

**A STUDY OF PROFESSIONALISM AND THE PROFESSIONALISATION
OF JOURNALISTS IN UGANDA FROM 1995 TO 2008**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

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OCTOBER 2008

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine how Ugandan journalists' and politicians' views on journalism professionalisation in Uganda relate to the broad theoretical arguments about professionalism within sociology and media studies. It also seeks to examine how such views impact on the democratic role of the media. The study finds out that there are two sets of distinct ideas on journalism professionalisation. The idea espoused by politicians is statutory professionalisation in which the state plays a major role through regulation and control, hence professionalisation is seen primarily as a control system. On the other hand, journalists perceive professionalisation as nurtured by voluntarily and socially inculcated professional values, hence as a value system.

The study however, finds that both sets of understandings have their own complexities. While the statutory approach has complexities like how core elements of professionalism such as professional values can be imposed through legislation, the voluntary approach to professionalism also exhibits tensions within, especially stemming from the relationship between the professional and the news organisation regarding what constitutes professionalism.

The study concludes that both sets of ideas have implications for the democratic role of the media, with both perceptions of professionalism curtailing this role. Statutory professionalisation in the Ugandan political context where the state is the dominant institution brings media institutions within its control, which leads to suppression of content of democratic value through a number of means. On the other hand, the self-regulatory perception does not protect media professionalism from the assault of commercial imperatives, especially when fused with state patronage in regard to broadcasting licences and placement of advertising.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	I
TABLE OF CONTENTS	II
LIST OF ACRONYMS	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VI
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT	1
1.1.1 LOCAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY.....	1
1.1.2 THE GLOBAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	5
1.1.3 THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	7
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	9
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	10
1.4 RESEARCH GOAL	10
1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	11
1.6 SUMMARY OF CONTENT	12
1.7 CONCLUSION.....	14
CHAPTER TWO	15
THE SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS	15
2.0 INTRODUCTION.....	15
2.1 ORIGINS AND ISSUES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS.....	15
2.2 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF PROFESSIONS.....	17
2.2.1 THE STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH.....	17
2.2.1.1 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS UNDER STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	18
2.2.1.2 INADEQUACIES OF STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM.....	20
2.2.2 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH	22
2.2.3 THE POWER RELATIONS APPROACH.....	23
2.2.3.1 RE-DEFINING PROFESSION, PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONALISATION	25
2.3 JOHNSON’S TYPOLOGY OF INSTITUTIONALISED FORMS OF OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL.....	27
2.3.1 COLLEGIATE FORM OF OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL	28
2.3.2 PATRONAGE FORM OF OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL.....	31
2.3.3 MEDIATIVE FORM OF OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL	33
2.4 CONCLUSION.....	35
CHAPTER THREE	38
JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISM IN MEDIA STUDIES	38
3.0 INTRODUCTION.....	38
3.1 JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISM AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES	38
3.2 THEORETICAL APPROACHES IN MEDIA STUDIES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION OF JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISM.....	47
3.2.1 THE LIBERAL-PLURALIST INTERPRETATION.....	47
3.2.2 THE MARXIST INTERPRETATION	50
3.2.3 THE RADICAL-DEMOCRATIC INTERPRETATION.....	58
3.3 CONCLUSION.....	63
CHAPTER FOUR	65
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	65

4.0 INTRODUCTION.....	65
4.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL RESEARCH.....	65
4.2 THE QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	67
4.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	70
4.3.1 THE POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH	70
4.3.2 LEE’S THEORETICAL DICHOTOMY OF POLITICAL ECONOMY	73
4.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS.....	79
4.4.1 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS.....	79
4.4.1.1 SAMPLING OF DOCUMENTS	82
4.4.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS	84
4.4.2.1 SAMPLING OF INTERVIEWEES AND INTERVIEW PROCEDURE.....	86
4.4.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS	88
4.5 CONCLUSION.....	89
CHAPTER FIVE	90
APPROACHES TO JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION IN UGANDA.....	90
5.0 INTRODUCTION.....	90
5.1 THE STATUTORY APPROACH TO JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION	90
5.1.1 THE REGULATORY AND CONTROL FUNCTION OF THE STATUTORY APPROACH	92
5.1.2 THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND FELLOWSHIP FUNCTION OF THE STATUTORY APPROACH	95
5.1.3 CODES OF ETHICS UNDER THE STATUTORY APPROACH	97
5.2 THE SELF REGULATORY APPROACH TO PROFESSIONALISATION	99
5.2.1 CODE OF ETHICS UNDER THE SELF-REGULATORY APPROACH.....	102
5.3 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION IN <i>THE MONITOR</i> AND <i>NEW VISION</i> NEWSPAPERS....	104
5.4 CONCLUSION.....	112
CHAPTER SIX	114
PERCEPTIONS BY UGANDAN POLITICIANS OF JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION.....	114
6.0 INTRODUCTION.....	114
6.1 POLITICIANS’ PERCEPTIONS OF JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION	114
6.1.1 MEDIA FREEDOM, INDEPENDENCE AND DEMOCRACY	115
6.1.2 JOURNALISM AS A PROFESSION AND JOURNALISTS AS PROFESSIONALS	116
6.1.3 PERCEIVED ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROFESSIONALISATION	118
6.1.4 PROFESSIONALISATION AS A MEANS OF REGULATION AND CONTROL.....	121
6.1.5 PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS.....	125
6.2 CONCLUSIONS ON PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICIANS.....	127
CHAPTER SEVEN	129
PERCEPTIONS BY UGANDAN JOURNALISTS OF JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION	129
7.0 INTRODUCTION.....	129
7.1 JOURNALISTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION	129
7.1.1 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONCEPTS OF PROFESSION, PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONALISATION	130
7.1.2 PERCEPTIONS OF STATUTORY PROFESSIONALISATION BY UGANDAN JOURNALISTS	135
7.1.3 PERCEIVED ROLE OF JOURNALISTIC VALUES IN PROFESSIONALISATION	140
7.1.4 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE DEMOCRATIC ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN UGANDA.....	145
7.2 CONCLUSION.....	149
CHAPTER EIGHT.....	151
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION	151
8.0 INTRODUCTION.....	151
8.1 PROFESSIONS AND LEGISLATION: THE CASE OF JOURNALISM	151

8.2 IMPLICATIONS OF ENTRY RESTRICTIONS AND LICENSING.....	155
8.3 APPLICATION OF FINDINGS TO JOHNSON’S TYPOLOGY OF ANALYSIS	160
8.3.1 PROFESSIONALISATION OF UGANDAN JOURNALISTS AS A COLLEGIATE FORM OF CONTROL	161
8.3.2 PROFESSIONALISATION IN UGANDA AS A PATRONAGE FORM OF OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL.....	162
8.3.3 JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION AS A MEDIATIVE FORM OF OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL.....	163
8.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN UGANDA	165
8.5 CONCLUSION.....	173
8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS	176
APPENDIX I : INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	178
APPENDIX II: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS.....	180
REFERENCES	217
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES	222
INTERVIEWS.....	223

LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. BBC	:	British Broadcasting Corporation
2. CBO	:	Community Based Organisation
3. CNN	:	Cable News Network
4. DANIDA	:	Danish Development Agency
5. DemGroup	:	Democracy Monitoring Group
6. EAMI	:	East African Media Institute
7. KAS	:	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
8. MP	:	Member of Parliament
9. NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
10. NIJU	:	National Institute of Journalists of Uganda
11. NMU	:	Natural Meaning Unit
12. NRA	:	National Resistance Army
13. NRC	:	National Resistance Council
14. NRM	:	National Resistance Movement
15. RDC	:	Resident District Commissioner
16. UBC	:	Uganda Broadcasting Corporation
17. UJA	:	Uganda Journalists Association
18. UMDF	:	Uganda Media Development Foundation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge some people and institutions whose contribution to the production of this work has been very valuable. First of all, my indefatigable supervisor, Prof. Guy Berger, whose guidance throughout the course of doing this work has been priceless. My association with him has expanded my appreciation of the connection between theoretical knowledge and the practical work we do in the course of our duties. In other words this work has helped me expand the bounds of possibility in my routine work in media development, courtesy of his guidance. Secondly I would like to acknowledge the material contribution of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) who have not only helped me to develop my career through work, but have also funded my studies at Rhodes.

Thirdly I would like to appreciate the Uganda Media Development Foundation (UMDF), the NGO that I have worked for all these years, and which has shaped my thinking and attitudes towards media development issues. It has helped me define the niche in my professional career, that is the intrinsic connection between media and democracy. The topic of this research was actually inspired by my daily experiences in the course of doing my work at UMDF.

Last but not least, special appreciation to my wife, Mrs Carolyne Esther Mayiga, whose daily encouragement to finish this work has sometimes made me question my own resolve. She is been such an inspiration.

This work is dedicated to my two little daughters, Eileen Jane Namata Mayiga and Evelyn Jordana Nanziri Mayiga both of whom came to be in the course of doing this work. May it inspire them to great academic heights.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter is a summary of the study, describing its local, global and theoretical contexts. It also describes the goals as well as the methodology. It ends with a summary of the contents of each chapter.

1.1 Research Context

1.1.1 Local Context of the Study

This study is located in Uganda, East Africa, where the state imposed a form of journalism professionalism on Ugandan journalists, through a law passed by parliament in 1995. The law, known as The Press and Journalist Statute, was a culmination of an uneasy relationship between the government of President Yoweri Museveni (who captured state power in 1986) and the media. Kayanja (2002) argues that the repressive use of the law against the media manifested itself early during President Museveni's regime when in 1988 the government amended the 1950 Penal Code Act to include a section barring the media from publishing information regarding military installations, equipment and movements. This was the time when the new government was faced with a rebellion against its legitimacy in the north and north-east of the country. Kayanja (2002) further argues that within the same period, the government came up with another amendment to the Penal Code known as the "Anti-sectarian Law" barring the media from publishing information that could bring ill feelings against anyone because of their tribe, sex, religion, region or ethnicity. Opposition groups then had been using the media to comment about the high profile presence of what were considered as people of Rwandese origin, in the National Resistance Army (NRA) which was the new Ugandan army. According to Kayanja (2002), the intention of the amendment was to attempt to achieve national unity as well as silencing the anti-Rwandan groups that were using the media.

The Press and Journalist Statute can then be said to have come against a background of doubts and scepticism by the new government about the role of the

media in promoting the new political and ideological dispensation, which was characterised by liberal economic recovery efforts but with inhibiting restrictions on political freedoms, especially political pluralism. But more importantly, the perceived shortcomings of the media were thought by the new government to be caused by irresponsible journalism because of lack of codified ethical standards and institutionalised oversight (Kayanja, 2002). However, other accounts indicate that the government regarded Ugandan journalists as lacking the necessary academic education to understand and appreciate the demands and challenges of the new political and ideological dispensation, which explained their perceived irresponsible, unethical and critical journalism (See Appendix II, T6, K10, and M10). One news editor in an interview with this researcher captured the government mood about journalists at that time: "...their [government] feeling was that you have [news]papers which simply wrote what they wrote because the profession was not legally sorted out. That anyone could masquerade as a journalist. Some were saying that journalists were fishmongers who abandoned their nets, came to the city, picked pens and became journalists." Matters were not helped by the state of journalists' associations in the country which, as Mwesige (2004) notes, had been weakened because of political and economic factors as well as internal wrangling.

The Hansard (1995) which is the official record of parliamentary debates quoted the then Information Minister, Hon. Paul Etyang as indicating that the idea of coming up with a comprehensive law to regulate the media took eight years to materialise, outliving "four Ministers [of information] and three Prime Ministers" (Hansard, 1995:152). The length of period is attributed to the controversy it generated especially with journalists, and the complexities it posed in implementation. Kayanja (2002) argues that the first draft was produced in 1990 but because of the stiff opposition it received from journalists and their allies in the National Resistance Council (NRC), Uganda's legislative body at that time, it was shelved until some sort of compromise was reached that culminated in the press law in 1995. Even then, there are indications that the final form of the law did not reflect a consensus between journalists and the law makers because it is said to have incorporated only "close to 50%" of the journalists' submission (*The Monitor*, 1995:3).

The necessity of the law to professionalise journalism in Uganda therefore was underpinned by the sensitivity and attitude of the new government about the professional standards of journalists, and the perceived lack of cohesion among journalists' associations. This law was represented by the government as having the effect of ensuring press freedom, encouraging and recognising 'responsible' journalism, and recognising journalism as a profession (Hansard, 1995:150). The Press and Journalist Statute therefore was explained as being able to professionalise journalism through regulation of professional conduct and promotion of professional standards through education and training as well as adhering to the code of ethics. The law established the Media Council, which is mandated to regulate the conduct of journalists and take disciplinary action (if necessary), conduct annual licensing of journalists, as well as censoring films, videotapes and theatrical productions. The composition of the council according to Kayanja (2002), and the method of appointment, make it vulnerable to state control because the Information Minister appoints eight out of the thirteen members, thus ensuring that the council is under the control of government. An elaborate discussion of the form and functions of the Media Council is made in chapter five.

The law also established a professional institute for journalists called the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) which is mandated with promoting professional standards of journalists through training and fellowship. However, to be a full member of the institute, one must have a degree in journalism or mass communication, or a degree from any other field plus a post-graduate qualification in mass communication. Short of those qualifications, journalists are not entitled to vote or be voted into any office of the institute. The issue of minimum education standards was specifically criticised by journalists for its implication of disenfranchising many practising journalists who were considered the majority then, who did not possess university degrees (Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), 2007). Lugalambi (1999:2) articulates the arguments of objectors to statutory professionalisation as follows: "What they are saying is that the creation of an elite class of practitioners ordained by their education stands against the very essence of journalism- freedom". The institute is also mandated to keep a roll of journalists,

which the Media Council is supposed to use as a basis to issue practising licenses. NIJU's membership is mandatory because for one to acquire a practising licence from the Media Council, that person must present a certificate of enrolment from NIJU (Republic of Uganda, 1995). The roles and structures of NIJU are as well further discussed in chapter five. The law also created a code of conduct which is supposed to be enforced by the Media Council through punitive measures, the harshest of which is suspension of a practising certificate. According to the law, no journalist is allowed to practice without a certificate, breach of which fetches a prison sentence of not more than six months, or a fine of Uganda Shillings 300,000, or both (See chapter five).

Although the Press and Journalist Statute was established to professionalise journalists, the perceived involvement of government in both the Media Council and NIJU (both NIJU and the Media Council are housed by the Ministry of Information, which is under President's Office) has created credibility problems for both bodies to the extent of reducing them to redundancy (Kayanja, 2002). According to a human rights report on freedom of expression released by FHRI, the law is retrogressive in as far as it enforces minimum education standards as well as a licensing and certification regime. It further reports that the Media Council is even snubbed not only by journalists, but also by the very government that established it:

It is contended that the most positive function the Media Council could serve in Uganda is a mediation role between journalists and government. But this role has never been taken seriously. The industry has no faith in the Media Council and does not feel that it serves the interests of journalists and editors. The Media Council has never stepped in to influence government not to prosecute journalists. In fact, even the state has no proven confidence in the Council, that is why it prefers to take errant journalists to court instead of producing them before the council. Therefore the Media Council has no justifiable function except to suppress the media (FHRI, 2007).

As noted, journalists have objected to government-imposed professionalisation, and a self-regulatory framework has been introduced within the journalism fraternity as a way of addressing legitimate shortcomings of journalism practice, but also as a way of indicating that the occupation had the capacity to regulate itself. The self-regulatory framework has been championed by the East African Media Institute

(EAMI), which is a local media lobby group, working with Panos Eastern Africa (an international communication for development organisation) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The framework establishes the Independent Media Council of Uganda, which is supposed to promote ethical and professional standards through voluntary means (Independent Media Council, 2006). The voluntary council, which is considered as a court of honour, is modelled along the Media Council of Tanzania, which has been presented as a successful model of self-regulation especially by EAMI, although a recent bill called the Tanzania Media Services Bill proposes a statutory form of regulation (see next section). These two approaches to journalism professionalisation in Uganda therefore characterise the local context of this study.

1.1.2 The Global Context of the Study

This study is also underpinned by issues of global significance, especially regarding the methods of professionalising journalism. The issue of professionalisation of journalism and how to achieve professional standards has been of concern to journalists and the general public for many years. Knudson (1996) notes that the Latin American region has had a fair share of the controversy of professionalising journalism where in thirteen countries, *colegios* or professional associations require a university degree in journalism for one to be licensed to practice journalism. The issue of obligatory licensing has not only resulted in court rulings in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic against the practice, but is also seen as having contributed to the souring of the relationship between the United States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which resulted in the US withdrawing from the UN body. The issue was expressed in a Congress bill that forbade any more US funds for UNESCO, “if that organisation implements any policy or procedure the effect of which is to license journalists or their publications, to censor or otherwise restrict the free flow in information within or among countries, or to impose mandatory codes of journalistic practice or ethics” (Knudson, 1996:883). The link between freedom of information and freedom of expression was further articulated by the Special Rapportuer on Freedom of Expression for the Inter-

American Council on Human Rights in 2000 through a declaration that censorship constitutes “an extreme violation of the right to freedom of expression by impeding the free circulation of information, ideas, opinions or news” (cited in Berger, 2007:9).

The significance of the Latin American debate within the global context is that mandatory professionalisation has been linked to violation of human rights, especially freedom of thought and expression, resulting in successful court cases against the practice. Statutory professionalisation in Uganda through the Press and Journalist Statute can be interpreted from the same perspective since it involves mandatory licensing and membership to NIJU. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (ICCPR) to which Uganda is signatory, both recognise the right to hold opinions without interference, and the right to freedom of expression in various forms including oral, writing, print, art or any other media (Berger 2007).

The topic of this study can also be seen from the perspective of its relevance to the African situation where the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights in 2002, adopted the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa. The document touches on a wide range of contemporary freedom of expression issues, with guidelines on observance. The specific relevance of this Declaration is that it specifically touches on journalism professionalism. Principle X provides that: “Media practitioners shall be free to organise themselves into unions and associations; and that the right to express oneself through the media by practicing journalism shall not be restricted to undue legal restrictions” (cited in Berger, 2007:167). From this perspective, this study also concerns itself with the implications of the Press and Journalist Statute in Uganda within the provisions of Principle X.

There are also regional developments that bear resemblance to the debate on journalism professionalisation in Uganda. Kenya did not have statutory regulation until 2007 when the government introduced the Media Council of Kenya Bill. The Bill, just like the Press and Journalist Statute, proposed compulsory licensing for journalists based on academic qualifications and an annual licence fee. It also proposed de-licensing and other punitive forms against journalists found guilty of violating the code. Berger (2007) notes that due to stiff opposition from civil society

organisations, media houses and opposition politicians, there were reports that the Kenyan government was willing to change its mind on the contested provisions. In the same year (2007), in spite of the perceived success of the non-statutory Media Council of Tanzania, the Tanzanian government published the Media Services Bill which bears the same features as the Kenyan Bill and the Ugandan press law. The Tanzanian Bill proposed licensing of journalists by a central body called the Media Standards Board which would license only those journalists who have recognised academic qualifications which are a university degree, a post graduate diploma in journalism or mass communication, or other qualifications to be approved by the board (Berger, 2007).

The widespread role of the state in regulating journalism professional standards is of particular concern to this study, especially how such involvement impacts on the democratic role of the media.

The trend is the same in Ethiopia and Mali where government-controlled press councils license journalists (Berger, 2007), despite increased calls for media freedom and independence as is articulated in the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa. This study is cognisant that the issue of defining who is a journalist along with concomitant rights and responsibilities has in recent years been part of the significance of the impact technology has had on media professionalisation, which has given rise to a category of communicators called bloggers who are exercising their freedom to inform through the internet, without being bound by journalism professional conventions. The debate around the Uganda case may have some wider relevance in this regard.

