



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

THE PRACTICE OF CONTENT BEAT REPORTING IN EBC:

The Case of Amharic Television News Department

BY

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by MekdesMelaku , entitled: The Practice of Content Beat Reporting in EBC: The Case of Amharic Television News Department and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in journalism and communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

EBC	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
E.C	Ethiopian Calendar
ERTA	Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency
ETV	Ethiopian Television
FDRE	The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FG/FGD	Focus Group/Focus Group Discussion
FM	Frequency Medium
GA/GAR	General Assignment/General Assignment Reporter
IDI	Individual In depth Interview
TV	Television
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WJS	World Journalists Society
PR1	Participant Reporter 1
PR2	Participant Reporter 2
PR3	Participant Reporter 3
PR4	Participant Reporter 4
PE1	Participant Editor 1
PCE1	Participant Chief Editor 1

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to evaluate the practice of beat reporting in EBC/ETV Amharic news service. For the study, descriptive type of research design was used. Data was collected using in depth interview, focused group discussion and document analysis; and the collected data was analyzed qualitatively. Based on the analysis, the findings of the study showed that practicing specialized/beat reporting has good ground in documents but not found practically, the news rooms operate based on similarly organized themes where reports chose their areas of interest. From the findings it can be concluded that noactual beat reporting was found practically except in documents. Based on the conclusions of the study it was forwarded that the EBC reporters, higher officials, the government and other media owners should work on specialized/beat reporting in order to satisfy the needs of their audiences.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Media has a role in presenting various social, political and economic activities happening around the world. It is like a mirror, which shows or strives to show the bare truth and harsh realities of life. The media has undoubtedly evolved and become more active over the years. It is the media only who reminds politicians about their unfulfilled promises at the time of elections. The media exposes loopholes in the democratic system, which ultimately helps government in filling the vacuums of loopholes and making a system more accountable, responsive and citizen-friendly (Happer and Philo, 2013).

According to Plattner (2012) media will be powerfully influenced by economic developments and advances in technology. The term “the press” has been replaced by “the media”. This reflects the transformative emergence of radio and television broadcasting and the internet as well, as leading channels for conveying news and opinions.

Plattner puts the impact of introduction of radio and TV technologies and its ownership as follows:

The rise of radio and television, however also brought a new justification for governments to play an active role in overseeing the media. The limited nature of the broadcast spectrum meant that entry to this field had to be restricted. In many countries, broadcasting was established as a state monopoly. (ibid)

Since the introduction of modern media with the first newspaper AEMERO, Ethiopia has been introduced with modern communication technologies such as TV, radio, telephone, postal service, computer and the internet in different times. From these TV and radio are the most popular ones. At the beginning the sole ownership was in the hands of the state. In the long years of its history it used to serve only the interest of the party at the power.

EBC (formerly called ETV or ERTA) has been the only broadcast media for the long time.

Since its introduction it was owned by the government and serves only the interest of the ruling regimes. After introduction of FM radios and private TV stations things seem to be a little bit different from what was the culture of the media known for years.

The influence of emerging of these new platforms in Ethiopian media influenced the ordinary function of the existing way of treating news stories. The influence can be seen in agenda setting and framing of stories.

The FM radios and private TV stations introduced new trends like treating business, entertainment and technology stories as a news. This helps media program producers see other way of treating stories. In previous times business stories were included in regular news programs and entertainment news were also treated on weekend entertainment programs. The same is true with technology, science and other stories that need special treatment.

In broadcasting media, including stories of different disciplines will serve audiences as multiple information sources and build the reputation of the media organization. The stories could be politics, sport, business, crime and war, environmental, technology etc. This is common in foreign and international Media.

There might be different reasons for not treating stories in the way they have to be treated. Having reporters in different areas that can understand the issues and report it in the way that anyone can understand might be the solution.

The professionals in news reporting must understand the nature of each stories and how they can be treated. This needs the knowledge of journalism and its unique characters. In most cases, the practitioners do not necessarily need to have a degree or diploma of journalism to work as a journalist in the country's situation. This might also affect the treatment of the stories since it needs knowledge in how to deal with it.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the practice of specialized or beat reporting in Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) television.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The impact of media is really noteworthy. Media should take utmost care in airing or publishing sensational news. From being just an informer it has become an integral part of our daily lives. With the passage of time it has become a more matured. Beat reporting is among the maturity of the media.

In Ethiopian broadcasting media there are specialized/beat reporting. In EBC beat reporting were included in regular news hours in most cases. Of course there are some reporting like sport and business which have been given relatively better coverage. However this is not a problem in print media relatively (Semere 2010).

Using the air wave which is a common resource of the general public to broadcast their productions, media houses need to consider the heterogeneity of their audiences. They must work to serve the interests of their audiences as much as possible. In this regard, Theodoros (2020) in his research conducted on Business reporting at The Ethiopian Reporter and The Addis Fortune newspapers explained that “professional socialization and training of business journalists remains an underdeveloped area of research in Africa”.

Beat reporting or specialization reporting is a recent invention of the end of the 19th century in the United States with the aim to increase the efficiency of journalistic work. It marks the beginning of modern journalism (Magin and Maurer, 2019).

This goes with the main purpose of the media which is providing information for the public that will inform, educate or entertain them in different areas. But what is practically being done is not as expected (Theodoros, 2020). The information transmitted should also center what people to know about but not to the will of the politics or the government.

There are different types of beat reporting which are investigative, court, accident, politics, fashion, business, sports and other specialized reporting. Beat reporting involves discovering, selecting and presenting the important facts and weaving a comprehensive story, involves hard work, which in turn involves stamina and patience. A reporter must appreciate the importance of having a good reputation for absolute reliability and have the ability of news reporting and writing skills in the language of his story (Farooq 2015).

To this end this paper aimed at answering the following research questions.

1.3 Research Questions

- How do EBC/ETV journalists and news room editors understand specialized/ beat reporting?
- What are the challenges in specialized/beat reporting?
- Is EBC/ETV serving as the source for variety of information and exercising the right for information of its audience?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study has the following general and specific objectives:

1.4.1 General Objective

To evaluate the practice of specialized/beat reporting in Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation Television.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify the understanding of specialized/beat reporting in EBC/ETV journalists and news room editors.
- To identify the challenges in specialized/beat reporting.
- To see whether EBC/ETV is serving for variety of information and exercising the right for information of its audience.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The outcome of the study is significant for EBC/ETV for better understanding and mitigating challenges of beat reporting. It is also significant for other media owners, managers, practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders who wish to work in the area. Further, this study may be used as a spring board to those who are interested to carry out further research.

1.6 Scope of the study

This research, due to constraints of time, energy and money, was delimited to Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation Television and beat reporting.

1.7 Limitation of the study

Some of the limitations of this study were

- **Availability and willingness of respondents:** the nature of the profession demands the professionals to be alert to move any time. Therefore organizing appropriate time to get the selected professionals might be one of the problems. To overcome this to arrange meeting times after regular working hours. Number of participants in the FGDs is also minimized to 4 in each group.
- **Availability of related literature materials and researches made on the topic.** To get literatures that have direct relation to the topic was also the problem. But to solve this researcher has used research paper which has some relation with topic and share common ideas were used.
- **EBC's new system:** The newly introduced restructuring system of EBC

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

2.1 What is News?

The word 'News' is driven from the Latin term 'Nova' meaning 'New Things' (Niblock cited in Semere 2010). The assumption that the term 'News' as refers to certain media material, is generally understood and agreed. From this it will be easier to understand that news is a commodity for the media and need to be fresh.

A good news story is about something the audience decides is interesting and important. A great story often does both by using storytelling to make important news interesting. In such process a reporter uses verification and storytelling to make the subject news worthy (Robbennolt and Studebaker, 2003). This tells any news can has special feature is news worthy and values to be kept.

2.2 Criteria of news

There are various criteria by which news is judged. In this aspect McGregor (2002) proposed four new intertwined features for the news values: visualness, value emotion, conflict, and the "celebrification" of the journalist.

Being visualness television news is to mean that it should be kinetic overdrive, experience a variety of elements of visualness such as fast-pacing, heightened graphic, imagery including computer graphics, rapid, cutting, re-cut film or file footage (ibid).

