Background document

“Public Service Broadcasting and Language Development: A Summary Report on the Situation in Five Countries”

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Introduction

Public service broadcasting is a very important institution that serves different purposes in different societies (Padovani, 2010; Banerjee and Seneviratne, 2005; Heath, 1999; Shalabieh, 1995). In its ideal form, public service broadcasting caters for the diverse needs of audiences. Public service broadcasting is founded on the principle of universal access to information. In many emerging democratic countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, public service broadcasting is seen as essential for the development of a strong and participatory democracy. Specifically, Price and Raboy (2003, p. 182) emphasise that, “[i]n new democracies of Africa, Asia and central and Eastern Europe the public broadcasting model is [being] seriously examined as an alternative to its strictly commercial counterpart”.

The institutionalisation of public service media is critical not only because it promotes the development of local programs and talents but also because it enhances citizen access to information, democratisation of information, the development of a deliberative public sphere in which the citizens will engage freely in participatory communication to empower themselves. This summary report examines how public service broadcasting aids language development in five countries. The report shows that different countries have different policy frameworks for the promotion of minority or less developed languages through public service broadcasting. In some other countries, there are no clear policy frameworks. South Africa is an example of a country in which constitutional clauses and policy guidelines mandate the public service broadcaster to reflect and promote 11 official languages in its programming. In Canada, public service broadcasters are encouraged to broadcast in English and French but also in several Indigenous languages. And yet in other countries such as Jamaica and Lebanon, there is no specific policy requirement that compels the public service broadcasters to promote minority or less developed languages in their programming. The following report summarises the situation in five countries namely Canada, South Africa, Jamaica, India and Lebanon.
1. Summary in five countries

1.1. Canada

In Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is the leading public service broadcaster while the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is responsible for regulating broadcasting in the country. The Broadcasting Act of 1991 outlines in sections 3(1)(l) and (m) the CBC’s mandate as follows:

(1). the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains;
(m). the programming provided by the Corporation should:
   (i) be predominantly and distinctively Canadian;
   (ii) reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions;
   (iii) actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression;
   (iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities;
   (v) strive to be of equivalent quality in English and French;
   (vi) contribute to shared national consciousness and identity;
   (vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means as resources become available for the purpose; and
   (viii) reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada (cited in Boardman and Vining, 1996, p. 49).

The main elements of the 1991 Act are: the inclusion of a ‘cultural’ objective, the need to reflect the “particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities”, the requirement for “equivalent quality in English and French”, and the desire to mirror the “multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada” (Boardman and Vining, 1996, p. 49).

Apart from the CBC, other public service broadcasters operate in Canada. They include the Aboriginal Public Television Network (APTN), as well as educational broadcasters that are owned and operated by various provinces (e.g. TV Ontario, Radio Quebec, the British Columbia-based Open Learning Agency, and the ACCESS network in Alberta (Boardman and Vining, 1996, p. 49).

Regulation of broadcasting in Canada includes (but certainly is not limited to) rules governing Canadian content (e.g. the number of hours that broadcasters are required to devote to Canadian drama or children’s programs). Canadian content is therefore at the centre of the development of broadcasting policy in Canada (Acheson and Maule, 1990). Pike (1998) agrees that the initial goal of the framers of Canadian broadcasting policy was to make sure that a certain level of Canadian presence was guaranteed.

Structure of the CBC

The CBC operates eight domestic services, including English and French AM and FM radio stations, two English and French television networks (i.e. CBC Television in English and the Télévision de Radio-Canada which broadcasts in French), radio and television stations
serving local and regional centres, as well as the national satellite channel. The CBC maintains a service that operates native language programs in the Far North (Groves, 1990, p. 460; Mendel, 2000). The CBC also operates local and regional services of which 28 (16 English and 12 French) provide regional and local programs, contributes to the network's programming and assists in the local distribution of the network's signals (Hoskins and McFadyen, 1992, p. 276).

**Aboriginal broadcasting**

The Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN) was launched on 1 September 1999. The APTN prides itself as the first national Aboriginal television network in the world that broadcasts programs made by, for and about Aboriginal people (http://www.aptn.ca/corporate/about.php. Retrieved on 24 September 2010). The APTN broadcasts 56 per cent of its programs in English, 16 per cent in French and 28 per cent in at least 15 Aboriginal languages such as Inuktitut, Cree, Inuinaqtun, Ojibway, Inuvialuktun, Mohawk, Dene, Gwich'in, Miqma'aq, Slavey, Dogrib, Chipewyan, Tlingit and Mechif (http://www.aptn.ca/corporate/facts.php. Retrieved on 24 September 2010). This suggests that the APTN aims to reflect in its programming the diversity of languages in Canada. By broadcasting in Aboriginal languages, the APTN contributes to the development and sustenance of Indigenous languages and culture. Overall, the APTN broadcasts more than 80 per cent Canadian content, with 84 per cent of APTN programs produced in Canada.