1.1.3 Theoretical Context of the Study

Theoretically, this study is located within the context of the sociology of professions in general, and journalism professionalism within media studies.

Three basic perspectives have dominated sociological literature on professions. The first and earliest is the functionalist or trait perspective. It regards professions as advancing societal causes such as stability, consensus and moral order, through altruistic service (Johnson, 1972). Within this perspective, Durkheim (1957,

cited in Johnson, 1972) argued that the break-up of the traditional moral order through the division of labour could be rectified by the formation of “moral communities based on occupational membership” (1972:12). Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933, cited in Johnson, 1972) saw professions as stabilising agents, while Tawney (1921, cited in Johnson, 1972) saw them as a neutralising force against individualism. This approach identifies a set of core traits or attributes that all professions share. Such characteristics include in-depth skills based on specialist and theoretical knowledge, training and education, an occupational organisation whose entry is regulated, code of ethics and altruistic service (Johnson, 1972; Beam, 1990; O’Sullivan et al, 1997). Within the same perspective however, Weber (1964, cited in Johnson, 1972) questioned the benefits of professionalism, arguing that professions are bureaucratic mechanisms which function to enforce monopolistic practices. Others like Wright-Mills (1956, cited in Johnson, 1972) and Young (1958, cited in Johnson, 1972) saw professions as a form of meritocracy.

The second is the phenomenological perspective. It rejects a strict definition of professions and instead looks at how the term is invoked in the everyday life of members of a certain occupation, through values, norms and practices (Beam, 1990).

The third, which is the power-relations perspective, emphasises the exercise of power in professions and professionalisation, and therefore looks at the relationship between professionals and other factors such as the political, economic and social environment (Johnson, 1972; Beam, 1990). From this perspective, Johnson (1972) analyses professions according to their different modes of control of tensions between the producer and consumer.

These three sociological models of professions are evident in the diverse nature of the debate about journalistic professionalism. Media scholars have analysed the professional orientation of journalists, their professional values, ideologies, socialisation and practices using these sociological models. Beam (1990) notes that much of the work which analyses professionalism as based on certain values such as objectivity, is essentially phenomenological, while the empirical studies about the features of journalists have followed the trait approach (McLeod and Hawley, 1964; Menanteau-Hourta, 1967; Nayman et al, 1973).

These analyses of journalistic professionalism with their sociological influences are also related to various approaches within media studies. The liberal-pluralist media studies approach argues that media professionalism is a reality since journalists are guided by professional autonomy based on the principles of objectivity and impartiality despite various pressures and influences. It regards the media as an important professional institution in promoting diversity and pluralism in society (Berger, 2000). On the other hand, the Marxist media studies approach challenges the validity of professionalism, arguing that it is a means of subjugating the practitioners to the service of the dominant ideology (Carey, 1969; Curran, et al, 1982; Golding, 1977). Radical democratic approaches argue that the professionalisation of journalists creates an “elite” communicator stratum which excludes regular citizens from the communication process, and runs counter to the universal right to free expression and opinion (Bekken, 1998; Berger, 2000). This echoes the criticisms of professionalism from community radio and citizen journalism perspectives as argued in chapter three.

This study is located within the political economy approach. Under this approach, the dynamics of media production are controlled not by the media professionals themselves, but by the dominant economic and political interests. Political economy therefore views the media not as autonomous organisations, but as institutions closely linked to the dominant economic and power structures. This approach is relevant to the study of media professionalism because it analyses professional ideologies and work practices as forms through which economic and political determinants of the media are linked to content (Tuchman, 1978; Curran et al, 1982).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As argued in the global context of this study (see 1.1.2), professionalisation of journalists and how to achieve it has been a controversial issue in different parts of the world and has always generated debates for and against. This was the same outcome of the decision by the Ugandan state to professionalise journalists of Uganda through a statute (see local context of the study, 1.1.1). However, many such debates on journalism professionalisation have not been put in proper historical and

sociological perspectives. The Ugandan debate on professionalisation of journalists is a case in point because it lacked the deeper analysis of the sociological and democratic implications of the different approaches to professionalisation. This study therefore attempts to delve into the sociological and democratic implications of professionalisation of journalists in Uganda by contextualising the debate on journalism professionalisation in sociology and media studies perspectives.

1.3 Research Questions

This study aims to probe the interpretations by journalists and politicians in Uganda, of the diverse perspectives that inform the debate on professionalisation of journalists as explored in Chapters Two and Three. It also seeks to analyse the implications of such interpretations on the democratic role of the media in Uganda. Therefore in order to pursue these objectives, this study will be underpinned by two major questions. The first is: “How do journalists and politicians in Uganda interpret the diverse perspectives that inform the debate on professionalisation of journalists?” The second question is: “What are the implications of such interpretations for the democratic role of the media in Uganda?”

1.4 Research Goal

This study probes the interpretations by a selection of journalists and politicians in Uganda of the professionalisation of journalists and the implications of such interpretations for the democratic role of the media in Uganda. Therefore the research focuses on the following broad areas: The sociology of professions in general; media professionalism and the debates around it in media studies; the debate on the professionalisation of journalists in Uganda and the implications of such perspectives for the democratic role of the media in Uganda.

As a mid-career journalism trainer who has carried out various trainings in Uganda on the essence of professionalism in journalism, I am interested in understanding how professional journalism is intellectually constructed both historically and more recently among Ugandan stakeholders in the professionalisation debate, in relation to the perspectives that inform the debate on journalistic

professionalism in media studies. As already cited in this chapter (see 1.1.1), I am aware of two studies done in Uganda which are related to my area of study. One was done by Mwesige (2004) which was an attempt at profiling Ugandan journalists using various profiles which included professionalism. The second, which is closest to this study and was the first attempt to address the subject of journalism professionalisation in the Ugandan context after the enactment of the Press and Journalist Statute, 1995, was done by Lugalambi (1999) which actually attempted to put the Ugandan debate about professionalisation in historical and sociological perspectives. The gist of his argument was that in spite of the arguments especially by journalists that journalism is a function of freedom of expression and therefore should not be statutorily defined like other professions, it must allow itself to be measured by the standards of other professions which claim to be central to the functioning of modern society. His study however dwelt more on the sociological perspectives that inform professionalism than the perspectives in media studies, as well as the democratic implications of professionalising journalism. My study seeks to widen the scope of the debate to include those issues that were not addressed, and I hope that it will fill the gap and broaden the understanding of the issue of journalism professionalisation. The intent is also to contribute to the body of knowledge about journalism professionalism in the developing countries, which can be used as a basis for further research.

1.5 Research Methodology

My study adopts a qualitative approach which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of human beings from their own point of view (Bryman, 1988, Lindlof, 1995). I have specifically used document analysis and semi-structured, in-depth interviews as methods. From secondary data, I have analysed the sociology of professions in general and journalism professionalism in particular.

As another method, I located and analysed documents relating to this debate, noting that such data gathering is natural and unobtrusive (Jensen, 1982). Specifically I analysed the Press and Journalist Statute (1995), and the constitution and code of ethics of the Independent Media Council of Uganda (IMCU) to determine the model of professionalism that they establish. I also analysed the Hansard of the Parliament

of Uganda to retrace the opinions expressed during the debate on this statute. In addition, I read through old newspapers to retrieve any other relevant views expressed on this issue. I specifically analysed articles published as opinions and letters in *The Monitor* and *The New Vision* newspapers during the period in which the Press and Journalist Statute was debated and passed. This document analysis informed the approach to another method which I used, which is the semi-structured in-depth interview.

According to Bryman (1988), in-depth interviews allow the interviewee considerable latitude since the interviewer plays a minimal role in guiding the interview. Hence my role was to allow the interviewees to volunteer all information necessary, except where my guidance was justified, such as in follow-up cases. I interviewed NIJU officials, and some of the leading names in journalism, especially those who were involved in the process and debate about media professionalism. I also interviewed some members of the 6th Parliament which passed the statute to get their perspectives and establish whether their views differ from the dominant views expressed during the debate in Parliament. In the interviews, I probed for the understanding and interpretations of media professionalism, as informed by analysis of the debates around professionalism in general and media professionalism in particular. I used purposeful sampling for both the interviews and document analysis. This technique involves the selection of small, manageable and information rich samples, be it informants or documents. In analysing data, I used a technique called “meaning condensation”. This technique involves condensing data from interviews into “Natural Meaning Units” (NMU). I deduced central themes from the NMUs, interrogated them in terms of the specific purpose of my study, and finally combined essential themes into descriptive statements (Kvale, 1996, cited in Chikunkuzeni, 1999).

1.6 Summary of Content

This chapter has dealt with the introductory issues to this study. Chapter two then deals with the general sociological issues within the sociology of professions. In that chapter, I explore the broad theoretical approaches in the sociology of professions,

which are largely the structural-functionalist approach, the phenomenological and power-relations approach. Arising out of the criticism of structural-functionalist approach, I present Johnson's typology of analysing forms of occupational control, which are the collegiate, patronage and mediative forms of occupational control.

In Chapter three, I explore the debate on journalism professionalism indicating how this debate has been influenced by the three broad sociological approaches as explored in chapter two. I also present the broad approaches within media studies from which journalism professionalism has been analysed, and the various arguments within those approaches. The approaches presented are the liberal-pluralist approach, the Marxist approach, and the radical-democratic approach.

Chapter four explores the methodological issues and theoretical framework underpinning this study. I argue for a qualitative methodological approach, while for the theoretical framework, I argue for the liberal-pluralist approach to the political economy of the media. I also argue for the civil society and public sphere approaches to media and democracy as offering insights in analysing the democratic role of the media.

Chapter five is a presentation of the data from document analysis, about the approaches to journalism professionalism in Uganda, as well as an analysis of *The Monitor's* and *the New Vision's* letters and opinions on the debate about professionalising journalists in Uganda.

Chapter six is a presentation of arguments for or against the Press and Journalist Bill during debate before the Ugandan parliament as contained in the *Hansard*, and therefore contains the views of politicians on journalism professionalisation.

Chapter seven contains the findings from the in-depth interviews with journalists about their interpretations of professionalism and journalism professionalism.

Chapter eight deals with an analysis of the findings within the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapters two, three and four, and the implications of the findings for the democratic role of the media in Uganda.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the issues raised in my study to give a summarised picture of this work, regarding the research context, research goal and research methods, and a summary of the contents of this study. In the next chapter, I will deal with the theoretical issues surrounding the sociology of professions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the theoretical issues around the concepts of profession, professionalism and professionalisation, exploring their sociological roots, and the different broad approaches that have been used to analyse them in what constitutes the sociology of professions. I present the various criticisms of some of these approaches from sociologists, and finally present a typology of analysis as proposed by Johnson (1972).

2.1 Origins and Issues in the Sociology of Professions

The sociology of professions is largely a product of the social changes that resulted in industrialisation and urbanisation in the 18th and 19th centuries. Sociologists attempted to understand the nature of established professions and others seeking professional status which were rapidly growing. Johnson (1972) notes that this sprang from an attempt by sociologists to answer two fundamental questions, that is, to what extent professional occupations are a unique product of the division of labour, and whether professions perform a unique role in the industrial society. Elliot (1972) notes that Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) was one of the early contributors to this sociology.

Durkheim noted that a division of labour, which was a characteristic of the industrial society, had replaced the collective and communal type of social order with the “organic, based on the interdependence of different functions” (Elliot, 1972:6). He grappled with the question of how moral order within the social structure could be maintained with the scope of individualism which had developed with industrial change and the division of labour. For Durkheim, the answer lay in the formation of groups “of moral communities based on occupational membership” (Johnson, 1972:12). He saw occupational groups as a replacement of the traditional moral order that had broken up because of the division of labour. According to Durkheim:

An economic activity can be efficaciously regulated only by a group intimate enough with it to know its functioning, feel all its needs, and able to follow all the variations. The only one that could answer all these conditions is the one formed by all the agents of the same industry, united and organised into a single body. This is what is called the corporation or occupational group. (cited in Turner and Hodge, 1970:20)

Other sociologists saw professions as positive agents in society. Johnson (1972:14) makes reference to Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933, cited in Johnson, 1972) who saw professions as stabilising agents which “inherit, preserve and pass on a tradition,....and engender modes of life, habits of thought and standards of judgment which render them centres of resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution”. Tawney (1921, cited in Johnson, 1972) saw them as a redeeming factor against the self interest that was undermining the community interest in industrial England and referred to them as a neutralising force against individualism (Johnson, 1972). The positive perception of professions even extended to the democratic role from which Marshall (1939, cited in Johnson, 1972) looked at them as cures to the “sick democracies”. This early perception of professions gave not only the impetus for the study of professions, but also the resultant criticisms that focused on unanswered questions and contradictions, which together widened the sociology of professions, and gave rise to the various approaches to the study of professions.

Jackson (1970) observes that most literature about professions has focused on division of labour, nature of occupations, relationship of occupational roles to the definition of class interest, social status and access to power.

Because of the diversity of approaches to understanding professions, the sociology of professions has been riddled with disagreements over the most appropriate approach. This diversity has directly affected an attempt to define the concepts of profession, professionalism and professionalisation outside the confines of a particular approach. Different approaches have their own definitions of the concepts, and therefore this study will undertake to understand those concepts within the contexts of the different approaches that will be explored.

Johnson (1972:10-11) notes that the pillars that informed the origins of the sociology of professions, such as professional occupations and industrialisation, have

been ignored or lost, because of inadequate approaches that obsess sociologists with “narrowly conceived problems” such as definitions, and have reduced the large question into “smaller and manageable components”.

The result of this inadequacy, Johnson argues, is that there is a widening gap between research and theoretical positing especially in relation to the social changes that characterise industrial societies. This view is supported by Turner and Hodge (1970:25) who argue that it is common to find that actual professions studied deviate from theoretical models in particular ways. They conclude that “the time is perhaps ripe for an attempt to match theoretical models with empirical findings”.

In the next section, I will examine some of these approaches that have dominated the sociology of professions and have marked the major points of departure in the attempt to understand professions.

2.2 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Professions

As already pointed out, there have been various approaches to understanding the concepts of professions, professionalism and professionalisation, but three basic perspectives have dominated literature on the sociology of professions. These are structural-functionalism, phenomenology, and power relations. Structural-functionalism looks at professions as structured entities with unique functions for society. Phenomenology looks at professions as defined and understood by the professionals themselves, while power relations sees professions as fora for exercising different forms of power. Next I will explore in depth the nature of these approaches.

2.2.1 The Structural-Functionalist Approach

This is the earliest approach in the sociology of professions, and it looks at professions as unique occupations with a unique role in society. It analyses professions as structural, that is, with unique core characteristics that distinguish them from other occupations. Professions are also seen as functional, that is, as performing certain special tasks that are functional to the needs of society (Elliot, 1972). While some authors such as Elliot (1972) and Ritzer (1977) refer to this approach as

structural-functionalism, others like Johnson (1972) divide it into the “trait” and “functionalist” approaches. While admitting that there is a thin divide between these two, Johnson describes the former in terms of the specific traits or characteristics of professions, and the latter in terms of the functions that professions perform in society. But for purposes of this study, I will employ Elliot’s and Ritzer’s reference.

According to Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933), professions,

inherit, preserve and pass on a tradition.... They engender modes of life, habits of thought and standards of judgment which render them centres of resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution.... The family, the church and the universities, certain associations of intellectuals, and above all the great professions, stand like rocks against which the waves raised by these forces beat in vain. (cited in Johnson, 1972:14)

Talcott Parsons (1968, cited in Johnson, 1972) studied the professions in comparison with business entities to prove that professions were a unique form of organisation, much as both subjects shared much in common in industrial societies. He concluded that while business pursues economic self-orientation through profit, the professions pursue collective interest through altruistic service. But within this same approach, other sociologists saw professions as functional not in the positive sense, but in the negative sense.

A strand of economists for example, questioned the benefits of professionalism, arguing that professional associations promote harmful monopolistic practices, while a strand of sociologists led by Max Weber argued that professionalisation necessarily leads to bureaucratisation (Johnson, 1972), as evidenced in the increase in specialised functionaries within complex organisations (Elliot, 1972). In spite of these differences in the perception of the functions of professions, both the positive and negative functionalists have the same structural view of professions.

2.2.1.1 Definition of Key Concepts under Structural-Functionalism

As already argued, this approach looks at professions as special groups in society with specialised skills that are used altruistically to serve the needs of society. From

this approach therefore, a *profession* is seen as an occupation that has undergone a dynamic process through which it has acquired certain crucial characteristics (Johnson, 1972). The issue of which crucial characteristics and their number has been a subject of debate among the proponents of this approach. Johnson (1972) notes that the most comprehensive search for these characteristics that define a profession was done by Millerson, who surveyed sociological literature of no less than 21 authors who have attempted to extract the essential elements of a true profession. He thereafter compiled 23 elements which have been included in the various definitions of a profession. Johnson (1972) however, further notes that from Millerson's elements, no single element is accepted by all authors, and no two authors are agreed on the same combination of elements.

Nevertheless, there are some commonly referred to characteristics among many sociologists which include 1) skills based on a systematic theory of knowledge; 2) the provision of specialised education and training which gives the professional authority over the client, testing the competence of the members; 3) a system of control through an organisation to which professionals belong; 4) adherence to a professional code of conduct which serves as the "conscience" of its members; 5) the occupation has a high degree of autonomy; and 6) altruistic service which stresses the community interest rather than the individual self-interest (Beam, 1990; Allison, 1986; Johnson, 1972). Because of these common characteristics, professions are viewed as a homogeneous group of occupations "sharing a unique character and destiny" (Johnson, 1972:17).

From the above definition of a profession, structural-functionalists view *professionalisation* therefore as a dynamic process through which occupations go in order to acquire those crucial characteristics that make them true professions. This process is sometimes said to have predictable stages and an end-state towards which certain occupations are moving and others have arrived. The end-state is what is known as *professionalism*. Elliot refers to the process of professionalisation as a "series of stages that usually follow the core characteristics, marked by changes in the formal structure of an occupation as it aspires to professional status" (1972:113). This process, he further notes, usually starts with the claim by occupations seeking

professional status that the service they provide is important, “if not vital”, to society. This is followed by establishment of training and selection procedures, and the formation of a professional association. The occupation then agitates for public recognition and legal support for its control over entry and methods of practice. The final stage is the development of a formal code of ethics.

There has not been a consensus among sociologists on the chronology of these stages and the fact that this is a rigid, unilinear presentation of the process of professionalisation attracts questions over whether the same unilinear process applies in the same way to different manifestations in space and time. This point is particularly relevant to understanding professions and particularly journalistic professionalism in the post-colonial period where different historical and social conditions have led to different manifestations of professionalism. This is discussed later in chapter three under the Marxist interpretation of journalism professionalism.

According to the proponents of structural-functionalism, the reason why certain occupations exhibit a higher or lesser degree of professionalism, and attract higher or lower status, is because they are at different levels of professionalisation. Therefore professionalisation under this approach is a very fundamental process for occupations.

Structural-functionalism also assumes that there exist true professions, the ideal type, such as medicine and law, which act as yardsticks for measuring the level of professionalisation of other occupations. Further to the ideal type, there is also the notion of the professional ideal under structural-functionalism. This ideal includes three major tenets, which are the notion of service, emphasis on professional judgment based on professional knowledge, and a belief in professional freedom and autonomy in the work situation (Johnson, 1972; Elliot, 1972).

2.2.1.2 Inadequacies of Structural-Functionalism

Being the earliest approach to studying professions, structural-functionalism has inevitably attracted a number of criticisms which have focused on its approach, assumptions and tools of analysis. Johnson (1972) levels a number of criticisms of this approach. Concerning the concept of the core characteristics, he argues that

structural-functionalism suffers from a theoretical deficiency in that it fails to explain the theoretical relationship between different characteristics, especially those that can be subsumed under others, whether that relationship is causal or otherwise. Where such theoretical parameters lack, he argues, there is a possibility of arbitrary inclusion or exclusion of certain characteristics in order to satisfy an individual's quest. He explains:

The decision to exclude or include elements (characteristics) appears also to depend on which occupations one wishes to endow with or deprive professional status. The liberal or open-handed analyst will be the most parsimonious with his categories because the fewer essential elements he includes, the greater the number of occupations that can qualify (1972:25).

