and management challenges

Using McChesney’s (1999) definition of a Public Service Broadcaster, GBC cannot be defined as one. In both legislative and operational terms, GBC falls short of McChesney’s definition as

a system that is nonprofit and noncommercial, supported by public funds, ultimately accountable in some legally defined way to the citizenry, and aimed at providing a service to the entire population - one which does not apply commercial principles as the primary means to determine its programming (226).

Theoretically, the public service media organization accounts to the public through its regulator, and in some cases, Parliament, which ensure that it lives up to its operational mandate, sanctioning it in cases where breaches occur. Like the ICASA in South Africa, CRTC in Canada and the IBA of England, the NMC of Ghana is mandated to oversee the conduct of media in Ghana, including GBC. However, unlike its counterparts, it is constrained from living up to its mandate by both funding and “institutional capacity” challenges (Amihere, 2013, personal interview; World Bank Study, 2005). With no legal requirement to possess any competence in media regulation, the part time Commissioners of Ghana’s NMC might be reflective of various interests in society, but are significantly constrained to effectively provide guidance to the conduct of media in Ghana. As a former member rightly points out, “apart from acting as a stumbling block to government, the NMC is really a hopeless organization” in terms of its capacity to provide enforceable policy guidance (2013, personal communication)⁷⁴.

As the regulator for a media institution struggling to transition from state-owned and run to a public service, Ghana’s NMC can learn some lessons from ICASA’s relations with SABC. For instance, ICASA denied the SABC a license to operate a commercial channel until it demonstrated the financial muscle to justify such a license. The NMC needs to play a more active role to gain control of the media landscape and steer it towards its intended destination. The philosophy of leaving things to the devices of an “independently appointed board to independently manage the affairs of GBC” (2013, personal communication) creates a policy vacuum, especially in cases where

⁷⁴ He continued to rightly argue that in view of these deficiencies in competencies, the NMC is “not properly structured, or composed so that it can handle the task of really defining what the role of a public service broadcaster should be, [...] or do to serve the society” (2013, personal communication).

members of governing boards have little or no knowledge of broadcasting, and their appointments are not by public nomination and scrutiny as is the case in South Africa and Australia.

The effects of a weak media regulator tend to trickle down and, in the case of GBC, such aloofness could result not only in the institution of “the wrong board” (2013, personal communication) due to their limited knowledge of broadcasting, but also a policy vacuum which could then be filled by the very operators of such media whose conduct the policy is intended to guide in the first place. The media regulator’s unwillingness to “replace government with itself as masters of GBC,” and, therefore, to “interfere in its affairs” (media regulator, 2013, personal communication) is not out of choice, but by the exigencies of the situation where it lacks the requisite expertise to do so.

It is not enough to grant GBC independence in theory. It is even more important that the institutions mandated to oversee its conduct are ensuring that such independence is reflected in its editorial and operational conduct. My argument is that such independence is unlikely to be attained when the regulator adopts a hands-off posture in its dealings with a media organization which is struggling to shed off a politically paralleled mindset, and therefore, needs support and policy guidance.

In line with current international best practice, such as in Kenya and South Africa, media and telecommunication regulators are fusing their “telematics” operations under a single operator for efficient regulation (Schiller, 1993). In view of this, the problems of the NMC are likely to compound as its mandate is expanded to include approving licenses; managing a media development fund; sanctioning media stations which breach

their codes of conduct including withdrawal of their licenses; and instituting a media ombudsperson to adjudicate media infringements (Broadcasting Bill, 2013).

The likely impact of this regime where a weak NMC is forced to assume more specialized communication responsibilities without corresponding growth in its economic and human resources, will be leaving GBC more to its fate and devices at a time when it most needs guidance and support, aside insulation from government control.

A lot depends on the management and Board of GBC, as they are forced to operate within this policy and regulatory vacuum. If there are calls for its restructuring to make GBC leaner, more efficient and better positioned to be competitive within a multimedia landscape, it is indicative of how its current size, hierarchical structure, and management systems still reflect a state-owned and run media monopoly. Generally considered inflexible due to its top-heavy administrative structure, program staff sees GBC's administrative system as slow and unresponsive to their programming needs (2013, 2014, personal communication), while government sees it as inefficient as a result of its high operational costs.

In an effort to redefine and reorient itself to better reflect current times, GBC has made haphazard and unsuccessful attempts to downsize its staff, merge some critical units and better manage its scanty resources. GBC's unsuccessful efforts to merge its radio and television newsrooms was largely due to management failure to effectively outline and implement an operational policy intended to better maximize its news resources and engender better news concordance. What stands out from these efforts is the delicate nature of such downsizings and mergers (McLean, 2005; Teer-Tomaselli, 2011). They are especially susceptible to resistance and their success depends, to a

significant extent, on the central role of managers and their competence.

Lloyd et al. (2010) point to the ways “lack of institutional memory” could affect the growth of an institution such as the SABC, especially in its efforts to forge an independent editorial and operational policy after apartheid. Pointing to the high attrition rate of Group CEOs of SABC and in some cases their governing boards, they argue that political interference in the SABC contributed largely to the inefficiencies of management that ultimately led to quick dismissals and transfers to rival media organizations. Not only did such quick dismissals create hostile conditions for editorial and operational independence, it also resulted in failure to see policy through. This situation resonates loudly with the case of GBC where since 1990, it has seen 12 Director-Generals, seven Directors of Television, five Directors of radio, and about 8 Governing Boards⁷⁵. This high attrition rate of Director-Generals, Executive Directors and the Board create conditions where frequent changes in policy occur and institutional memory and culture easily gets eroded.

To a large extent, these factors accounted for the failure of the “radio-vision” merger and the reversal of GBC’s community radio policy. In the case of the former, four Director-Generals have so far overseen its implementation and understandably, changed the policy’s substance and implementation along the way. The resultant confusion in the minds of editorial managers about the policy’s vision, likely impact and mode of implementation was due largely to these constant changes (Editorial managers, 2013,

⁷⁵ One of GBC’s 10-member Board I interviewed cited extension of their two-year mandate as one of the things that will help in the growth of GBC since it will ensure continuity and maturity of projects (2014, personal communication). The board was inaugurated in May 2013 (*GBC Newsletter*, 27: 14). A new one was constituted in June 2015, (“GBC gets new Governing Board” Graphic online, 23rd June, 2015).

2014, personal communication). In the case of community radio, an earlier policy⁷⁶ for GBC radio not to operate such stations, due to its impact on its dwindling staff and resources, had been reversed by 2013.

