A Study on the Practice of Kombolcha Community Radio, Amhara, Ethiopia (Access, Participation and Platform)

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the practices of Kombolcha Community Radio (KCR). The theory of participatory communication as articulated in the UNESCO's debates of the 1970s and the dialogical or critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire served as the theoretical frameworks in this study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in the study. Questionnaires, interviews, documents and observation were the tools employed for gathering the data from residents of the community and KCR staff. Probability sampling (i.e. random sampling) and non-random sampling (i.e. purposive sampling) methods were used to select the subjects. Based on the information obtained, it was found that KCR focused on entertainment (i.e. music), educational, phone-in and discussion programs. It provided good access, but the quality of the signal and the representation of the community culture in the output of the station's programs were found to be poor. The participation of the community was also found to be poor in the overall activity of the station. Even though the community was assumed to participate in decision making process through their representatives, the representatives themselves didn't participate in the station's activity. Similarly, the study revealed that the station gave independent platform were the community members discuss of issues of concern to them. Finally, it was recommended that the station focus on participatory programs, use modern transmission equipment and give much emphasis to the Kombolcha Community's culture as well as creating a mechanism for soliciting feedback.

Keywords: Access, Community Radio, participation, Platform, Kombolicha

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Community radio is one part of community media that is often defined by the parameters with which groups have to work, including organizational structure, production techniques and programming (Rennie, 2006). Community radio does not adhere to a set of definitions. Its identity is contextual and its vision is shaped by the people who use it. The prevailing ideas of citizen participation and ownership as well as an opportunity to give voice to the previously unheard are the common denominators. Community radio is a type of radio made to serve people; a radio that encourages expression and participation and that values local culture (AMARC, 2003). Its purpose is to give voice to those without voice (Girard, 1992).

The earlier media development approaches, such as modernization, had focused on the imposition of narrow media-based and top-down solutions to the cultural and social problems of communities. Recently, other initiatives have come forth with the commitment to promote local development through empowerment and participation. These approaches have contributed a lot for the emergence of community radio. MECCSA's stated that community radio operates under the democratic-participatory theory (Kennedy Javuru, 2011).

The world's first community radio organization was formed in 1906 (Rennie, 2006). Lewish Hill built the first transmitter of community radio, and he was the pioneer of community radio in the United States (ibid). Latin America, Bolivia and Colombia used community radio for social change as well as used it for direct political struggle to counter the dominate political culture (Servaes, 2002). Community radio emerged in Africa three decades ago. The Government of Kenya was the first to open the door to UNESCO's proposal for setting up a community radio in May 1982 (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were operating the community radio in the absence of a regulatory framework (Wanyeki, 2000). Central and South Africa started a more advanced community radio. Similarly, Ghana, Burkinafaso and Nigeria are developing legal frameworks to promote community radio (HOACBP, 2002).

In Ethiopia, community radio is a recent phenomenon when compared with developed countries. The Ethiopian Broadcast Authority approved the proclamation in 2005. In accordance with Article 47 of the broadcasting proclamation No.533/2007, "Community Radio Proclamation directive" was cited. The first community radio license was awarded to Kore Community Radio in January 2007 (Getahun, 2006 unpublished thesis). At present, including those currently in the pipeline, Ethiopia has 12 community radios. *Kombolcha* community radio is the one with in these (EBA, 2012). The Broadcast Authority believes that community media are necessary in order to fulfill the information, education and entertainment needs of each nation and nationality and people of Ethiopia. *Kombolcha* Community Radio is one of the community radios in Ethiopia. It got its license

in March 2008. It transmits some regular programs in Amharic language. It broadcasts 14 hrs a day at 104.8 wavelengths (Ward, 2011:43). The program genres that are broadcast in the station include children's programs (4%), debate and discussion (20%), drama (7%), entertainment (21%), health (6%), phone-ins (32%) and sport (10%) (ibid).

The operation of community radio depends on the theory of participatory communication and developmental participatory communication as a framework. Participatory communication encourages participation, stimulate critical thinking, and stress process as the main tasks of development communication (Altafin, 1991). Communities should be encouraged to participate in decision making, implementation, and evaluation of projects. Community empowerment has become one of the main contributions of participatory theories to develop communication.