Structural-functionalism also falls into the mistake of accepting the professionals' own definition of themselves. Johnson (1972) notes significant similarities between the core characteristics and the preambles to and contents of professional codes, arguing that accepting the professional code as a sociological law unquestioningly assumes uniformity of benefits to different sections of the community. He elaborates:

To take one example, the view that the profession of law mediates between the power of the state and the needs of the individual citizen is often expressed as a form of altruism whereby the lawyer is regarded as the guardian of the rule of law for the benefit of all. However....the profession's vested interest in a given legal order renders its service irrelevant to those groups in society who seek radical change in the existing legal order (1972:25).

Further to this, Elliot (1972) notes that there has been unusual convergence between the writings of some sociologists of the professions and those of some professionals, who are their subjects. For example, he notes, some statements by professionals addressing professional audiences have been taken up as the basic body of the sociology of professions.

Related to Johnson's criticism is structural functionalism's assumption of supposed societal needs which require special skills and attitudes that can only be provided by professions. Elliot (1972:12) argues that this assumption leads to an acceptance of professional ideology at its face value, because in reality "the supposed

needs may not be met, may be met by quite different mechanisms or may not be needs at all, in the sense that they do not impinge upon the social situation”.

The view that professions are a homogeneous group of occupations sharing a unique character and destiny disregards the dynamics of space and time. Johnson (1972:26) argues that the supposition of an “ideal type” by the structural-functionalist approach means that very few professional bodies are analysed and these “include features of professional organisation and practice which find full expression only in Anglo-American culture at a particular time in the historical development of these professions”. This means that a universal view of professions is derived from an ideal type which is itself tied to specific historical and cultural circumstances. This is a contradiction, and Johnson refers to it as an imposition “on us of a unilinear view of the development of selected occupations” by structural-functionalism (Johnson, 1972:27).

The most fundamental criticism of structural-functionalism by Johnson is that this approach is not an attempt to define occupations as it appears, but it only specifies the characteristics of a peculiar institutionalised form of occupational control, and in his words, “this confusion between the essential characteristics of an occupation and the characteristics of a historically specific institutionalised form of its control is the most fundamental inadequacy of both trait and functionalist [structural-functionalist] approaches to the study of professions” (Johnson, 1972:27). Therefore Johnson sees this approach as a narrow way of understanding professions, more so since it concentrates on definitions and occupational activity, thereby ignoring the most fundamental issue about professions, which is the different forms of occupational control. This angle of criticism, as will later be expounded on, forms the core of Johnson’s typology of analysis of professions utilised in this study.

2.2.2 The Phenomenological Approach

There is minimal literature available on the phenomenological approach and it is considered to be the least formalised tradition in the study of professions (Beam, 1990). However, phenomenology as a broad social science approach has been used by social scientists as a method of deducing constructs which people use to render the

world around them meaningful and intelligible. It involves tapping the thought objects which determine the behaviour of social beings. The focus of phenomenology as an approach is clearly described by Bogdan and Taylor (1975) in the following description:

The phenomenologist views human behaviour... as a product of how people interpret their world. The task of the phenomenologist, and, for us, the qualitative methodologists, is to capture this *process* of interpretation.... In order to grasp the meanings of a person's behaviour, *the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view*. (cited in Bryman, 1988:53, emphases in original)

Whereas structural-functionalism delves into definitions, the phenomenological approach steers clear of searching for a strict definition of profession. It advocates studying the way the concept is invoked in the everyday life of members of a certain occupation, through norms, values and practices. This approach is essentially subjective and it rejects the ideal type approach that we have seen in structural-functionalism. It is very commonly utilised in many studies of journalists as will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Beam (1990) argues that one of the limitations of this approach is that it makes “cross-occupational” comparison difficult since there is no common definition of the concept of professions or as Beam notes “because occupations are not being compared on a common standard” (1990:3).

2.2.3 The Power Relations Approach

In criticising the structural-functionalism approach, Johnson (1972) argues that the reward structure in occupations is arrogated by groups with the *power* to secure their claims and create their own system of legitimacy. In the same way, he argues, “institutionalised forms of control of occupations are only to be fully understood historically through an analysis of the power of specific groups to control occupational activities” (Johnson, 1972:37). Hence Johnson and other authors have advocated concentrating on the power dynamics within occupational groups and how that power affects the relationship with the outside environment (Johnson, 1972, Beam, 1990, Allison, 1986) as a way of understanding professions. A different

approach, such as Marxism discussed in more detail in the next chapter, will concentrate on the external power dynamics that can constitute and condition a “profession” such as journalism.

As already mentioned in this chapter, structural-functionalists have been criticised for uncritically accepting the ideology of professionalism from the professions’ own point of view. The power-relations approach on the other hand looks at the stakes that occupations have in seeking professional status. The struggle for professionalism is not merely seen as a struggle to reach the end-state or to acquire those core attributes, but as a “complex process of securing privilege and prestige” (Allison, 1986).

Beam (1990) says that this approach looks at the exercise of power in professions and how such issues as professionalisation relate to the political process, how professionals relate to other actors in the environment, and how professions relate to the labour market.

Using this approach, Johnson (1972) argues that dependence on the skills of professionals necessarily reduces the area of “shared experience and knowledge” and therefore increases the social distance. Social distance, he further argues, creates uncertainty in the relationship between consumer and producer, thus creating a tension in the relationship which must be resolved. He therefore argues that the concept of professionalism is just one way of resolving that tension, and there are other ways which can be identified by analysing the power dynamics in the relationship between producer and consumer. He notes:

There is an irreducible but variable minimum of uncertainty in any consumer-producer relationship, and, depending on the degree of this indeterminacy and the social structural context, various institutions will arise to reduce the uncertainty. Power relationships will determine whether uncertainty is reduced at the expense of the consumer or the producer (Johnson, 1972:41).

Under power relations, the difference in the levels of autonomy among occupations for example is not because one occupation is at a different stage on the linear scale to professionalisation, but because such occupations have different levels of indeterminacy or social distance, and because there are different resources available

to one occupation as against the other in imposing their own definitions of the producer-consumer relationship.

Whereas power-relations advocates do not deny the existence of attributes to professions, they do not merely accept the attributes at face value, but look at them in terms of their power implications. Allison (1986) however notes that such attributes may exist only as myths being propagated by the professions for purposes of maintaining professional power over the public who perceive them as real.

Under power-relations, an attribute of a profession is analysed in terms of how that attribute serves the professional community. Allison gives a case in point:

For instance, monopoly over a systematic base of knowledge affords professionals control over a domain of uncertainty, giving them description and power over their clients. The knowledge uncertainty of the public allows professionals to exercise description over procedures, events and resources. It allows them to expand their jurisdiction and domain through research. And it affords them protection from blame for services that fail, while permitting them to take full credit for their successes (Allison, 1986:7).

Power relations advocates take particular interest in professional codes of ethics which they see as public claims to status, because through them a group presents itself as necessary within society. They note that the codes then pay more attention to the practitioner's relationship to their colleagues than with the clients. Thus, Allison (1986:8) notes, "ethics codes can serve as means of formal social control within a profession and can provide a means of disciplining deviant or disloyal comrades".

Licensing is viewed as a means of limiting public power so that professionals account to their occupational group, and not the public. Therefore power advocates view the occupational world as a quest for power, prestige and autonomy.

2.2.3.1 Re-defining Profession, Professionalism and Professionalisation

Johnson (1972), one of the most elaborate exponents of the power relations approach, argues that changing power relations bring about new social problems and needs, hence changes in knowledge and skills and definitely changes in the institutionalised forms of control of occupations. Therefore as far as he is concerned, a profession can better be understood by studying the nature of consumer-producer relationship. This

relationship, as has already been argued, is determined by the level of uncertainty or tension between them and the nature of resolution of this tension defines the form of occupational control. Therefore social control is a major concept in power relations approach. From this perspective, the concepts of profession, professionalism and professionalisation necessarily take on a new meaning.

Having contested the unilinear and ahistorical view of professionalism and professionalisation, Johnson (1972) offers a new definition of the concepts using a power-relations approach. He argues that professionalism is just one form of control of the acute tensions between producer and consumer. *Professionalism* therefore is a peculiar form of occupational control rather than an “expression of the inherent nature of particular occupations” (Johnson, 1972:45). A *profession* then, is not an occupation, but a means of controlling an occupation. Likewise, *professionalisation* is a “historically specific process which some occupations have undergone at a particular time, rather than a process which certain occupations may always be expected to undergo because of their essential qualities” (Johnson, 1972:45).

The distribution of power in society is a major factor in understanding occupations because it explains the different forms of occupational control. Therefore a power-relations approach enables sociologists to break loose from the limitations and assumptions of concentrating on occupational activity with its associated contradictions, thus ignoring the fundamental factor in understanding occupations, which is how they utilise power resources to legitimate themselves over other external factors. Power-relations also enables sociologists to elaborate the theoretical framework of the sociology of professions to accommodate such factors as the historical and cultural dynamics that account for different institutionalised forms of control.

In summary, the power-relations approach looks at professions as collective groups existing to generate, exercise and safeguard power for the sake of their members. Therefore power is a central factor in professions under the power relations approach. But the analysis should be taken further to include a probe into how power is exactly exercised within the occupational setting, this time not in relation to the outside world, but amongst members. It would be interesting to analyse who wields

power among the occupational members and whether those who wield that power do it on their own behalf, or on behalf of some other invisible interests. Whereas the emphasis here is on power from within the occupation, it is important to note that sometimes the initiative comes from outside of the occupation, for example when government requires professionalisation for a range of reasons. This will be further explored in the next section.

2.3 Johnson's Typology of Institutionalised Forms of Occupational Control

Terence Johnson has argued that sociologists who focus on occupational activities rather than on occupational control lose out on understanding how power as a resource is used to resolve the inherent tension between producer and consumer in the occupational world. He has also argued that professionalism as understood by structural-functionalists is just one form of occupational control. Forms of occupational control, he continues, are determined by how or in whose favour the tension or uncertainty between consumer and producer is resolved. The level of uncertainty, he argues, proportionately determines the level of autonomy that a particular occupation can command. He explains why occupations such as medical practice enjoy greater autonomy than others:

A significant element in producing variations in the degree of uncertainty and, therefore, the potentialities for autonomy is the esoteric character of knowledge applied by the specialist....certain occupations are associated with particularly acute problems of uncertainty, where client or consumer judgment is particularly ineffective and the seeking of skilled help necessarily invites intrusions of others into intimate and vulnerable areas of the consumer's self- or group identity (Johnson,1972:42).

With that thesis Johnson proposes a typology of the major forms of occupational control that are determined by the nature of the tension between producer and consumer, which is in turn determined by the changing social conditions and power relations.

This study is particularly interested in this typology because it illustrates how power-relations as an approach can be used in understanding the variance in the different forms of institutional control and the factors that account for such variance,

and how the changing historical and social conditions actually determine those forms of control. This typology will also be used in identifying the nature and validity of the process that constitutes the professionalisation of journalists in Uganda.

Johnson identifies three main institutionalised forms of occupational control. *Collegiate* control occurs when producers define the needs of the consumer and how they are to be catered for. *Patronage* control occurs when the consumer defines his own needs and the manner in which they are to be met, whereas *Mediative* control is whereby a third party mediates in the relationship between consumer and producer, defining both the needs and how they are to be met. These different forms are determined by the prevailing historical and social conditions. The next section will delve into the details of these different forms, looking at the producer-consumer relationship of each, the nature of recruitment, the relationships among members of the occupational group, and the issues of knowledge and ideology.

2.3.1 Collegiate Form of Occupational Control

Collegiate control, or what the structural-functionalists would call professionalism, occurs where the tensions between producer and consumer are controlled by an institutional framework based on occupational authority. In other words, the producer exerts authority over the consumer in determining the needs of the latter and how they are to be met. As Johnson (1972) explains, collegiate control has specific conditions under which it can exist, such as in large heterogeneous consumer groups.

Consumers will normally have diverse interests; they are unorganised, dependent and exploitable. Dependence arises out of the creation of needs which may themselves be differentially distributed according to socio-economic status. ... The degree of exploitability of consumers will vary however. For example, where there is an accepted obligation on the sick to seek expert medical advice, the authority of the doctor is relatively high as compared with other occupations whose products and services are not obligatory and backed up by social sanctions in the same way (1972:51).

Johnson further notes that the conditions that gave rise to professionalism developed in 19th Century Britain (as already noted) when an urban middle class rose to power, thus providing a market for various services based on individual needs. Needs like medical, legal and architectural services which were largely demanded by an

exclusive social clique before the industrial revolution, became affordable for the emergent middle class. This middle class as well became a recruiting ground for the expanding professions. Elliot (1972:16) notes that:

The new middle class, drawing on new sources of industrial wealth, exercised powerful pressure on the educational and occupational systems for change to accommodate their needs.

Under professionalism, the producer-consumer relationship is a “one-to-one” relationship and this creates a form of vulnerability. To understand how vulnerable the consumer is, Johnson explains.

The one-to-one relationship under professionalism refers to the fact that solo practice is the norm, although various forms of partnership are possible. The fee is the all important mechanism of defining client needs, and the client’s only appeal is to a body made up of the relevant practitioners (1972:53).

Since consumers are characterised by heterogeneity and individualism, consumer choice is limited. The occupational community is able to exert its authority on the clients because unlike the clients who are heterogeneous, it is homogeneous with low levels of specialisation, and recruits from similar social backgrounds. Elliot (1972) confirms this when he refers to professions as “a group whose members share common socio-economic origins, educational experiences and lifestyles and a common, if confused, ideology of professionalism” (1972:143).

Under professionalism, specialisation is seen as disruptive and a threat to the unity of the occupational community and is therefore limited. Issues of occupational unity and functions are managed by a practitioner association which bestows status and identity. The association seeks to sustain uniformity in interests and policies by imposing a monopoly on practice and actually regulating entry. Johnson (1972:54) explains further.

The association will also attempt to impose a uni-portal system of entry to the occupation in order to ensure that shared identity is reinforced by the creation of similar experiences of entry and socialisation.

Status under professionalism is very important, and members of the occupational community are assumed to be equal in status. This helps to maintain a sense of identity, colleague-loyalty and shared values. A referral system among members

helps to avoid isolation. Homogeneity also applies to occupational norms which are imparted and internalised during training which is normally long. The training institutions are closely supervised by practitioners through apprenticeship and peer-solidarity. A number of activities and events help to sustain cohesion and “associational forms of organisation, a developed network of communication and a high level of interaction through branches, discussion groups, journals, ‘social occasions’, etc., all help to maintain the subculture and *mores* of the occupation which may partly be shared with other occupations but will also include elements specific to the occupational group” (Johnson, 1972:55).

Johnson (1972) notes that public attitudes to the profession are instilled into the public sphere through legends, symbols, stereotypes and jargon. He illustrates.

The legend of Florence Nightingale is certainly effective in the public sphere, as is the stereotype of the selfless nurse and the symbol of the white cap. A highly developed community language or jargon performs the double function of maintaining internal homogeneity and increasing autonomy from outsiders, both competing specialists and laymen (1972:56).

The code of ethics under professionalism is the point of reference upon which community-generated role-definitions and standards are based. The ideal of service or the essential worth of practice is highly emphasised. For example law and medical practice are essential because justice and health are central values in society.

Under professionalism, occupational skills cannot be transferred outside that specific community. Any attempt to do this is what is referred to as charlatanism and quackery. The ideology of professionalism ties status to the length of training. The longer the training, the higher the status of the practitioner. Longer training is necessary because certain specialised skills are not easy to acquire, and once acquired, economic and social rewards flow. Status becomes the motivating end in pursuing lengthy training. Ideology also stresses this specialised knowledge as a form of mystique. Jackson (1970:7) says that these areas of knowledge “assume a mystery, a quality of the sacred whereby they take on a distinct mystique which distinguishes them from more mundane matters. The Professional necessarily becomes the high priest of that area of knowledge in which he is acknowledged to be competent”.

Professionalism is not only challenged by the power of the consumer to overturn the producer-consumer relationship, but also by other allied occupations who are challenging the exclusive authority of professions to define who becomes a practitioner and how such a practitioner should behave. Johnson (1972) gives the example of the physician in Britain who has maintained his pre-eminence in medical services, by seeking legislation that defines other auxiliary professions as “professions supplementary to medicine”. This means, he writes, that “physiotherapists, occupational therapists, chiropodists, dietitians, remedial gymnasts, etc. may carry out treatment only in respect of prior diagnosis by a doctor” (Johnson, 1972:58).

Most of the characteristics attributed to professionalism as outlined in this section are mostly the characteristics that have been attributed to professional occupations as distinct from non-professional occupations under structural-functionalism. For Johnson (1972, 1973) however, this is but just one form of occupational control within specific historical and cultural contexts. To prove his point, he attempts to explain other forms of control which are different from professionalism.

2.3.2 Patronage Form of Occupational Control

In explaining professionalism as a form of occupational control, Johnson (1972) indicates that occupations under this description are characterised with major tensions which threaten their stability. The major source of this tension is the growth of consumer choice which demands for diversity within the occupational community. He notes:

Client choice and the pressures inherent in the client diversity operate to set up strains in the system of professionalism as such and may lead to modifications in the institution which eventually reduce and in the long run may eliminate the conditions of professionalism itself (Johnson, 1972:60).

Patronage as a form of institutional control therefore arises where such tensions overpower the capacity of the producer to define consumer needs and the mode of delivery. In other words, “fully developed institutions of patronage arise where the consumers have the capacity to define their own needs and the manner in which those

needs are catered for” (Johnson 1972:65). Under patronage, the client or consumer is small, unitary but powerful, usually in form of an aristocratic clique with common interests and the capacity to monopolise services, or a small group of large scale corporations which demand expert services. Under these circumstances, the patron has relative independence and is difficult to exploit because he commands wide social bases of power. Therefore uncertainty is reduced, because by his unity and power, the patron is able to define his own needs.

Johnson (1972) argues that the aristocratic variation of patronage developed from traditional aristocratic societies, for example in 17th and 18th century Britain and Italy. Under these conditions, a variety of occupations were under the exclusive control of the landed aristocracy. Because of this restriction, autonomous professional groups were unable to develop, and professionals were part of the household of a king or nobleman, who would occasionally give the professionals favours as opposed to payment for their services (Elliot, 1972). The corporate variation of patronage emerged from industrial societies characterised by bureaucratic organisation, in which demand for occupational services was from large-scale corporations, both public and private. The demands of corporate business, for example, are said to have given rise to the accountancy profession.

Recruitment under patronage is based on sponsorship. It is not mainly based on technical competence, but on shared values and status with the patron. Social acceptability was the major qualification for recruitment. Therefore, the professional under patronage shares to some degree the same social origins like his client. In 18th and 19th century Britain, the professional was supposed to be a gentleman who could share the tastes and values of his patron, be part of the high culture and be “socially fit to take part in the life of the great houses” (Johnson 1972:67). As Elliot (1972:21) notes, a gentleman, as distinguished from a labourer, “was expected to maintain a leisurely lifestyle without actively working to support it”.

Patronage, where it is the rule, creates the ‘housed’ practitioner. The aristocratic patron ‘keeps’ his artist, architect, doctor, and priest. He maintains them on his estates or in some location socially or politically controlled by him. The practitioner is a courtier and must share the social manners and graces of the courtier (Johnson, 1972:68).

Contrary to professionalism where the occupational group enjoys a high level of homogeneity, the professional occupation under patronage is fragmented and hierarchical. Fragmentation is possible because every patron has his local needs, and therefore the professional only requires those local skills and knowledge relevant to the local demands of the patron. Consequently, the professional's point of reference is not the occupational community, but the patron, and conformity is with the local customs and beliefs than with the professionally defined norms. Even with corporate patronage, "occupationally defined norms have less significance than corporately defined expectations." (Johnson, 1972:69).