Value emotion is to refer that it should excite the emotions, which are more effectively aroused by things seen than by things heard". Conflict value is to mean that the dynamics of televised political news in particular is driven by a conflict format like in a studio debate. It drives the selection and presentation of political news and news of controversial issues political story not to be too complex to be news; and the "celebrification" of the journalist refers to is the mythical reporter who conducts an impartial inquiry by asking questions of all sides on behalf of the public (ibid).

These elements make up what we call the "news value" of information. The stronger the elements are, the higher the news value. There are also other criteria.

Is it Unusual?

Things are happening all the time, but not all of them are news, even when they are new. Ordinary and everyday things do not make news. The classic definition of news is this: "Dog bites man" is not news; "Man bites dog" is news. What is usual in one society may be unusual in another. Again, we will expect the content of the news to vary from society to society. In every society, though, whatever is unusual is likely to be news.

Is it Interesting?

Events which are new and unusual may still not be of general interest. It depends on the nature of the story and the audience.

Is it Significant?

The story becomes news, because it is significant. If it is a matter of concern to them, it is news because it is significant. Once again, what is interesting or significant in one society may not be interesting or significant in another. The content of the news may be different, therefore, in different societies, but the way it is identified will be the same.

Is it about people?

Most news is automatically about people, because it is the things people do to change the world which makes news. However, news can also be made by non-human sources, such as natural disasters. It is when reporting these stories that it is important to make sure that the story is centered on people.

Natural disasters only become news when they affect people's lives. Every story can be told in terms of people. Whenever you have a story which tells of how something has happened which affects both people and property, always put the people first. News can be transmitted using different media. Television is one of them.

2.3 The History TV in Ethiopia

The first introduction to the concept and purpose of television in Ethiopia was happened in 1956, when Emperor Haile Silassie's 33th anniversary Exhibition took place. The main objective of the exhibition, which was carried out by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Television,

however, was to indicate the existing political and social developments in the country. In order to achieve the required output, in a closed circuit system, the corporation presented two cameras, four monitors and a few telecasts (Leykun, 2004).

There was also another event in Addis Ababa for television to be introduced to Ethiopia. In 1963, on the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), a temporary closed circuit television was made. As a result, some people were able to follow the proceedings of the meeting on monitors fixed on lobby at an open space in front of the organization's hall (ibid).

Different events arranged at different times for different purposes which created opportunities for television to prove its power and importance to the people and government. Moreover, logistics facilities have been improved: from one studio to three and more studios including mobile van studios, from black and white laboratory to full color labs, from rental office to its own building. Furthermore, the broadcasting coverage of ETV has increased from one percent in 1964 to 47 percent of total area of the country in 1997(Ibid). It is believed that these improvements and investments are held in order to fulfill citizens' information, education and entertainment needs.

Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation /EBC/

In 2015 the EBC authority was established with proclamation No 858/2014 to regulate all broadcasting in the country (radio and television) and to promote the culture and history of the nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia. EBC was formed to utilize new technologies to reach further regions to broadcast in different languages and become a primary source of information. Symmetrically its intention is to assist the overall development efforts of Ethiopia. To attract advertisements to supplement government grants for sustainability and to increase its competitiveness with satellite TV (UNESCO, 2017).

2.4 Type of News Reporting

2.4.1 The General Assignment Reporting

General assignment reporting sometimes referred as GAR is a form of reporting that requires the ability to report and write about a wide range of topics. The person who does general assignment reporting is called a general assignment reporter. Many news outlets, such as newspapers,

television news stations, and some radio news stations, use general assignment reporters to gather news(Magin and Maurer, 2019).

According to open school of journalism, the types of stories that are covered by general assignment reporters are human interest, or any type of story that the news editor news to be covered. The role of the GAR is very important to the success of a news organization. Without GAR most news stories could not be reported or get a coverage.

Usually in the news media GAR is performed by beginning reporters. In TV GA reporting is performed by on-air reporters. TV must have the ability to report on a wide range of topics. A TV reporter usually reports on one story per day but the story subject changes daily. This is the same with radio. The job of a GAR can be fun, exciting and very interesting. On a daily basis the GAR has the opportunity to meet different people could be: firemen, policemen, government officials, entertainers, celebrities and everyday people.

To be an effective GAR requires a broad range of knowledge, it does not require the reporter to be expert on a specific topic. The basic skills in GA reporting are: - curiosity, desire and ability to meet deadlines (ibid).

The use of beat reporters has fluctuated over the years. Once a common way of assigning work to reporters, some news organizations preferred to have a general assignment (or GA) reporters. This gave more flexibility to newsrooms to assign reporters to the news of the day, since not every beat is going to produce daily news items(ibid).

2.4.2 Beat Reporting

Beat reporting refers to thematic specialization in journalism and was an answer to the immense diversity of the themes and events it covers. Beat reporting especially went with newspapers in their “golden age,” throughout most of the 20th century but seems less possible in the leaner era of transition from print to online news that has characterize journalism since 2000. Journalism, in terms of media outlets as well as the journalistic workforce, is structured around the opposition between a generalized pole and a specialized pole (Marchetti, 2005).

Magin and Maurer (2019) also explained that beat reporting is the act of covering and reporting from a particular field or subject of coverage for media organizations. Beat reporting is therefore

specialized news gathering. It could also be regarded as a form of correspondence. Here, the beat is the place of coverage while the correspondent in that place is the beat reporter.

Beat reporting marks the beginning of modern journalism. It was invented at the end of the 19th century in the United States with the aim to increase the efficiency of journalistic work. Thus it relates to the professionalization and rationalization of newspaper journalism and the transformation of newspapers into a mass product. In everyday work, beat reporting has undeniable advantages (ibid).

2.5 What is Beat?

Beat is a journalistic term used to refer to segmented area or particular field. A reporter is assigned to monitor and report from there on a regular basis. A beat may be an institution, or a subject area, such as science and technology business etc. Beat reporters can cover everything from local crime to a specific sports team. They develop expertise in their beat, getting to know people and earn their trust so that when news happens, the journalist can report on it with authority and some depth of knowledge. There are multiple news outlets covering the "what" of the news, but good beat reporters can also provide the context of "why" and "how"(ibid).

2.6 Types of Beats

There are two types of beats. The first is the topical beat. Topical beats thrive because the media audience constantly needs updates from such topical subject. Some topical beats are education, politics, business, economy, science and technology, health, and so on. The second type of beat is the geographical beat. Geographical beat require the reporter to report from specific location on all topical issues and subject matter. The beats could be the parliament, the local chamber of commerce or research institutions(ibid).

2.7 Who is a Beat Reporter?

A beat reporter is a person with well, trained and adequate knowledge in a particular area of news coverage where he represents his news organization. A beat reporter may be a young reporter assigned to cover such local beats like the police, the courts, local government or the schools. A beat reporter could also be a well, trained and very experienced reporter of many

years standing who covers very important institutions one has to be a successful reporter before one is assigned to cover such important beats (ibid).

A beat reporter is someone trustworthy and credible specialized in covering a particular segment of the population or a select geographic area, neighborhood or business sector. This journalist will cover a distinct locale that defines his/ her beat, such as the criminal courts or the police, education or perhaps the schools, religion or the church, sports, local or state government, medicine or healthcare, the environment or science, or business happening (Magin and Maurer, 2019).

Typically beat reporters work with a specific editor who also knows the beat, who can guide the reporter toward sources or information, and help them shape their stories. For instance, a reporter covering retail companies might report to the business editor, who will be able to help that reporter gather information more effectively. (ibid)

2.8 What does it take to be a Great Beat Reporter?

The best beat reporters are well-organized determined, with a clear sense of mission and a wide range of sources. Beat reporters are expected to develop sources, i.e., people who have information about their subject matter, so they can better gather news and find scoops. By developing a rapport sources the beat reporter can more easily get information happenings in the neighborhood (McCluskey, 2008).

But to offer balanced coverage, a beat reporter needs to develop sources beyond those at the front. They need to know the potential story sources like barber or shop vendor. For instance to report on crime scene it is not enough to talk to the local police only but defense attorneys, community leaders, coroners, judges enriches the story,. A good beat reporter will have people who contact her with news tips before he/she hears about them. Good beat reporters constantly read about the beat and striving to learn new things. They are well-versed in the language, issues and events that matter. They are judged by the breadth of their knowledge and their success at communicating the important stories on their beats(ibid).