The value of participatory media lies not in being an instrument of transmission but in being the channel of communication that promotes the exchange of views among the community members. Community media deal with various subjects: literacy, health, safety, agricultural productivity, land ownership, gender and religion. Community media here play a facilitative role and have a greater distance from centers of power, since they seek to provide citizens with a platform for expressing themselves and participating in the political process (http://www.uta.fi/jour/english/ontact/nordenstreng_ eng. html). Community broadcasting generally refers to broadcast media which are independent, civic society based and which operate for social benefit not for profit (Buckley, 2008). Community radio responds to the needs of the community it serves, contributes to its development within progressive, perspectives promoting social change. Community radio strives to democratize communication through community participation in different forms in accordance with each specific social context (World Association of Community Broadcasters: AMARC, 1988). In this sense, it could be said that community radio is guided by participatory communication theory. Communication for social change relies on participatory approaches which emphasize the notion of dialogue as central to development (African Communication Research: 2008, vol.1, No. 1). Communication for social change calls attention to relevance of the ongoing policy and structural changes in providing new opportunities for communication interventions. It recognizes that transformations open possibilities for community-based, decentralized form of participation and other issues (ibid).

Community radio has great contribution for harmonious social interaction, economic development, political participation, and the existence of culture and language. The relevance of community radio in Ethiopia is undeniable because of illiteracy in the nation, the existence of more than 80 nation and nationalities, the infancy of democratization as well as deep-rooted problems, such as poverty, diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria), lack of infrastructure and other development obstacles. In Ethiopia, the community media would be instrumental in teaching the people about gender issues, education, health care, conflict resolution, family planning, harmful traditional practices, culture, politics and so on (EBA, 2001).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Community radio has significantly impacted developing countries around the world. It has been credited with playing significant roles in political and social struggles across the globe. From Colombia to the Philippines, Tanzania to Korea, small locally owned and operated community radio stations have played a major role in what scholars have referred to as participatory communication for social change (Dorgon, 2001). According to the 2001 Rockefeller Foundation Report, the power and influence of community radio in developing countries is a result of five factors. First, the technology is affordable for both broadcaster and listener. Second, the listener format is valuable for unable to read and write population in rural areas. Third, local tradition and cultures can be shared through local radio. Fourth, the equipment requires little maintenance and programming is dependent on community involvement. Finally, the convergence between radio and the internet is creating powerful new networking opportunities.

In the 21th century, people need to know what is going on around them. The necessity of information is unquestionable because without information people live in the dark. Information leads people to participate in politics, economics and other social issues. When they do these, they develop a good habit of motivation, which would lead them to engage in participatory communication. Community based media can become an important instrument for community participation in media and in decision-making processes of development related issues. Community radio takes, as a given, the principle that people in developing countries need information about family planning, health and agricultural development in order to lead better lives.

Ethiopia is the country of many nations, nationalities and people with different languages, cultures, norms, geographic location and other social traditions. It is challenged to meet the interests of all the nations, nationalities and people with reference to ensuring equitable access to media. However, the constitution of the FDRE in, Article 29, and No.2 assured the right to freedom of expression (FDRE Constitution, 1995). In order to fulfill the needs of each nation and nationality, the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority has passed a directive for the establishment of community radio and the procedures for the granting of license for any interested community as well as nongovernmental organization to operate community radio. The directive states the importance of community radio as follows:

A community broadcast service plays a significant role in fulfilling education, information and entertainment needs of community which the commercial and government broadcasting service do not cover; while, it is necessary to expand and develop the service in order to fulfill the needs for information, education and entertainment of each nation nationality and people for our country being the home to various nations, nationalities and peoples (EBA: ECRBS, No.2/2008).

There are also echoes of development journalism in some of the community radio projects funded by International Nongovernmental Organizations working in less-developed countries today.