Theoretical knowledge under patronage is not as important as the knowledge of the practical needs of the patron. As Elliot (1972:21) stresses:

Professional work itself was not sufficiently specialised to be limited to the routine application of a particular expertise to a particular set of problems. The performance of the professional function seems to have been a less important aspect of the professional role than the ability to live a suitably leisured and cultured life.

Whereas the ideology of professionalism stresses equal status among the professional community, patronage stresses superior competence, and is therefore hierarchical in nature. Hence the medical profession in Britain had the physician on top, followed by surgeons, apothecaries and finally druggists.

There are situations when a third party may come in to mediate in the relationship between the producer and the consumer. Certain services for example, may be considered too critical to be left to the producer or consumer to determine. This is when the third form of control arises.

2.3.3 Mediative Form of Occupational Control

There are circumstances when the state intervenes in the relationship between practitioner and client, and defines the client needs and the manner in which such needs are to be catered for. Johnson (1972) notes that in circumstances where the state deems it necessary to have neither the producer nor the consumer determine the nature of needs, it may do it in two ways. The first would be to intervene within an existing system of professionalism by giving support to disadvantaged members of an

occupation in order to minimise instability within the occupation. The second way would be to intervene in the distribution of particular occupational services deemed critical, by putting in place a state agency “which is the effective employer of all practitioners who have a statutory obligation to provide a given service” (Johnson, 1972:77). Examples include welfare and health services.

The state usually legislates on who may practice and under what conditions. Under state mediation, consumers access services not on the basis of social origin or affordability, but on the basis of citizenship. Because access is based on citizenship, there is necessarily greater diversity in the status characteristics of consumers. As far as the occupation is concerned, much as state intervention is meant to ensure that everyone gets a service, the occupation is guaranteed consumers or clientele.

Uncertainty or aspects of it, between the producer and consumer are managed as the possibility of exploitation by either is minimised. The state may also decide to come in, in order to regulate a service which is considered to be a public good. State mediation interferes with the existing social bases of recruitment. For example, by liberalising academic channels into the occupation, the conventional forms of sponsorship into the occupation, and forms of exclusivity such as paying fees, will be weakened. Again while under professionalism, entry to an occupation is tightly regulated through professionally controlled schools and examination, the state tends to put greater power in academic institutions such as universities and technical colleges.

Because the referral system is minimised, stratification of practitioners develops and colleague relationships may be destroyed. Therefore occupational controls on members are weakened. No dominant power group can emerge because of the divergent interests and ideologies between managerial and non-managerial positions, between one agency and another, and between the centre (administration) and the periphery (field workers). Whereas under professionalism, professional orientation and identity are paramount, state mediation creates divergent if not opposing attitudes.

Differences in the structural or organisational location of practitioners are, then, likely to generate divergences of orientation, there will accordingly be

varying degrees of self-identification within the occupational community. A 'client' orientation is likely to be characteristic of practitioners close to the periphery whose relationships are more meaningful and immediate than those with their socially distant colleagues and superiors. (Johnson, 19972: 81).

The occupational association is reduced to a trade union, advocating for better working conditions and remuneration, and the function of maintaining colleague identification becomes less relevant. Where the functions of maintaining standards are taken over by state agencies, or are provided for in legislation, Johnson (1972:82) argues, "the association is transformed into an occupational pressure group, effectively losing its powers to prescribe the manner of practice".

Under professionalism, the occupational community is the 'repository of knowledge'. But under mediative control, this characteristic is lost, usually to full time research institutions. Whereas professionalism stresses personal service as an ideology, state mediative control stresses social service. By stressing social service, various occupations find themselves interpreting their actions in terms of their political and social consequences; hence practitioners will find themselves sucked into the rhetoric of issues such as "social service, social and preventive medicine, laws reform, etc.", which issues have political undertones (Johnson, 1972:84).

2.4 Conclusion

Johnson's typology of the three alternative forms of occupational control, which largely stems from the power-relations approach, has been able to test the elasticity of the sociology of professions which had been made static by the structural-functional view. Whereas structural functionalism as an approach provided the necessary impetus into the sociology of professions, its inadequacies gave rise to a more dynamic outlook to understanding the nature of professions.

In this chapter, I have looked at the main theoretical approaches that define the sociology of professions, looking at the variations in the professional orientation, attitudes and ideologies that affect professional practice. When Johnson's typology is applied to journalism, one can argue that journalism fits into the different types of client-producer relationships. First of all under the collegiate type, worldwide journalists have shown occupational cohesion by collectively fighting against attacks

on press freedom, and through professional commitment, individual journalists have shown commitment towards their audiences even under difficult occupational conditions, that is why journalism is sometimes described as a labour of love.

Journalism can also fit into the patronage form of occupational control because according to the critical approach in media studies, the political economy of the media inclines journalists to regard the political class (or sometimes, as in the case of government newspapers and broadcasters, the government) and the corporate world as the key clients or patrons as opposed to the general audience. Journalists then become a patronised group serving the interests of the political and economic classes who determine their needs and nature of service.

One can also argue that journalism fits into the mediative form of occupational control because the social relevance of journalism and its practitioners has been recognised by international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19) and reflected in frameworks such as national constitutions (article 29 of the Uganda Constitution) which offer institutional guarantees for freedom not only of expression, but also of the media. Applied to the African context, African governments have always justified regulation of the media because of what they term as its social relevance (as a value that needs to be mediated) when actually their true intention is to have control over what the media communicate to the masses (thus defining themselves as the key client or patron as is the case under the patronage form of occupational control). Looking at it from the point of view of freedom of expression, one can as well argue that whereas journalism can fit into Johnson's (1972) typology, it cannot be described as any of those occupational types because it is part of the wider freedom of expression which is guaranteed for all, and not merely segmented interests.

Assessing all this and concentrating on the power-relations approach as a dynamic view of occupations, it seems that even the mediative form of control under Johnson's typology will not be the last to be identified. Given that the power-relations approach focuses on how factors such as culture, history and the general social changes affect institutional manifestations of occupation, the concepts of professions and professionalism will be a non ending area of contestation, and as Elliot

(1972:152) argues, this ambiguity makes projection difficult, but “it helps to make the sociology of professions an intriguing field of study”. Nevertheless, the power-relations critique of structural-functionalism and phenomenology does not mean that they are without value. Power-relations in a way only builds on both structural-functionalism and phenomenology to cast new light and contexts. It does not erase them. For example the six common characteristics of professions under the structural-functionalist view as earlier explained in 2.2.1.1 still resonate with some views of professionalism, such as governments’ emphasis of the control aspect. Phenomenology on the other hand is evident in the mythologies of journalism in a normative sense, such as the watchdog role. Lastly power- relations’ focus on the producer-consumer relationship tends to imply singular producers. But there are, in much media, bosses and workers. The consumers of journalists’ services are, in the first instance, the people who hire them, and this is the major mediation as regards the reporters’ relationship to the ultimate consumers of their content. Johnson’s’ power-relations analysis does not reflect this reality. In the next chapter, I will attempt to establish the connection between the sociological theoretical approaches and journalism professionalism. I will then specifically look at the various approaches within media studies on journalism professionalism.

CHAPTER THREE
JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISM IN MEDIA STUDIES

3.0 Introduction

In the last chapter, I have explored the theoretical issues around the concepts of professionalism and professionalisation, by looking at the different theoretical approaches in the sociology of professions. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the sociological approaches have influenced the debate about whether journalism is a profession. I also look at how journalism professionalism is perceived within the broader theoretical approaches in media studies.

3.1 Journalism Professionalism and the Sociological Approaches

The question of whether the sociological concepts of profession, professionalism and professionalisation apply to journalism has been a controversial debate that has attracted various postulates with no clear compromise. At the beginning of the 20th century, Joseph Pulitzer prophesied that schools of journalism would be generally accepted “as a feature of specialised higher education, like schools of law, or of medicine” (Pulitzer, 1904:178). To him, journalism professionalism was to be achieved through better education and training in order to gain status. Walter Lippmann, in his pursuit of having journalism recognised as a profession, called for objectivity among journalists as a way of disengaging themselves from the different interests within the issues that they cover. Since then, the debate on whether journalism is a profession or a mere craft that should not aspire to be a profession like law and medicine, has raged on unabated without clear consensus.

This debate has not been without context. It has raged within the context of the sociological approaches to professions. Media scholars have examined the professional orientation of journalists, and its occupational characteristics such as the “professional values, professional ideologies, professional practices and socialisation of journalists using these approaches” (Beam, 1990:4).

Building on a structural-functionalist perspective, McLeod and Hawley (1964) came up with a ground-breaking method for indexing the professional orientation of

reporters. The focus on professional orientation was an appreciation of the futility of “definitionism” which had obsessed earlier structural-functionalists. Allison (1986:8) notes that researchers had come to agree that focusing on professional orientation was a more “useful and realistic” approach, since “it sidesteps the theoretical difficulties posed by calling journalists professionals, even when their occupation cannot be called a true profession”. Nevertheless, McLeod and Hawley (1964) argue that in spite of the disagreement over whether journalism is a profession or not, it is important to establish how much a journalist sees himself as a professional. In this regard, they come close to a phenomenological understanding of professionalism.

Structural functionalism, as noted in Chapter Two, is an understanding of the term profession by its core attributes or characteristics. McLeod and Hawley listed eight core characteristics of occupations that qualify them to be professional, these being: a unique essential service; emphasis on intellectual techniques; specialised training; autonomy; personal responsibility for judgments and actions; service as opposed to personal gain; a professional association and a code of ethics. These are largely the characteristics advanced by structural functionalists. They were guided by the structural-functionalist view that a professional person, in defining his job, has areas of emphasis which include service, intellectual activity, autonomy and influence, and that professionally oriented persons differ in “overt behaviour and cognitive judgment” (McLeod and Hawley, 1964:530). Therefore for McLeod and Hawley, whether journalism met the essential characteristics or not, was not as important as finding out whether journalists thought they possessed those attributes of a professional person.

Using the editorial staff of Milwaukee newspapers as the “professionals” and the non-editorial staff (advertising salesmen, circulation managers, business supervisors and clerical employees) as “semi-professionals”, McLeod and Hawley asked those two groups through questionnaires what they felt about those areas of emphasis. They discovered that the professional group showed more homogeneity of judgment, strongly desired implementation of professional values, and was more critical of their own newspapers, than the semi-professional group. Their conclusion

was that journalists thus show traits of being professional in the perception of their job.

McLeod and Hawley's (1964) index, inspired by structural-functionalism, which assessed the professional orientation of reporters, further inspired other researchers to measure the professional orientations of journalists in other geographical areas and other occupations which are part and parcel of the mass communication process.

Menanteau-Horta (1967) studied the professional orientation of journalists of Santiago de Chile. He stresses the fact that the question of whether journalism is an art, a craft, or a profession still lacks consensus. Using McLeod and Hawley's eight requirements for certification as a profession, Menanteau-Horta argued that the Chilean press passed the test. He measured the professional orientation of the journalists of Santiago using the following five indices: Attitude towards journalism schools; participation in professional organisations; identification with a profession or occupation; motivation to enter journalism; and the attitude regarding the possibility of one of the respondents' children entering journalism as his occupational activity. He discovered that although Chilean journalists generally worked long hours and were inadequately remunerated, the majority of the 235 journalists interviewed nevertheless had a favourable attitude towards the journalism schools (78%), were active in professional organisations (69%), had high motivation to enter into journalism-related activities (62%), and showed clear profession identification.

McLeod and Rush (1969a, 1969b) also took a cross-cultural approach when they studied the professional orientation of Latin American and United States journalists, using the same questions and procedures. Rating different items as professional items (such as skills and knowledge, a job that is valuable and essential to the community) and non-professional items (such as salary, job security and job enjoyment), the researchers asked Latin American journalists to give their rating of the two categories of items using a questionnaire that had been used in the United States by McLeod and Hawley (1964) among Milwaukee reporters. They concluded thus:

In general, the Latin American and United States newsmen showed far greater similarity than dissimilarity in all areas (desired job characteristics, adequacy of news content, job satisfaction and attitudes towards implementation). They were particularly close to one another in what they wanted from their jobs. Each showed a distribution in emphasis in desires across various areas of the job, and in each case, salary and job security were overshadowed by a need for personal expression and having their talents and training put to use in a creative way (McLeod and Rush, 1969a: 590).

The purpose of a cross cultural approach was to find out whether professional orientation among reporters is similar across different cultures and the findings were in the affirmative.

As argued in the conclusion of chapter two, structural-functionalism only offered the impetus, not the conclusion, for the scholarship of professions. Picking up from this impetus, other more dynamic approaches have been proposed. This same trend has found its way into the debate about journalism professionalism. Whereas McLeod and Hawley's (1964) indexing of the professional orientation of journalists from a structural-functionalist model broke the ground into journalism professionalism, its limitations inspired further scholarship into the concept, using other approaches. One such approach has been the phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology as a sociological approach has also attracted different scholars who have looked at journalism professionalism from this perspective. These have included Janowitz (1975) and Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1972-73). Phenomenology, as noted in Chapter Two, is an approach which rejects a strict definition of a profession, and instead focuses on how members of a particular occupation understand the term through frequent usage. Beam (1990) categorises many analyses of journalism professionalism as phenomenological. He notes that Janowitz's (1975) attempt to identify the different professional models in journalism as well as Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman's (1972-73) research into the professional values of American newsmen are essentially phenomenological.

Janowitz (1975) argues that just as practitioners in any profession hold different perceptions of their tasks and priorities, the same is true in journalism. He presents two alternative models of professionalism - the gate-keeper model, and the advocate model – as they are perceived by contemporary journalists in understanding their

“tasks and priorities” in society, and the professional issues associated with these models.

Janowitz’s approach is phenomenological because the two professional models he presents are perceptions of journalists themselves of their role in society. The gatekeeper orientation among journalists looks at objectivity as the redeeming value that separates “reporting fact from disseminating opinion”. This concept of professionalism does not deny that there are institutional pressures and personal limitations on journalists in their attempt to be objective, but stresses the ability of the journalist to discern the greater good. To Janowitz, the option for the journalist seems to be clear “to the extent that he thought of himself as a professional or hoped to make journalism into a profession, he had little doubt about the standards of performance, although there was much debate about their clarity and how to apply them” (Janowitz, 1975:618). Therefore, under the gatekeeper perception of journalism, the journalist sees himself as a gatekeeper of sorts, and his role limited to detecting, emphasising, and disseminating “that which is important” in assisting the client to “understand his position in the socio-political process” (Janowitz:1975:620).

The other professional model also identified by Janowitz (1975) is the advocate model, which is a “participant” sort of model in which a journalist is immersed in society. This model doubts the relevance of objectivity as a guiding professional value, and instead stresses representation of competing viewpoints and interests, but leaning towards the viewpoints of the underprivileged and marginalised groups.

These journalists feel that there is a series of conflicting interests, each of which creates its own contribution to the definition of reality. Therefore the role of a journalist is to ensure that all perspectives are adequately represented in the media, for the resolution of social conflict depends on effective representation of alternative definitions of reality. The journalist must “participate” in the advocacy process. He must be an advocate of those who are denied powerful spokesmen, and he must point out the consequences of the contemporary power imbalance. The search for objective reality yields to a struggle to participate in the socio-political process by supplying knowledge and information. (Janowitz, 1975:619).

Advocate-journalists conceive of themselves as spokesmen of the marginalised groups, and professional journalism is conceived as highlighting the “barriers to socio-political change in contemporary society and the difficulties that certain segments of society have in achieving their legitimate self-interest” (Janowitz, 1975:621).

Journalists who pursue advocacy journalism nonetheless perceive themselves as professionals in spite of the fact that they agree that advocacy journalism must have a declared bias as long as that bias is for purposes of “achieving certain goals, usually the aim of influencing public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic and social systems and institutions” (Highway Africa: Introduction to Advocacy Journalism Handout, 2005:2). Careless (2005) argues that it is possible for a journalist to have a declared bias and still practice journalism in a professional manner because advocacy journalists, like any other good journalist, adhere to the principles of fairness, balance, accuracy and acting in the public interest. Indeed proponents of this model distance advocacy journalism from other forms of communication with a bias, such as public relations, social marketing and development communication on account of the fact that advocacy journalism uses the principles of good journalism while the other forms do not. Careless (2005) illustrates the issue of using the principles of good journalism by arguing that an advocate-journalist who is covering a demonstration for a cause he or she believes in is obliged to report even the misdeeds of demonstrators such as hitting police officers or shouting profanities, because short of that would be presenting half-truths and suppressing vital facts.

Whereas Janowitz’s gatekeeper orientation stresses objectivity, advocacy journalists argue that absolute objectivity is unattainable because of human nature, and the fact that it is the journalists who decide the sources of their stories and how the story is eventually framed, hence the notion of objectivity is affected because of such realities. Advocacy journalism therefore presents journalism as devoid of absolute objectivity, and thus bias or inclination is tenable as long as it is exercised in a fair, balanced and independent manner in the interest of the public. Therefore advocacy journalist’s challenge of objectivity as a journalistic value and their claim to

professionalism in spite of their professed bias towards societal causes complicates the long held belief that equates journalism professionalism to objectivity.

Still from a phenomenological perspective, Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1972-73) examined what American journalists regard as professional values by looking at their definition of responsible professional practice. They started by examining to what extent the journalists' conceptions of the media comply with "neutral" and "participant" conceptions of journalism - what Janowitz (1975) has called the "gatekeeper" and "advocate models of professionalism) They discovered that more journalists indicated general support for the participant than the neutral media functions by endorsing "investigative, analytic, and interpretive reporting, rather than timeliness, technical skills, and objectivity" (Johnstone *et al*, 1972-73: 526-527). They went ahead to examine the factors which determine the journalists' definition of journalistic responsibility, and discovered that the more educated a journalist is, the more he is likely to conceive of his professional responsibility as "participant"; yet the older the journalist is, the less he is likely to conceive of himself as a "participant" journalist.

Beam (1990:3) notes that most of the journalistic work on professionalism has followed the structural-functionalist and phenomenological traditions, virtually ignoring the power-relations approach "which has today become the prevailing sociological perspective on the concept of profession". In an attempt to contribute to an understanding of journalism professionalism from the "ignored" power-relations approach, Beam (1990) proposes a conception of journalism professionalism as "an organisational-level concept". Professionalism, according to Elliot (1972), is a dynamic process that operates at three different levels, that is, the level of the individual, the level of the occupational organisation and at the level of society. Whereas Beam's (1990:3) concept of journalism professionalism acknowledges Elliot's (1972) trinity of operation, it excludes the first and third levels by looking at professionalism "not as a characteristic of an individual or occupational group, but instead as a characteristic of a news media organisation". He argues that organisational professionalism is usually reflected in the extent to which an

organisation's policies, procedures and customs conform to the expectation and standards as articulated by the occupational group.

Beam's (1990) study of different newspapers found that they have variance in the degree to which their practices conform to the practices that journalists, as an occupational group, regard as desirable because factors such as community structure, ownership structure, government structure and cultural influences actually have an influence "directly or indirectly" on the capacity of journalists as an occupational group to influence or control policies, procedures and customs in news organisations.

All these postulations indicate that the study of professions is a dynamic field which becomes even more dynamic when applied to particular occupations with their own unique dynamics. One of the strongest criticisms of structural-functionalism as advanced by Johnson (1972) in chapter two is its assumption that all professions or occupations are homogeneous, regardless of space, time, and other dynamics. This critique finds validity in Beam's (1990) analysis of journalism professionalism as an organisational concept, because it departs from structural-functionalism's perception of the occupational group as the main, if not the only, conduit of professional consciousness. However, it is important to note here that the notion of "organisational-level concept" refers not to the organisation of the professional group, but to the different organisations within which journalists work.