The best reporters know how the world works, whether it's the world of law enforcement, the laboratory or the corporate boardroom. That takes time, dedication, discipline and courage. Beat reporting demands a wide range of skills, talents, attitudes and work habits. (ibid)

Probably the hardest part of being a beat reporter is staying on top of things and dealing with sources you have to return to every day even if you've written a story they don't like. Unlike other journalists, beat reporters every day face the challenge of encountering sources who may not be pleased with their reporting. That experience, although sometimes painful, helps instill the quality of persistence that defines good beat reporters. Beat reporting takes courage, discipline and judgment, knowing which story has to be written today and which can be put off. It requires teamwork with an editor and other reporters (ibid).

Some reporters take a limited view of their beat. They Spend little time talking with victims or suspects. Beat reporters get comfortable with their sources, the jargon and the process, forgetting who they're working for. Covering a beat isn't easy. One often feels like an alien, especially during the first days on the job. One has to acknowledge your ignorance and learn the language, learn the process, learn the people (ibid).

This reporter goes way beyond the superficial, delves in deeper, enriching the reader, the viewer and the public who have the right to know. The smaller news organization may not have the ability to dedicate scarce resources exclusively to beat reporting, at the risk of not covering basic news gathering, but the larger news media can do (ibid).

2.9 Principles of Beat Reporting

According to Maurer and Magin (2019) there are three risks concerning the reporter–source relationship that beat reporters should remind during beat reporting. The first is if beat reporters become too loyal toward their sources, they can be instrumentalized; the second is being too adversarial toward their sources might entail a loss of trust and an increasing cynicism of the audience; and lastly if beat reporters start feeling like advocates of their own interests, they might behave as activists rather than detached observers. So, journalists should take care regarding their sources during beat reporting.

On the other hand cultivate and grow relationships **i.e.**: protecting right sources and treating them fairly; a meaningful business relationship with sources means taking the necessary time and making proper follow up i.e. being persistence, perseverance, tenacity and an overt sense of mission are all required in order to clarify, follow-up on the many details and ultimately provide much more than the basic story during beat reporting (ibid).

It is also paramount importance to identifying who knows the real story and getting to it. Understanding the language of that segment of the society means truly understanding the issues and how the pieces fit together. In addition it is important to interpret, translate, into a comprehensible story. Much like the legal profession has its own proprietary language, so too do many regions, neighborhoods, sector and specialized businesses. It is the role of the beat reporter to understand the language and convert it for general consumption, for the reader (ibid).

2.10 Strength and Weaknesses of Beat Reporting

Adeniyi and Suleiman (2017) discusses, specialized reporting seeks to split news sources into units while a reporter takes charge of it to encourage expertise. They are situations for the generation of stories and news ideas. For some active beats, like the state government houses, the stories might be daily, or even hourly. Some beats might be coming just once in a while. For others, activities could be periodic, like for the Religious affairs reporter who gets busy mainly during religious programs.

According to them, a creative reporter might be able to generate good stories during lack of news from his/her news beat. S/he might seek for interviews, describe a scene, or begin an investigation on a worthy issue. S/he can also write a news feature article in the meantime, until activities pick up again. It is all dependent on the creative and perceptive ability of the personnel on a particular beat.

The following are points described as strengths of beat reporting by the authors,

1. As it is designed to increased expertise, it deepens understanding on a particular area.
2. Increase the sense of responsibility on the reporter in charge of the beat, to bring about more knowledgeable reports.
3. It promotes good journalism. It serves the exact purpose of the profession.

4. For increased productivity. If a certain media house has the capacity to address most disciplines and cover a better geographical area will have a better reliability among its audience and build credibility.
5. It helps quick execution of assignments, and enhances acquaintance ability.
6. Specialization therefore, reduces the need for supervision, helps eliminate waste, and creates room for upward mobility,
7. Working with key sources on the beat, and can even sometimes be some kind of confidant.

This kind of reporting also has number of weaknesses and some are the following.

Adeniyi and Suleiman in their writing put, the nature of beat reporting demands the reporter to spend as much more time as possible at his/her beat. If this is not handled carefully it brings an irreparable damage. If the familiarity stretches unnecessarily,

1. It creates little or no line between a professional and social relationship. Through specialized reporting, reporters get familiar with key personalities, on their beat and become friends, sometimes lasting a lifetime. Irrespective of the benefits of the reporting.
2. Attached to some famous personalities, and celebrities, will be regarded as lifestyle.
3. Instead of keeping the expected professional distance; there will be a tendency for one-sided reports, only favorable to the beat. The evaluation of news will be originated from and this compromises professional ethics.
4. A key role of the media, their watchdog role will be forgotten, and start sounding as if they were of the organization.
5. Reporting reflected working like an arm of the organization. The reporter works often to please the organization, and is wary of writing reports that will offend their sensibilities.
6. The emergence of one sided reports. In this situation, the reporter is no longer able to balance stories: S/he begins to write essentially from the management perspective although there are opportunities to reflect the opinion of the other side. In these cases, actors from both ends expect the reporter to sympathize with them through their reports.
7. The essence of the assignment to the beat is waved for financial gains, eventually cheapening professionalism. The beat reporters are now also exposed to contracts and business deals. Many turn to proposal writers.

8. Ethics is compromised, while professionalism takes a back.
 9. The result will then be poor evaluation of news, or a complete laziness to even report basic stories. Some and better enterprise promotion.
 10. Increasing competition amongst private media helped the development of the trend, but still important contents might be missed in quicker execution of assignments and the development of expertise.
 11. The trust of the audience in the reporter is now betrayed, abused and even discarded.
- (pp46)

2.11 Challenges in Beat Reporting

2.11.1 Ownership

In Ethiopia the media were under the control of the state since its introduction. It was served to promote government deeds and image building. Much emphasis is given to economic politics and health (Semere, 2010). Regarding the broadcast media EBC was the one and the only alternative for long time. It has benefited from a monopoly situation and has been the only available radio and television channel for most people in the country (Skjerdal, 2017).

2.11.2 Internal policy

Media houses internal policy also has impact in prioritizing news issues. In state controlled media topics which interest the government will be given the priority. According to Skjerdal (2017) (The 48 page policy document 2015) implies in short that the official media including the national broadcaster EBC, the regional mass media agencies and the various print mediachannels should cover news and issues in such a manner that they ultimately support national growth and development.

He also argues that, editorial policy is has the most impact in journalists daily work. High impact of editorial policy doesn't necessarily represent a threat to a journalistic autonomy and craftsmanship. It depends on the content of the policy and its implementation (Skjerdal, 2017)

In some cases media houses clearly put their list of priorities. In his study Semere(2010) showed the list of news topics in Ethiopian Herald. This could be a typical example for the other media houses under the control of the state. These are

1. Federal government's stands.
2. Major and current decisions, briefings and duties of the president and House of Peoples' Representatives.
3. Regional administrations briefings and duties.
4. The public and private investors' meaningful activities.
5. Political and civil organizations activities.
6. Current events
7. And other related news events. (Semere 2010, Ethiopian Herald policy article 5.3.2)

2.10.3 Professionalism

Under this topic there are factors that could be listed down as reasons for the lack of variety in news coverage

2.11.3.1 Education and Training

Gizachew(2013) and Sisay(2011) believe that, there is a lack of trained journalists in government media houses. But Skjerdal(2017) argues this is not a problem in Ethiopian situation. Ethiopia is one of the leading countries where educated journalists are found .Journalism and communication to be given as a field of study has an age of a decade. Therefore it will be useful to investigate this as a possible factor for lack of beat/specialized news reporting. Be maintained by their academic preparation because, news reporting is not only about writing news story writing, it demands the ability to identify news worthy issues. This will be obtained through education and training.

Regarding EBC there are some news reporting which will be out sourced for government offices. FDRE defense radio produces content for EBC television. The journalists in the station are not news reporters in the strict sense, but they are recruited through the universities journalism programs and practice reporting (Skjerdal, 2017)

According to Mihret(2015) the problem in relation to practicing journalism is seen with specific practitioners. One is beat reporters allies themselves with their subjects. That is being a part of their sources, not working with them.