**Broadcasting in Indigenous/minority languages**

In order to achieve the objective of cultural preservation and integrity, it is necessary to keep an eye on the number of hours of programs devoted to Aboriginal people and their culture. Alcock and O'Brien (1980) concluded in their study of radio and television broadcasting in the lesser used languages of the European community that the success of radio and television in achieving such a task would depend on the particular situation facing a minority culture, including the position of the minority language, the strength of its creative writing, the availability of school instructions on the language, as well as the number of teachers and availability of teaching resources (cited in Groves, 1990, p. 466). Alcock and O'Brien propose 40 hours of radio programming per week in the minority language and between 20 and 25 hours of television programming per week during peak hours as minimum requirements to promote and develop minority languages within the European community. In light of these recommendations, Groves (1990, p. 466) sees a problem in Canada because “secondary education in aboriginal languages is virtually nonexistent” in Canada. He suggests that even if the weekly average radio broadcasting time proposed by Alcock and O'Brien are met in Canada, it does not necessarily imply that Aboriginal culture would be improved and developed. Groves (1990, p. 466) says this is the case because “radio is only one minor element in the overall cultural enhancement process”. This means that development of minority languages in Canada would require more than fixed broadcasting time on radio and television. Other social, political, cultural and educational institutions and factors would have to be involved.

In Northern Canada, the CBC broadcasts 221 hours of radio programming every week. These are programs produced by the CBC Northern Service. Of this figure, 104 hours are broadcast in seven Aboriginal languages namely Inuktitut, Slavey, Dogrib, Chipewyan, Gwich'in, Inuvialuktun and Cree (Groves, 1990, p. 467). The number of hours of radio and
television programs broadcast in Aboriginal languages could be influenced by the level of federal funding provided to the CBC. For example, in the 1990-91 financial year, the CBC’s National Broadcasting Service received 98.4 per cent of federal funding whereas the Aboriginal broadcasting service received a mere 1.3 per cent of federal funding. This could be, as Groves (1990, p. 470) points out, due to the fact that a small amount of the CBC national broadcast is devoted to Aboriginal language programs.

1.2. South Africa

In South Africa, there is a deliberate policy framework designed to facilitate the use of public service broadcasting to improve and develop official languages. There are 11 official languages in South Africa. These are: Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Northern Sotho, English, Tswana, Southern Sotho, Tsonga, Swati, Venda and Ndebele (Finlayson and Madiba, 2002, p. 41). These 11 official languages are part of a total of between 24 and 30 languages that are spoken in South Africa. However, the 11 official languages “account for the home languages of a very large majority of the total population of around 45 million people” in South Africa (Finlayson and Madiba, 2002, p. 41). Section 6 of the Broadcasting Act stipulates that “(6) A range of programming in the Republic’s official languages must be extended to all South Africans as circumstances permit” (http://www.sabc.co.za/wps/portal/SABC/SABCBROADCASTINGACT).

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is the only public service broadcaster in South Africa. The SABC derives its mandate from the Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999. In South Africa, responsibility for monitoring compliance with broadcasting policies and regulations rests with the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). The SABC’s official television service began 34 years ago on 5 January 1976 with one channel that broadcast only in English and Afrikaans languages. Slabbert et al. (2007, p. 337) state that SABC television services were expanded in the 1980s with the introduction of TV2 (which provided services “in the Nguni languages”) and TV3 which broadcast “in the Sotho languages”. However, TV1 operated on a rather stringent policy that allocated 50 per cent broadcast time to English language services and 50 per cent broadcast time to Afrikaans language services.

The 1940s saw the launch of African language services and the introduction of radio services in local languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Southern Sotho. The corporation was further expanded in the 1960s when large-scale radio services broadcast in all African languages were introduced (Slabbert et al., 2007, p. 337). In 2007, there were three public and two commercial television channels operating in South Africa.

The SABC is obliged by its charter to develop specific policies that address issues relating to news and editorial, programming, local content, education, universal service and access, language and religion (http://www.sabc.co.za/wps/portal/SABC/SABCCHARTER). Some of the obligations which the SABC is required to uphold are set out in section 4(a-d) of the charter. However, more specifically in regard to language obligation, section 8c of the SABC charter states that:

(8) The Corporation must develop a Code of Practice that ensures that the services and the personnel comply with-
(c) the constitutional requirement of equitable treatment of all official languages;
Language development in programming

It is within this clause that the SABC is mandated to ensure “equitable treatment of all official languages”. Multilingualism is recognised in the South African constitution which identified nine African languages, as well as English and Afrikaans (listed above), as the 11 official languages recognised nationally. In fact, section 6 (4) of the South African constitution (Act 108 of 1996) states quite clearly that: “The national government and provincial government by legislative and other measures, must regulate and monitor their use of official languages. Without detracting from provisions from subsection (2), all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably” (cited in Finlayson and Madiba, 2002, p. 41).

Language development is highly recognised and addressed in the SABC charter and mandate. This is understandable in light of the legacy of discrimination suffered by speakers of other languages that were not recognised during the Apartheid era. During the period of apartheid, South Africans were divided according to their racial background and the language they spoke (Slabbert et al., 2007, p. 335). This was also the period during which English and Afrikaans became the two officially recognised languages of the country. Finlayson and Madiba (2002, p. 44) point out that during the apartheid era, “the indigenous languages were only important in so far as they served as tools for the division of the African people into a large number of conflicting and competing so-called ethnic groups”.