In this context, the 18th Director General's call for the establishment of community radios and his appeal to District Assemblies to partner GBC in this endeavor creates even more confusion, especially since that appeal could be contravening the spirit of the Broadcasting Bill (2013). The Bill proposes barring District Assemblies from owning and operating any media (*GBC Newsletter*, 27: 23)⁷⁷. Such frequent changes in key human resource do not enable consistency in policy formulation and implementation; it deprives such policies from gestation and maturity and the opportunity to evaluate their true impact, as well as create an unending cycle of new hands whose tenure of office ends barely before they have had a handle on the job⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ This 2005 policy handed GBC's Dormaa Ahenkro and Apam community radio stations back to their respective communities to operate, thereby withdrawing its involvement in their operations (2013, personal interview).

⁷⁷ At a program to commemorate GBC's 78th Anniversary celebration, the "D-G disclosed that GBC is to change all its relay stations into community radio stations to serve the people better in their respective districts. He said he would hold talks with the District Assemblies to support this initiative" (*GBC Newsletter*, 27: 23).

⁷⁸ Out of the 12 Director-Generals GBC had has since 1990, only 5 were staff from GBC. David Anaglate a former Director of News and Current Affairs; Eva Lokko, former Engineer; and Berifi Apenteng, a former Director of Radio; Anane-Sarpong, a DD-G who acted as D-G; and Yaw Owusu-Addo, a Director of Radio who acted as D-G. The two acting D-Gs took on those roles, following industrial actions that led to the dismissal of the substantive D-Gs.

Can it be nonprofit and non-commercial if not funded by public?

Besides a legally mandated institution to oversee and ensure a public broadcaster's editorial and operational independence, how such a broadcaster is funded has a telling effect on how it meets its mandate. In the case of a public service broadcaster, the requirement to be funded by the public is so central to its ethos that "once the public broadcaster ceases to be funded by the public, it is no longer in a position to perform its public service mandate" (McChesney, 1999: 241). By funding it, the public can hold it to account. Furthermore, such funding enables reliability, and is less prone to controls from the likes of advertisers and government officials. It is for these reasons that direct public sources, such as television or user license fees are considered preferable to indirect ones, such as government grants, advertising and sponsorship.

However, unlike in settings such as the BBC, NHK and ABC where such public funds, often in the form of licenses constitute a key, even if insufficient economic source for the public broadcaster, the reverse is the case in Africa. Compulsory television license fees accounted for 18 percent of SABC's funds in 2009, one of the highest in Africa, (Lloyd et al, 2010: 185). Radio Mozambique attracts 30 percent of its revenue from radio licenses, while TV Mozambique (TVM) relies almost entirely on advertising revenue for its operations in the absence of TV licenses (2010: 95).

License fees constituted 0.046 percent of GBC's revenues in 2009, with the highest over a six-year (2005 to 2010) period being 1.09 percent, and cannot be said to be an important and reliable source of funding for GBC. Like its Mozambique counterpart, which receives 60 percent of its funds from government, GBC relies on government subventions, which oscillate between 40 and 60 percent. With much of this subvention

going to staff salaries GBC, like the TVM and SABC, relies almost exclusively on “internally generated funds,” a euphemism for advertising and sponsorship, for its programming.

With so little direct public funds to rely on, most African broadcasters have had to rely to various degrees on advertising revenue to survive. As Blumler (1992) and Avery (1993) have pointed out, a narrow programming scope and the tendency to conceptualize its audience as consumers of products rather than citizens to be engaged with are some of the effects of relying on advertising. While the former speaks to the need of the public service broadcaster to be “comprehensive” in its programming remit, the latter speaks to lack of diversity, a reliance on familiar program formats that tend to exclude others such as children programs, documentaries and adventurous programs (Blumler, 1993).

If Blumler’s conclusion is true that “broadcasting systems which are most dependable on advertising also schedule the narrowest range of programming” (1993: 411), then the direct impact of advertising and sponsorship on programs is beyond doubt. It is within this context that after a cursory look at GBC’s transmission log, one tends to agree with Karikari’s conclusion that “there is a bit more narrowness” in GBC’s programming compared to when it was a monopoly where its programming was “quite far reaching and [...] very comprehensive” (2014, personal interview).

GBC’s expansion onto 5 digital terrestrial television channels has been justified as an effort to free a congested national channel, improve signal quality, and provide better opportunities for more revenue (GBC Newsletters). By relying on subscriptions, such theme- channels fragment the “national audience” (Wolton, 1993). In the process, they undermine a central pillar of public service broadcasting which hinges on the provision of

universal access. By their funding nature (pay-per-view or subscription) and logic, such theme-channels restrict viewership to its subscribers, thereby excluding those who cannot pay.

The “viewing ghettos” that such theme channels create, then become fertile channels for the transmission of both national and international program content, a condition Bagdikian (2004), Croteau and Hoynes, (2006), Mansell, (2004), Smythe, (1981) and others have argued undermine the very ethos of public access which is so foundational to the formulation of local and national dialogue and, by extension, democracy. As the South African (Lloyd et al., 2010) and Nigerian (Akingbulu, 2010) examples show, there is very little evidence that profits generated from such commercial channels are used to cross subsidize the general theme channel.

In the case of GBC, it is impossible to evaluate the potentials or realities of such cross subsidies in the absence of commercial data since some of the theme-channels are still test transmitting or took off barely a year ago. That notwithstanding, the lessons to be learnt are that theme-channels rely on a commercial funding logic (through subscription and advertising), which ultimately narrows their programming scope (made up of familiar formats often imported from “the international marketplace which is structured against diversity” Blumler, 1993: 415). Even where they exist alongside general-interest channels, such theme channels do not necessarily make it possible for general-interest channels to offer better public interest programming (Wolton, 1996, Lloyd et al., 2010). In fact, in the opinion of Wolton (1993), Raboy (1996), and McQuail (1993), such theme-channels tend to mimic their commercial broadcasters in the content they generate.

They argue that it is the deinstitutionalization of public service broadcasting as the

Broadcasting Bill (2013) proposes to do in Ghana that often accounts for such tendencies. Deinstitutionalization tends to erase the clear role set out for the institutional public service broadcaster, by forcing it to play a “complementary” role to its commercial counterparts. Fourie (2003) makes a similar argument for the SABC and the need for public service in South Africa to be conceptualized as a genre instead of an institution.

Apart from the National Media Policy guidelines which stringently provide program ceilings for all the three tiers of broadcasting in Ghana, there is no such legislative compulsion under the Broadcasting Bill (2013), in its current state for public interest content, thereby providing no guarantees that public content will be carried by all. As a consequence of a competitive media ecology, GBC has already reoriented itself to providing a large staple of program content that often makes it difficult to differentiate it from the others.