Community radio is established depending on the following principles: access, participation, self-management, community mandate and accountability (Tabing, 2002). According to Tabing (2002), community radio serves a recognizable community, encourages participatory democracy, offers the opportunity to any member of the community to initiate communication and participate in program making, management and ownership of the station, uses technology appropriate to the economic capability of the people is motivated by community well being, not commercial considerations, and it promotes and improves problem solving capacity of the community.

Community radio aims to fulfill the following functions: reflect and promote local identity, character, and culture; create diversity of voices and opinions on the air; provide diversity of programs and content; encourage open dialogue and democratic process; promote development, social change, civil society, and good governance; encourage participation, sharing of information and innovation; give voice to the voiceless and so on (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). The program policies should also be participatory programs in which audiences involve and participate in the planning, operation, and evaluation of its programs. Community news, balancing views, coverage of cultural events, local election and educational broadcasts are the main contents of the programs (ibid).

Community radio has its aims and functions as access, participation, and platform, which constitute the concept of participatory development communication. As Ahuja & Chabra (undated, P.83) note "communication is a bridge between people's thoughts, feelings, needs and their external world." Examining the practice of *Kombolcha* community radio was necessitated due to the fact that it is located in a potential area bringing change. According to Fraser and Estrada (2001), the function of CR is encouraged open dialogue and democratic process to promote development, social change, civil society, and good governance. It is situated in the industrial zone in the region. Above 60 % of the population of *Kombolcha* locality live around the station. The coverage of the national media and regional media in the town has usually been poor in coverage of local issues and concerns. Because the above media focused on national and regional issues instead of *Kombolcha* Community concerns. It is, thus, important to examine whether *Kombolcha* Community Radio lives up to ideals (i.e., access, participation and platform) or not.

3. BASIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS
This study tried to addressing the following research questions:
- What types of radio programs are transmitted via *Kombolcha* Community Radio?
- How does *Kombolcha* Community Radio apply the principles of public access and participation?
- Does the *Kombolcha* Community Radio provide an opportunity for the community member to discuss issues that concerned them?

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
4.1. General objective
The general objective of the study was to examine the practices of *Kombolcha* Community Radio in light of democratic participatory framework.
4.2. Specific objectives
Besides the general objective of the study, this research tried;
- To identify the main programs being transmitted by *Kombolcha* Community Radio,
- To evaluate the applicability of the principles of public access and participation in *Kombolcha* community radio, and
- To examine whether *Kombolcha* Radio gives independent platform for its community members to discuss issues that concern them.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
The outcome of the study would be valuable for journalists, administrators of the community radio, and community members in shedding light on the actual practice of *Kombolcha* Community Radio. Beside this, it helps to the community members to exercise and develop the actual practice and strength their own identities, cultures, interests, languages, work habits, skills, moral rearmament and there by develop their knowledge, and also for researchers who might want to study the practice of community radio in Ethiopia.