Challenges of broadcasting in official languages

The requirement for equitable representation of all official languages in post-apartheid South Africa presents the SABC with a major challenge of how to broadcast in 11 official languages in an equitable manner in its three television channels. How, for example, would news and current affairs, including entertainment and documentary programmes, be produced and presented in all 11 languages and in an impartial manner? This is not an easy challenge. Slabbert et al. (2007, p. 339) outline vividly the challenges that confront the SABC as it strives to produce and broadcast a variety of programmes in 11 official languages in an equitable manner. The first challenge is the constitutional obligation to cater for 11 official languages in an even-handed way. The second challenge deals with limited broadcast time available to fit in all programmes in all the 11 official languages. Additional constraints include: the divergences and parallels among the 11 languages (e.g. some language groups are bigger or smaller than others); some languages are “more marginalised than others (Xitsonga, Tshivenda, sSwati and isiNdebele) and the additional responsibility this places on institutions such as the SABC to address this marginalisation” (Slabbert et al., 2007, p. 339), not to forget the possibility of using television to promote South Africa’s diverse cultures and languages. It has been argued that the recognition of 11 official languages in South African broadcasting “further entrenches the responsibilities of broadcasters both in terms of advancing linguistic democracy and in terms of safeguarding the rights of those whose languages have been disregarded in the past” (Maingard, 1997, p. 262).

Strategies for language development

In terms of strategies for language development, research evidence shows that soap operas produced and presented in multiple languages can indeed enhance the development of
languages on television programmes. For example, Slabbert et al. (2007) studied three soap operas produced and presented in multiple languages and broadcast on SABC to demonstrate that the position of minority languages can indeed be enhanced through television programming. According to Slabbert et al. (2007, p. 354):

- in a multicultural and multilingual context, multilingual soap operas that mirror the realities of language use can be powerful and commercially successful vehicles for the promotion of diversity and multilingualism. However, the successful local multilingual soap operas would probably not have been produced without the South African Constitution’s position on languages and the resulting language mandates of the SABC.

It seems that in the case of South Africa, the success of minority language development is linked to two factors: specific constitutional clauses on language development and the strengthening of that requirement in the SABC mandate intended to boost minority language programming on the SABC. It is worth noting that South Africa is a multilingual and multi-ethnic country in which 11 languages are officially recognised in the country’s constitution. This is noted in section 6 (Act 108) which identified 11 nationally recognised languages. Thus, language issues dealt with in the SABC mandate have their origins in the South African constitution (Barnard, 2006; Teer-Tomaselli, 1995).

**Strategies adopted by the SABC to promote multilingualism**

There are various strategies adopted by the SABC to show its commitment to multilingualism in its programming, as stipulated in the constitution and in the SABC charter. Apart from broadcasting programmes in various languages on the same television channels, the SABC management has also developed new programmes that advance multilingualism. For example,

- often several presenters will anchor a single news programme or quiz show, each presenter speaking a different language (and thus representing and speaking to a different language constituency in South Africa); sometimes individual hosts will switch between two or three languages, often within the same sentence. Popular soap operas represent perhaps the apogee of this trend: different characters may speak different languages, individual characters may switch languages depending on whom they are addressing, or sometimes within sentences spoken to a single addressee, and dialogue is often subtitled into an additional language (Barnard, 2006, p. 49).

In this context, Slabbert et al. observe that "What the South African broadcasting scenario has amply illustrated is that a public broadcaster’s language mandate acts as a facilitating instrument to uncover the commercial viability of multilingualism" (2007, p. 355). Perhaps it is worth noting that the success of multilingualism on television was facilitated by the popular appeal of the particular soap operas. If the programmes were not popular and if they did not address issues that appeal to the mass audience, perhaps fewer viewers would be attracted to watch the soap operas. Nevertheless, the opportunities for language development on television cannot be limited to soap operas. There are other avenues through which marginalised languages can be supported in television programming. They include news and current affairs broadcast in local (indigenous) languages, religious services presented in local languages (in many African countries, religion serves as an
important avenue or pathway through which many people seek to improve their socioeconomic conditions or to heal their physical and mental health problems), as well as children’s programmes, sports and other entertainment programmes.

Nevertheless, mandating a public service broadcaster to provide for the language, educational and entertainment needs of ethnic minorities may not necessarily be cost-effective. There are certain economic drawbacks. As Teer-Tomaselli (1998, pp. 156-157) noted: “Catering for the information and entertainment needs of small pockets of distinct language speakers is costly, with a very low marginal rate of return on the numbers of viewers and listeners reached. This is particularly true of television, where original programming is very expensive.”

1.3. Jamaica

The situation in Jamaica is somewhat less sanguine. Relative to South Africa, public service broadcasting in Jamaica is still less developed. Many programs are still imported from the United States and the United Kingdom, although less so now than in the past. In Jamaica, the institutionalisation of public service broadcasting is deemed to be important not only because it will promote the development of local programs and talents but also because it will promote citizen access to information, democratisation of information, and the development of a deliberative public sphere in which the citizens will engage freely in participatory communication to empower themselves.

For many decades, the Caribbean region has been regarded as one of the consumption capitals of western media and entertainment fare. This is understandable because Jamaica was confronted after independence in 1962 with a weak economy and a fledgling broadcast media industry that depended so much on imported programmes. Thus, in fashioning its public service broadcasting policy, Jamaica is confronted with an ongoing battle to define its cultural identity. The impact of imported television programs on the culture and people of the Caribbean is at the heart of the campaign to establish public service broadcasting in Jamaica. For example, Jamaica recorded an average of 88 per cent imported television programmes, which supports the claim by Brown (1987, p. 21) that countries in the Caribbean were the “most penetrated region by foreign television content in the world”. It is in this context that public service broadcasting is seen as an important institution that will serve cultural, economic, social and political interests of Jamaica.

