

ABSTRACT

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has experienced major financial and mismanagement problems since mid-2000 and yet current scholarship has neither provided a satisfactory explanation of this situation nor suggested effective solutions to these challenges. Based on a qualitative research methodology, this study seeks to determine how issues of viability of the mixed funding model of the public broadcaster (SABC) can be addressed. In addition, this study reflects on different but related public service broadcasters (PSBs) mainly in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom- BBC for aspects of their models that the SABC could emulate in order to resolve its viability issues. At its heart, this study explores and articulates the macro-level effects of the mixed funding model of the SABC. The core argument generated by this study revolves around the current lack of viability of the mixed funding model of the SABC owing to the fact that it is heavily dependent on commercial revenue –income generated primarily from advertising – while government funds and public funds (licence fees) play a minuscule role.

The findings of this study reveal that the viability of the mixed funding model of the SABC should not be seen narrowly in terms of finances, but rather in the ability of the SABC to deliver on its public mandate as these are intrinsically intertwined. The findings also point to the fact that the SABC must be funded predominantly by public funds– a licence fee collected not by the public broadcaster itself, but by the South African Revenue Service (SARS) to ensure its viability going forward.

In addition, for a public mandate to be realised, it is imperative that the SABC has a solid and independent governing structure, which is a key requirement for a public broadcaster.