6.   SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Owing to time and resources, the study focused on the practices of *Kombolcha* community Radio. The sample selected only in Kombolcha Town Administration (i.e., five kebele). It targeted the issues of access, participation and platform as laid out in Freirean and UNESCO's discourse approaches to participatory communication.
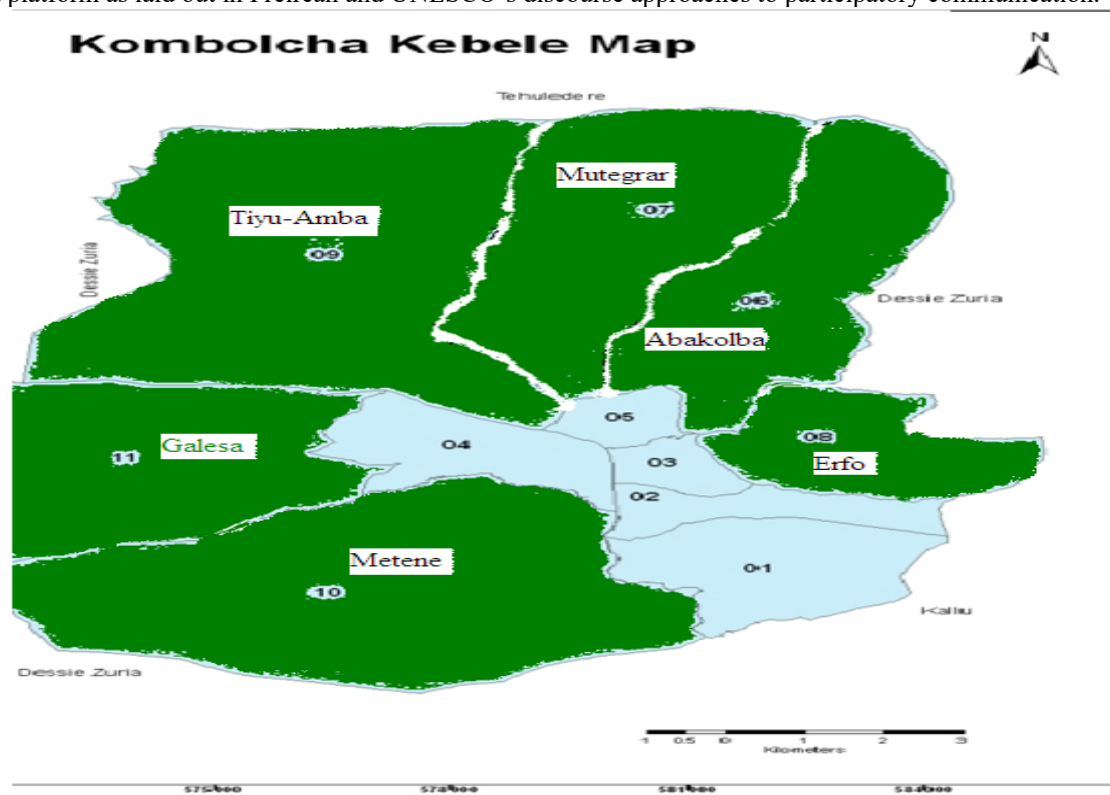
Source: Kombolch City Administration

7.   METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

7.1.   Research Method

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. As Dornyei (2007) stated, "Mixed methods approach involves the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods with the hope of offering the best of both worlds". Quantitative inquiry helped the researcher to gather the data from the community on the aspect of access, participation and platform. Qualitative method also contributed to gather the data from staff and board members, documents and observation on the practice of KCR.

7.2.   Data Collection Tools

In order to examine the practice of *Kombolcha* Community Radio, the study used mixed methods. In this study, the data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, non-participant observation, and analysis of written materials. The methods chosen allowed the researcher to triangulate the results gained from each method.

7.2.1.   Questionnaires

According to Borge (1996), questionnaire is used extensively in research to collect information that is not directly observable. This method helps to inquire more detail information. This data collection tool was used to collect information from the community of *Kombolcha* Town Administration on issues of access, participation and platform in relation to the station. The self-completion questionnaires: closed-ended and open-ended, were used for data gathering. More focus on the rating scale questions and open-ended questions.

7.2.2.   Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods for data collection. Interviews are appropriate for eliciting individual experiences, opinions, feelings and addressing sensitive topics. Interview makes possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge), what a person likes or dislikes (values and performance), and what a person thinks (attitude and opinion) by providing access to what is inside a person's head (Cohen, 1994). The study employed interview as a tool for gathering information about the practice and performance of the station. Staff and board members of the station were the target respondents.

7.2.3.   Document analysis

According to Gray (2004), "Documents are some of the most frequently used unobtrusive measures." This study made use of written documents (i.e. Program schedule, editorial policy and board and general assembly agendas

of the station) for cross checking the practice of the KCR. The Station's 2011 program schedule, editorial policy and agenda were used to look in to the issue of access, participation and platform, and held discussions with the deputy of the station's coordinator so as to gain a deeper understanding of variety in programs, access, participation and platform. These documents were selected on the basis of their importance as judge by the researcher.

7.2.4.   Observations

The fourth instrument used to gather data was observation. Observation provides an opportunity to get beyond people's opinions and self-interpretations of their attitudes and behaviors towards an evaluation of their actions in practice (Gray, 2004; Sarantakos, 2005). The researcher studied all observable community phenomena and equipments as long as they were accessible. The study used non-participant observation. The observation task focused on the equipment of the media, the settings of the station, the activities of the community in the station, and the participation of the community in the program preparation.