Radio and television in Jamaica

Radio was established in Jamaica in the 1930s and today is regarded as the oldest broadcasting medium in the country. According to Padovani (2010), “The growth of radio in Jamaica has been staggering (from 6 in 1997 to 22 stations in 2007); and radio broadcasting commands approximately two thirds of the national audience.” There is a close relationship between the development of radio in Jamaica and growing interest in public service broadcasting. Padovani (2010) argues that the establishment of the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation (JBC) offered “an important forum for local ska musicians thus contributing to the growing legitimacy of Jamaican music. The fact that Jamaicans were now able to listen to their own music, their own talk shows, and their own Jamaican accent on radio broadcasts, were important reasons for the startling initial success of public broadcasting”. Like radio, television was also beset with critical funding problems, which led to a reliance on government subsidies and advertising income. The Jamaican
Broadcasting Corporation Television (JBC TV) was established on 6 August 1963. The JBC TV also faced a key challenge: “to fill airtime with quality programming that would also attract the critical mass audience sought after by advertisers” (Padovani, 2010). Owing to a range of issues such as funding problems, ‘biased’ programming, too many imported programming, and political indecision and interference, the JBC TV folded in 1997. However, the end of the JBC TV was by no means the end of public broadcasting in Jamaica because nine years later, in March 2006, the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica (PBCJ) was launched.

**Language development**

In Jamaica, there is no language specific accountability required of the PSB to develop minority languages (Dunn, 2010, personal communication). In terms of internal policies and standards, including legal framework on statutory commitment by the Jamaican PSB in the context of including new languages, Dunn (2010) believes that this is reflected only in terms of the overarching commitment to indigenous content in programming. According to Dunn (2010), the question about how Jamaican PSB enables linguistic communities to be informed, educated and entertained shows there are no clear distinctions among linguistic communities in the country. Most people understand plain spoken English, even if they cannot speak it and most persons understand plain spoken Jamaican. However, some PSB initiatives to expose and recognise the Jamaican language on air or to discuss the topic, often contribute. The National Festival Movement provides the most potent on-going source of such content and the output often gets transmitted mostly by PSBs.

Dunn (2010) believes that public service broadcasting is a faltering and emerging broadcast sector in Jamaica, represented by the underfunded Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica (PBCJ) and also the Creative Production and Training Centre (CPTC) now mainly self-financing. The two may merge soon. CPTC has promoted visual media coverage of Jamaican language-based productions and elevated Louise Bennett, the late patron of Jamaican indigenous language expression, in all her creative endeavours. Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica (PBCJ), like CPTC, covers folk forms such as poetry and drama that involve use of the local language, in contrast to scant attention to this zone by commercial media, except through popular music lyrics and talk shows.

Specifically, Dunn (2010, personal communication) argues there are “Sporadic initiatives, mainly emanating from the University (of the West Indies), around recognition and respect for Jamaican, a widely used combination of English, West African linguistic retentions and Spanish”. Similarly, in terms of the use of any language not previously used in programming, Dunn (2010) notes that “There are instances, mainly talk shows, of use of Jamaican on broadcast media, but English predominates.”

**1.4. India**

With a multitude of languages, India presents an interesting scenario. The only policy initiative that mandates the public service broadcasters in India to promote less developed languages in their programming is expressed in the Prasar Bharati Act 1990, although the extent of the enforcement of that mandate remains unknown. India is the second most populous country in the world, with a diverse, multi-class, multi-religious and multi-lingual population. According to Census of India 2001, India had 22 officially recognised languages and several hundred dialects, though Hindi was spoken by about 41 per cent of the
population (Census of India, 2001a&b). Officially, English language is spoken and understood by about 2.2 per cent of the population (Census of India, 2001c).

In India, the public service broadcasters – Doordarshan (literally translated in English it means ‘vision from far’) and All India Radio (AIR) – though not in a monopolistic position anymore, continue to play an important role in the country’s media scenario. Doordarshan’s television network is a combination of terrestrial and satellite technology with coverage of more than 91 per cent of the area with its 30 channels, broadcasting information and entertainment programs in more than 24 languages, many of them produced and sponsored by private production organisations (India.gov.in 2010). AIR has a network of 232 broadcasting centres; it broadcasts in 24 languages and 146 dialects in home services. In external services, it covers 27 languages: 17 national and 10 foreign languages (Allindiaradio.org 2006).

One problem with Doordarshan’s programming has been identified as lack of audience homogeneity and the number of languages spoken in India. Until 1990, viewers had a limited choice. They could only watch local/language programs till 8.40pm, followed by ‘National Programs’ from New Delhi featuring news presentations in Hindi and English. Following deregulation of the broadcast industry, Doordarshan was allowed to enlarge its services by increasing the channels accessible to national and regional audiences in various languages. By 1997 the Broadcasting Corporation of India was established under the Prasar Bharati Act 1990.