Ethiopian journalists regard themselves as generalists, meaning that they do not cover any particular issue but can be assigned to a range of issues. The most popular beats are News and current affairs, sports and entertainment. There are noticeable gender differences in some of the beats such as entertainment and culture are covered by women and sport covered by men (Skjerdal, 2017).

2.11.3.2 Age and Experience

Ethiopian journalists are among the youngest and least experienced. The professional experience is corresponding low on average; an Ethiopian journalist has practiced in the profession for 5.2 years (Skjerdal, 2017). This results in poor news production. News should be edited by editor in chief or assigned editors but most of the time senior reporters and reporters act as editor in chief and as a result low quality news has been broadcasted (Desta, 2016).

2.11.3.3 Sources

The issue regarding news sources can be treated in two major points

- i. Lack of news sources
- ii. The reliability on the sources

i. Lack of News Sources

According to Teshome (2006) lack of news sources in different regions of Ethiopia is one of the major factors in treating varieties of news stories. Since there are no enough sources in the country it will be difficult to reach those happenings although the stories are interesting and news worthy. Relying only on local sources was mentioned as one of the problems (Semere 2010).

ii. The Reliability on the Sources

The reliability of the sources is also identified as a key problem regarding news sources. Mihret (2015) put the role of PRs in rewarding or punishing media houses and journalists, to keep their interest. On the other hand for Ethiopian journalists, political parties and politicians are the most mistrusted sources (Skjerdal, 2017).

2.11.3.4 Interference of Editors and Media Authorities

As the higher authorities of the state owned media are assigned by the government, they always tend to serve the interest of the government. Their interference could be even extending to suspending programs. Programs might not be allowed to be transmitted if higher official do not allow it (Bereket, 2012).

The other problem relates with the deeds of unethical editors. In order to serving the interests of sources, reporters might be assigned to places where the issues are not that much news worthy. The relationship between sources and editors is purely economic (Mihret, 2015 and Skjerdal, 2017).

The interference of editors is not only regarding journalism issue and ethics, But on how to treat the interests of professionals. For example the issue of accuracy for a journalist and a scientist may not be the same at some point. This creates a conflict between the researcher and the journalist. Therefore as a solution the news room editor may interfere in the news production (Tenaw, 2006).

2.11.3.5 Working Environment

To qualify as a journalist according to WJS criteria one has to have journalism as the primary occupation i.e. at least 50% of the personal income should come from news media production. Most Ethiopian journalists are full time employees but least paid (Skjerdal 2017).

In increasing their creativity in their work there has to be a good environment which is appropriate for the profession. Conducive working environment is good for workers to exert their potential (Sisay, 58). But, most of the time in state owned the working environment is always dull and no progress at all (Desta, 2016) and (Skjerdal, 2017).

2.11.3.6 Professional Autonomy

According to WJS one also has to make independent decisions about media content at some level. The criteria may be challenged if one works for an outlet which primarily distributes information on behalf of an organization. Ethiopia in a country where journalists feel they have least editorial autonomy (Skjerdal, 2017).

Ethiopia is among the leader countries when it comes to perceived editorial influence from politicians, military, police and state security. The country doesn't stand out quite as much when it comes to perceived influence from pressure groups, business people and public relations. Even those groups have stronger perceived influence in Ethiopian journalism.

The good news is that Now the EBC has developed to be a broadcasting corporation. The need for structuring was to make the organization be efficient competitive and qualified (Desta, 2016). The Ethiopian journalists the role of journalism is to support the national development. The role has a strong parallel in advocating social change and educating the audience (Skjedal, 2017). Therefore, showing the challenges in practicing beat/specialized reporting in EBC will be the focus of this work. Possible ways of improving the situation will be discussed.

2.12 Theoretical Framework

There are different perspectives on beat reporting. Beat reporting is invented recently in the ninetieth century. To improve the profession of journalism, it was theorized that beat reporting should be encouraged (Magin and Maurer, 2019). The researcher also believes that beat reporting is to be encouraged. For the achievement of this objective media needs freedom or democracy. The essence of democracy in regard to purpose of the media will be discussed in this section.

Democracy means rule by the people or popular power, it combines two Greek terms *Demos* refers to a citizen and *Kratos* meaning power or rule.

According to Plattner, it was Spinoza (1951) who was explicitly linked freedom of expression to democracy. "That in a free state every man may think what he likes and say what he thinks" (Plattner, 2012).

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article XIX states,

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression: this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

Media is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy. Not only does it have to be transparent and unbiased but it also bears the responsibility of educating the masses and propagating reform in public opinion. It is also a platform for public discussion and exchange of opinions. It has the power to control and influence a nation's political discourse. Thus, media plays an important part in our lives by shaping our opinions and by guiding us in understanding the various discourses and events that take place. In this regard Ulbah (2009) strengthens and argued that "*media play a significant role in giving democracy and people's right a firm footing ensuring transparency and accountability in all spheres of public affairs*". So, it is the backbone of a democracy; and democracy without media is like a vehicle without wheels.

It is known that the media is not free from biases and offences. When in the wrong hands, media has been often abused to further agendas, to fuel hatred and to sway public opinion through misinformation and tactful reporting. This can be dangerous because people are easily influenced into thinking in a specific way. Here is why the media need to serve the interest of the largest society as much as possible (ibid).

According to (Slavko, 1993 in Cuilnburg) and (Wurft, 2000) there are four general assumptions regarding communication in all types of democracy.

1. Citizens are well informed.
2. Citizens are interested ... in ... politics.
3. Citizens have equal rights to speak and participate in decision making.
4. All decisions are submitted to public discussion.

According to the previous discussion the public has the opportunity to choose what to know about. But that is not the reality. It is not the public that chooses the issue but those who have the power to lead the media.

Plattner (2012) puts the media as one of the three domains in democracy with political parties and civil societies. According to him these domains provide channels through which the opinions of the people are formed and transmitted. As these domains are interlinked, changes in one of them usually affect the other two. This is especially true with regard to the media.

2.13 Goal of Media Democracy

Media democracy is the group of ideas that believes in reforming mass media to serve the larger public. By means such as improving public service broadcasting, participating in various forms of media and journalism, offering various platforms for public discussion and expression of opinions (Ulbah, 2009).

Its main goal is to establish a strong democracy which is transparent, accessible to all, empowers society and contributes to democracy and its values. It relies on information technology to reach out to people and to empower them by encouraging them to participate more in media and journalism. The main weapon to exercise democracy in a society will be keeping the well informed, as information is a power (ibid).

Media democracy argues that ownership and commercialization would influence media in a negative way. It would lead to a narrow, biased and watered-down version of the media which would limit public knowledge and opinion. Hence, there should be an equal distribution of economic, social, cultural and information capital which would lead to a higher level of awareness in the public (ibid).

2.14 Ideas, Ideologies and notions of Media

Media today advocates various ideas and notions and follows certain ideologies that they have a strong hold on. Some of them are

- Replacing the current media model with one that is democratic and transparent.
- Improving public service broadcasting.
- Spreading the use of alternative media in the mainstream media.
- Increasing the influence and role of citizen journalism.
- Making more people participate in the wider discourse.
- To promote democratic ideals and values.

These notions show that the media should serve the interest of the larger public rather than the interest of the owners. Here we can see how the media can serve the interest of the public is by

being a reliable source of information in different ways and different areas of expertise. The media need to acknowledge the diversity of its audiences and need to work to reach their interest. The public should not be the passive receiver of messages cooked by those in power rather should have been given the space to choose (Victoria, 2011).

2.15 Critics on Media and Democracy

Media and politics have complex relationships; and one has strong influence on the other (David, 2007) and (Chang, 2018). He adds that there is a significant positive association between following media information and political interest.

Mainly the problem lies with the nature of the society. According to the critics media democracy idealizes the public and its level of awareness and intelligence. It assumes that every member of society is well-informed and educated to be able to participate in public discussion. Such an approach would only lead to more fragmentation of society based on class. Also, journalists have to follow a code of conduct and ethics while reporting. Thus, a level of regulation does exist even within the media (ibid).

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section deals with the research design, sampling strategy, data collection and method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive type of research design was employed in the study. A qualitative approach was employed in the study to achieve the intended objectives.