7.3.   Sampling Techniques

The study used sampling to select the sample respondents for the sake of necessity, effectiveness, and economy of time, economy of labor and more detailed information. As Langham (1999) noted, the smaller sampling operation lends itself to the application of more rigorous controls, thus ensuring better accuracy.

In this study, probability (i.e. random sampling) method was used to select samples from the community. The key component of probability sampling is random sampling (Dornyei, 2007). Sample selection was made by using rule of thumb. The rule of thumb suggested that random samples are almost always more representative than non-random samples (ibid).   The more scientific the sample procedures, the smaller the sample size can be; 0.1 % of the population can produce accurate generalization (Dornyei, 2007).   Due to this, for the questionnaire, 61 respondents were randomly selected from the community. The respondents   were selected from residents of different *kebeles* of *Kombolcha* Town Administration (i.e. five town *kebeles*).

On the other hand, interviewees were selected by using non-probability sampling (i.e. purposive sampling). They were selected purposively depending on their contribution, position and availability in the station. Thus, interviews were conducted with the station coordinator, two board members, and four staff members of the station.

7.4.   Data analysis and interpretation

As discussed above, this study used mixed research method. The data analysis and interpretation was done after the data were collected. First, the data were gathered through the tools discussed above. Second, the data were organized and summarized on the summary sheet. Third, the researcher grouped the data according to their types and natures. Finally, the data were analyzed and interpreted according to their type and nature with suitable analytical methods. These methods were deployed depending on the nature of the data, the purpose of the analysis and the nature of the underlying paradigm.

8.   DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings from quantitative and qualitative analysis in the previous sub-section are discussed in light of objectives of the study. To this end, the discussion focuses on the practice of *Kombolcha* Community Radio with regards access, participation and platform. Furthermore, this section connects discusses theoretical underpinnings with the actual practice of *Kombolcha* Community Radio. The discussion concentrates on the major components of the findings.

8.1.   The Performance of Kombolcha Community Radio

KCR broadcasts seven days per week for about 70 hours. It airs its program, from 8 AM to 6 PM with FM 104.8. The station has had a well structured schedule, consisting of 14 regular programs, but all transmission hours did not have full programs (see appendix G). Each program had its own day and time allocation. As it stated above, the programs are classified in to genres. Entertainment (62.1%), education (20.4%) and phone-ins and discussion (6.9%) were the most dominant programs in the station. Overall, the KCR gave much emphasis for entertainment programs.

According to Fraser and Estrada (2001), community News, balancing views, coverage of cultural events, local election and educational broadcasters are the main contents of the programs. Even if the KCR proposed to cover on social (40%), economic (10%), entertainment (20%), education (20%), and News (10%) but it accomplished social (8-13 %), economic (0.5%), entertainment (62.1%), education (20.4%), News (1.7%). In KCR, community news and cultural events had less coverage. It had good achievements on education and entertainment programs.

All the station's activities were run by two employees (i.e. a technician & a journalist), there were above 35 volunteers and four administrative employees workers. All the staff members were accountable to the manager of the station, and the station was over seen by the board. The station had some drawbacks which are shortage of finance, lack of trained volunteers, and the transmission equipment. These problems could not perform the station good practice.

8.1.1.   Access

As the study revealed that the coverage of the station's transmission was good. The respondent revealed the station

covered the whole community. Fraser and Estrada (2002) argue that a community radio's broadcast pattern should reach all members of the community. Even though the station's coverage was good, the signal lacked quality. The result showed that all the community members did not receive clear signals. The problem was associated to the antenna of the station. KCR used short antenna (16m) and was planted at a lower area, while the topography of the town is 1800-2000 meter above sea level. As Tabing (2002) stated, the highest position and adjustment of the antenna play a primordial role in achieving high quality and furthest possible reach of an FM broadcast. The transmission of the station could not cover wide area because the mountains blocked the transmission of the station. FM signals usually travel in a more or less straight line following the line of sight (Tabing, 2002). Due to this, some parts of the town residence could not receive quality signal from the station.