**Broadcast mandate (Language development)**

The Prasar Bharati Act 1990, which administered India’s two public service broadcasters, outlined their role in relation to the development and promotion of diverse languages in the country. It stated specifically that the Prasar Bharati Board would be guided by the following goals:

- providing adequate coverage to the diverse cultures and languages of the various regions of the country by broadcasting appropriate programmes;
- serving the rural and weaker sections of the people and those residing in border regions, backward or remote areas;
- providing suitable programmes keeping in view the special needs of the minorities and tribal communities;
- promoting national integration by broadcasting in a manner that facilitates communication in the languages of India; and facilitating the distribution of regional broadcasting services in every State in the languages of that State (Prasar Bharati Act 1990).

**Diversity in broadcast languages**

All India Radio (AIR) produces on a daily basis more than 500 news bulletins in 82 languages and dialects for more than 52 hours from its head office in New Delhi and 44 Regional News Units. The news bulletins are broadcast on the Primary, FM and DTH channels (India.gov.in 2010). Similarly, Doordarshan network consists of 24 Regional News Units. It has a three-tier programme service – National, Regional and Local. The Regional Language Satellite Services and Regional State Networks broadcast a wide spectrum of programmes that cover development news, serials, documentaries, as well as news and
current affairs programs to the local population. DDIndia – the international channel – caters to the needs of Indians in the Diaspora all over the world, by broadcasting news in Hindi, English, Urdu, Sanskrit, Gujarati, Malayalam and Telugu, and the other programs in a number of other languages as well. In its latest effort, Doordarshan launched DD Urdu on August 2006, catering to the minority Muslim community in India.

There is no doubt that India needs a more specific policy framework that would mandate its public service broadcasters to pay greater attention to the promotion and development of less developed languages in their programming. Clear policy guidelines and perhaps constitutional obligations are required to utilise the resources of the public service broadcasters as effective tools to promote less developed languages in India.

1.5. Lebanon

The landscape of public service broadcasting in Lebanon is still unclear, owing to the multiethnic and multi-religious nature of the country, including conflicting political and religious interests and years of conflicts in the country. Lebanon is also a multi-lingual country. Arabic and French are the official languages although English is widely spoken. Lebanon gained independence in 1943. It has a population of about four million people.

Lebanon’s first television station -- La Compagnie Libanaise de Television -- was established in 1959. The second commercial television station -- Tele-Orient -- started broadcasting in 1962. The two stations were merged in 1977 to form Tele-Liban, a half private and half state-owned company. As a national broadcaster, Tele-Liban flourished by creating programs suitable for a pluralistic society.

The official or government-controlled channel was censored by authorities to preserve the country’s stability and national unity. As a result, many people in Lebanon relied on private broadcasters for their news and entertainment. The end of the war in Lebanon also resulted in the 1990 TAEF agreement which declared broadcast regulation to be a priority for Lebanon’s government.

On 19 October 1994, the Audio-Visual Law providing a regulatory framework for broadcasting in Lebanon was passed. “It legalized private broadcasting and revoked Tele-Liban’s monopoly on television in Lebanon but maintained that channels were the exclusive property of the state and could only be leased” to private operators (Kraidy, 1998, p. 393). The law mandated more local production, re-affirmed media freedom within the framework of the constitution and established the National Council of Audio-Visual Media (NCOAVM) to come up with a technical and regulatory framework for monitoring broadcasting in the country. However, the role of NCOAVM was purely advisory and it was the Minister of Information who served as the final authority on decisions about viability of a television station.

Although Lebanon has a higher number of private broadcast media, a number of these are exclusively or largely owned by government officials, their relatives and business partners. “Moreover, the dividing of the ‘media cake’ in Lebanon reflects power divisions along confessional lines in the country: each of the licensed broadcast media serves as the exclusive mouthpiece for one of the powerful factions to which the major shareholder belongs and is free to disseminate views particular to that faction” (Dabbous-Sensenig, 2000).
Impact of new technologies

With advances in technology and a demand for more open, more diverse and more entertaining programs, particularly from the younger generation, it is the private, international and pan-Arab broadcast media (some of them unlicensed) which are winning the popularity context. Through a cable and satellite subscription fee of typically $10 per month, Lebanese citizens can access up to 80 channels, including Arab satellite channels, some Indian networks, and the major U.S. and European channels. “But, there seems to be one advantage derived from this mixed state-commercial system: rather than viewing commercial services as ‘evil’ rivals with ‘subversive’ agendas, state broadcasters seem to see commercial radio and television as furnishing a new catalyst for enhancing their program offerings to an increasingly critical media audiences” (Ayish, 2010, p. 20). However, Ayish (2010) states that it is the state broadcasters in Arab countries, who in this age of globalization, are continuing with their commitment to the long-held tradition of indigenous cultural development and community learning.

The need for a public service model of broadcasting

Ayish makes a case for the state owned media in Arab countries, including Lebanon, to be evolved into a public service broadcasting model for the benefit of its citizens. In the case of the Middle East, in 2003, a UNESCO workshop on Public Service Broadcasting and Democracy in the Arab States noted that public service broadcasting is an important element of society in assisting citizens to participate in the general public sphere in a country (UNESCO, 2003).

However, among Arab States, the state/government broadcasting has some ways to go before it can be seen as public service broadcasting as defined by Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) in 1986. According to BRU, a typical PSB concept is part and parcel of an ideal of socio-economic empowerment and intellectual enlightenment (Tracey, 1998).