In short, the prospect of deinstitutionalizing GBC from being the national/public broadcaster to being one of several expected to provide public service content, has resulted in a shift in its programming profile that tends to mimic its commercial counterparts. My conclusion that GBC is not a public broadcaster is based on the fact that once the public no longer funds it directly, it has to rely on the market which stymies its effective provision of public content both in program diversity and access. Granted that it does the widest range of local language programming and has the widest geographical reach, the important fact remains that its programming depends on commercial considerations to such an extent that even if “it is not for profit, it is no longer noncommercial” (McChesney, 1999: 241).

As I have tried to show, heavy reliance on advertising and sponsorship, including

for portions of its news bulletins, reflects in a narrow scope of programming. There is also a tendency to disregard some of the most important landmarks of public service broadcasting including its universal access, comprehensive program remit, and the obligation to engage its audience through socially relevant programming that does not conceptualize its audience as a market, but as citizens.

The current organizational arrangement where regional offices run FM stations with a limited production crew for both news and other programs has isolated the regions from headquarters in the capital. Besides taking live radio news and some selected program feeds from headquarters, the regional FM stations which are editorially and operationally autonomous (Monney, 2014, personal communication) often reel under high operational costs (Heath, 1995) and are unable to generate sufficient content for quick delivery to the capital (editorial managers, personal communication).

If the essence of having regional footprints was to make it possible for local concerns and voices to be represented in programming (Owusu-Addo, 2013, personal interview), then the present arrangement is far from satisfactory. Program content is disproportionately generated from the capital (Anoff-Ntow, 2007). Both in news and in programming, the regional is underrepresented in national programs, thereby undermining the central objective of reflecting the nation to itself, and opening up opportunities for vibrant regional representation in national discourse. As a remedy, GBC could benefit from Raboy and Taras' (2005) proposals outlining how CBC's regional footprint could be better integrated into its national service in order to meet its national, cultural vision.

It is not only for economic reasons that this situation exists. It is also a hangover

from the past where, for political reasons, regional content was safer to drop than ones from Accra, anytime the bulletins overrun (Editorial managers, 2013, 2014). It is worth acknowledging that the reflex of privileging an official or political story instead of a regional one, especially in the news bulletin, has waned, because GBC now runs a 24-hour news channel and, therefore, is not under the old pressure of broadcasting on two major one-hour news bulletins per day.

In as much as GBC should be commended for doing programs in local languages and even making provision for the hearing impaired in its television news and national programs, its disproportionate use of English language is a setback. So is its inability to fully integrate regional programs into its national programming schedule on a sustained basis. GBC's plan to close down its national local language station, thereby losing its national radio footprint (Apenteng, 2013, personal interview), undermines its quest to be universally accessible in both reach and participation. While its regional FM stations are providing useful local programming to their various catchment areas, they do not go the extra mile of refracting their content to other regions as a public service broadcaster is expected to do.

In order to re-gain its national foothold as a public service broadcaster, GBC is far advanced in its preparations to "re-establish radios 1 and 2" as national channels (*Newsletter*, 2015⁷⁹; Monney, 2014, personal communication), while its general-interest television channel strives to be as representative in its programming content as possible.

⁷⁹ The Acting Director of Finance of GBC reports that the parliament of Ghana has approved an amount of 137,564,500.00 (one hundred and thirty-seven million, five hundred and sixty four thousand, five hundred Ghana Cedis) for GBC to undertake projects which include "the re-establishment of radio 1 and 2; migration from analogue to digital television" (*Newsletter*, 2015: 6-7)

The task of properly balancing and seamlessly integrating its national and regional sites and programs will be crucial to the effective delivery of GBC's public service mandate. In this sense, how the SABC operates its 18 radio stations, offering local language programs all over South Africa could serve as a workable blueprint for GBC to emulate (Lloyd et al., 2010). Additionally, how the SABC manages its third, commercially run channel, SABC 3, alongside two public ones, should provide some guidance as to how GBC relate with its sister television channel Metro Television.

How GBC conceptualizes and executes its operations suggests a management and editorial mindset which is overly centralized. If it is to successfully sustain a 24-hour transmission cycle with quality programs, then it has to expand its production options to include external production partners. Although "independent productions" feature prominently on its bouquet, such productions are not tailor made to fit GBC's specific program needs since they are wholly generated and produced externally without GBC's involvement except to accept or reject them. Sweden (Norback, n.d) and South Africa (Teer-Tomaselli, 1995) provide useful exemplars from which GBC could learn to open up its production spaces to external producers in a manner that generates tailor made programs to fit their specific transmission needs. This will also promote "external diversity" (McQuail, 1993) by enabling fresh voices to be represented without losing editorial control or the risk of diluting its PS brand. Commissioning such programs under the supervision of in-house producers is one way of achieving this. Close funding and production collaboration with partners, jointly managed by both organizations is another way.

The nature of technology deployed to support its operations is crucial to consider

if GBC is to achieve effective delivery of program content across multiple platforms as well as seamlessly integrate the regional into the national as it hopes to do. As the Radio-vision project clearly showed, technology is not neutral but tends to impose its own operational routines on its users (Katz and Wedell, 1977). GBC should, therefore, learn lessons from its “Radio-vision” fiasco by recognizing the need to, through training, rework its editorial routines of gathering, processing and disseminating content and by providing training that synchronizes these routines with the operational modes of new technology that it acquires and installs. This will forestall the possibility of such new technology disrupting its old editorial practices and as a result of insufficient training, prevent the realization of the full benefits of such new technology. This could provide an antidote to the frustration of media managers who think their inability to pass the test of speed and accuracy equally is a result of such technological disruptions. As Burns (2006) and Bennett (2008) demonstrate with the Australian and British Broadcasting Corporations respectively, there are viable blueprints that could guide GBC to successfully integrate new technologies into its editorial practices as well as extend their content across multiple platforms.

Rigid editorial routines that tended to “politically parallel” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) also played a role in slow news content delivery. Although it is difficult to see overt examples of such politicization, some frontline workers, especially past and present news reporters displayed biases for governments of the day. “The politicization of the newsroom” (Apenteng, 2013, personal communication) creates conditions where such advocacy reporters are no longer critical of government and end up being “lapdogs” of government instead of “watchdogs” for the people by vigorously holding governments to

account (Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 1970).

This perception, right or wrong, could be dealt with in various ways ranging from decoupling the editor-in-chief and operational roles of the Director General, as is the case with the Group CEO of SABC, to mentally reshaping the orientation of such news workers to be bolder to confront government narratives, as in Sweden (Ornebring, 2003). They could also create conditions for their audience to be more involved in the editorial process and program output (Rodriguez 2003).