As indicated above, the representation of the community's culture in the output of the station's programs was poor. Not all the community's cultures were represented in the output of the station's programs. Only one program (i.e. *Mehder Tebeb*) reflects the culture of *Kombolcha* Community. Fraser and Estrada (2002) noted that CR provides programming that is particular to its community's identity and character; it also focuses on local culture. Beside to this, the editorial policy of the KCR did not include any article that focuses on the culture of the community. Even the entertainment programs did not reflect the culture of the community; they presented national and international contented programs and music. The ability of offering content concerned with truly local issues and culture, content that is produced by local community members is what makes community stations unique (Pringle and Subba, 2007). The practitioners believed that presenting local issues was good but they had problem to present the local contented programs; the problem was related to finance, time, and other logistics. The station had no any finance source (as shown in 4.2.3).

According to Melkote (1991), the development of community's cultural identity acts as a vehicle for people's self-expression. *Kombolcha* Community has many and different culture, yet the station gave poor coverage to the people's culture. It gave only a two-hour program from its 70hrs weekly air time coverage. The function of CR is to identify and promote the community's culture, folk tradition, language, etc. (Mainali, 2008). This is yet to be realized in KCR services.

Almost all respondents argued that the station had a facility to enable the audience to express themselves in their own language. KCR uses Amharic language to transmit its program. Amharic language is also the working language of the whole country, Ethiopia. Hence, it was not a challenge for the station to enable the audience to express themselves in their own language. According to Fraser and Estrada (2002), the community wants to hear their own experiences and concerns, told in their own voices and in their own language. On the other hand, the result showed that even though the community could express themselves in their own language, there was no much opportunity for the community to express themselves in the station.

As stated above, the development of the community's cultural identity act as a vehicle for people's self-expression. But KCR gave low coverage for the community's culture and less opportunities for the community to express themselves. This contradicts tenet of the AMARC, i.e., community radio being "broadcasting in the community, by the community, for the community and from the community". Local languages and expressions are the raw materials that feed community radios (Fraser and Estrada, 2002). Even though KCR used local language, the practitioners did not use local expressions, dialects and tones. This also contradicts the notion that in the community radio the dominance of local language, colour and personality in the manner in which programs are presented and everyday language, colloquialism, expressions, and embellishment phrase are encouraged (Tabing, 2002). Instead of this, the KCR program producers tried to follow standard language, expressions and colours. This shows that local issues and the community's needs got expression in the standard language. As Fraser and Estrada (2002) noted, CR should deal with local issues in local language and expressions.

It was also found that, the continuous interaction between the producers and receivers of the massages was good. However, the station had limited feedback access to receive the feedback with its audience. According to Fraser and Estrada (2002), in community radio, there should been continuous interaction between the producers and receivers of the message, because the radio itself acts as a principal channel for this interaction. In this regard, feedback system is necessary to make continuous interaction. KCR station had only one phone line to receive the feedback from its audience. Regarding feedback, Tabing (2002) is of the opinion that access to the facility is the primary step towards the full democratization of the communication system. He also added that feedback channels should always be open, and full interaction between the produces and receivers of the message should be maintained.

This appears to suggest that in order to make communication fully democratic, the feedback system has to be full and open. That helps to make full interaction between the producers and receivers of the messages. But as could be seen from the finding, KCR had poor feedback system. Therefore, this problem seen as obstacle for KCR makes open and full interaction between the producers and receivers of the message.

Even though the feedback system was poor, the station's office/studio was near to the community. KCR was built in the center of the town. Physical access of the station permits great interaction between the station and its listening community (HOACBP, 2002). It helps the community and the practitioners to make continuous

interaction and participate actively in the station's practice. Fraser and Estrada (2002) recommended that the studio should be as close as possible to the listeners of the population.

8.1.2.   Participation

One of the unique characteristics of community radio is the active participation of the community in every process of the station (Tabing, 2002). As the result revealed, *Kombolcha* Community members did not actively participate in administrating and financing the station. Regarding finance, there was no clear structure in the station as to how could finance the station. The station was run with financial from a few institutions   and from advertisement. Fraser and Estrada (2002) argue that the community has to participate in administrating and financing the radio station.