In 2006, a study published by the Cairo Centre for Human Rights on broadcast reforms on the Arab World noted that the public service broadcasting model is the most appropriate for Arab radio and television systems (Ayish, 2010). Although, Lebanon was the first to recognise the significance of radio and television broadcasting in a country, “Lebanese government-operated television and radio networks have struggled to serve as voices of national cohesion in the aftermath of Rafiqi Al Hariri’s assassination, and during the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon and the 2009 parliamentary elections” (Ayish, 2010, p. 15).

2. Key recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from evidence found in the five case studies of public service broadcasting and language development in Canada, South Africa, Jamaica, India and Lebanon. The recommendations cover issues relating to PSB presence, policy framework, legal/constitutional mandates, resource requirements (including funding, equipment, staffing and training), programming, online presence, and public service broadcasting on the web.
1). PSB presence

1.1 An effective public service broadcaster (radio and television) that caters for the diverse needs of the citizens should be set up in a country in which such a service is non-existent. Public service broadcasters fulfil certain obligations to citizens such as provision of universal access, cultural preservation, promotion of national unity, democratisation of information and civic deliberation by citizens. Public service broadcasters will offer a level playing field that provides everyone -- the rich and the poor, majorities and minorities, women and men, the elderly and the young -- equal access to broadcasting services.

1.2 To oversee the activities of the public service broadcaster, it is important for each country to establish an official regulator of all forms of broadcasting. The main responsibility of this regulator is to ensure that broadcasting organisations meet certain mandates, such as an obligation to broadcast in lesser-used languages for a specified number of hours per week during peak hours. Such broadcasts should not be limited to language programs but must also be reflected in news and current affairs programming, documentaries, educational broadcasts (especially educational programs targeted at pre-school age children, as well as primary and secondary school children). Other programs in which lesser-used languages should be used include sports, entertainment, drama, etc.

1.3 One of the conditions for the issuance of broadcast licences is that licence holders should be required to broadcast in lesser-used languages for a specified number of hours per week during peak and off-peak hours.

2). Policy framework

2.1 The establishment of a public service broadcaster should be backed up by clear policy guidelines that mandate the broadcaster to fulfil a number of obligations, including the promotion and development of lesser-used languages through a range of programmes. South Africa and Canada present good case studies of countries where public service broadcasters are mandated through policy to engage in the promotion and development of officially recognised languages as well as other lesser-used languages. It is not enough to outline policy goals relating to public service broadcasting and language development. Clear, specific and achievable goals must be set, including how the goals should be measured and assessed.

2.2 National language policy: In multiethnic and multilingual countries such as India, South Africa and Jamaica, a national language policy will be required to outline the official languages of communication in the public and private domains. Such a policy should recognise rather than endanger the lesser-used languages. It should also outline official channels (such as public service broadcasters) through which the lesser-used languages should be promoted and developed. The development, preservation and maintenance of lesser-used languages should be one of the key objectives of a national language policy.

2.3 Public service broadcasting policy should be committed to raising the profile, status and knowledge of lesser-used languages and their speakers. This should
increase public recognition and acceptance of the languages and their speakers as relevant elements of the society, and the learning of those languages as a valuable requirement for all members of society.

3). Study of existing language revitalisation initiatives

3.1 To advance policy on public service broadcasting and language development, it is important to analyse or study existing language revitalisation initiatives that mandate public service broadcasters to promote and sustain lesser-used languages. One aim of the study could be to determine the effectiveness of existing initiatives, to identify alternative pathways to achieving similar goals if the existing frameworks are insufficient or have failed, and to propose new measures that reflect the realities and challenges of broadcasting in the age of new technologies. It is important to undertake the study prior to the establishment of public service broadcasting institutions, as the outcomes of the study could form part of the mandates of the newly established public service broadcasters. The institution that is best placed to conduct such a study will be higher education institutions (e.g. universities or polytechnics) which offer courses or programmes in broadcast journalism or public service broadcasting.

4). Legal and constitutional framework

4.1 For language policy initiatives to be effective, as in the case of South Africa, it may be necessary to consider whether there needs to be some kind of legal framework or constitutional clause that identifies officially recognised languages, as well as the lesser-used languages. The key question to be considered here is whether a legal framework is required to specify how the lesser-used languages should be supported and maintained through various public channels such as public service broadcasting. In essence, policy frameworks for public service broadcasting might be more effective if they have legal backing or, in some countries' situations, constitutional backing and mandate. South Africa serves as an example of a country in which the public service broadcaster (SABC) is mandated in the constitution to promote 11 officially recognised languages.

5). Programming

5.1 To promote lesser-used languages through public service broadcasting, it is necessary to specify the number of hours of programmes that should be broadcast in the lesser-used languages. Perhaps 40 hours of radio programming per week and somewhere between 20 and 25 hours of television programming per week during peak hours should be recommended as minimum requirements to promote and develop lesser-used languages, as is the case within the European Community. It is also important to define what is meant by “local content” and to specify local content requirements (in percentage terms) for television and radio programmes.

5.2 The number of programs broadcast in lesser-used languages should be increased. To implement this policy, the number of lesser-used language speakers employed by public service broadcasters should also be increased partly as a strategy to increase the number of programmes produced in lesser-used languages.
and partly to increase the number of professional broadcasters who are proficient
speakers and writers of lesser-used languages.