3.2 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. The primary sources of data were EBC news reporters and editors. The secondary sources of data were Organizations, published and unpublished written documents.

3.3 Sampling Strategy

As Wimmer and Dominick (2011 cited in Mihret, 2015) depending on the purpose of the study, cost benefit analysis, time constraints and amount of acceptable errors, researchers can decide whether to use probability or nonprobability sampling. Probability sampling uses statistical guidelines by means of which each unit's probability for selection is known. On the other hand, non-probability sampling does not follow the guidelines of numerical probability.

Because of the above mentioned factors, mass media researchers commonly use non probability sampling, specifically in the form of available or convenience sampling, a collection of available people and documents (ibid).

This might not be true always, (Yin 2011 in Mihret 2015) argues in qualitative research, the samples are likely to be chosen in deliberate manner of purposive sampling; and the rationale for selecting the specific study units is to have participants/ samples that will yield the most relevant and ample data, given the topic.

Although it will be more preferable to use deliberate sampling, due to the nature of the profession and schedule of the professionals non probability sampling will be used.

Unfortunately the change in the organizational structure of the corporation had an influence on the study's structure in some ways.

In order to gather the necessary data for the study, two FGDs and two in depth interviews were planned. In order to get detail information, the researcher used depth interview. The FGDs were planned to be conducted with the reporters. But, the number of reporters which can be available at a time is not more than one. The reporters work in shift basis. There are four shifts. There are not more than 10 reporters in one shift. Some of them are send to cover events. The others work on international news and others in the studio or news editing.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

In order to evaluate the practice of specialized or beat reporting in EBC, data was collected in depth interview, focused group discussion and document analysis.

3.4.1 Individual in Depth Interview

In depth interviews which are sometimes referred as depth interviews, or by the acronym IDI are qualitative data collection method that involves direct, one-to-one engagement with individual participants (Steber, 2017).

IDI can be conducted face-to-face, or in some cases over the phone. However, for the latter to be effective and deliver reliable information, the interviewer must be highly skilled to prevent data loss (ibid).

The researcher conducted an in depth interview with selected beat reporters and editors. The number of interviewees depends on the availability of beat reporters in the corporation.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion FGD is one of the methods for qualitative data collection. Its application dates back to decades and it still works with some modifications (Hennink, 2014).

The academic approach for FGD is centered on the careful application of a research method, the generation of scientific data and rigorous analysis of these data. Therefore, if done well, this approach can take considerable time. In academic research FGDs are often used to understand the context of people's lives or experiences (ibid).

The method is used to identify diversity of experiences and perceptions and not seek a consensus on the issue discussed. Participant recruitment is also carefully planned and may involve segmenting the study population into different groups to avoid the creation of hierarchy in group discussion which may influence participants' contribution (ibid).

FGDs are a very flexible research method. They are particularly effective for explanatory and evaluation research. FGDs are particularly suitable for

- Exploring topics which little is known or where the issue is unclear.
- Explaining specific behaviors or beliefs and circumstances in which they occur.
- Evaluating a service, program or intervention and understand the reasons for its success or failure.
- Designing a survey or experimental study by identifying the issues, terminology or components to include.
- Gaining diversity of experiences and perspectives on the study topic.
- Understanding the context, culture or social norms surrounding the research issues because moderation can distinguish typical from uncommon behavior.
- Understanding group process (i.e. decision making) by observing how participants discuss an issue, influence each other or decide on a strategy for action (ibid).

Focused group discussion was also used in the data collection. A total of 8 participants were used to collect data.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

In this study editorial policies and media manuals and documents of EBC regarding news coverage and other useful documentation of the organization of the news room are discussed.

3.5 Method of data Analysis

The collected data using depth interview, focused group discussion and document analysis was described qualitatively.

CHAPTE FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

In this study the researcher was interested to evaluate the practice of beat reporting in EBC.

As of March 29, 2018 EBC has started new transmission with different programs by dividing the channels into three channels. These are:

1. ETVMeznagna, for sport and entertainment.
2. ETV Languages, for different local and foreign language service and
3. ETV News, 24 hours Amharic news and documentary services.

A separate channel has been set for 24 hours to give Amharic news service. The prime time news is broadcasted in the morning (7:00am-9:10am), midday (12:00pm-2:30pm) and at night (7:00pm- 9:05 pm). During these news hours fresh news stories and news developments take the largest time.

To come up with a better EBC, the corporation has conducted a gap analysis. It was made by identifying the current problem regarding news and program contents and presentation. The data were collected from the researches made on EBC, audience analysis and a public conference which was organized to collect public views on EBC. The gap analysis study identifies the short comings of the then EBC and discusses the need for new format as follows:

- The problems regarding content and presentation of EBC's news and programs.
- News and other programs broadcasted by EBC were not satisfying its audience and
- The corporation was not working reflecting the democratic system the country is building up and its development as it is expected. Etc (Gap Analysis:2017, 11)

The objectives of the study were to evaluate EBC's current status in comparison with local and international media and come up with the possible solutions:

1. To make EBC1a 24 hour news and documentary channel.
2. To make EBC the voice of renaissance and diversity as its motto.
3. To make the system well organized.
4. To assess the limitations and improve them to become a competent media.(Gap Analysis:2017,12)

The major things which were seen as a gap were the news which were broadcasted only for three news prime hours, the news hours had no name and the news were not including human interest elements. As a solution the gap analysis study came up with setting a prime time for the news and the news hours were named as follows.

1. TenaYistlign Ethiopia 7:00am -9:10am
2. EBC AratMaezen 12:00pm -2:30pm
3. EBC 360 7:00 pm- 9:05 pm

Before launching the ETV News as a news and documentary channel, more than 300 news stories were saved as a backlog. This was made to face shortage of stories after the service started to be on air.

4.1.1 Organization of the News Room

EBC's Amharic news service is found at the fifth floor of the corporation's building. The whole floor is given for news and current affairs section. The rooms are well organized and equipped with the necessary materials. The rooms are labeled clearly. There are 32 reporters and 4 secretaries to assist them. They work in four shifts. There are 7-10 reporters and one secretary for each shift.

The Amharic news department is organized under six themes. At the beginning there were nine themes. The themes were reorganized in a way that most of the news stories can be categorized.

The themes are:

1. Government and Politics
2. Social Affairs
3. Agriculture
4. Business

5. Urban Development and Infrastructure
6. Industry and Technology

The reporters were made to choose their area of interest through a format. They were organized based on their choice. This has two impacts, PE1 (the editor) and PR3 (the reporter) put the advantage and disadvantage of the themes as follows.

1. As the reporters are assigned according to their area of interest, they will be more creative and productive.
2. The distribution of reporters among each theme was not fair. There are up to 10 reporters in one theme and only two in another. The social affairs theme attracts more reporters and the government and politics has the least one. Therefore, to overcome these problem reporters from other themes will be assigned to cover news stories.

The discussion was made with the reporters using planned questions. The participants were four reporters and one Editor and one Chief Editor.

4.1.2 Profile of the Respondents

Table1. Profile of Participants

No	Participants	Qualification	Field of Study	Theme	Years of Experience	Position
1	PR 1	BA	Journalism	Urban Development and Infrastructure	3	Reporter
2	PR2	BA, MA	English, Journalism	Politics and Government	5	Reporter
3	PR3	BA	Journalism	Social	2	Reporter
4	PR4	BA	Broadcast Journalism	Business	2	Reporter
5	PE1	BSc	Environmental Science	-	9	Editor
6	PCE1	BA	Journalism and Communication	-	11	Chief Editor

As table 1 above shows, most of the respondents (reporters and Editors) in EBC have at least BA degree and journalism background. This may show that important information for the study could be obtained. Their area of study is also appropriate for the organization's objective; and this goes with the idea of (Skerjial, 2017) a research made on Ethiopian journalists. In his research findings he shows that the Ethiopian journalists are among the educated ones (Skerjial, 2017).

The discussions made with the reporters and the editors are organized and presented based on the similarity of the topic.