Beam's (1990) analysis also brings into the spotlight the question of balance of power between individual news organisations and the occupational group insofar as professionalism and professionalisation are concerned. The nature of the media industry is such that news organisations in as far as dynamics like house style, ownership and the operating environment, as clearly pointed out by Beam (1990), have substantial autonomy from any form of organisation at the occupational level. If, as Beam (1990) argues, factors such as community, ownership and government structure, and others such as cultural influences, affect the capacity of journalists as an occupational group to influence policies, procedures and customs in news organisations, then the structural-functionalist approach proves inadequate in solving the problems posed by the various organisational structures of different occupations like journalism.

One can argue that the unique structure of the media industry, whose balance of power lies more in news organisations as opposed to the occupational group, makes perception of journalism professionalism from a structural-functionalist approach with its focus on the occupational group, inadequate. Meaningful analysis of the sociological nature of journalism professionalism will make more sense from a phenomenological or power relations approach because of the elasticity of both approaches in dealing with such contradictions as posed by the various industry structures such as the unique structure of the media industry. In the next section I will deal with the perception of journalism professionalism within the broader approaches in media studies.

It can be argued that all these postulations from a power-relations approach, mean that journalistic professionalism appears to be a way for journalists to protect their ranks against pressures from consumers, patrons or clients by presenting journalism as a self-correcting mechanism using codes of ethics (see Allison, 1986), making it conform to the collegiate form of control. This argument equally applies to cases where the relationship between media owners and their employees come in conflict. More often, journalists tend to seek autonomy for themselves by invoking professionalism. But journalism professionalism can also be seen as a means of protecting consumers and clients as audiences, in the form of audience protection mechanisms and ethical guidelines such as the right of reply, fairness and balance, in which case the consumers seem to have sway over the producers. Journalism professionalism can be seen as a mediative factor when the state compels a form of professionalisation on journalists through statutory regulation and licensing, as a way of mediating between the producer and consumer (although in reality many such states represent themselves as clients and patrons). Therefore all the three forms of occupational control in power-relations find resonance in journalism professionalism, which makes it a complex notion to reduce to one single approach.

3.2 Theoretical Approaches in Media Studies and their Interpretation of Journalism Professionalism

Whereas journalism professionalism has been interpreted from within the sociological approaches to professions as discussed in the earlier section, the concept has also been a subject of interrogation from within the broader theoretical approaches in media studies. There have been a number of approaches to the study of the mass media but two traditions have dominated this field, that is, the liberal-pluralist approach and the Marxist approach (Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, 1982). In the course of this discussion, another recent approach, which is the radical-democratic approach, will be introduced.

3.2.1 The Liberal-Pluralist Interpretation

The liberal-pluralist tradition, which is an empirical approach to studying the power of the media, emerged as a criticism of the mass society theory. Mass society theory in turn was a critique of society that viewed the development of the media in a negative sense. Mass society theorists argued that the fall of elite culture, the disintegration of traditional values and social ties and the fall of organic society had been accentuated by the advent of democracy, the development of the press and of popular education “and more generally, by the dissolution of those traditional forms of social relationships which allegedly had hitherto clearly defined for the masses their subordinate place within a hierarchically structured social order” (Bennett, 1982:35). Instead, they argued, organic society had been replaced by mass society, characterised by “mass man” who is a mediocre and vulnerable to all forms of manipulation.

Under mass society, the media are seen as part of the social power structure, and therefore a critical factor in the development and control of the vulnerable “mass man”. The media are controlled and run in a monopolistic way and are an effective means of organising people in masses – as audiences, consumers, markets and electorate (McQuail, 1994). Mass society critique was largely a theoretical representation of media power, and this exposed it to challenge from empiricists.

Liberal-pluralism therefore emerged from the desire to interrogate the assumptions by mass society critics. The liberal-pluralists, supported by empirical studies, argued that contrary to claims by mass society critics that society had become atomised and homogeneous, society was actually pluralist with regional, ethnic, religious and economic differences. According to Bennett (1982) liberal-pluralists viewed the media as promoters of plurality, contrary to mass society claims that they were monolithic. The diversity of the viewpoints which form the content of the media, argued Bennett (1982:40) “contributed to the free and open circulation of ideas, thereby enabling them to play the role of ‘fourth estate’, through which governing elites could be pressurised and reminded of their dependence on majority opinion”.

The view of the media as promoters of plurality, diversity and heterogeneity in society by liberal-pluralists positioned journalism as an important institution which should have systematic guidelines in playing that important role. In order to promote diversity, plurality and heterogeneity, the media have to be free from partisan controls. In other words, they have to be autonomous. Hence the justification of the media as promoters of diversity is guaranteed by the evolution of professional ideologies such as autonomy, and indeed liberal-pluralists look at journalism professionalism as a positive reality because media professionals have developed and committed themselves to certain values that guide them as work practices and regulate their professional conduct. Such values include objectivity, impartiality and fairness.

Bennett (1982) points to studies to establish the beliefs, values and work procedures of media professionals, and professional orientations like autonomy, the presence of which, according to liberal-pluralists, would enable the media to take control of the production process. Professional values like objectivity, impartiality and fairness would also guide the media through the various pressures and influences in society.

Much of the research informed by structural-functionalism inspired research which sought to establish the professional orientation of journalists as explored in the earlier section of this chapter actually falls under the broader approach of liberal-

pluralism in media studies. Already noted is McLeod and Hawley (1964), Menanteau-Horta (1967), and McLeod and Rush (1969a, 1969b), all of whom established the presence of professional orientation among journalists.

Besides the liberal-pluralist approval of journalism professionalism, there have been other advocates of journalism professionalism as desirable if journalism is to function effectively in society. Hodges (1986) argues from a social responsibility vantage point that builds on liberal pluralism, that journalism taking on a professional cloak has the advantage of improving the quality of service for the audience, because then journalists will be guided by moral considerations other than their own or their organisations' interests in as far as stories are concerned. He further argues that journalism professionalism has the benefit of turning around the meaning of work, if journalists see themselves as servants of others, as the professional belief dictates.

The idea of being a journalist, a servant, becomes again a source of pride, and that pride in turn feeds on itself contributing all the more to the reader-centred perspective. And journalism becomes not merely something that one *does*; it becomes something that one *is*. It is not merely a job; it is a commitment to service that one *professes* (Hodges, 1986:35).

In making a case for journalism professionalism, Hodges (1986) makes reference to a list of six attributes of a profession which are 1) intellectuality, 2) science and learning through theoretical grasp, 3) knowledge being required for a practical and definite need, 4) possession of an educationally communicable technique, 5) self-organisation, and 6) altruistic motivation. He notes that whereas journalism does not qualify on all the six benchmarks, it possesses the most important of those attributes to regard itself as a profession. In his assessment, journalism functions towards a definite need, which is to inform and influence trends in life. Journalism also has communicable skills and techniques such as news gathering and writing skills. Referring to successful journalists' organisations like the American Society of Newspaper Editors, he argues that journalism has attained a level of self-organisation. This contention is supported by the existence of many journalists' trade unions which have been formed for purposes of safeguarding the industrial and professional interests of journalists as a professional group.

As for altruism, he contends that given the fact that journalism pay levels are low as compared to other occupations, journalists are not journalists because of commercial or pecuniary interests, but because of altruistic considerations. Therefore according to Hodges (1986), journalism professionalism helps journalists to appreciate the value of their audiences, experience the value of sacrificial service to humanity and that these make journalism mean much more than the story and event, that ultimately it means helping people to run their lives.

Liberal-pluralism and social responsibility elaborations of it present a positive view of journalism professionalism by postulating that for the media to promote pluralism and diversity and serve society, they need to be guided by professional values that would insulate them from pressures and influences prevalent in society. The perspective as such does not deny that there are such pressures, but looks at professionalism as the guarantee against such pressures. The next section then looks at an approach that dismisses any assumed capacity of the media to contain external pressures.

3.2.2 The Marxist Interpretation

The Marxist interpretation of journalism professionalism has its roots in the Marxist approach to media studies. At the core of Marxist analyses is the question of power, who exercises it, and how it is exercised. The central thesis of Marxist analysis of society is contained in the following:

The class which has the means of material production has control at the same time over the means of mental production so that, thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it...Insofar therefore, as they rule as the class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self evident that they ... among other things ... regulate the production and the distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch (Marx and Engels, 1956, cited in McQuail,1994:76).

According to the Marxist perspective, this power equation in which the ruling class necessarily imposes its ideas on the subordinate class, means that the media are implicated as part of the power structure with the role of reproducing “the viewpoints of the dominant institutions not as one among a number of alternative perspectives,

but as the central and obvious or natural perspective” (Curran et al, 1982:69-70). The media are also seen as “legitimizing the existing distribution of power by controlling the context within which people think and define social problems and their possible solutions” (Jhally, 1989). From this analysis neo-Marxist scholars have made references to the media in regard to their role in legitimating and reproducing the dominant institutions. Enzensberger referred to the media as the “consciousness industry” (Jhally, 1989), while Louis Althusser has called them the “ideological state apparatuses” (Hall, 1982).

Like the mass society theory, the Marxist view of the media is of a powerful institution, which has become an agent of legitimation of the dominant institutions. Contrary to liberal-pluralist postulation that the media promote pluralism, the Marxist conception of the media is of promoters of monopolistic domination. Since the media are agents of dominant forces, they are not autonomous, but merely “a set of institutions closely linked to the dominant power structure through ownership, legal regulation, the values implicit in the professional ideologies in the media, and the structure and ideological consequences of prevailing modes of newsgathering” (Curran et al, 1982:64).

From this background, the Marxist interpretations dismiss journalism professionalism as no more than a stratagem for subjugating the practitioners to the service of the dominant will. The professional ideologies such as objectivity and impartiality are the tools that deliver this assignment. Whereas Marxist interpretation, like the mass society theory, is largely theoretical, some empirical studies have proved that professional ideologies can put the media to the service of dominant powers. In Finland, a study was done on the role of the media in Finland’s entry to the European Union. As Nordenstreng (1998:128) explains,

The study demonstrated that people were quite prepared for an open and many-sided debate but the media largely missed this historic opportunity to provide a platform for a true exercise of freedom of expression. Instead of serving civil society, journalists served the power elite – not in a vulgar and partisan way - but ‘professionally’ by letting the elites (then mostly in favour of joining the EU) set the agenda and letting the routines shape the discourse.

One variant of Marxism looks at professionalism as a means of subduing journalists to the will of news organisations and their chiefs. A professional therefore becomes a journalist who is capable of adhering to the system, right from “defining news to conforming to news style, from writing on deadlines to pyramiding reality” (Birkhead, 1986:41).

A journalist’s total loss of independence under professionalism to the news organisations and those who control them becomes vivid in journalists’ own descriptions of what professionalism does to them, as quoted by Birkhead (1986:41-42) from autobiographies of disenchanted journalists. They use phrases such as: “[like parts of a machine], each (one of us) is drilled and fitted to his place”; “[each reporter is] a replica of his chief”; “we are fools, dupes, literary prostitutes”; and “our souls are not our own”. Journalists, Birkhead further argues, lack “ideological control” over their work, which is the authority to determine the goals and purpose to which work is put. This means that under professionalism, journalists cannot shape the objectives, direction and policies of an organisation. This powerlessness further curtails their sense of ethical purpose, which forces them into “moral accommodation which include adjusting one’s own goals and values to an industry or organisation, a process of socialisation and indoctrination, or disengaging from the problem altogether”. The problem is further expounded as follows:

Beneath the questioning of the values of our news media is the growing realisation among practitioners that their moral prerogatives are pre-empted by how they work, how they are trained and educated, how they perceive their very identity as professionals. They are coming to realise the limitation of their influence over the policies and ends of the organisations they work for. The freedom they exercise in the newsroom seems bound by the confines of a regulated routine. (Birkhead, 1986:43).

From a Marxist interpretation, independence ceded by journalists to news organisations and their chiefs under professionalism does not make those organisations independent either, because in reality they are controlled by the dominant forces in society. In the final analysis, through professionalism, dominant forces are able to strip journalists of their autonomy and turn them into robotic agents of the dominant will.

The theme of professionalism stripping journalists of their freedom is further expounded by Merrill (1986:58) who equates professionalism to an “institutionalised mentality” that restricts individual freedom and journalistic diversity. He argues that the assumed freedom that comes with professionalism is actually freedom to “fulfill the expectations of a “monolithic elite”. Contrary to the postulates of liberal-pluralism, Merrill argues that professionalism is objectionable in as much as it leads to the loss of individual freedom and journalistic pluralism and diversity, which ironically are the justification for professionalism under liberal-pluralism.

Carey (1969) had earlier argued that “objective” reporting transforms a journalist from an independent observer and critic to a passive link in the communication chain. To him, “objective” reporting routinises the reporters’ function and gives sources exceptional control over news dissemination. Ultimately, “the independent journalist is reduced to a broker in the communication process and a broker allied structurally if not sympathetically with the persons and institutions he reports” (Carey, 1969:34).

Closer to classical Marxism, Kaul (1986) analyses journalism professionalism in terms of capitalism and class struggle. By establishing a historical link between media economics and ideology, he argues that professionalisation of journalism was merely a manoeuvre to protect newspaper owners and publishers against “profit-threatening commercial crises, class conflicts, and public disenchantment with the press”. According to him, the crisis-ridden “long waves” of American capitalism forced newspaper owners and publishers to devise commercial strategies to quell the prevalent commercial crises. Professional ethics, which to him are camouflaged commercial strategies, provided the answer and were deployed to “resolve commercial crises by legitimating marketplace practices, colonising audiences, and co-opting journalists” (Kaul, 1986:48). Arguing that America had a “deep rooted” tradition of resolving problems and issues of depression into moral terms, journalism’s depressions were, true to American tradition, resolved ideologically when “journalism responded to marketplace crises by harnessing commercial strategies to ideologies” (Kaul, 1986:50).

It might be difficult to imagine how commercial strategies for solving a genuine marketplace problem can be camouflaged and deployed as professional ideologies.

But Kaul (1986) illustrates this by picking on three professional ideologies, that is, independence, objectivity, and social responsibility, and he demonstrates historically and chronologically that they were appropriate commercial answers to the market problems of the day. Independence, which he refers to as a “practical economic strategy” and a “trade tactic”, was a claim to be independent from special interests, in order to isolate the Union Leagues as a means of collecting audiences and selling advertisements.

Kaul (1986) further argues that objectivity was a commercial re-construction of the contractions of the late 19th century and early 20th century to address the intra media and inter media competition. The concept of objectivity as a commercial strategy was earlier argued by Carey (1969) who traced its commercial origins from the need of the mass newspaper to serve politically heterogeneous audiences without alienating significant segments of the audience and therefore be able to sell to all segments.

The ideology of social responsibility on the other hand, was translated from interpretive reporting. As Kaul (1986:52) notes, this puts emphasis on analysis and commentary which represent “a form of product differentiation – an attempt to distinguish the news commodities of newspapers from radio”. Kaul’s conclusion (1986:53) tells all about his view of professionalism:

Proletarian journalists’ assertions of professionalism obscured their economic exploitation. In its substitution of “morality” for “mere pecuniary gains”, professionalism legitimated marketplace practices. “Independence”, “objectivity,” and “social responsibility” were merely ideological corollaries of commercial strategies deployed to stabilise marketplace crises and class conflicts within journalism.

Kaul’s (1986) view of professionalism as legitimating marketplace practices bears resemblance to some other views of professionalism as an agent of legitimation. For example, Tuchman (1978) looks at the mass media as tied to the Western capitalistic order as its “cultural arm”, and professionalism as the tool by which legitimating practices are executed. Such practices are manifested in a number of work practices that are considered professional.

One such practice is the physical location of journalistic bureaus and beats in space and time, which favours coverage of legitimated institutions like the police, parliament or city hall. This leads to less coverage of institutions such as social movements and political dissidents because “reporters are much less prone to learn of news occurrences generated by such (groups)... and because the rhythm of the news media is not attuned to the rhythm of the social movements that schedule their events after normal working hours” (Tuchman, 1978:110).

The methods of identifying and verifying facts are grounded in legitimated institutions which serve as the conventional sources of news. When facts cannot be verified easily, recourse is made to legitimated institutions such as political parties and the branches of government for their comments. The media, Tuchman notes (1978:110), “specifically avoid practices that might lend any element of legitimacy to radical movements and so expand their following”. One notes that Tuchman’s (1978) perspective is influenced by a typical Western democratic and stable society where the media serves to reproduce society with clearly defined and seemingly unanimous national interests. However, viewed from a post-colonial developing society where despotism has been practiced, some journalists and some of the media have served to offer a platform to anti-despotic forces in pursuant of the professional values of fairness and balance. Indeed Lee (2001:6) argues that under state repression, the liberal-pluralist rhetoric of media professionalism, checks and balances, and the marketplace of ideas, empowers political struggles and has actually instilled “a profound sense of hope and legitimacy” in many struggles and liberation movements in the Third World. Tuchman’s (1978) view therefore is narrowed by being oblivious to other socio-political realities different from the typical Western society and how such realities affect media perception and practice.

Journalism professionalism has also been studied in the context of colonialism and the post-colonial context, especially in developing countries. In order to prove his thesis that different social changes bring about different manifestations of the producer – client relationship and consequently different forms of occupational control, Johnson (1973) has cited the case of the former colonies of Britain where – it is claimed - professionalism as a form of occupational control has largely failed to

take root because “the professions in those underdeveloped countries which now make up the British Commonwealth emerged from, and are embedded in, social structures and power relations which differ significantly from those prevailing in the metropolitan country” (Johnson, 1973: 285). He argues that since the professions under colonial rule were enmeshed in the imperial structure, and therefore playing a subservient role within the colonial bureaucracy, the professions in the independent states, which have inherited the colonial bureaucracy, continue to be subordinate to the authority of a centralised state, hence the development of state and corporate variants of patronage as a dominant form of occupational control.

The consequence of this is that where some indigenous professionals have been educated in the West and immersed in the Western professional values associated with professionalism, they have often met with disillusionment and frustration under state patronage and coercion which seems to be the dominant form of occupational control in developing countries, because state patronage is antithetical to professional autonomy (Johnson, 1973:295).

Golding (1997), applying Johnson’s (1973) analysis of occupations in developing countries as quite different from those in the metropolitan country on account of the different institutional settings, concurs that professions in developing countries are tied to the history of being part of the colonial apparatus and therefore incapable of professional autonomy. Hence, he argues that it is the ideology, not the practice of professionalism in its ideal form, that is transferred to the developing countries. In the case of journalism, Golding (1997:293) has argued that what has been referred to as professionalisation in journalism is nothing but “an integration into a dominant global culture of media practices and objectives as developed in the media of advanced industrialised societies”. This transfer is achieved at three levels, at the institutional level, at the training and educational level, and at the level of occupational ideologies. At the institutional level, Golding (1997) notes that Western models of broadcasting and press systems have been replicated in developing countries, including modes of practice, standards and assumptions. However, Golding’s (1997) observation finds relevance only in the immediate post-colonial period. The persuasions of national unity and development as argued by post-colonial

governments quickly changed the Western model to a new model which has been referred to as the development journalism model (McQuail, 1994). However in many African countries, even the development model of journalism quickly gave way to the propaganda model, political party goals and programmes automatically became national goals, and hence the media was supposed to play a propaganda role in favour of the ruling party.

Third World practitioners who have been educated or trained in Western countries have taken back to their countries not only skills but “values and attitudes” (Golding, 1997). For practitioners who have been trained in their countries by expatriate trainers, the training experts carried with them not only the skills, but also “executive styles and programme philosophies of inescapable stamp” (Golding, 1997:296). At the level of diffusion of occupational ideologies, ideologies such as public service broadcasting, audience maximisation through entertainment are transferred in a less tangible way to developing countries and built into “the very ethos of media professionalism”. Therefore to Golding, journalism professionalism “ensures the reproduction of institutions and practices from the advanced industrial societies, is a stabilising philosophy, a prop for the status quo...” (1997:305). Just as I argued within this section in this chapter that Tuchman’s (1978) contention that the media lends credence to legitimated institutions and avoids radical movements is only applicable to particular socio-political situations, the same argument applies to Golding’s (1997) above assertion. Sometimes in conditions of despotism, the very Western concepts of objectivity, fairness and balance end up not reproducing institutions and status quo, but actually challenging their very existence.