5.3 Public service broadcasters must be mandated by the constitution and national
legislation to ensure that every member of society has unimpeded access to
programmes designed to promote lesser-used languages. For example, public
service broadcasters could be mandated to produce and deliver high quality
language programmes during prime time that inform, educate, entertain and
advance knowledge of the nation’s cultures.

5.4 In each country, there must be a clear policy on public service broadcasting
which compels the broadcasters (radio and television) to engage in educational
programming in lesser-used languages. For example, research shows there is a link
between language programming on television directed at children and the
development of language skills in children. This is because television has the
potential to engage young viewers with its contents when it provides messages that
are directed at and which appeal to younger viewers (Selnow and Bettinghaus,
1982, p. 471). Additionally, “television is always there, and is always available to a
child at the touch of a button when parents may be preoccupied” (Selnow and
Bettinghaus, 1982, p. 471). Therefore, programmes that are aimed at children and
young people should be accorded priority in light of the importance of radio and
television to promotion of languages. Children have greater capacity to learn new
languages compared to their elderly parents.

5.5 Public service broadcasters should be mandated to use lesser-used languages in
the production and broadcasting of a variety of programmes such as entertainment
programmes (drama, soap operas, quiz shows, etc.), sports, as well as in news and
current affairs and children’s programmes. Research in South Africa, for example,
shows that soap operas were successfully used as a vehicle for the promotion of the
11 official languages of the country.

5.6 Educational and language broadcasts directed at students and teachers should
be used as a key resource for advancement of teaching and learning in primary and
secondary schools. Public service broadcasters should use radio and television as
major instruments for the advancement of teaching and learning in lesser-used
languages, and as interactive tools that facilitate cross-fertilisation of ideas between
speakers of lesser-used languages, teachers and students.

5.7 Language is an important channel of cultural expression and preservation of
social values, including personal and national identities. It is important to
harmonise and standardise lesser-used languages in written form in order to
develop a common orthography for those languages at national and international
levels. This should form the first phase of the development of lesser-used languages.
Civic deliberation through public service broadcasting can be achieved and
enhanced through the harmonisation of lesser-used languages.

6). Resource requirements: Funding, equipment and staffing

6.1 Resources must be provided to facilitate language broadcasts on radio and
television. Language programmes require enormous resources such as financial,
human and material resources (e.g. equipment). For example, funding is crucial to the development of lesser-used languages in public service broadcasting. In terms of determining the best funding mechanism to apply, it may be worthwhile to look at existing funding models. In Canada, for example, the three main sources of revenue for the CBC are: parliamentary appropriations (approximately Cdn$854 million per annum); advertising and sales (approximately Cdn$364.9 million); and miscellaneous sources. The increase in advertising revenue is seen as CBC’s response to consistent reductions in parliamentary allocations. Nevertheless, the focus on advertising revenue means the CBC programs are perceived by the public as being dictated by market forces rather than the needs of the public. In South Africa, the SABC’s main sources of revenue are licence fees (18 per cent), advertising (78 per cent) and sponsorship and sales (4 per cent). This implies, as Teer-Tomaselli pointed out, that the SABC, as a public broadcaster, “operates in a commercial environment, under commercial constraints” (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998, p. 149). This is reflected in the corporation’s funding mechanism in which the SABC mandate spells out how the public broadcaster should be funded. The section states:

(b) to provide sound and television broadcasting services, whether by analogue or digital means, and to provide sound and television programmes of information, education and entertainment funded by advertisements, subscription, sponsorship, licence fees or any other means of finance (http://www.sabc.co.za/wps/portal/SABC/SABCMANDATE).

6.2 What is evident in the two models of funding presented here is the increasing reliance on advertising revenue as a major source of funding for public service broadcasting. What should be considered in regard to this funding mechanism is the impact of advertising revenue on the ability of the public service broadcaster to serve the public interest rather than the interest of advertisers. Another point to be kept in mind is that huge variations in Canadian federal funding have had adverse impact on the number of hours of Indigenous language programmes broadcast by the Aboriginal People’s Television Network (APTN). Thus, the number of hours of radio and television programmes broadcast in Aboriginal languages was influenced by the level of federal funding provided to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). For example, in the 1990-91 financial year, the CBC’s National Broadcasting Service received 98.4 per cent of federal funding whereas the Aboriginal broadcasting service received a mere 1.3 per cent of federal funding.

Examples of other funding models across the developed world include:

- Full funding, commercial-free (much of Europe);
- In the United Kingdom, a licensing fee on TV sets helps to fund TV, radio and online broadcasting;
- In the United States, funding is provided through mostly public donations but also through foundations and corporations, and individual donations (Barmak, 2009).
6.3 **Equipment**: In line with funding mechanisms, it is important to establish a fund for the purchase of broadcasting equipment, including the upgrading of existing equipment and the replacement of dated equipment that are no longer required.

6.4 **University-based courses on PSB**: La Trobe University in Victoria, Australia, offers a postgraduate course on public service broadcasting. It is entitled: “Public Service Broadcasting in a Global Context”. It is a part of the Master of Global Communications by Coursework program. It would be important to include language teaching and learning as part of the curriculum of that course so that students from diverse backgrounds who enrol in the course are given the opportunity to learn how public service broadcasting could be used to promote lesser-used languages in different cultural contexts.