Since the Director General remains the Editor in Chief of GBC, the first option is unlikely, just as the success of the third option depends almost entirely on how its audience reacts to it, and therefore, not under its complete control. The Swedish version becomes a useful exemplar for GBC in demonstrating some of the ways it could reverse its politically paralleled “mindset” as exhibited by the SABC before 1994 (Teer-Tomasselli, 2003). Ornebring (2003) argues that both changes in professional conduct and genre accounted for the successful transformations in Swedish television to the point where it could better hold governments and state officials to account. That means aside professionalism, changes in the current affairs and talk formats also became a means of expanding communication spaces for better inclusion, sometimes of subaltern voices in Swedish television.

Towards this end, GTV’s handling of its flagship discussion program, *Talking Point* could benefit from the Swedes by taking another look at its format and being more inclusive in the people it attracts as panelists. In contrasts to the Swedish example which deliberately opened up spaces for voices critical of government to be expressed, what stands out from viewing *Talking Point* is a dogged adhesion to an old format where

privileged voices of state and government officials far outweigh those of the common person. If GTV wishes to attract more viewers without losing its public service focus, then the Swedish television option serves as a useful exemplar of how rigid program formats such as *Talking Point* could be reengineered to be more inclusive without losing its “forum model” of serving as a vigorous platform for public discourse and engagement.

This is exactly the argument of van Cuilenberg and Slaa (1993) when they point out that in the world of media abundance, “there is justification for a more limited definition of public broadcasting through a *forum model* which relinquishes entertainment to markets forces and concentrates on the democracy serving functions of information provision, opinion expression and political criticism” (169, emphasis mine). However as Blumler rightly counterpoints, such forum model programs, like *Talking Point*, tend to “attract only a small portion of the audience, thereby risking the chance of being socially irrelevant and failing to attract the attention of a large enough audience to enable meaningful social and democratic interaction to occur” (1993: 409). This is the condition Nissen (2006: 65) describes as “the Scylla of populism and Charybdis of elitism” and calls on PSB to successfully navigate to remain relevant. I argue that between Cuilenberg and Saal and Blumler, it is possible to maintain the deliberative focus of a forum model and still stay entertaining to the point of being attractive to a sizeable audience.

My conclusion is that government no longer places the same premium on *Talking Point* as the foremost program on which to launch and defend its policies, as was the case in the past. This is due to the fact that, in my opinion, *Talking Point* has evolved to fit more into Blumler’s typology. Its format is rigid, its subject choices are often “safe” and non controversial, and it is seldom live. This format is in sharp contrasts to its *Newsfile*

counterpart on a commercial station, which is live, with more controversial subjects, and more interactive as it transmits across three platforms.

The range of voices that get represented on the programs also add to its perception as either tame or vigorous and critical of government. As journalists in Swedish Television (Ornebring, 2003) and Multimedia news program *Newsfile* have demonstrated, it is in the public interest when the mindset of the media worker shifts from a “more passive ideal focusing on objectivity and a certain deference towards authority, to a more active ideal focusing on criticism and being the representative of the ‘common man’ (Ornebring, 2003: 522).

Ultimately, it is not only “forum model” programming in all its versions of news and current affairs that guarantee this interactive and energized national debate and discourse formation. As Newcomb and Hirsch (1984) point out, entertainment television including soaps, dramas and sitcoms also serve as a “cultural forum” for social and moral issues to be discussed. This comes back to public service broadcasting’s capacity to provide a diversified range of programming, both internal and external; accessible to all; and not dependent on commercial imperatives. Since much of this could be achieved through editorial and operational independence from government and market, this vision of providing diversified programming stands the best chance of success if such a public service broadcaster is funded from some form of direct public funds to guarantee the realization of its public service vision.

Recommendations, going forward

As Syverstern (2003) shows, the momentous changes brought about by convergence, globalization and privatization provide a new set of challenges for policy makers and public broadcasters to confront. Across the spectrum of traditional and alternative, online media, new ways of addressing older themes are being fostered. The old way of reaching a mass audience from a single source is becoming increasingly inconvenient to an audience which does not only wish to choose programs at its convenience, but also to participate in content generation as well. If media institutions such as the BBC and the CBC are streaming live some of their traditional media content online, it is due to the recognition that it provides more opportunities for interaction than traditional media alone could offer.

In view of these issues, GBC should carefully reconsider the extent to which it can successfully extend its footprint through its digital terrestrial platforms, while maintaining a stronger, and more interactive online presence. Perhaps instead of extending itself into 5 digital terrestrial “ghettos”, GBC should avoid the risk of overspreading by merging some of the channels (such as GBC News24 and Governance, GBC Life and Sports Plus) and concentrate its efforts on strengthening its almost dormant online presence. A merged “Radio-vision” newsroom with a formidable online presence will extend GBC’s footprints, make it interactive and hopefully, engaging. As other media institutions have demonstrated, the additional benefits of streaming regular programs online goes beyond the interactive opportunities between program makers and their listeners/viewers. It also facilitates interactions amongst such viewers/listeners. In the opinion of Napoli (2010), it is at this point of maximum access that program reception

translates into active participation. As mobile telephony penetration in Africa increases exponentially, public service broadcasters, such as GBC, can tap into their interactive potential to improve their access, by addressing their domestic and diasporan audiences.

As Tomasselli (2009) showed in the case of *Big Brother Africa*, through interactive SMS by telephony, Africans all over the continent, with MNet subscription, contributed to a reality show through voting. Besides the interactivity, the possibilities of generating extra income through such texting could also provide some welcome relief to public service broadcasters who at the moment are reeling under huge financial pressures. As Curran et al. (2012), and Bivens (2014) among others have shown, online activity is attracting significant advertising revenue and public service broadcasters such as GBC should strengthen their presence online if they intend to benefit from such shifts. It is not only for economic reasons that such migration becomes useful. Within a deterritorialized world where citizens are found all over the globe, connections to “home” are often facilitated by information technology (Tettey, 2009, 2015). These online extensions also serve as a welcome departure from the “high-mindedness” criticism often leveled against traditional broadcasting and its patriarchal and didactic posture (Blumler, 1993; Scannell 1996).

In order to avoid the possibilities of creating viewing ghettos in the process (Wolton, 1993), GBC should seriously reconsider the creation of a converged newsroom as a means of minimizing wastage due to duplication of resources, as well as ensuring news concordance across its multiple platforms. The biggest challenge, besides a robust, responsive technology and well-trained personnel with multitasking capabilities, is a clear conceptual and operational framework for such a converged newsroom. This

framework has to be developed through a consultative process involving both management and staff who will ultimately operate it.