Golding’s (1997) presentation of journalism professionalism as a reproduction of institutions and a prop for the status quo, and Johnson’s (1973) assertion that transfer of the concept of professionalism in developing countries (where state patronage flourishes as a dominant occupation form of control) is bound to breed disillusionment and disappointment, finds application in Rampal’s (1996) study of journalists in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. He concludes that journalists in those countries who had been trained as “professionals” and had imbibed the professional values of objectivity, balance and reportorial detachment

could not apply the professional skills and values acquired through journalism education because of political, legal and media structural factors in those “Magreb states,” which leads to frustration. He questions the validity of journalism curricula predicated on free press systems when the skills and values that such curricula endow are not embedded in countries with controlled press systems. He asks:

Isn't such a journalistic value system bound to cause frustration when graduates go out to real-life journalism and contend with a variety of political, legal and other controls on the press? Wouldn't the curricula be better off teaching how to improve the quality of journalism and contend with a variety of political, legal and other controls on the press?(Rampal, 1996:41).

Rampal's study obviously contradicts both Tuchman's (1978) and Golding's (1997) Marxist-inspired assumptions that professional ideologies are automatically assimilated and applied to reproduce dominant institutions, by demonstrating that particular situations dictate particular manifestations of journalism practice, therefore exposing the inadequacies of the Marxist interpretation of journalism professionalism. Nevertheless, the Marxist interpretation still offers a critical glance into the validity of the core values that define and justify journalism professionalism. For example their probing of the canons of objectivity and social responsibility, giving their historical background as commercial strategies turned into moral values, greatly makes the debate of journalism professionalism an even more interesting one. In the next section, I deal with an approach that adopts a radical approach to communication and sees it as a right for all.

3.2.3 The Radical-Democratic Interpretation

The radical-democratic approach in media studies is less traditionalised than the liberal-pluralistic and Marxist approaches I have already discussed. But in the journalism professionalism debate, it becomes a major perspective because it offers a radically different view of communication as a function of democracy. According to this view, communication enables the citizenry to participate in common political action through democratic exchange and discussion of ideas. Everyone is assumed to have the right to participate in the political discourse. Communication is seen as a radically democratic space in which everybody fits.

The journalist, as a communicator, is not separate from the community and its discourse, but is seen as a participant in the discourse. Bekken (1998: 25) notes that such communicators are not detached professionals, but “advocates fighting as best as they could to advance the public good”. This has been demonstrated by some newspapers which would not only invite readers to actively participate in the communication process through submission of news reports, but also by attending editorial meetings to discuss policy. This form of democracy in communication was evident mostly in the foreign-language press in the United States, where specific language communities like the German, Lithuanian and Croatian communities were able to hire and fire editors for their respective publications. But as Bekken (1998) notes, these were largely labour and socialist movements. This view therefore assumes Janowitz’s (1975) advocate model as the dominant professional model, where the journalist is part and parcel of the daily struggles of the community he or she reports about. The advent of professionalism through objective reporting had the effect of detaching the journalist from his niche, which is the community, into a de-intellectualised broker for powerful interests. Eventually, as Carey (1969:32) notes:

The journalist became a reporter, a broker in symbols, rather than an independent interpreter of events, who mediated between audiences and institutions, particularly, but not exclusively government. In this role he does not principally utilise an intellectual skill as critic, but a technical skill at writing, a capacity to translate the specialised language and purposes of government, science, art, medicine, finance into an idiom that can be understood by broader, more amorphous, less educated audiences.

The radical-democratic view of the media therefore looks at journalism, as an aspect of communication, as embedded in the community in which it exists. This view has found strong justification in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes the right to “seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (Bekken, 1998:30). Bekken further quotes the *Bratislava Declaration* which emerged from a seminar on communications held by the NGO Forum on Human Rights, as emphasising the need for “individuals and groups to have adequate resources for satisfying the human need to communicate in the practice of democracy” and as urging human rights covenants to “affirm and

strengthen the right to communicate as an inalienable right fundamental to the democratisation of society” (1998:30).

Insofar as journalism professionalism creates a “monolithic elite” as Merrill (1986) refers to it, or “fortress journalism” as Nordenstreng (1998) prefers to call it, it necessarily excludes certain sections from this assumed right to “seek, receive and impart information”. Therefore the radical-democratic interpretation rejects professionalism because it creates a special group of people that hijack the “inalienable right” to communicate and make it an exclusive luxury of the self-styled few. As Bekken (1998:31) notes:

The Right to Communicate implicitly challenges professionalisation, for if all citizens have a right to communicate, and society has an obligation to make the exercise of that right practical, then the communication professional becomes one voice among many – no longer able to lay claim to a privileged position in public discourse.

Professionalisation is seen as anti-democratic because it alienates the regular citizens from the communication process and reduces them to mere spectators. Manca (1989) articulates the marginalisation of citizens as a result of professionalisation:

As journalism remains in the hands of professionals, regular citizens tend to be excluded... from having access to the means to reach the rest of the public. Grassroots discussion among citizens, which is a fundamental requirement for a democratic society, tends to be displaced... by discussion among columnists, public relations practitioners and other professionals... From active contributors to the grassroots discussion on issues, citizens become passive spectators... (cited in Bekken, 1998:29).

Bekken (1998) cites Habermas as referring to the same situation as the “re-feudalisation of the public sphere” in which “political discourse and citizenship become spectacles paraded across the pages of daily newspapers and the screens of our television sets, but wholly outside the daily lives of citizens who have little possibility of entering into and reshaping that discourse” (1998:29).

Journalism professionalisation is also rejected under the radical-democratic view because it negates the concept of community media and citizen journalism, which under this view, are the most democratic means of involving regular citizens in the communication process. Carey (1969) extols the virtues of community media, which

he refers to as “specialised or minority media” as being able to organise “differentiated speech communities” as well as confer national identity on groups and put their interests on the national agenda. To him, community media:

...mirror a process whereby groups formerly dependent upon face-to-face contact are organised into audiences. More importantly, such media create entirely new publics or groups by providing collective symbols that transcend space, time and culture (Carey, 1969:25).

The challenge of democratic communication, according to Bekken (1998), is to come up with realistic strategies of organising and mobilising publics to engage in the production and dissemination of ideas, in cultural production. Whereas he sees a demonstrable move towards this through community stations and community production centres, he is skeptical whether the professional communicator (professionalised journalist) can have any meaningful role to play in this process.

By invoking the rights to expression and information, the radical-democratic view has made communication, of which journalism is a part, an inalienable entitlement, and therefore any form of professionalisation which excludes certain sections from participating in the communication process (such as on the basis of academic qualifications and mandatory licensing) as its antithesis, hence as anti-democratic, and a violation of a fundamental human right. This very argument has been the basis of litigation in challenging the constitutionality of requiring university degrees and licensing as prerequisites for practicing journalism in Costa Rica.

Thus Knudson (1996) notes that the law requiring compulsory licensing of journalists in Cost Rica was declared unconstitutional by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, on the basis that it contravened Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights. This provides that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression. This right includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, in print, in form of art, or through any other medium of one’s choice.” The court ruled that compulsory licensing based on specific minimum qualifications (university degree) was unconstitutional because it “prevents certain persons from joining the Association of Journalists and, consequently, denies them the full use of the mass

media as a means of expressing themselves or imparting information” (Knudson, 1996:882).

It should however be noted that this is an old debate, whose focus has now shifted to new trends in communication such as blogging and the new concept of citizen journalism. The capacity of technology to democratise communication by offering opportunities to citizens to create their own content and disseminate it the way they choose has opened a whole new debate of whether citizen journalism, which the radical-democrats would support, is actually journalism. There have been arguments that it is not professional because bloggers are not bound by the journalistic values of truth, accuracy and professional routines such as crosschecking stories to ensure their veracity. Raynsford (2003) notes that bloggers are opinionated, ranting, often incoherent and frequently biased with little regard to accuracy and balance, while Hempel (2005) argues that while they have been touted as the new pillars of American democracy, they have gained a reputation for inaccuracy and proved to be swirling rumour mills. However, bloggers have made a case to be treated as journalists in spite of the differences in their perception of journalistic professionalism, arguing that journalists are called so because of their role of gathering news for dissemination to the public, not because of the method they use to publish.

The question of whether bloggers can enjoy the same rights as professional journalists received legal interpretation when a California judge ordered three bloggers who published leaked information on an unreleased Apple product to divulge their sources because apparently they were considered not to be legitimate members of the press who could have a stronger case to argue that they were entitled to protection of their sources (Hempel, 2005). All this suggests that in spite of the radical-democratic arguments dismissing journalism professionalism as an undemocratic and elitist form of exclusion, there are at least some differences between journalists and other communicators on account of the formers’ ascription to professional values such as truth, accuracy, fairness and balance as an integral part of their practice. While some blogging may count as journalism, in general its practitioners are defined much more loosely.

3.3 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have demonstrated how the three sociological approaches influenced the perception of journalism professionalism, and explored the three main theoretical perspectives for and against journalism professionalism in media studies. While liberal-pluralism validates journalism professionalism, the Marxist and radical-democratic approaches reject it as a strategy of legitimating dominant institutions, and constitutionally, as a violation of a fundamental human right, the right to inform and be informed. Here, the problem is that journalism deals with a resource (information) that is considered to be a public good. These arguments pose not only conceptual, but even constitutional, problems for justifying any form of professionalisation of journalists that specifies certain forms of exclusion.

The justification of journalism professionalism from a liberal-pluralist perspective as engendering pluralism and diversity seems to be appealing to the African post-colonial situation where both diversity and pluralism have been suppressed in the name of achieving and preserving national unity. Post-colonial Africa has been characterised by either one-party or military states, both of which are monolithic in nature. That the professional values of objectivity, fairness and balance as argued by liberal-pluralists foster diversity and pluralism, makes the liberal-pluralist interpretation more appropriate. On the other hand, the Marxist interpretation bears relevance in two aspects. One is that media organisations are likely to refer to the dominant institutions as news sources because they are easily accessible, and hence makes them cheaper and sometimes safer sources of news. The second is that Golding's (1997) concept of the transfer of ideology to third-world countries has validity to post-colonial Africa in the sense that African pioneers of journalism were after either the French or British press systems, but as argued in this chapter, the ever-changing model of African media depending on the prevailing socio-political circumstances, means that different press systems keep emerging and disappearing. For example in the 1990s wave of democratisation in Africa, the model of development journalism and state control gave way to western systems through liberalisation and privatisation.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that journalism as an occupation does not fully meet the attributes of professions as described by structural-functionalists in chapter two. Neither does it seem to fit into the professional-client relationship so much touted by advocates of professions. As May (1986:25) notes, “the physicians bond to their patients; the lawyers to their clients; the teachers to their students; the social workers to their families; the ministers, priests, and rabbis to individual members of their congregations, but the journalist has no corresponding one-on-one tie – whatever one may say or pretend about the ‘dear reader’”. It is also important to note that in some circumstances, journalists even challenge their “clients”. Further, professionalisation may be a way of defending a group not against the consumers of their journalism, but against their employers as “clients”.

Journalism professionalism has had various interpretations as explored in this chapter. Whereas the liberal-pluralist, Marxist and radical-democratic perspectives have their validity, it is important to look at how the political and economic factors actually impact on journalism professionalism. The conclusive part of this study will be analysed from this perspective and therefore both the Marxist and radical-democratic approaches are going to be important to this analysis because they help to examine the influence of state and economic power in the definition of professionalism. The analysis of the influence of the state is particularly important to this study because in Uganda the state regarded itself as a patron of journalism by forcing a sort of professionalism. The role of the state in relation to journalism professionalism will further be explored in the next chapter under the discussion of political economy as the theoretical framework of this study.

In the next chapter, I will explore the methodological issues implied in this study. Specific methods employed in gathering and analysing information and data for purposes of this study will be explained and justified and the theoretical framework of this study will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.0 Introduction

In Chapter Three, I explored the theoretical linkages between the sociological approaches to professionalism, and the debate on journalism professionalism, and how the liberal-pluralist, Marxist, and radical-democratic approaches to media studies interpret journalism professionalism. In this chapter, I explore the methodological approach to this study and the theoretical framework within which this study will be analysed. The broad methodological approach will be justified, together with the accompanying methods and sampling techniques.

4.1 Methodological Approaches to Social Research

Deacon et al (1999) argue that contemporary research in communication and media studies has been underpinned by three rival approaches to social and cultural investigation, that is, positivism, interpretive approaches, and critical realism.

Positivists argue that in investigating the cultural and social world, the same basic procedures as those used in investigating the natural world should be used. Hence drawing from the principles of natural science, they argue that the only admissible scientific evidence is facts which have to be drawn from systematic personal observation. In studying the cultural and social world, positivists advocate for simple direct questions and reject “extended encounters or personal involvement in their research practice” (Deacon et al, 1999:1). They advocate for objectivity and precision in collecting facts, through maintaining a distance with the research subjects in order to prevent the influence of their own values and any other subjective judgments in their research work. To them, objectivity and precision can be proved through quantities or numbers that can be processed into empirical data using statistical techniques. Hence this approach often goes hand in hand with the quantitative approach.

The second tradition as identified by Deacon et al (1999:6) is interpretation. Whereas the positivists put emphasis on establishing cause and effect, the interpretive

tradition emphasises ways that people “make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound imagery, personal styles and social rituals”. Interpretive researchers emphasise ethnographic practices, by socialising with their subjects intimately as a way of getting to know their social organisation. Where positivists use pre-determined methodological procedures, interpretive researchers co-produce social knowledge out of multiple encounters, conversations and arguments with their subjects. This form of research generates qualitative knowledge which is usually descriptive in nature, and is alternately referred to as qualitative research.

Deacon et al (1999) identify the third tradition as critical realism, which, like the interpretive tradition, agrees that social reality is reproduced in everyday life. However, unlike the interpretive tradition, it rejects the thinking that social reality exists in ways that people choose to imagine it, arguing that certain social and cultural structures shape people’s choices without them being aware of that influence. They therefore call for an analysis of the relationship between social and cultural structures and the daily actions of people, arguing that general structures generate different responses as the underlying formations remain invisible to the people as they go about their daily activities.

Having weighed these different traditions in light of my theoretical pursuit in this research, I will opt for the interpretive/qualitative approach as the most appropriate for this study. This choice is dictated by my objective in this study to probe interpretations of both politicians and journalists. The qualitative approach will enable me to dig into meanings and how my subjects make sense of journalism professionalisation. Hence interpretations are best sources through the methods used by qualitative researchers such as socialising and conversations. In this regard, this study mirrors a phenomenological approach to professionalism, except inasmuch as its assessment of perceptions of journalism professionalisation is informed by the structural-functional and power-relations insights, and by the debates in media studies through the liberal-pluralist, Marxist and radical-democratic approaches as discussed in the previous chapters. In the next section I shall explore in more detail the qualitative research methodology which underpins this study.

4.2 The Qualitative Methodological Approach

As argued in the previous section, in order to pursue the research questions as specified in this chapter, this study adopted a qualitative methodological approach, which is described by Bryman (1988:46) as “an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of human beings and their groups from the point of view of those being studied”. While the quantitative approach tends to be preoccupied with causality and is usually positivist in approach, qualitative research focuses on meaning and value and how social agents make sense of the world around them. As Christians and Carey (1989: 358-359) argue:

Qualitative studies start from the assumption that we are examining a creative process whereby people produce and maintain forms of life and society and systems of meaning and value. This creative activity is grounded in the ability to build cultural forms from symbols that express this will to live and assert meaning.

Emphasising the point that qualitative research stresses interpretation and meaning, Lindof (1995) argues that where questions of culture, interpretation and power are concerned, qualitative methods are the best. In line with this argument, Jensen (1982) argues that qualitative research emphasises meaning because “human agents experience both their ordinary lives and extraordinary events as meaningful”. He further argues that “cultural artefacts and other vehicles of meaning provide people with a sense of identity, a position from which to exercise agency, and a means or orienting oneself to social interaction” (Jensen, 1982:236).

From this perspective, Christians and Carey (1989) argue that a question for example on the relationship between the media and human beings would not be “how do the media affect us”, but “what are the interpretations of meaning and value created in the media and what is their relation to the rest of life?” The emphasis of qualitative research on meaning and interpretation as emphasised by Christians and Carey (1989) in the above illustration is relevant to this research since the object of this study is to establish the interpretation and meaning of journalism professionalism

among Ugandan journalists and politicians and how it affects the democratic role of the media.

One of the intellectual underpinnings of qualitative research is phenomenology, which according to Bryman (1988) is an investigation of the constructs that people use in order to make the world meaningful and intelligible to them. Phenomenology within the qualitative approach rejects the positivist position that knowledge constitutes only phenomena that is observable through the senses, and postulates that social reality can only be understood through people's experience of that social reality.

The social scientist must grasp the individuals' interpretive devices which provide the motivational background to their actions. Failure to recognise and encapsulate the meaningful nature of everyday experience runs the risk of losing touch with social reality and imposing instead "a fictional non-existent world constructed by the scientific observer" (Bryman, 1988:52).

In order to grasp interpretation and meaning, Bryman (1988) argues that qualitative research favours a research strategy that is relatively open and unstructured rather than a rigid approach that predetermines the subject and strategy of investigation. This flexibility allows qualitative researchers access to topics and information that may not be expected. The open approach means that qualitative researchers do not necessarily need to have a problem they seek to investigate.

This flexibility that allows the qualitative researcher access to issues otherwise unexpected is what Lindof (1995) calls "social intimacy". He argues that there exists a close relationship between the qualitative researcher and the human subjects as the "subject and researcher become familiar to each other: they see each other as something more (knowing, authentic) than human subjects and he or she as possibly something less (exalted, authoritative) than a researcher". He continues: "The people under study become known to the researcher through their social histories, personal selves and the stories they tell. The researcher responds visibly to these people, and the people respond to the researcher's response, and it all goes into the data record" (Lindof, 1995:9). This is what Christians and Carey (1989:360) refer to as "naturalistic observation" which is one of the characteristics of qualitative research in which the researchers must "pitch their tents among the natives, enter the situation so

deeply that they can recreate in imagination and experience the thoughts and sentiments of the observed”.

Christians and Carey (1989) also identify other characteristics of qualitative research. They argue that since unlike quantitative research where phenomena can be observed in manipulated circumstances, qualitative research approaches phenomena from their natural circumstances. Hence, they argue, contextualisation becomes an important characteristic of qualitative research since cultural and historical frames differ under different circumstances. To illustrate their case, they argue that in analysing decision making among media professionals for example, the fact that the conventions and traditions of media corporations vary tremendously over which practices are regarded as moral or immoral, cannot be ignored. Therefore contextualisation of situations becomes an important characteristic of qualitative research.

Christians and Carey (1989:366) further argue that in qualitative research, it is important to establish certain categories of meanings that are “meaningful to the people themselves and, yet sufficiently powerful to explain large domains of social experience”. This is what they call “sensitised concepts”, which are largely operational definitions or cognitive frames in form of phrases like ‘community liturgy’ or ‘community worship’.

Another characteristic of qualitative research as argued by Christians and Carey (1989:366) is what they term as “maximised comparisons”. They argue that qualitative researchers need to choose several comparison groups not to test hypothesis but to “improve the substance and explanatory power of our interpretations”. These characteristics are important to this study in that they underscore the importance of socialising with the subjects which creates the confidence and enables the researcher to tap as much knowledge as possible. Since this study also interprets the views of selected Ugandans within the global perception of journalism professionalisation, the attribute of contextualisation assists this research in analysing the differences in historical and cultural frames within which the broad perspectives on journalism professionalisation are likely to be wrapped. In

the next section, I will explore the theoretical framework in which this study is located.