4.1.3 News Selection and Prioritization

According to the broadcast service proclamation No 533/2006 and the editorial policy of the corporation, news stories will be prioritized based on the benefits they have for the larger public. The news need to give more coverage for the stories that ensure the long lasting benefit of the public. EBC's principle regarding news prioritization is, to ensure the benefit of the public with disciplined, qualified and experienced professionals, provides up to date information and detailed analysis of issues by reliable analysts (EBC editorial, 2007).

The findings of the depth interview, focused group interview and the document analysis showed that the news stories will be prioritized based on the benefits in EBC. News stories were prioritized based on their contents and the personalities in the news. If there is anything which is related with the president, no matter what it gets the priority, next are the prime minister, and other ministers. As it is stated in the editorial policy it is given priority for the public. But it is not working. This goes with the idea of (Semere, 2010).

4.1.4 Factors Determining News Stories

Chapter nine of the editorial policy list down the situation that will be given priority while news covering. When there is emergency or current government affairs the news would get the priority to get coverage.

Some of them include: when there is an emergency that the constitution and the constitutional system are endangered, when a natural disaster occurs, when there is a break out epidemic that endanger the public's wellbeing, when there is state of emergency to be declared by the federal

or regional government and when only legally registered opposing parties have issues regarding election, their candidates, programs or when they have something to let the people know (EBC Editorial Policy, 2007).

In the discussion made with reporters and editors how news will be given coverage was discussed as, news stories will be prioritized based on their intimacy for the ruling body. The stories will be submitted to the editorial meetings and decisions will be made on which one to be given priority, which one to get coverage and which one not to be covered at all. The reporters will be assigned with the approval of the topics. Through the TV screen at the gate of the floor the reporters will be made to know their assignments.

We have editorial meetings. The news stories to be covered or not will be decided there. But there are some understandings that, government related issues will be given the priority. For example the president's issue always comes first, then the prime minister, then other ministry (May 21, 2018 10:05am-10:42am).

News stories will be covered based on requests presented to EBC and the editorial meeting will decide on it. Usually higher government officials will be given the priority. But this will be improved in future (May 21, 2018 11:58am-12:31am).

4.1.5 The Challenges in Beat Reporting

Based on the discussion made with the participants, the challenges in beat reporting were identified as the reporters, the sources and the ownership. The reporters' attitude regarding news stories, their sources and their personal interest has influence on their news stories. On the other hand, their sources most of the time the public and government officials are not cooperative in providing interviews. The ownership of EBC also has an influence on the news stories to be covered. The discussion will be presented separately as follows.

4.1.5.1 The Reporters

According to the participant's view, the attitude of reporters' competency in collecting information for their news, and their view about their professional status in the future was considered as the challenges in news reporting.

***PR1:** For me the basic problem is idea generation. It starts with coming up with ideas and shaping them in a way that can be news worthy (May 21, 2018 9:34am-9:42am).*

***PR 2:** The practitioners have a problem in understanding the purpose of the profession. They think of the hierarchy in the future. Their objective mostly focuses on to be a team leader now, an editor or chief editor in the future. They simply report what they have observed. They do not dig deeper to get the truth. Their stories will be shallow and unattractive (May 21, 2018 9:48am-10:03am).*

These shows that beat reporting needs further development in EBC; which is similar finding with Theodros (2020).

4.1.5.2 The Sources

Regarding news idea sources, basically news sources in EBC are three:

- The public recommendation, news stories came from the public through different means of communication. The public could be common people, professionals or legal organizations or associations.
- The reporter's observation: reporters in EBC are expected to work on their planned news. (It is called project news) and usually the stories arises from the reporter's observation in day to day lives.
- PR or government communication offices. The request will be send by the organizers of the event.

The first two are usually used in project news. The third will be used to cover event news. Regarding their sources the reporters have different views as well. According to the respondents the need to get the reliable sources is one of the challenges. The attitude of the public to EBC and the public's lack of confidence to stand in front of the camera is also the other challenge. Regarding political figures, there is a tendency to deny information, but not directly.

***PR1:** For project news you need to have contact with your sources and maintain your relationship. If it is event news the reporter will simply attend the event and*

report on it. Getting an interviewee in event news is less problematic than project/feature news.

PR2: *The first problem relies with the reporter him/herself. One needs to know where one can get reliable information to develop news stories. Usually reporters will go to either to higher officials or the public to get information. But, professionals and experts are forgotten. I agree that our society has a problem in information exchange. But still there is a problem with the reporters.*

PR3: *the bigger challenge is getting an interviewee to make the news reliable. This comes from two parties. The public is afraid of cameras to give interview. In my experience this is because of the reason that TV exposes the picture of the interviewee; therefore they are afraid of the consequences from their community and the government.*

The other problems are government officials. They do not officially deny giving information. Either they will not be available or give you repeated appointment. This doesn't go with the nature of news reporting. But this is not a problem for event news. (May 21, 2018 10:45am-11:12am)

PR4: *The attitude of the public for EBC is a problem. Sometimes we face physical attacks at the roads while collecting public view on a certain issue. They will not be willing to give interview. They will get angry simply looking at the logo on the mic. Moreover, in covering event news the public relation officials and government officials will not allow you to ask further questions. They simply want you to report on what happened there or only what they want you to report about. Sometimes they try to bribe reporters and their supporting staff using a pocket money, usually called "Buche".(May 21, 2018 11:17am-11:48am)*

PE1: *I have observed that, reporters are not well aware of where they can get the right information. They usually seek information from higher officials such as ministers and deputy ministers. But the appropriate information may be found with experts and professionals.*

4.1.5.3 Number of Staff in the News Room

The reporters and editors agreed that there is no enough staff in the news room. In order to overcome the need for more reporters due to the new system, the reporters are made to work in shift basis. As there are less number of reporters and high demand for news reporting, reporters will be send to cover where reporters are not assigned. This creates burden on the reporters and leads to low quality of news production. This goes with the idea of (Teshome2006:78).

***PR4:** The other problem is the number of staff. For example in the business theme there are only three (one reporter, one producer and one editor). Sometime the reporter may act as an editor when the editor is not available. This compromises news quality. We are also expected to produce 70% of local and 30% of international business stories. We also plan to do project news. Due to the burden we postpone our project news to do it on our weekends. This causes us extra cost and sacrifices our holiday.*

***PCE1:** every reporter is expected to come up with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 project news in a month. So they will work on their project news one day and cover event news the other day. Some reporters will be assigned to come with foreign and international news as well. There are four shifts in the news room. All the 32 reporters will not be available all the time. Therefore, if there is a shortage in one theme another reporter from other themes will be assigned to cover the news.*

The gap analysis made by EBC in 2017 suggests the total number of staff members needed in the news room was up to 140. From these 132 are reporters and producers at different level. (Gap Analysis: 2017.399)

4.1.6 Reporters Assignment

As indicated earlier, the news room works with six themes. The reporters are organized under each theme. Every reporter is expected to work on his/her project news one day and to cover event news the other day. The distribution of reporters in each theme and the shift system causes

shortage of reporters. Therefore to overcome this problem reporters from one theme will be assigned to cover other theme's issue.

However, the reporters are not limited to work only on other themes story because they are assigned but if there is a chance to get something news worthy they will do it. This has two views in between the reporters some of them are not happy in working out of their theme. On the other hand, other reporters will take it as a chance to learn new things.

***PR1:** Usually we will be assigned based on our theme. However, if there is a shortage of reporters one can be assigned to cover an event from another theme.*

***PR2:** That is how usually it is, but for example if one reporter is going out for field report, but got something interesting. She/he can broadcast though it is not his/her theme. You will not be limited to your theme. You have the freedom to work on others' theme as well.*

***PR3:** Covering another theme's story doesn't feel good because you simply report what you see. You may not have the details since you are from another theme. You need to ask and dig out an interesting story. For me it is okay. If I will be assigned on different themes, I will take it as an opportunity to learn more things.*

***PR4:** When you are assigned to cover other theme's story, you will be forced to postpone your work at hand. My interest is to work on one theme only and specializes on it. Otherwise the reporter will not get enough time to evaluate the stories. You simply include what you think is okay. Sometimes we will be assigned to cover event news, most of the time government meetings. Because you will be assigned you will not be effective. Rather we better be allowed to search for business related news stories. Business reporting has its features, it doesn't go with meetings and government issues in most cases. Sometimes the reporters will be assigned in my experience this is not a kind of job that every reporter would like to do.*

***PEI:** usually it is based on their themes. They will be assigned to work on their project news one day and event news the other day. I believe in including beat reporting as a format. It promotes specialization. We assign reporters from one theme to cover another theme when there is lack of reporters. I have observed that reporters will make errors from the concept of something to titles positions and names. This is due to lack of competency. They miss important concepts in their reporting or skip important point. Therefore their reports will be shallow.*

A reporter may be assigned to report on 70/30 education system. If the reporter has no relevant back ground information and understood the concept, the story will not add anything for the public. Rather the story may misinform or confuse the public. He/she may not be interested so not asking further questions even missing the central point of the meeting may occur. Not giving explanation in simple language. No examples and on explanations to make the concept easy to be understood.