Because such a merger had operated before 1985, it becomes comparatively easier for it to be reinstituted even if it requires some fine-tuning as a result of technological, editorial or operational changes. The process should inform a final decision of whether to adopt a simple system of “cross-promotion” of news, a “coopetition” model in which “partners cooperate by sharing information on selected stories but still compete and produce original content,” or simply “clone” news through the unedited display of a partner’s content (Dailey et al., 2005: 153).

Considering the differences in culture and emphasis of the various media, as well as the need to integrate a vibrant online version into such a converged newsroom, my recommendation will be for the revised “radio-vision.com” (radio-vision-online) to begin from “coopetition” as initial point of contact, before transiting to a “content sharing” stage where “partners meet regularly to exchange ideas and jointly develop special projects such as election coverage or investigative work” (Dailey et al., 2005: 153).

GBC should build on the minimal levels of “cloning” that exist in the transmission of programs such as *Talking Point* and *What do you know*, and on “content sharing” that occurs during events such as the 2012 Ghanaian Presidential and Parliamentary elections. More frequent interactions should be encouraged and firmed up as a way of identifying potential trouble spots before transiting to “full convergence.” If these challenges are well managed, GBC would not only be avoiding the duplication of scarce economic and human resources, it would also be improving upon its access through an efficient newsgathering, processing and transmission system where partners

have “a shared assignment/editor's desk and the story is developed by team members who use the strengths of each medium to best tell the story (Dailey et al., 2005: 153).

This would give GBC a new boost in the performance of its public service remit especially if it also sets out to integrate the programming of its sister station, Metropolitan Television, into its national remit through greater involvement in the planning and scheduling of such programs. Perhaps, significant portion of GBC's challenges, in effectively carrying out its PS mandate, hinges more on effective management of available, albeit scarce, human, technological and economic resources rather than a need for more money. This is because aside “the wide perception of waste and corruption at GBC” (2013, personal communication), there is very little evidence that more money will translate into better programming in the face of its human resource and logistical challenges. In this instance, the following remarks Joe Mjwara, the South African Minister for Broadcasting, comes to mind:

It seemed that when the SABC spoke about public funding, it was just talking about an additional source of revenue to do the same commercialized broadcasting, [...] The SABC never, for example, showed how it would look and sound different with increased public funds (cited in Lloyd et al., 2010: 187).

This position has been echoed similarly in words such as “GBC's biggest setback is not funds. It is its deficient human resource” (2013, personal interview). GBC will be doing itself a great deal of good if in addition to calling for increase in television license fees, it is able to demonstrate ways in which such revenues will improve delivery of its public service remit. GBC's argument for more revenue could be weakened by huge overheads and over-bloated staff numbers only a third of whom provide core-broadcasting duties (GBC Annual reports). However, it has, more than any other institution in the country, demonstrated the capacity to provide crucial public service

content, even under very stressful financial conditions. These include the two Presidential debates GBC held for presidential candidates excluded from an IEA-funded and organized one in 2012; continuous coverage of Ghana's 2012 election petition at the Supreme Court; and coverage of sittings of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee. All of such coverage, which was undertaken at great cost, are a clear indication of what GBC can do once resources are channeled into programming.

It is commendable that GBC has responded to general public outcry about the quality of journalism in Ghana by launching its own "Draft Editorial Policies" (November, 2014) to "outline the corporation's standards and how to enforce it" (2)⁸⁰. I interpret this to mean a realization by management that nothing, including editorial decisions, should be left to chance. Hopefully, the operationalization of the policies will enable GBC to "pass both the tests of speed and accuracy" in content production and delivery (Monney, 2014, personal communication). Although accuracy is crucial, speed is vital in a competitive media landscape where a station's tagline such as "Be the first to know" becomes an assurance to its audience and an editorial lodestar to which media practitioners aspire.

Unlike its private counterpart, TV3, which promises to be "First in News, Best in Entertainment", GBC's promise to be "the authentic and trusted voice of Ghana" reflects this heavy emphasis on authenticity, accuracy, and credibility. GBC will be gaining significant mileage as a relevant, competitive public broadcaster if it did not achieve

⁸⁰ The Editorial Policies' objective is to "offer a frame of reference as well as, on occasions, a check list of considerations aimed at helping content makers to make difficult judgments for themselves and to explain their reasons for same" (2). Until the draft policy document was discussed with staff members at a general durbar on 9th April 2015, its editorial policies were not codified, but largely imbibed through institutional practices.

these tenets by compromising speed. Perhaps this is the best time to consider reverting to its 1995 tagline of being the “First on the Scene, Best on the Screen”, a tagline which a former Director of GTV argues, was “mischievously coined to create confusion and scuttle TV3’s strategy to gain instant recognition among viewers in Ghana” (Duodu, n.d: 2). Notwithstanding the fact that “First on the scene” pointed more to its longevity than speed, the fact still remains that “GTV’s programming philosophy” in the early to mid 1990s was “be first but first be right” (undated internal memo: 1). GBC should make more efforts to quicken the process of “being right” if it really wants to be the first on both the scene and screen.

Relevance of study and suggestions for future work

These conclusions and recommendations highlight a media organization very much in transition. Just like the political and economic contours of the society which engendered it, GBC as a media organization, is caught within the interstices of many conflicting interests, and suffers a crisis of how to define itself within a new media landscape. As a result of these uncertainties, there seem to be some confusion about its current status, and what role it is to play within Ghana’s emerging democracy. While opinions abound, about what should be done about the organization, including selling it off to private interests, they are very often guided by very little empirical research, if any. This study addresses this deficiency by demonstrating how legislation and policy have contributed to its performance as an important social formation.

The study also enriches the existing scholarly literature on politics of media in Ghana, which is either too narrow or overly broad. Ansah’s (1985) Golden Jubilee

Lectures, for instance, only chronicled the origins of GBC and its role in Ghana's developmental efforts, while Tettey's (2006) narrowly focuses on the politics and the politicization of radio phone in programs. Hasty's (2005) evaluation of newsroom culture within state-owned newspapers largely, explores the context of a very different medium, while Amin (2012) and Avle's (2010) work on the pervading influence of neoliberalization on commercial and private radio offer broad overviews.

The current study not only provides a focused, critical, and in-depth analysis of the largest broadcasting organization, and the single public service broadcaster, in the country, but also unearths unique insights into its internal politics as well as its relationship to external political and socio-economic forces. It also offers a novel perspective on how GBC is negotiating a new identity that seeks to balance the challenges of a new media ecology, premised on a neoliberal market framework, and the responsibilities of a public broadcaster, as enshrined in the country's Constitution. The relevance of these contributions extend beyond the specific context of GBC and have resonance in other political and geographical contexts.