4.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is located broadly within the field of the political economy approach to media studies. This approach critiques the media as part and parcel of the dominant political and economic forces in society that determine social life. Graham (2005:2) defines political economy as a “study of how values of all kinds are produced, distributed, exchanged and consumed (the economic); and how power is produced, distributed, exchanged, and exercised (the political) and how these aspects of the social world are related to any given place and time in history”. Therefore at the heart of political economy is the question of power relations in the production and consumption processes: who wields power, how, and for what benefit. In this respect there are shared concerns with the power-relations, Marxist and radical-democratic approaches to professionalism discussed in the previous chapters.

The major attributes of political economy will be discussed below, and Chin-Chuan Lee’s thesis on re-thinking political economy will be presented. His typology of analysing the democratic role of the media within the political economy approach will be adopted in determining the implications of the understanding of journalism professionalism by Ugandan journalists and politicians for the democratic role of the media in Uganda.

4.3.1 The Political Economy Approach

Political economy as an approach often corresponds with the Marxist analysis of society, in which class becomes a determinant of social relations. As noted in the previous chapter, according to Marx, the class which controls the means of material production at the same time controls the means of mental production. Hence the ideas of the ruling class become the dominant ideas in any society. Marxist theory argues that there is a direct connection between economic ownership and the ideas that dominate societies, hence in relation to the media, the economic class that owns the media reflect their ideas and interests of class manipulation and exploitation through

media content (McQuail, 1994). Marxist analysis is therefore structural and based on a base/superstructure model, with the economic as the base while the social and political environment is the superstructure.

There are different variants within the Marxist approaches to media studies, political economy being one of them. Curran et al (1982) contend that apart from political economy, there are two other paradigms within the Marxist approach. They identify the structuralist approach and the culturalist approach. The structuralist approach, which has been influenced by Althusser's theory of ideology, focuses on the internal relations of signifying systems (such as film and television) through textual analysis. The culturalist approach focuses on placing the media and other practices "within a society conceived of as a complex expressive totality" (Curran et al, 1982:76). The political economy variant suits this thesis because of its emphasis on the factors that link the media to dominant power structures, including professional ideologies, which are part of the subject of this research.

Political economy conceives society in a Marxist base/superstructure model, with the ideology (superstructure) as both less important and subordinate to the economic (base). From a political economy perspective, in the subordination of ideology to the economic, the media are implicated as central players in this process. They are regarded as not autonomous but closely linked to the dominant power structure through a number of processes such as ownership, legal regulation, professional ideologies, and modes of news gathering (Curran et al, 1982).

Through these processes, according to Murdock and Golding (1977), the media "underwrite certain predominant values, beliefs and institutional procedures that benefit certain persons or groups at the expense of others" (cited in Chikunkuzeni, 1999). By underwriting such values, the media conceals and misrepresents the nature of class struggle which is in reality grounded in economic antagonisms. Murdock and Golding (1977:37) further argue that the power of the economic base translates into pressure on the media to maximise audiences and revenues thereby necessarily avoiding "the unpopular and tendentious" and drawing instead on "the values and assumptions which are most familiar and most widely legitimated". In this process, ideology becomes "false consciousness" and the role of

the media is legitimation of false reality by producing false consciousness, in the interest of a class that owns and controls the media.

Part of the relevance of political economy as the theoretical framework for this study is in the argument of political economists that it is through professional ideologies and work practices of media professionals that media ownership with its economic imperatives translates into controls over media messages. As Curran et al (1982:66-67) state,

The workings of these controls are not easy to demonstrate – or to examine empirically. The evidence quite often is circumstantial and is derived from the ‘fit’ between the ideology implicit in the message and the interests of those in control. The links between the economic determinants of the media on the one hand and the contents of the media on the other must, according to this analysis (political economy), be sought in the professional ideologies and work practices of media professionals since these are the only channels through which organisational controls can be brought to bear on the output of the media.

However, other dimensions of political economy are also relevant to the study, in particular the notion in political economy of class contestation. This may refer to the assertion of capitalist interests (including fractional or sectoral ones) in regard to state power, such as the media industry protecting or advancing its business in regard to regulation. Another can be the role of employees in seeking autonomy against control by their employers. These have a bearing on the understanding of media professionalism.

Since this study examines the interpretation of journalism professionalism by Ugandan journalists and politicians, the implication of the professional ideologies and work practices of media professionals as the conduits through which media ownership exercises control over content helps make political economy a relevant theoretical framework for this study. Beyond media ownership as a form of control, this study will also be looking at the role of the state, irrespective of ownership, in controlling media content. The place of this focus within political economy will be further explored in the next section.

Whereas mainstream political economy has concentrated on the economic base as the determinant of everything in the superstructure (what has been termed

‘economic reductionism’) including social, political, and intellectual consciousness, there have been deviations within the same theoretical framework to suggest a less linear relationship between the economic base and the superstructure. It has been argued that changes in the base structure or superstructure may have “reciprocal impact on the other and their interaction can be uneven and contradictory (Garnham, 1990, cited in Chikunkuzeni, 1999:39). This strand of thinking is very important especially under qualitative research in that it rejects rigidity and acknowledges that different contexts may account for different relationships between the base and superstructure.

As already argued in the discussion of the methodological approach to this study, Christians and Carey (1989) have underscored the importance of contextualisation as an important characteristic of qualitative research because of the flexibility of cultural and historical frames under different circumstances. From this perspective of a more flexible approach to the relationship between the economic and other social relations as opposed to the rigid thinking that the economic determines the rest, Lee (2001) proposes a rethinking of political economy in analysing the democratic role of the media. In the next section, I will discuss in detail Lee’s (2001) theoretical propositions of analysing the democratic role of the media from a political economy approach.

4.3.2 Lee’s Theoretical Dichotomy of Political Economy

Apart from examining how Ugandan journalists and politicians interpret the diverse perspectives that inform the debate about journalism professionalism, this study also aims at determining the implications of such interpretation for the democratic role of the media in Uganda. Lee (2001) has argued that in conceptualising the democratic role of the media within the political economy approach, the Marxist political economy approach with its economic reductionism is inadequate in explaining media trends in Third World countries and former Communist countries where liberal institutions are not fully developed and authoritarianism is the mode of media control. He proposes two theoretical prepositions, that is, the liberal-pluralist approach and the radical Marxist approach as two exclusive or interactive approaches within the

political economy of the media, depending on the context. He argues that the liberal-pluralist approach is relevant in analysing the authoritarian media in Third World countries and former communist countries, because of its critique of the state. The radical Marxist approach on the other hand, with its critique of capital, is then used to analyse the liberal-capitalist media.

To justify his theoretical dichotomy of political economy, Lee (2001) argues that the dominant Anglo-American literature on the political economy of the media disregards comparative studies and tends to be insensitive to authoritarian political and legal determinants of news production, because it assumes society as an affluent, industrialised and politically stable entity, typical of Western societies. Hence the radical Marxist perspective finds relevance in advanced capitalist democracies, while the liberal perspective “is relevant in a large part of the contemporary world where feudalism and authoritarianism prevail” (Lee, 2001:4).

Under radical Marxist analysis of the democratic role of the media, or what Lee (2001) calls “economic” political economy, the market is seen as undermining the ideals of democracy through creating situations of resource inequity and “cultural distortion”. Radical Marxist political economists, who present a “top down” approach, criticise the unhampered economic dynamics of advanced capitalism whereby corporate institutions commodify public communication. Their chief nemesis, Lee (2001:5) argues, “is the capitalist mode and relation of production, as embodied by the military-industrial complex and multinational corporations that manufacture cultural hegemony”. From this perspective, the state is viewed as playing a secondary role in influencing the means of communication as compared to private capital. On the underestimation of the power of the state, Lee (2001:5) explains the possible reasons:

Many Western critical scholars have systematically deprived the state of its central role because, I think, the censorious power of the Western liberal state – which includes emergency powers, armed secrecy, lying, state advertising, and corporatism – is more subtle, benign, and invisible. Not only is its control not as naked and cruel as the authoritarian state; the liberal state also provides legal and institutional protection of media freedom.

Radical Marxists, Lee (200:5) further argues, tend to ridicule media professionalism as firmly rooted in the capitalist logic, with such descriptions as “an ideologically constructed myth that serves the status quo”, and as “strategic rituals that enable the media to uphold the façade of objectivity”. Since the media’s representations rotate around centrally legitimated institutions and tend to neglect alternative views, the long term ideological effect of the media would be the manufacture of consent to achieve hegemony.

Contrary to the perception that the capitalist mode of production is the main impediment to democracy as stated by radical Marxists, Lee (2001) argues that even within the capitalist world system, in the context of the Third World and former communist countries, the state is still the dominant force in as far as distribution of political, economic, and cultural power is concerned, and therefore the enemy of democracy in as far as it is authoritarian. The authoritarian state, Lee (2001:6) argues, “dominates if not monopolises the political and economic resources upon which the media depend”. He adds: “It also owns key news mouthpieces, institutionalises an elaborate system of censorship and coercion, and co-opts the subservient private media enterprises into a patron-client relationship”.

This view of the authoritarian state as the main culprit in the suppression of democratic ideals other than the capitalist system is the variant of political economy known as the liberal-pluralist political economy. This is what Lee (2001:6) calls the “political” political economy. He argues that this “bottom up” approach, under state repression,

empowers political struggles with such (perhaps illusory) liberal images as media professionalism and “checks and balances” in the “marketplace of ideas”. The characteristically unromantic and pragmatic liberal rhetoric has instilled a profound sense of hope and legitimacy in a wide variety of popular struggle, resistance and liberation movements, including those in the Third World.

The liberal pluralist view differs from the radical Marxist view in their perception of the role of the state. A freer market order, if not directly abused by the authoritarian state, according to Lee (2001:6), “offers an emancipatory alternative to aristocratic, oligarchic, despotic, or authoritarian leadership”, through media professionalism by

promoting a diversity of opinion and empowering the media to check and balance the established power. He cites examples where market competition has provided more opportunities for freedom of expression such as in Taiwan, South Korea, Mexico and South Africa. Even in the United States, he argues, through the “enduring values” of media professionalism, the media has been vigilant against government corruption and corporate wrongdoing. From this view, the “creed of objectivity” creates media space for the weak especially in circumstances where the authoritarian state’s power overwhelms any stronger means of resistance.

The relevance of Lee’s (2001) theorising about the different approaches within the political economy approach to this study is that this research is grounded in Uganda, which has seen different phases of tyranny under different authoritarian and military regimes. Whereas Uganda is said to be democratising, the power of the state in determining political, economic, social and cultural resources is still overwhelming. Lee’s (2001) calls for a theoretical dichotomy of the political economy approach to analysing the democratic potential of the media helps this study avoid analysing its findings from a contextually limited theoretical framework. Given its emphasis on analysing the power of the state in monopolising the resources upon which the media depend and its impact on democracy, the liberal-pluralist approach to political economy will be preferred as a contextually relevant approach given the determinant role of the state in Uganda to other social realities like economics and culture.

However, the focus on the role of the state in regard to professionalism is not necessarily at odds with the class analysis because the state may sometimes represent certain class interests in the way it intervenes in the media arena. In addition, the class contestation issue noted in the previous section, points to some features which give rise to the liberal-pluralist characteristics in a society.

Apart from the liberal-pluralist approach as discussed in the previous paragraphs, there are also other approaches to analysing media and democracy which offer useful insight for the analysis of the democratic role of the media.

The civil society approach, which corresponds to the radical-democratic perspective of media professionalism as discussed in the previous chapter, perceives

democratic media as that media which gives space to civil society interests which often work against state abuses. Such interests usually include Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and social movements. The form of media perceived under this approach is often community media but sometimes even commercially owned media. Berger (2002) argues that under this approach, civil society and business are seen as an almost righteous countervailing force against a bad state, hence there are calls for participation, liberalisation, de-regulation and privatisation. This approach is seen as important to the democratic role of the media for its recognition of the media as part of the players outside the state against state abuses. He notes:

At the very least it [civil society approach] locates (some) media in the milieu of actors that stand – albeit in varying degrees – outside the state apparatus. This context has important bearings on the democratic or otherwise role played by non- state media and its (diverse) relations with other civil society forces (Berger, 2002:30).

Under this approach, media professionalism is not so much regarded as a virtue since grassroots voices are recognised as part of the communication process, and are given a platform. Berger however warns against pushing the state out of the equation, arguing that the state is an important institution in as far as provision of law and order is concerned, including the existence of civil society itself. The ideal role of the state in this perspective is to protect and advance the rights of all to communicate (including through the media), and not to create or authorise a monopoly or closed shop as regards practitioners. These are clearly echoes of a right to expression and information as normative positions which were noted in the previous chapter. The relevance of this approach is that it will guide this study in analysing the relationship between the Ugandan media and civil society in regard to the democratic role of the media.

One other approach to analysing media and democracy is the public sphere approach. This approach stresses the importance of media, especially state-owned media, in providing a common forum for political debate and deliberation that in turn empowers public opinion and in a way allows for democratic influence on the exercise of state and other sources of power. The assumption under this approach is

that in order for the media to play this role effectively, they should be free from political and economic constraints from both the state and vested economic interests. Because of the aspect of public participation, Berger (2002) notes that the public sphere approach inclines more to state-owned media with public service mandates, hence it calls for transformation of government propaganda media into proper public media. In terms of professionalism, journalists under this approach are supposed to subscribe to the values of fairness and balance, especially in public broadcasting, in order to be able to offer a common forum for the diversity of views. This approach points to regulation in regard to whether professionals in state-owned media in Uganda provide a common platform for Ugandans to exercise democratic influence over the state and other sources of power.

In summing up, the discussion of the political economy theoretical framework that guides this study is relevant to the research topic in pointing to the different notions of professionalism which are likely to be present in the perception of journalists and politicians. It raises issues about to what extent professionalism is seen as aiding the reproduction of dominant class views and institutions, as is argued by most Marxist political economists, or the liberal-pluralist approach in as far as the democratic role of the media is impacted by the interest of the Ugandan state in enforcing professionalisation of journalists, as part of control to enforce its will. The civil society approach on the other hand helps this study in analysing to what extent there are perceptions about how the liberalisation of the Ugandan media offers opportunities for a diversity of opinions to be heard and how this impacts on journalism professionalism. The public sphere approach helps this study to see if there are perceptions about professionalism in the context of the role of state-owned media in the democratic discourse.

Therefore this theoretical exploration helps to contextualise how the various issues raised are reflected in journalists' and politicians' construction of journalism professionalisation in Uganda. In the next section, I deal with the specific research methods employed in this study.

4.4 Data Collection Methods

As already stated in this chapter, the qualitative approach to research underpins this study as its methodological framework. In order to pursue the research questions, specific methods within the qualitative approach were employed. This study employed two main data collection methods, that is, document analysis, and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Purposeful sampling was used as the sampling method for both document analysis and the interviews. In analysing data, I used a technique called “meaning condensation” which involves condensing data from interviews into “Natural Meaning Units” (NMUs). The NMUs are direct statements extracted from the interviewees’ responses that are considered to be more meaningful to the central areas of inquiry. From the NMUs, I then deduced central themes that relate the thinking of the interviewees to the central areas of inquiry and the specific purpose of the study. I then combined the central themes into descriptive statements (See Appendix II). It is these descriptive statements that I use in inferring the perceptions of journalism professionalisation by Ugandan journalists in Chapter Seven. The following is a detailed description of these methods.

4.4.1 Document Analysis

Whereas participant observation is probably the method of data collection closely associated with qualitative research, followed by unstructured interviewing (Bryman, 1988), Lindof (1995) argues that certain methods are used to support those primary research strategies, on account of their importance as aspects of social life. He further argues that recent thinking postulates that material culture, including clothing, architecture and personal memorabilia can function as a primary means of symbolic expression, and hence merits more foreground treatment. Bryman (1988:47) justifies combining different techniques arguing that a variety of techniques allows “inferences or ‘leads’ drawn from one data source to be corroborated or followed by another”.

Analysing documents and artefacts are such methods which, as Jensen (1982) notes, are potentially valuable sources of evidence, but somewhat neglected. He further argues that this method represents qualitative research in its natural form,

because the data in documents is found, rather than made through the researcher's intervention in the field.

This study used document analysis as one of its methods, because journalism professionalism in Uganda as the concept under scrutiny in this research has been a subject of discussion both at the Executive and Legislative levels, and in the public domain. As a result, an Act of Parliament, the Press and Journalist Statute of 1995, was enacted purportedly to professionalise journalism. The justifications and counter views for and against the various provisions of this Act are documented in the Hansard, the official publication of parliamentary proceedings.

In this study, I analysed the Press and Journalist Statute (which is informed by a statutory approach to professionalisation). This statute provided valuable information as regards the structural construction of journalism professionalisation by Ugandan politicians. Of particular interest to this researcher were the institutions established under this statute and their respective mandates. Emphases were sought in regard to these mandates to establish dominant perceptions. They were then matched with the three sociological approaches as discussed in chapter two to find any correlation.

I also analysed the constitution of the Independent Media Council of Uganda (which is informed by a self-regulatory approach) in terms of its structural composition to examine how it fits in the three sociological approaches to professions. Like with the Press and Journalist Statute, I looked for the different institutions that the constitution creates and how such institutions compare with the ones created under the Press and Journalist Statute for convergences or divergences. In doing so, I was comparing and contrasting the two major approaches to the professionalisation of journalists in Uganda, that is the statutory approach and the self-regulatory approach.

An analysis of the structural formation of the Press and Journalist Statute and the Independent Media Council of Uganda as important documents to this study was considered important because as Jensen (1982:244) argues, such documents are not ready made representations of social facts, but are "outcomes of previous social interaction whose circumstances must be part of the object of analysis and

interpretation". Where such documents are vital to the research, Lindof (1995) argues that document analysis becomes a vital component of the research methods. Citing the case of Monica, a researcher who wanted to study how the college tells its story of research and training activities to external constituents and to the public, Lindof (1995:5) underscores the necessity of document analysis:

It was also vital for Monica to consider documents and other artefacts, because her study concerned stories by the mass media as well as materials processed inside the organisation (such as) announcements, memoranda, policy statements, minutes of meetings, research reports and so on.

The opinions of Members of Parliament on the concept of journalism professionalism were retraced from the Hansard, which provided invaluable information regarding the arguments of Members of Parliament (MPs) in support or otherwise, of the Press and Journalist Bill before it was passed into law, the reasons why such a law was necessary, and the expectations from the law once implemented. It should be noted that the debates were extensive and provided bulky information regarding views of MPs. In order to avoid unnecessary waste of time, and in order to sieve out information that would not necessarily be relevant to the subject of this study, I deduced from chapters two and three, dominant themes that characterise the debate on professionalism in general (chapter two) and journalism professionalism in particular (chapter three). I came up with the following themes:

- Understandings of the concepts of professions, professionalism and professionalisation;
- How occupations professionalise;
- The structural organisation of professions;
- Role of knowledge/education in professionalisation;
- Codes of ethics in professions;
- Role of government in professionalisation;
- The extent to which professionalisation is seen as self-serving to journalists and the media industry, or whether it is seen as consolidating legitimation of dominant political and/or economic forces in society.

- Relation of journalism to freedom of expression; and
- The functional value of journalism to society.

Different views were matched to these themes and relevance was analysed. Hence the analysis of the Hansard records was guided by the literature review of this study.