However, the *Kombolcha* Community was not actively participating in financing and administering of the radio station. Normatively, what distinguishes CR from other media is the high level of people's participation in administration and financing of the station (Tabing, 2002). In this regard, it can be concluded that *Kombolcha* Community's participation was very low. They never also participated in formulating plans and polices of the radio services. The station's plans and policies were formulated by the board members of the station. KCR was administered by the board of the station. Each member of the board was a representative of different social class, institutions, and gender in the community. The board's task is to make decisions and formulate policies with respect to the operation of the community radio (Tabing, 2002). In KCR, the management of the station to made any improvement on the station's policies and plans if it necessary and the board approved it.

In addition, the finding revealed that the community did not have part in defining the station's objectives and programming. The community should have active involvement in both programming and management (HOACBP, 2002; Fraser and Estrada, 2002). This being the case, the *Kombolcha* Community never participated directly in defining the station's objectives and programming.

As indicated, the community and their representatives (i.e. board members) have equal power in defining the station's objectives and programming. This shows that *Kombolcha* Community participates in defining the station's objectives and programming with their representatives. However during the annual meeting only 207 people attended from the total population and in a year board member's meeting only 4-5 people attended within 300 members (see appendix H). Then the community's and their representative participation was low in the station's activity.

The community did not actively participate in deciding on the program content, duration, and schedule of the radio. According to Fraser and Estrada (2002), the community should participate in decisions concerning program content, duration and schedule. The participation of community in programs involves: idea generating, selecting themes, research, program planning, production, editing, program monitoring and evaluation was very low. It makes contradict with the theories of PC. According to Tabing (2002) citizens' participation in radio allowed at the levels from planning to implementation and evaluation of the project.

Regarding the mandate to select the program themes they want or selecting themes, the *Kombolcha* Community did not actively participate. According to Fraser and Estrada (2001), the station's programming should be based on the community access and participation and should reflect the special interest and needs of the listeners. KCR programs are fixed but there were some opportunities that the community has to select the themes of the program. *Kombolcha* Community participates in two different ways to select the program themes; they participate indirectly with their representatives and by selecting the daily program themes via phone for discussion and phone-ins programs.

Here, the community used their right to select the themes of the programs, but there had limited freedom to select the theme of the programs.

The community members did not have any participation in program evaluation. However, the editorial policy (Art. 4) allowed the community to participate in program evaluation. The community had freedom to comment and criticize the station's programs, yet their participation is very low. They mention as reasons, the station has no full access for feedback system and there was no any opportunity prepared to evaluating the station's programs. In addition, less awareness of the community about their right and responsibility was one factor.

The management of the station made improvement on the station policies and plans when it is necessary. Fraser and Estrada (2002) noted that overall policy is set by the aforementioned representatives and community-level-committee, but with day-to-day operational decisions about the programming the responsibility is given to the station manager.

8.1.3.   Platform

The study brought to light that the station promoted democratic discussion and offered opportunities for all members of the community. According to Girard (2000), CR should to encourage open-dialogue and democratic process to identify problems, give solutions and mobilize adequate groups for action of change. The notion of participatory communication stress on democratic participation at all levels (Freire, 1983). However, the community could not participate at all levels of the station's activities, i.e., the community's participation from program preparation to evaluation.

The station provided platform for the community which was used for interactive discussion, debate, analysis, exchange of ideas and opinions. Scholars noted that CR encourages open-dialogue with in the community by servicing as independent platform for interactive discussion. KCR has programs like *Min Yiteyikalu* (What do you want to ask?) and *En'ngager* (Let's discuss) which serve for independent platform.