Theoretically, this work engages with larger global concerns about the future and relevance of PSB within a liberal market and converged knowledge economy, and what such "flows" could mean for PSBs if they are to live up to their public interest vision of enabling citizens to partake in national discourse (McChesney, 1999; Mbaine, 2003). For instance, it addresses how the older broadcasting model of one-source-to-many is being challenged by a new model which provides personalized content to its consumers across multiple platforms. On the one hand, the preference of this new, narrowcasting model for niche programs undermines PSB's general interest programming and fragments its

audience (Napoli, 2010; Wolton, 1996), while on the other, it engenders better access by providing multiple access points for media consumers, audience, or citizens (Burell, 2012; Dahlberg, 2011; Dahlgren, 2005; Papacharissi, 2002; Sey, 2005; Tettey, 2001). The GBC example of extending itself onto other digital platforms and improving audience interaction through new media technology illustrates the broader question of how PSBs globally are reinventing themselves and engaging their audiences more closely. The CBC in Canada, BBC in Britain, ABC in Australia, NHK in Japan all demonstrate the imperative for PSB to adopt new means of interpreting their PS mandate within a liberal, multi-party democratic setting.

It is not only through technology that new broadcasting models provide better access to their audience. Like many other African PSBs such as in Uganda (Chibita, 2009; Mwesige, 2009), Zambia (Phiri, 1999), Kenya (Mak'Ochieng, 1996) and South Africa (Teer-Tomasseli, 2005), the GBC example shows that local language use is a crucial scaffold upon which PSBs' efforts to attain universal access, hangs. It demonstrates that beyond technology, linguistic competence in the local language further provides opportunities for citizen engagement thereby extending the scope of voices that contribute to national discourse formation. Towards this end, the exponential growth in the setting up of commercial, local language FM stations in Africa should be seen as yet another challenge to PSBs, as they seek to address their audience reach and program diversity issues, while still maintaining their public interest mandate. Theoretically, the point seems to be that expanding public communicative spaces through the use of local language is an effective means through which PSBs could improve upon universal access and their program diversity mandates.

Although local language use has often been cited as an opportunity for hitherto excluded voices to be heard in the formation of national discourse, the more substantive question of the quality of interaction between such interactants, and therefore, the quality of the public sphere pose a different set of concerns. The concerns are twofold: whether quality is necessarily engendered through more inclusion (Dahlgren, 1995; Tettey, 2001), and whether the discussions within such public communicative spaces impact the policy sphere (Bennett and Entman, 2001). Both concerns underpin the question of how effectively PSB can continue to act as a conveyor belt of democracy: formulating national discourse in an all-inclusive manner while still living up to its critical mandate of reflecting such public discourse to holders of power. These concerns are not only perennial, they also seem to suggest that with all its imperfections, PSB should strive, if it is to achieve its democratic role, to attain universal access even if the quality of discourse it generates is sometimes banal (Chibita, 2009, Kariithi, 2003; Tettey, 2006).

But more fundamental is whether what constitutes “public interest” ought to be seen as a burden to be borne by an institution or a responsibility to be carried by all media including private, commercial, and community (Nyamnjoh, 2003; Raboy, 1996). Towards this end, current debates about deinstitutionalizing PSB in such a manner that obliges private, commercial and community media to also generate public interest content extends the frontiers of PSB from its narrow meaning. Not only does such an interpretation oblige all tiers of broadcasting to mount public interest programming, it also provides PSB “institutions” with legal justification to mount commercial programs/channels in their bid to cross subsidize less profitable public service channels. This understanding opens up the debate and status of PSB as publicly funded, state-

owned and run “institution”, to a complex permutation that includes all media that generate public interest content irrespective of their ownership type. The question that remains to be asked, according to Raboy (1996), is whether commercial and private broadcasters will be legally mandated to generate public interest programs to complement the efforts of PSBs, or whether PSB institutions will be forced to cover unprofitable areas private, commercial media are unwilling to cover.

Irrespective of where the pendulum swings, the growing pattern where PSB institutions operate both commercial and public channels ought to be seen as an effort to navigate this dilemma, further complicating the traditional role and status of public service broadcasting. Again like its global counterparts, the Ghanaian example illustrates how public service is deinstitutionalized from a media institution (GBC) into a genre (programs), and underline GBC’s commercial channels as a response to global pressures to stay relevant within a new media ecology where public interest is defined to include what the public is willing to pay for.

Methodologically, this study bears similarities with others before it. Like many others, it highlights the complex processes a researcher is forced to navigate even within ethnographic spaces where (s)he has previous experience. As a former worker, my insider/outsider status in relation to accessing GBC production spaces and its institutional texts was delicate and required constant negotiations with institutional players. Under such circumstances, inability to access crucial texts (either as institutional processes, written texts or programs) present formidable setbacks to be surmounted.

In the Africa context where the Freedom of Information Act is either nonexistent or disrespected by officials, such losses necessitate that the researcher rely on other

methodological strategies. Audience surveys, for instance, have the potential to serve as a valuable tool for exploring the sustainability of current broadcasting models within the contexts of how their publics perceive their public service values. Whether their publics find them socially relevant is a crucial question which such audience surveys could shed light on in the absence of texts and access to production spaces.

Epistemologically, audience surveys speak to the larger issue of “social totality” and the value of experiential knowledge in the critical political economy research process. It also addresses the deficit charge often leveled against critical political economy for failing to address adequately the consumption end of the production continuum (Garnham, 1993, Mosco, 2009; Wasko et al., 2010). Ultimately, whether it is audience participation or citizen (dis)engagement, the central role of human agents and their quality of interaction in the democratic process is what is underlined in pursuing a “public service” role for broadcasting. It is this participation and citizen engagement which further reflect in calls for an inclusive and transparent communication policy process.

Empirically, this study further illustrates the challenges African media regulators especially face as they seek to insulate their respective public service broadcasters from political and economic capture. While current debates and protests in Ghana and other African countries about the future of PSB regulation signal increasing public interest in its activities, there are instances to suggest that constitutional gains to protect the independence of PSBs are in peril of being clawed back in subtle ways. Prominent among them are weak media regulatory bodies without real muscle to enforce their mandate, and the growing menace of the government resorting to legislation to regain its hold on media

operations. Calls on the public to protest against a tabled bill by the South African Minister for Broadcasting to revert board and executive appointments to the government is a clear example of such threats to media independence (Kupe and Skinner, 2015). Similar efforts by civil society and individuals in Ghana to rally public support against the passage of a bill allowing telephone conversations to be tapped without a court order is another example.