7). **Staff development and training**

7.1 Public service broadcasters should reserve specific roles for speakers of lesser-used languages such as producer, director, writer/researcher, presenters, translators/interpreters, etc. Lesser-used languages cannot be promoted if public service broadcasters do not employ appropriate and sufficient staff to implement the policy frameworks relating to advancement of the lesser-used languages.

7.2 Training opportunities must be provided to staff to enable language broadcasters to undergo regular training, to update their skills and to keep in touch with developments in the vocabulary and orthography of lesser-used languages, including updating of new terms, concepts, spellings and expressions in those lesser-used languages.

7.3 Media and information literacy constitute important instruments that will enable citizens to develop the language skills essential for understanding media messages. Professional language broadcasters must be familiar with modern technologies that are essential for the advancement of educational and language-specific broadcasting.

8). **Online presence**

8.1 Public access to lesser-used languages should not be restricted to programmes offered by public service radio and television. In the new electronic environment, multiple platforms for delivery of media content online and in the mainstream media must be provided. Mobile television and integrated television broadcasts and mobile phones constitute such options (Middleton, 2010, p. 165). For example, Internet-based television broadcasting will expand opportunities available to audiences to access television programmes and to learn the lesser-used languages. On-demand viewing of television programs broadcast via the Internet will eliminate problems associated with access (Middleton, 2010, p. 166). While this might be the case, it should not be forgotten that a large number of people in developing countries, as well as people in remote, isolated communities of developed countries still lack access to the Internet. So, Internet access should not be regarded as a given. Nevertheless, it must be said that new technologies have opened up multiple platforms and sources for audiences to access lesser-used language programs...
broadcast on television and radio. These platforms must be harnessed by the larger population as avenues for teaching and learning of lesser-used languages.

8.2 In countries where lesser-used languages have not had significant online presence, it might be worthwhile to explore and engage social networking sites and other communication channels that attract young people and adults for promotion and teaching of lesser-used languages. Examples of social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.

8.3 There are certain benefits to be derived from online promotion of lesser-used languages, such as networking of speakers of lesser-used languages to facilitate the use, adoption and promotion of their languages. The Internet will allow speakers of lesser-used languages to popularise their languages among non-speakers of the languages. More significantly, the web can be used to store huge files of language resources and to preserve those languages that are threatened. Thus, one area where digital technology could prove to be of major benefit to speakers of lesser-used languages is the preservation of their languages.

8.4 Lesser-used languages should be promoted and developed through Internet-based audio, videos and other multi-media resources in order to widen access to the languages as well as the resources for learning those languages.

8.5 As part of efforts to publicise and promote lesser-used languages, it is important to introduce the key alphabets of lesser-used languages in computer keyboards. Part of the reason why lesser-used languages remain marginalised and isolated even within the countries where they are spoken by a minority of people is that the alphabets of the languages have not found their way into the computer keyboards. This has affected efforts to harmonise lesser-used languages through the development of a common orthography.

9). Public service broadcasting on the web

9.1 The Internet has increasingly become an established outlet for distribution of broadcasting services. The convergence of the Internet and broadcasting services therefore strengthens the case for the use of the Internet for public service broadcasting. The Internet could be used to deliver various television services on the web. In terms of language development, the Internet could be used to meet the needs of speakers of lesser-used languages particularly those not served by existing public service broadcasters. This could be done through the development of new Internet-based programmes specifically targeted at speakers of lesser-used languages.

9.2 Apart from the convergent use of the Internet to advance public service broadcasting, it is important to set up web sites for the promotion and development of lesser-used languages. One advantage of using the Internet to promote lesser-used languages is that the speakers of the languages will not feel shy or ashamed of communicating in their local languages on the web. The sites should also enable the language speakers to tell their stories in their own languages. E.g. blogging could be undertaken in lesser-used languages.
10. Problems of accessing the Internet

10.1 One of the impediments to widespread use of new technologies (e.g., the Internet) is the question of access. In many parts of the developing world, minority and disadvantaged groups do not have access to new technologies. Thus, they are denied knowledge of resources that exist on the web. Indeed, cost has been identified as a major factor inhibiting many people from accessing and using new technologies such as the Internet. Many people in Africa, for example, particularly those who reside in the rural areas, lack access to new technologies because of general economic deprivations and infrastructural problems. One of the issues to be considered in terms of popularising the web for teaching and learning of lesser-used languages is how to subsidise the cost of accessing the web for less privileged members of different countries.

10.2 Nevertheless, rather than pose a threat to the sustenance and survival of lesser-used languages, the Internet in fact will enable speakers of lesser-used languages to achieve complete control over representations of themselves, as well as the language they choose to communicate in the public domain. The Internet should be seen as a site where significant and meaningful cross-cultural communication and language learning can take place. It is also a place for dissemination of information controlled by minority groups to the wider public.

3. Concluding remarks

The use of public service broadcasting for the development and promotion of lesser-used languages constitutes an important subject that deserves the priority attention of every multiethnic and multilingual country. As this case study of five countries has shown, there are countries such as South Africa and Canada where public service broadcasters are obligated through clear policy mandates and through constitutional clauses to promote the lesser-used languages as well as the officially recognised languages. However, there are other countries such as Jamaica, India and Lebanon where there are no clearly identifiable policy guidelines that mandate the public service broadcasters to promote the lesser-used languages in the countries. The key recommendations outlined here show that there are various avenues and opportunities available to public service broadcasters to promote and develop lesser-used languages.

References