***PCEI:** We have lack of staff members. Now we are working on 24 hours news transmission. But we have only 32 reporters. We work in four shifts. Therefore we will not be available when you need us. We have shortage of reporters in each team that we assign from another theme whenever need arises. We are on a process to hire more reporters now.*

4.1.7 Education and Training

As it is indicated before the reporters and editors in EBC are among the educated ones. The participants were asked if there is any on job or refreshment training. They discussed the importance of it by exemplifying the recent experience they had with ALJAZEERA staff. They also indicated that, there is a department that is responsible for human resource development but it is not functional. They have also suggested that the criteria for higher education scholarship need to be revised, as it is not treated those who have different background from journalism in undergraduate programs.

PR4: I have not seen any training that will be provided by EBC. But some six months ago there were people from ALJAZEERA. They gave us an on job training and that brings about a tremendous change even on the organization's practice.

PR2: The on job training given by the ALJAZEERA staff has made us think of what we were doing. They are well organized. They started from office set up and they gave us on the spot training going out with us while reporting. They taught us what to do while reporting and the techniques to make our reporting effective. It was really a great experience.

PE1: The Corporation has a department which works on human resource development. But it is not functional because of lack of staff in the department. I believe education helps, but in selecting reporters for higher education, reporters from journalism back ground will be given the priority. But it has to be reporters from other fields who have to get the chance to study journalism. Having knowledge of journalism will make them a good reporter their field of study. These help in creating analysts and specialists and make them a better reporter.

PCE1: An agreement was signed by EBC and the ALJAZEERA to give training for our reporters and staff. We have learnt a lot of things during their stay. We have been introduced to the latest media technologies and the level of the practice. It helps us to reorganize our studios and build new ones.

4.1.8 Recruitment and Hiring

Concerning the issues on recruitment and hiring, previously the reporters were hired directly from universities. This has its problems, some are:

PE1: The recruitment and hiring process has also its problem. There is a trend in hiring reporters directly from universities. The newly employed reporters may not have any exposure on how the media actually operates. The challenge will frustrate them so they will leave. In our experience we have reporters hired for Amharic news but transferred to other language services. Currently we have two

reporters who work only news writing. They write the news but others will read it. This hurts their feeling and will make them leave their job.

***PCEI:** in my opinion, hiring high GPA graduates do not guarantee good practitioners. High GPA graduates are mostly academicians. But making the recruiting and hiring system more appropriate for the profession should be taken in to account. A good reporter can come from any field, all what it demand is interest and striving to develop the skill.*

***PEI:** Regarding education, the corporation started to hire reporters from journalism field to promote professionalism. It will be better if the corporation hires reporters from different background. Making the screening and testing process appropriate for broadcast news reporting.*

The other problem is the issue regarding news anchors. In EBCs trend news anchors will be hired in contract bases most of the time. It doesn't matter whether that person has journalism background knowledge or not. They usually arrive to studio five minutes to the news hour. They simply collect the papers and sit in front of the camera. They will not even cross check what is written there. They will simply read what is there although it is not correct.

***PCEI** we have a plan to train good anchors from our staff and keep all the benefits they have to get.*

4.1.9 Motivation Scheme

In relation to motivational scheme the actual monetary and material benefit of the reporters will be taken account. In addition to that the attitude of others especially those who are leading the corporation also has an impact. Sometimes reporters work for extra hours due to lack of reporters or because of the nature of the issue they are engaged with. But they will not get extra payment for their efforts. There are no any other benefits that will make the reporters stay on their job.

***PEI:** The motivation scheme is not attractive. They leave EBC and join other media houses. In my opinion If their problems were the profession, they would not leave EBC to other media houses. This is the cause for high turnover currently.*

PCE2: *There is no difference between EBC reporter and other civil servants regarding the benefits. They simply get their salaries. But the profession demands well dressing and other makeup things. The corporation will not provide that. There are places that demand the reporter to appear with good look. It is the reporter who will do it by him/herself. The newly introduced system the compensation and benefit of the reporters and supporting professionals has given due attention. Therefore, in the coming times this issue will be treated properly. There will be a separate department that works on the appearance and dressing issues including reporters and news anchors makeup and the expected dressing codes.*

We usually hire news anchors as freelancer. We have capable staff to that but in relation to dressing and the benefit they are not happy with it. They will be pay based on time that they are on air. If our reporters read they will not get anything and this is not fair.

Currently we have introduced an allowance for the reporters a minimum of 1900 birr and above as housing and transport allowance. This is good as a starter but we will proceed in the future.

PE1: *Regarding EBC's higher officials' attitude for job, the reporters are not comfortable about it. For example, if a reporter is sent for field reporting and an accident occurs, usually the officials ask how the camera and the other equipments are. This is known for the reporters. They feel that they are considered less important than the camera and other equipment.*

PCE1: *In relation to the higher officials, the problem basically comes from their assignment. EBC's higher officials starting from the CEO will be assigned by the government. That is not only the problem but they will be those who have no experience on how media works. As they come they start to learn from the beginning. When they knew the profession and start to act they will be taken again and a new person will be replaced. It goes like that. You cannot get one*

CEO of EBC who stayed for at least five years in his/her position. Basically there is a problem in the system.

4.1.10 General Reporting and Beat Reporting

EBCs editorial policy allows the practice of beat reporting. Chapter six of the editorial policy discusses the importance of beat reporting and lists down the focus areas. It elaborates the importance to create strong relationship with sources, to set agenda, to develop the competency of the reporters and their beats. The beats include Agriculture, Environmental Conservation, Industry, Court, Diplomacy, Defense, Police, Democratic Issues, Business, Religion, Women and Children and Youth (EBC Editorial, 2007).

In the discussion made with reporters and the editors we have discussed the understanding of the practitioners about general and beat reporting. The main difference according to them is the actual practice at EBC. Although there is no such a calling of beat reporting, the way the reporters reorganized leads to it. The topic has some relation. But they have different views about the practice.

***PR1:** The main difference between general assignment and beat reporting is the news production process.*

***PR2:** There is no such a thing called beat reporting in EBC. Although we are assigned in one theme, it doesn't work some times. Hopefully, it will functional in the future.*

***PR3:** I think beat reporting is simpler than the general reporting. What it all demands is that, the skill to present it. That is what I have observed.*

***PR3:** Talking of beat reporting in EBC, only sport and business can be taken as beat reporting. More over sport is in another department. As I am working in business theme I feel like I am practicing beat reporting. I joined this theme on my own interest and I am happy about it regardless of its limitation. I hope thing will be better in the near future. Working on beat reporting will make one reporter an expert on one issue..*

PR3: Basically there are two kinds of news in EBC, Project news and event news. Project news arises from public recommendation and the reporters' observation and plan. This news are carefully studied and planned. The stories will be investigative and interesting most of the time. Event news is recommended by public relation or government communication offices. This news is meetings, inaugurations or visits of higher officials and private organizations. Therefore our sources will be the public, officials, public relation officers or professionals and experts.

PE1: it is taken as distribution of tasks. Reporters are assigned in themes. There is no such a thing called beat reporting in practice. But it is there in the editorial.

PCE1: the case of beat reporting is found the editorial policy. It discusses its importance and how to practice it. But the system didn't allow it.

4.1.11 Working as Beat Reporter

The reporters are interested to work in the area of their interest. But some of them believe that since most of EBC's local news are event related, it will be challenging to bring the idea of beat reporting to practice.

PR1: Yes, I am interested to work on investigative social issues.

PR2: Yes, I want to be an expert of political analysis.