Increasingly, such debates and protests against legislation and policies do not only indicate a closer interaction between the public and media regulators, they also signal an emboldened public that is determined to play more active roles as subaltern counterpublics and citizens, ready to contribute and confront mainstream discourse if need be. More importantly, such interactions, especially around communication policy and legislation, stand the chance of being more beneficial if they are systematic, transparent and regular as the Canadian (Raboy, 2003) and Dutch models (McQuail, 2005) teach us.

The study hints at the question of “political parallelism” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) in journalism within an African newsroom setting and highlights its possible effects on media outputs and editorial processes. This conclusion resonates with similar studies in South Africa (Baker, 1996; Cottle and Rai, 2008; Sparks, 2009; Teer-Tomasselli, 2004), Kenya (Githaiga, 2011), Nigeria (Akingbulu, 2010), Mexico (Hughes, 2003) and Sweden (Ornebring, 2003) and leads one to the conclusion that more studies on the activities of advocacy journalists within public communication spaces ought to be conducted to better understand the subtle ways “political parallelism” is reinforced even within modern democracies. As the ANC’s shadow on the editorial and operational

activities of SABC lengthens (Teer-Tomasselli, 2004) and protesting crowds continue to perceive national/state broadcasters as mouthpieces of repressive governments and, therefore, legitimate sites for attack as we saw in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia (Cottle, 2011; Miladi, 2011; Reporters without borders, 2014), there is compelling rationale to focus more on the editorial processes of such “public” broadcasting institutions, both as a collective culture, and by individual agents with sociopolitical “capital” (Bourdieu, 1995).

This study’s relevance can also be seen in the issues that it raises but was unable to address, either because they were outside its immediate scope or due to logistical constraints of time and funding. They include areas such as similarities or differences between the editorial routines of private/commercial broadcasting and PSB, which remains largely unexplored. Such a comparative study could provide more nuanced understanding about how different media conceptualize and relate to their respective publics through their editorial logics and routines. Closely linked to this is how such commercial and private media lay claim to providing public interest content, and justifying their public service “status” with the argument that public interest includes what the public is willing to pay for in an unregulated marketplace of ideas. The likely impact of such redefinitions on their program outlook, markets and sources of funding ties in with how their editorial practices reflect such claims, and equally importantly, what such redefinitions could mean for the larger PSB ethos going forward.

The nexus of media ownership, news content, and the quality of democratic discourse remains an important area for critical analysis. In the case of Ghana, and Africa more generally, this relationship has significant implications for democracy as more

politicians become (cross)-media owners, and commercial media take hold. These developments provide us a perfect opportunity to test Herman and Chomsky's media "filters" and their application to different geographical and cultural sites in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa. Such an exercise will help to enrich the African literature on "Media power" and "mediatization" of politics (Couldry, 2010), which often tends to focus on cultural artifacts that media institutions generate rather than the larger political and economic forces that impinge on their formations.

I am hopeful that within its limited scope, this study will engender critical reflection not only on the role of GBC as a public service broadcaster but also as a social, political and economic institution that reflects the concerns and aspirations of its citizens as they struggle to find better ways of owning and engaging with it. The theoretical and conceptual issues it raises and addresses; the methodological issues that it engages; and the contributions that its findings make to the larger African and global literature, help to situate an African media institution within the complex, global PSB kaleidoscope, highlighting ways in which the Ghanaian case both reinforces and departs from its global counterparts.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Lists of interviewees

A former Minister of Information, conducted on 20th and 27th February 2014 in Ghana.

Amihere, K.B. Personal interview conducted on 4th December 2013, in Accra, Ghana

Ampaabeng, E. personal interview conducted on 27th January 2013 in Accra, Ghana.

Anaglate, D. Personal interview conducted on 16th October 2013, in Accra, Ghana.

Apaloo, Y. Personal interview conducted on 12th August 2012 and 15th January 2013 in Ghana.

Apau-Opong, B. personal interview conducted in GBC TV newsroom on 23rd January, 2013 Ghana.

Apenteng, B. Personal interview conducted on 8th October 2013, in Ghana.

Bucknor, K. personal interview conducted on 22nd January 2014 in Ghana.

Channel Manager GBC24. Personal interview conducted on 15th October 2013 and 3rd March, 2014 in Ghana.

Duodu, M. personal interview conducted on 16th February 2014 in Ghana.

Karikari, K. personal interview conducted on 5th December 2013 in Ghana.

Kumah Drah. Personal interview conducted on 23rd January 2013 in Ghana.

Kwatia, S. Personal interview conducted on 19th July 2012, in Ghana.

Lokko, E. Personal interview conducted on 16th October 2013 Ghana.

Moffat, A. Personal interview conducted on 3rd March 2014, Ghana.

Monney, A. Personal interview conducted on 19th February 2014 in Accra, Ghana.

Owusu-Addo, Y. Personal interview conducted on 25th January 2013 in Ghana.

Sarpong, G. Personal interview conducted on 8th February 2014 in Ghana.

Senior Manager, TV News. Personal interview conducted on 7th February 2014 in Ghana.

Retired Deputy Director of TV News. Personal interview conducted on 24th January 2014, in Ghana.

Tsikata, S. Personal interview conducted in August 2012 in Ghana.

Vogbe, E. Personal interview conducted on 6th February 2014 in Ghana.

Appendix B: Sample of interview questions for media regulators

Interview with the Executive Secretary of the National Media Commission,
(NMC) at Aburi, Ghana.

1. Within the larger media landscape and from a historical perspective, where will you place GBC on the spectrum of “state” to “public” broadcaster and why?
2. What laws have traditionally guided the conduct and operations of broadcasting in Ghana?
3. Could you provide a short historical account of the evolution of the NMC, highlighting its transition from press council to its present composition and some of the landmark moments that have associated this transition?
4. As a regulator would you say the 1992 Constitution provides sufficient laws for the conduct of broadcasting and the media generally in Ghana?
5. How does the absence of a broadcasting law militate against the performance of GBC and the regulatory and supervisory roles of the NMC?
6. From the point of view of a regulator, in what ways did the NPP vs. GBC case redefine the workings of GBC?
7. Besides the mandate to appoint its board, Director General and DDG among others, is the NMC involved in the formulation of policy to guide GBC in its operations?
8. How does the NMC in practical terms, ensure high journalistic standards and insulate the “state owned” broadcaster from governmental interference as outlined in the Constitution?