Kombolcha Community exchange their ideas and opinions through their radio. According to Servaes (1996), the right to participation and emancipation regarding social, cultural and historical reality is seen as a fundamental right of everyone. Depend on this, the schedule of KCR includes dialogical forum for reflection and communication. Freire (1968) also believe that individuals have the capacity for reflection, conceptualizing, critical thinking, making decisions, for planning and social change of their situation. The communication style often applied in the KCR was flat. Community members from all walks of life participated through phone-ins and make discussion on the programs which concern to them. According to Tomasselli and Dunn (2001), dialogue encourages wide community participation in broadcasting; provide an opportunity for horizontal communication, reflect the cultural and social diversity of the community even if it was less opportunity.

As stated in the editorial policy of the station, the station reflects different interests of various parts of the community (i.e. union-organizations, workers, youth etc) except the issue of religions and politics. UNESCO (1999) noted that participatory method is used in producing the content and programs of community media that reflects the interests of various social groups, especially, youth, women and children. The editorial policy of the station also mandates to present balanced programs and as a result, the station was committed to presenting diversified views of the community equally. On drawback was that there were no programs about women, religion, agriculture, politics, health and other issues in KCR broadcast. Though the station had problems related to finance, some of the above programs are very essential in teaching the community and creating better informed community.

As AMARC (1998) stated, CR broadcasts should not be about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself. As the result revealed when the community faced problems, they bring their problems to the station and the station allows the forum to discuss on that problem. Programs like *Min Yiteyikalu*, *En'negager* and *Tzebt* helped the community to discuss on their concerns. Collective perception can only be achieved through access to information and internal discussion to reflect problems, identify solutions and mobilize the adequate groups for action of change (Fraser and Estrada, 2002). The result showed that local problems and needs of the community were discussed through the radio.

With regard to participation, the structure of the program ensured participation. The programs like *Teyakena Melse*, *Leman Yigabzalu*, *Yerswo Wiusanea Menden new*, *En'negager*, and *Min yiteyikalui* were programs that encourage people to participate in the station's programs. Participation implied a higher level of public involvement (Servaes, 1999; Mac Bride, 1980). The community participates by phone and by coming in the station personally while; this study revealed that there was a good participation in KCR when local issues were raised.

9.   CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that the station had low performance. It broadcast seven days per week for the total of up to 70 hrs. The station had some regular programs. The schedule of the station's program consisted of 14 programs. More than 62.1% of the allocated time was covered with entertainment, especially music.

It also revealed that the station's transmission was good but it did not cover the whole community. The transmission's signal quality was poor due to the topographic factors and the nature of the antenna used. The cultural representation of KCR was also poor. KCR often gave opportunity for the audience to express themselves in their own language but it did not have much space or programs for the community to express themselves in good manner. The continuous interaction between the producers and receivers of the message was found to be good. The station itself acts as the principal channel for the interaction but there was poor feedback system.

The station was administered by the board but the participation of the community in the financing of the station was very low. This was attributed to the absence of clear structured rules and regulations about how the community should participate in supporting the station. The community did not directly participate in formulating plans and policies of the radio service rather they participated indirectly through their representatives (i.e. board). Similarly, members of the community participated in defining the station's objectives and its programming through their representatives, a community-level-committee i.e. the board but their participation was low. The management of the station made decisions concerning program content, duration and schedule of the station's programs. The programs in KCR were fixed but the themes/topics of some programs were selected based on the interest of the community, but the community's participation in program evaluation was low.

KCR station promoted democratic discussion and offered equal chance for all members of the community. The station provided platform for the community for interactive discussion, debate, analysis and exchange of ideas and opinions. *Kombolcha* Community radio promoted   problem-solving discussions on the concerns of the community. The community also involved actively in the discussions when local issues were raised for discussion.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to improve the practices of *Kombolcha* Community Radio as well as the practice of community radio in Ethiopia.

- The station should focus on participatory programs. It must appeal to the needs of its audience.
- To increase the coverage and quality of the signal, the station should use long antenna or plant it on high ground.
- *Kombolcha* Community radio should give much emphasis for the community's culture, norm, dialect, expressions, folk tradition etc
- To make continuous interaction with the receivers, it should improve its feedback system and use modernized the communication system (telephone, email, facebook, webpage etc). These help the community to participate in evaluating the programs of the station.
- The station should increase the transmission hours and accessibility of time.

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