PE3: yes, but I have some reservations, we need to think beat reporting in which aspect. Usually most of the news in EBC are event news. There are few practitioners who can give detailed analysis on a certain issue. On the other hand if you take our sport reporting, most of the stories are soccer related national or international stories. Athletics can take the second priority, but other local and international sport stories are pushed aside. This may have its own reason but in my opinion all indigenous and international sports need to get coverage. If you ask me about my interest I want to have my own news show like the HARD TALK.

PR4: I am interested with the theme I am working now. I want to continue with business and economics reporting and specialize on it.

4.1.12 Beat Reporting and the Public's Right to Information

The researcher raised this point of discussion for the respondents, because it has a strong relation with the theoretical frame work of the study. It also helps to make a sound conclusion and recommendation. In the discussion the participants bring about the problems they have encountered during news reporting. According to them, the problem has three faces which are the government, the stake holders and the public.

PR2: All the stake holders need to raise their political awareness. They need to know what the purpose of the profession and the media is. Private media owners have to be responsible into their contents. We should not focus on giving air times for those who can bring more advertisers. Give more emphasis on the quality contents and better production.

PR3: The public need to be free in providing information. They should not be afraid of cameras or the consequence of their views.

PR4: We need to focus on content. Collecting public view should not be a task of business reporters. I think it will be better if business reporters focus on the quality if their stories. For business reporters, government meetings and officials visits will not give that much content. They need to focus on valid business issues.

While discussing the autonomy of EBC, the respondents didn't agree with its belongingness to the public, but the Editorial policy of EBC state it as;

Prior to any other issues, EBC serves the interest of the public. It works on satisfying the benefit and interest of its audience with content and coverage. (EBC Editorial policy 2007: 27)

The respondents agree, EBC is not serving its objective. Rather being a sound for the public it stands for the ruling power's interest.

PR2: EBC is not serving as a national media but voice of the ruling party. For the last two years we have been reporting on the violence in regional states. Specially in Oromia and Amhara regions. The media has been using the same language as the government did. The youth were called as anti peace or anti people who have

hidden agendas. But was that really the case? We didn't investigate. The reporters including me reported what we have been told. But, as a national media, EBC had to be a forum for both parties and serve them equally. We had to say for the public to stop violence and ask peacefully and for the government to stop killing its people and listen to them. We didn't do it. This shows that EBC is totally government's weapon.

PEI: *EBC is reorganized as a public media with proclamation number 533/2006. It was made accountable for the House of People's Representatives. Practically, there is no change at all. It is not serving its role as a national media. It continues serving the state's interest. It can be taken as one party media.*

For example, if one of the EPRDF or its affiliate parties has an event, even in a small regional town or Kebele. It will get coverage. But if one of the opposing parties has an essential event and invites EBC to cover it. Either it may not be give the coverage, or a reporter may be sent to cover it but the news will not be broadcasted at all.

The other point is that, EBC is not serving its role as national media by being a forum for multiple ideologies. The languages are impartial or language of the ruling party. For instance, if you take the case of Fano of the Amhara and Qerro of the Oromia they were called as anti peace and anti people powers.

The other is suppressing people's idea. It is not serving diversity of ideologies and provides a forum for multiplicity.

For example, reporters will be sending to collect the public view about a certain issue. Let's say the current state of emergency. Only those who agree with the government's decision will be broadcasted. But those who say it is not right and it suppresses the right of the people will not be allowed to be on air. There are officials who feel like that they are protectors of the government and the government will get angry if those views are broadcasted.

4.2 Discussion

During the visit the researcher has observed that, the physical organization of the news room can be taken as a good one. The newly introduced system provides those changes. It is well equipped and there is enough space to walk around. Due to the structural change since the end of March 2018, some rearrangements are made.

The reporters are organized based on their area of interest in six themes. Each theme has one leader. There are twelve areas of specializations in the editorial policy. From these areas of specialization listed in the editorial policy agriculture, business, industry and diplomacy are included in the current system as individual themes. But the rest are included under the other themes.

During the in depth interview with the reporters and editors, the identified problems not practice beat reporting in EBC can be concluded as, the reporters attitude and capacity, reliable news source from the public and government and non-government officials and number of reporters in the news room.

According to the respondents, although EBC is reorganized with proclamation number 533/2006 as a public media to serve the national interest, practically it is functioning as the voice of the ruling power. Officials are assigned by the government. They stay at their position for a significant period of time that could bring a change in the corporation. They come and leave. The assigned officials are not those who know how the media function in most of the time.

The respondents also suggest that the corporation is not providing a continuous on job and refreshment trainings. Moreover, the criteria to get higher education opportunity by the corporation have some limitations.

Regarding the recruitment hiring process the newly graduated reporters are facing problems with the working environment and there is a question of competency among the reporters. According to the respondents hiring high GPA journalism graduated reporters do not guarantee good performance in the profession.

The motivation and benefit schemes of the reporters need to consider the nature of the profession and keep the corporation's image.

Then what is next

All of my respondents believe that the previous system in EBC were not good. However, starting from the training given by the Aljazeera staff and the new development in EBC they have started to hope for good. They believe that things will be better in the future. The change they have seen for the last two months is interesting and it enlightens their hope their future work in the news room.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter provides the conclusion of the study followed by some possible recommendations.

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to evaluate the practice of beat reporting in EBC. EBC has introduced new transmission some two months ago. The change did not appear from nowhere. The continuous effort to make EBC the choice of the public brought those changes.

The change was based on the gap analysis study made by EBC. During the analysis, there was of 400 pages document which has every detailed issues of the corporation that needs improvement.

The editorial policy of EBC has clearly stated the use of beat reporting (specialized reporting according to the document). But the lists of specialize reporting need to be revised based on the nature of the current media practice and the demand of its audience.

In order to treat stories based on their similarities, themes are organized. The reporters were made to choose their area of interest.

There is lack of reporters in the corporation. Therefore, sometimes the reporters will be assigned out of their themes.

The staff has a positive attitude towards the new system. They believe that the new change will bring something better for the coming times.

Starting from two years back reporters with highest GPA are hired directly from universities. They were selected from journalism and communication faculties. But the editors suggest that, the recruitment must not be based on their fieldof expertise but on their competency as well.

According to the respondents reporters view about their sources matters in news reporting. Sometimes they look for information fromwrong sources.

5.2 Recommendations

- The findings of the study showed that, the idea of beat reporting (specialization reporting as indicated in the editorial policy) has a good ground to be practiced in EBC in document. But the topics need to be revised.
- Since there is no limit in deciding the areas of specialization, the corporations need to revise the current themes and come up with more areas which concern the country's situation.
- Practically due to lack of reporters it could not be practical. Therefore, as indicated in the gap analysis study the need for more reporters has to be answered as soon as possible.
- The recruitment and hiring process should focus on bringing professionally and practically candidates.
- Refreshment and on job trainings need to be provide for the reporters and their supporting staff. Need assessment must be done the important topics.
- The corporations need to revise the editorial policy and come up with a format that can treat the need for specialized reporting. There must be a clear line between general assignment reporting and specialized reporting.
- The corporation has to work on better benefit schemes for the reporters. The benefits need to consider the nature of the profession the current international practice.
- As much as possible the government should made open the higher positions in EBC for those who have the knowledge, the experience and competency to lead it.

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Appendix

Interview Guide Questions

In depth interview questions for news editors

1. What is your and your organization's stand regarding beat reporting? its importance
2. How news stories will be prioritized?
3. What factors determine the news issues?
4. How journalists and reporters will be assigned to cover news stories?
5. How do you evaluate their interest?
6. How do you evaluate the practice of beat reporting in EBC?
7. What do you think are the challenges in doing so?
8. What do you think the role of the practice in increasing the organization's credibility?
9. How do you relate the public's right to information and the practice of beat reporting?

FGD questions for reporters

1. Please tell me your qualification, field of study and years of experience.
2. How will you be assigned to cover news stories?
3. Who are your sources?
4. What are the challenges in working as reporter?

5. How do you think it will be best done?
6. Are there special trainings offered by the corporation for the reporters?
7. How do you relate the right of the public to information and beat reporting?
8. Do you want to be assigned as beat reporter, if yes why? If yes, in what beat and why?