9. What would you say to those who argue that chasing after advertising revenue in the face of dwindling government funds will ultimately turn GBC away from its public service focus and dilute its mandate?
10. What is the NMC's position on GBC's extension into commercial broadcasting on a digital terrestrial platform? What does this mean for its initial mandate both conceptually and operationally?
11. Could you comment, in terms of ownership, the relations between GBC and Metro TV on the one hand, and Multimedia on the other?
12. What's the nature of NMC's interaction with NCA and would you say it promotes maximum synergy and efficiency in the management and regulation of the media?
13. From the regulator's standpoint, do you see GBC as a relevant media institution in the next decade especially in its role to deepen democratic practice through fair coverage and access to divergent voices and opinions in the formation of national discourse?
14. Any anecdotes and personal recollections on the subject of GBC, media regulation and free expression?

Appendix C: Sample of interview questions for former GBC operational managers

Interview with former Head of TV News, Director of Radio, and Director General of GBC.

1. Where will you place GBC? State or Public broadcaster and why?
2. On broadcasting policy: What are its substantive strengths and weaknesses of Media and Broadcasting Legislation/policy in their bid to situate GBC as a PSB. Comment on how such legislation/policy evolved and the way forward
3. What are some of GBC's specific operations in relation to advertisers and sponsors?
4. What are some of the likely effects of this mode of funding on GBC's editorial independence? What in your opinion would constitute an ideal funding mode for PSB and GBC for that matter?
5. How would you describe GBC's relations with government and other state organizations? What is the nature of such external influences, if any, and how do they affect GBC's editorial independence?
6. Comment on GBC's attempts, if any, to reposition itself within an evolving multichannel, competitive media landscape- focusing on technology, administrative reengineering, and new institutional practices
7. Comment on GBC's relations with NMC as a regulatory body. Is the latter an efficient regulatory body in your view?
8. The way forward for GBC- in terms of its institutional remit and practice, Human resource development, and funding among others.
9. Any other related/follow up questions.

Appendix D: Sample of interview questions for GBC editorial managers

Interview with Head of GBC24, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation.

1. I see your designation has changed from Head of News to Channel Manager GBC24. Is it just a change in name or is it an effort to rebrand and therefore, a change in orientation and newsroom culture?
2. Give me a sense of how the newsroom was like during your days as a reporter- its editorial processes, equipment in use and your role as a reporter.
3. Could you describe the editorial processes from the morning meeting to the transmission of the late news? First as a show editor and now as a channel manager?
4. In view of your responses, how would you describe GBC? As a “State” or “Public” broadcaster and why?
5. Do you often interface with management about editorial decisions? Such as which stories to cover or not cover? What about the Flagstaff House and the Ministry of Information?
6. What policies guide your operations and where would they normally emanate from? Are you part of its formulation? How do they get operationalized into newsroom practices?
7. Was the news ever sponsored back in the days? What about now? Does it have any effect on the existing editorial protocols such as which stories, how to cover them and their durations among others?
8. What training protocols are in place in the newsroom? Would you say it prepares the reporters sufficiently for the task? What about mentoring?

9. In what way does technology and equipment either facilitate or stall your work?
That is to say, did editorial processes define type of equipment to be used or vice versa?
10. Have you ever have to deal with the Union? How would you describe the Union's role in the pursuit of GBC's bigger institutional mandate?
11. Do you find the NMC as a useful and efficient regulatory/supervisory body in guiding GBC to achieve its Constitutional mandate?
12. Given the opportunity, what three things would you want to see changed or implemented in GBC and in the newsroom more specifically?
13. Where do you see GBC in the next decade?
14. Any concluding anecdotes and personal memories that have shaped and affected your personal and professional trajectory?

Consent Form

Name of Researcher: Kwame Akuffo Anoff-Ntow (PhD candidate), University of Calgary [Phone number and e-mail address]

Supervisor: Professor Wisdom J. Tetey, Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies, University of British Columbia [Phone number and e-mail address]

Topic: Public Broadcasting and the Politics of Media in Ghana: a Case Study of Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, GBC.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research and Ethics Board has approved this research study.

This research study is in partial fulfillment of requirements leading to the award of a doctoral degree at the University of Calgary in Canada. Its purpose is to closely investigate the institutional practices of Ghana Broadcasting Corporation with the aim of finding out how it is interpreting its public service mandate. You have been selected as a participant in view of your (previous/current) role in the organization either as a journalist, an editorial or administrative manager, or an official related to GBC's operations.

You are expected, once you consent to be a participant to answer questions in a face-to-face setting with the researcher for a period of approximately two hours. You will be expected to answer 6 thematic questions, and their follow-ups should they be necessary. Such questions will focus on your previous or current professional experience with GBC. They will range from role in policy formulation and interpretation, supervisory and regulatory relations with GBC, views about GBC's public service remit and its operations, whether or not journalistic/editorial practices appropriately interpret such a remit, and related questions bordering on how GBC is repositioning itself, both in philosophy and practice, within a new democratic and multi media ecology.

You are free to decline to answer to any questions you do not want during this interview session. If a follow-up becomes necessary after an initial interview session is over, you will be informed by telephone or email and upon your consent, another interview session will be arranged and conducted at your earliest convenience. Your participation is absolutely voluntary and if you agree to participate, you are at liberty to withdraw at any time without any repercussions, including loss of confidentiality or anonymity.

Should you agree to participate, you will be required to provide a name/pseudonym, gender and professional designation. There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:"

I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: ____ No: ____

I grant permission to be videotaped: Yes: ____ No: ____

I grant permission to have my company's name used: Yes: ____ No: ____

I wish to remain anonymous: _____ Yes: ____ No: ____

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ____ No: ____

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

You may quote me and use my name: _____ Yes: ____ No: ____

There could be minimal physical, social or economic risks to your participation if you are still an active employee of GBC. However, since all interview data will be collected individually at participant's convenience with utmost confidentiality and anonymity, unless you are speaking in your official capacity as a representative of your institution, such risks are significantly minimized. By participating, you make your voice heard in addition to contributing positively to forging and deepening GBC's public service ethos.

No one except the researcher and his supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the answers from the audio taped interview. Only aggregated information will be used for any presentation or publication of results, except where I have your expressed consent to attribute particular information to you. The taped interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible to the researcher and his supervisor. The data will be stored for as long as it is considered necessary and could be used for relevant future research work. Should you choose to withdraw in the course of the research, information collected up to the point of withdrawal could be used if it is considered relevant.

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions and Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research/ or your participation, please contact:

Kwame Akuffo Anoff-Ntow, PhD candidate (Researcher)
Department of Communication and Culture, Faculty of Arts
[Phone number and e-mail address]

And

Professor Wisdom J. Tettey, PhD. Professor and Dean (Supervisor)
Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies, University of British Columbia
[Phone number and e-mail address]

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at [Phone number and e-mail address]