In this study, I also analysed articles published as opinions and letters in *The Monitor* and *The New Vision* newspapers to retrieve the views of contributors on journalism professionalism, as representatives of the public domain. These two newspapers were picked because they are the leading daily newspapers with a combined circulation of approximately 50,000 copies. Even today, they are considered to be the leading print media in terms of influencing public opinion in Uganda (BBC World Service Trust, 2006). The two newspapers also offer valuable contrast because of the differences in ownership. While *The Monitor* is privately-owned now, with the Kenya-based Nation Media Group having 60% ownership and the rest owned by original shareholders, *The New Vision* has 80% ownership by the Uganda government while 20% of the shares are owned by various private shareholders through the Uganda Securities Exchange (BBC World Service Trust, 2006). This contrast therefore offered insight into the significance of ownership in shaping media content. Readers' letters were analysed as forms of construction of the concept of journalism professionalism within the theoretical approaches discussed in the earlier chapters. Retracing these opinions from newspapers is important because as Jensen (1982) argues, media are vehicles of cultural forms and historical world views, and hence their textual output has been a central object of analysis in qualitative media studies.

Like other modern organisations, the media are highly prolific generators of documents that prepare and feed into the media texts proper. Like other cultural institutions, they attract written responses such as audience letters, but also diaries, autobiographies, and fan fiction reflect on the social role of the media. (Jensen, 1982:244).

4.4.1.1 Sampling of Documents

As Deacon et al (1999) argue, sampling is at the heart of all scientific activity, whether in the human or natural sciences, because it is an integral element of social

life. In communication and cultural studies, sampling issues involve people, social groups, events, activities, institutions and texts. In document analysis, this study employed a technique called purposeful sampling. This technique is within the non random sampling type in social research, in which small, manageable and information rich samples are picked (Kvale, 1996, cited in Chikunkuzeni, 1999). This technique assumes that the researcher has adequate knowledge about the sample population in order to know the information rich samples.

Hence from my proximity to the journalism professionalism debate in Uganda as a mid-career journalism trainer, I picked the Press and Journalist Statute, which is an Act of Parliament enacted for purposes of professionalising the media in Uganda. This document is rich in information because apart from its aim of professionalising the media in Uganda, it defines the structural nature of journalism as a profession, and spells out the methods and mechanisms of regulation. The second document that I picked as a sample for analysis is the Hansard of the parliament of Uganda. This is the official publication of parliament and therefore contains the verbatim submissions of Members of Parliament. In understanding the perceptions that informed Members of Parliament to pass this Act as it is, the Hansard provided valuable information. However, knowing that the debate on the final Bill (earlier attempts were found insufficient until a select committee was appointed to re-draft the final bill) that was later passed as a statute took place between May and July 1995, I restricted myself to the Hansard editions covering that period.

The structure of the independent Media Council of Uganda was also picked as a sample because it offers an alternative approach to professionalism. Whereas the statute advocates for statutory professionalisation, the Media Council of Uganda proposes a self-regulatory approach to professionalisation.

In retracing the perceptions of journalism professionalism from the public domain at that time, I picked *The Monitor* and *New Vision* newspapers as samples. The choice of *The Monitor* as an information rich sample is because it encourages more public debate of national issues through its pages in form of opinions, letters to the editor, and commentaries from the general public as an editorial policy. But the *New Vision* was also picked as a sample because of its contrast to *The Monitor* in

terms of ownership. In order to match the data from the Hansard with the data from the newspapers, I perused the opinion pages of *The Monitor* and *New Vision* newspapers for the period May to July 1995 as I did with the Hansard. As has been argued by Bryman (1988), using a variety of techniques allows for inferences or leads from one technique to be corroborated or followed by another. Accordingly, data from document analysis as argued above, coupled with secondary data on the sociology of professions and journalism professionalism in media studies as argued in chapter two and three, informed the next method of this study, which is interviewing using semi-structured in-depth interviews.

4.4.2 Semi-Structured In-depth Interviews

Bryman (1988) argues that apart from participant observation, qualitative research employs interviewing as one of the primary strategies of data collection. On the other hand, Lindof (1995) argues that interviewing as a broad method, goes by several variations such as in-depth, unstructured, semi-structured, intensive, collaborative and ethnographic. However, these different variations only have slightly different shades of meanings and practice. This study opted for semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists in order to understand their interpretation of journalism professionalism within the sociological and media studies approaches to professionalism. Although the views of politicians are represented in the Hansard, this researcher decided to interview some politicians who were members of the sixth parliament that passed the Press and Journalist Statute in 1995, to gauge if their views had been affected by the passage of time.

Lindof (1995:5) argues that people are interviewed in order to “understand their perspectives on a scene, to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable for observation, to foster trust, to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyse certain kinds of discourse”.

In interviewing the respondents, I conformed to Bryman’s (1988) argument that in-depth interviewing allows the interviewee considerable latitude since the interviewer plays a minimal role in guiding the interview. This format of

interviewing, which according to Jensen (1982:240) resembles a conversation between equals, is suited to tap “social agent’s perspective on the media, since spoken language remains a primary and familiar mode of social interaction”. I therefore employed a free and open approach whereby the interviewee had sufficient space to air out views and opinions without unnecessary interruption. As Deacon et al (1999:65) argue, semi-structured interviewing abandons concerns about standardisation and control, but seeks to promote “an active, open ended dialogue”. In the interviews, I probed the respondents’ understanding and interpretation of journalism professionalism, as informed by debates around professionalism in general, and journalism professionalism in particular. In this, I was in line with Jensen’s (1982:240) argument that “respondents’ self-conception, opinions, and world views must be inferred from their languages (and other system of communication) and their argumentative structures, cultural themes and narratives”.

Bryman (1988) notes that in qualitative research, researchers have the option of making use of an interview schedule, or operating with a loose collection of themes to be covered. I therefore opted for an interview guide to differentiate my interviews from daily conversation. Whereas Deacon et al (1999:65) argue that semi-structured interviewing abandons standardisation and control, they also argue that differentiated from everyday conversation, the interviewer can still exercise limited but necessary control of the discussion by using an interview guide “which sets out the issues to be covered during the exchange”. Such issues in my case were the major themes deduced from secondary data about the theoretical approaches to professionalism in general and journalism professionalism in particular (see Appendix I). The major themes included the following:

- Understandings of the key concepts of profession, professionalism and professionalisation under study
- How professionalism is achieved
- Relationship between professionals and their clients
- Comparison between journalism and other professions
- Opinion about the Press and Journalist Statute, especially statutory registration, licensing and entry restrictions based on education

- Code of conduct
- Professional values such as objectivity and fairness
- Influences on news content and journalistic freedom
- Democratic role of the media

Whereas there are some overlapping themes as presented above with the themes preferred in document analysis, the issues for the in-depth interviews are broader and more detailed than those examined in document analysis.

4.4.2.1 Sampling of Interviewees and Interview Procedure

The interviewees were sampled using purposeful sampling, which is the same method I used in document analysis. As argued in the previous section, purposeful sampling involves the choice of “small, but information rich samples”. According to Maxiwell (1992), the goal of this type of sampling is “to make sure that one has adequately understood the variation in the phenomenon of interest in the setting, and to test developing ideas about the setting by selecting phenomena that are crucial to the validity of those ideas” (cited in Strelitz, 2002:13).

Using the researcher’s discretion, and using my knowledge of the debate about journalism professionalism in Uganda from my vantage position as a mid-career journalism trainer, I decided purposely to pick leaders of the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) and Uganda Journalists Association (UJA) because of my desire to “select phenomena that are crucial to the validity of those [professionalism] ideas” as Maxiwell argues. As leaders of two different professional associations, one statutory and another one voluntary, coupled with their proximity to the professionalisation debate, they represented an information-rich sample.

In total I interviewed six journalists who included the current leader of the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) who is now the Press Secretary to the Vice-President of the Uganda, and one former leader of Uganda Journalists Association (UJA) who was the President of the Association during the debate on the Press and Journalist Statute, which mounted a fierce campaign against the press law in general and NIJU in particular. He is now the Press Secretary to the President of Uganda. I also interviewed a veteran journalist who is currently the Secretary General

of UJA. Three more journalists were interviewed, one a news editor of a leading daily newspaper, another a retired managing editor of another leading daily who is now a journalism lecturer, and the last being a prominent academic in mass communication who was the first elected president of NIJU after the passing of the press law.

I also interviewed two politicians. One was the former chairman of the parliamentary select committee that re-drafted the media bill, the other being one of the vocal members during debate on the media bill. Both were from the sixth parliament, which passed the Press and Journalist Statute. In interviewing these politicians in spite of the fact that politicians' views were already analysed in the Hansard, this researcher wanted to establish whether their views, coming after thirteen years since they passed the press law, contained any divergences from the dominant views in the Hansard, as already justified in 4.5.2. In other words, the researcher wanted to find out whether the passage of time had had an impact on their perceptions of journalism professionalisation. This researcher found out that the politicians' views from the interviews did not differ from the positions as recorded in the Hansard, especially in regard to statutory professionalisation, and the role of government in journalism professionalisation, and hence their views were considered less useful.

All the interviews were conducted between 19th July 2007 and 17th September 2007, which is roughly a period of two months. All interviews for journalists were conducted in their respective offices, except one with a news editor who was on leave and preferred to be interviewed in the interviewer's office. One of the politician's interviews was conducted in a public place because he was always mobile and it was difficult to get him in a private space. All these were face-to-face interviews, except for the interview with the former chairman of the select committee that presented a re-drafted press bill, whose interview was conducted on the telephone. This was because he works in a remote district in the northern part of Uganda, which has been under civil war for the last two decades. Just like Hansen et al (1998) argue, the researcher found it cost-effective in terms of time and transport costs to conduct the interview by telephone.

The duration of all interviews spanned between one hour and one and half hours. Prior to the interviews, I made appointments and explained to the interviewees the purpose and scope of the interviews. This researcher did not experience any case of turning down an interview. Inconveniences were only experienced when some interviewees would change appointments for interviews because of unforeseen commitments, in which case the work schedule of this researcher would be affected. All interviews were conducted in a structured way following the interview schedule and all interview proceedings were recorded on tape.

Finally, all interviews were transcribed in a lengthy and careful process to ensure that interviewees' ideas are recorded verbatim to constitute raw data.

4.4.2.2 Data Analysis

In analysing data, I used a technique known as “meaning condensation” (Kvale, 1996). This technique involves condensing data from interviews into “Natural Meaning Units”. Here, I deduced central themes from the natural meaning units, interrogated them in terms of the specific purpose of this study, and finally combined essential themes into descriptive statements. According to Kvale (1996), meaning condensation involves abridging of interview data into shorter formulations. He recommends the following steps in this process which were followed by this researcher:

- First, the whole interview text was read through to get the general sense of the whole.
- Second, natural meaning units as expressed by the interviewees were determined by the researcher.
- Third, the themes emerging from natural meaning units were stated in simple terms while bearing in mind that the aim was to reflect the interviewees' viewpoint.
- Fourth was interrogating the natural meaning units in terms of the specific purpose of this study.

- Fifth, essential, non-redundant themes of the entire interview are tied together into a descriptive statement (Kvale, 1996, cited in Chikunkuzeni, 1999:62)

Using meaning condensation, interviewees' statements were broken down into smaller units called Natural Meaning Units (NMUs) and coded with a letter and a number. The letter represents the first letter of an interviewee's surname (in case of the same letter being shared with another interviewee, the first letter of their first name was preferred); while the number represents the chronological order of a particular NMU from number one. Hence this study employs codes such as B1, B10, K17, M20 and others. The numerical codes do not correspond with the numbering of the questions on the interview schedule, but are at the discretion of the researcher in breaking down meaningful statements from the interviews. Hence in the coding, the reader will for example find that while T ends at 22, B ends at 30.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the methodological issues that guided this study. I have argued in favour of the qualitative approach which underpins this study as the broad methodological approach, and explored the specific methods that were employed. I have also explored political economy as the theoretical framework for analysing this study, identifying the insights of a Marxist and liberal-pluralist approach to political economy, as well as those of the civil society and public sphere, forming the relevant framework for analysing the implications of the findings of this study to the democratic role of the media in Uganda. In the next chapter, I will present the two approaches to journalism professionalisation as deduced from document analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

APPROACHES TO JOURNALISM PROFESSIONALISATION IN UGANDA

5.0 Introduction

In Chapter Four, I explored the methodological and theoretical issues that have guided this study, and presented the methods of both data collection and analysis. In this chapter, I present the nature and form of the two main approaches to journalism professionalisation in Uganda as deduced mainly from analysing two documents, that is, the Press and Journalist Statute, 1995, and the Constitution of the Independent Media Council, 2005 as well as their Code of Ethics. An attempt is then made to compare the two approaches in their interpretation of journalism professionalisation. Similarities and differences are drawn in regard to their structural and conceptual nature.

5.1 The Statutory Approach to Journalism Professionalisation

The statutory approach to the professionalisation of journalists in Uganda is defined by a law passed by the Parliament of Uganda in 1995, titled the Press and Journalist Statute. It should be noted that passing of this law was preceded by years of grappling with the question of how to handle the media. According to Paul Etyang, the then Minister of Information who presided over the presentation of the Bill in Parliament, the Bill had gone through “eight years of gestation”, had been handled by four ministers of information, had outlived three Prime Ministers, and had also had seminars for people from different backgrounds “the majority of whom may not have necessarily been journalists” (Hansard, 1995:152). This means that the idea of having a law to regulate the media was conceived around 1987, one year after the capture of power by the National Resistance Army/Movement headed by the current President Yoweri Museveni. It also suggests that journalists were not closely involved in the development of the earlier attempts. This exclusion could imply a contemptuous attitude by government towards journalists at that time. Indeed John Kakande (interview, July 2007), News Editor of *The New Vision*, seems to confirm this attitude when he attempts to explain why government could have decided to come up with a

law to regulate the media. “The government’s feeling was that there were newspapers which simply wrote what they wrote because the profession was not legally sorted out [recognised by law]. Some were saying that some journalists were fishmongers who abandoned their nets, came to the city, picked pens and became journalists”. This position is confirmed by Atwai Ongora who chaired the select committee that finally produced a draft Bill. In an interview with this researcher (August 2007) twelve years after the passing of the law in Parliament, he justifies the statutory approach arguing that journalism was at that time abused because anybody could pick up a pen and write. The earlier attempts to legally define journalism did not seem to succeed due to questions about procedure and form, until in 1994 when a Bill was introduced before Parliament (*Monitor*, 1995:3). When the Bill was introduced in Parliament, it was still found to contain a number of loopholes and was referred to a select committee of parliament for re-drafting.

In May 1995, the select committee presented an overhauled Bill to Parliament titled the Mass Media Bill, 1994-1995 (Hansard, 1995:150) which formed the basis for what was eventually passed as The Press and Journalist Statute, 1995. As regards media institutions, it targets mainly print media organisations, while at the same time also targets both print and electronic media journalists as individuals. Indeed the reason why the title changed from the Mass Media Bill to the Press and Journalists Bill is because Parliament felt that the liberalisation of the broadcasting sector in 1993 presented unique challenges for regulation, hence the need to address the electronic media separately. Therefore in 1996, Parliament passed the Electronic Media Statute, 1996, to address the regulatory challenges for the electronic media. Hence while the Press and Journalist Statute, 1995, largely deals with individual journalists, the Electronic Media Statute deals with electronic media institutions.

The object of the Press and Journalist Statute as defined in its preamble is to “ensure the freedom of the press, to provide for a Council responsible for the regulation of the mass media, to establish an Institute of Journalists of Uganda, and to repeal the Newspaper and Publications Act and the Press Censorship and Correction Act” (Press and Journalist Statute, 1995:5). Structurally, the Statute establishes two institutions, that is, the Media Council whose main function is to regulate and control

the practice of journalism, and the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) whose main function is to promote professional standards and fellowship among journalists.

From the foregoing, it can be argued that the statutory approach establishes a duality of functions between the state and the practitioners, with the state exhibiting more interest in the regulation and control function as represented by the statutory Media Council, leaving promotion of professional standards and fellowship to practitioners as represented by the statutory NIJU. In the following section, an attempt is made to explore this duality in more detail.

5.1.1 The Regulatory and Control Function of the Statutory Approach

The regulatory and control function seeks to regulate and control the practice of journalism through the establishment of a statutory media council. According to the Statute, the functions of the Media Council include registering of editors of mass media organisations, regulating the conduct of and promoting good ethical standards and discipline of journalists, arbitration of disputes between the public and the media or the state and the media, exercising disciplinary control over journalists, and censoring films, video tapes, plays or other apparatuses for public consumption (Section 10). The Statute also mandates the Minister of Information to play an active role in the running of the affairs of the Council through provision of powers to the Minister to amend the schedule that specifies the procedures under which the Council conducts its business in relation to meetings, voting and disposal of disciplinary matters. It also mandates the minister with powers to determine the finances of the Council including any form of remuneration or allowances (Sections 11, 12). The powers to control procedures and finances imply close interest by the state in the affairs of the Media Council and the likely impact on its decisions regarding its mandate. Like the old adage that “he who pays the piper calls the tune”, the fact that the government Minister can control the procedures of the Media Council and the remuneration of its members implies that the independence of the Council in dispensing its duties can be compromised.

The membership of the Council is composed of thirteen personalities of different occupations, who include the Director of Information or a senior officer from the Ministry of Information who also doubles as the secretary to the Council, two distinguished scholars in mass communication, a representative of the Association of Newspaper Proprietors and Editors, four representatives of the electronic media and NIJU, four members of the public (not being journalists), and a distinguished practicing lawyer. There are different procedures of appointment to the Council. While some members are directly appointed by the Minister of Information, those who represent special interests are first nominated by their constituencies and then appointed by the Minister upon nomination. For example the two distinguished scholars in mass communication are appointed by the Minister in consultation with NIJU, while the representative of the Association of Newspaper Proprietors and Editors is nominated by his/her association. The four members representing the electronic media and NIJU as well as the representative of the Uganda Law Society are directly appointed by the Minister. However, of the four members representing the public, two are nominated by the Minister, one is nominated by the association of newspaper proprietors and editors, while one is nominated by the journalists [presumably through NIJU]. The chairman of the Council is elected by the members from among themselves. What is important to note is that whether a member is directly appointed or indirectly (through nomination), for all members, the appointment instrument comes from the Minister. It would seem that from the composition of this Council, journalism is perceived as an aggregate of a diversity of stakeholders and interests, that is, the state through the ministry of information, the academia, professional organisations, the general public, and other professions as represented by the law profession, and hence as stakeholders in the professionalisation process. However, the fact that all members of the council are appointed by the Minister responsible for information (directly or otherwise) implies that the state, in the way it perceives professionalisation, sees itself as the main stakeholder in the control function of the statutory approach.

The Statute empowers the Media Council to maintain a “Register of Journalists of Uganda”, through mandatory registration of not only editors, but also

all journalists. The Statute however does not give a direct definition of a journalist. It only gives implied definitions. In the preliminary definition of terms in the Statute, a journalist “means a person who is enrolled as a journalist under this Statute (Part I: 6)”. However, Section 28(5) of the Statute (which requires journalists to obtain an annual practising certificate) as a licence to practice journalism, describes those who are deemed to be practicing journalism as follows: “In this section, a person is deemed to practice journalism if he is paid for the gathering, processing, and publication or dissemination of information and such person includes a freelance journalist”. This could imply that newspaper columnists who are paid to write regular columns (who are not necessarily journalists in the conventional sense) are also supposed to possess a practising certificate and therefore be regarded as journalists since they are paid to write columns.

The practising certificate is issued to registered journalists upon enrolment with the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda and payment of a prescribed fee. The certificate is valid for one year but renewable. The statute forbids practicing of journalism without possession of a valid practicing certificate, and prescribes a fine of three hundred thousand Shillings or a prison sentence not exceeding three months or both (Sections 6, 28, 29). This means that breaches in what the state sees as the structural procedures of journalism professionalisation are viewed under the statutory approach as requiring not occupational peer sanctions, but criminal sanctions through the formal criminal system of Uganda. It is noted that the statute creates conditions under which a practising certificate may be denied. The conditions are failure to enrol and failure to “comply with any order made under this Statute”. The certificate may also be suspended for a specified period not exceeding six months if the holder (journalist) is found guilty of a professional misconduct by the disciplinary committee of the Media Council (Sections 29, 34). This indicates tight control of journalism by a body which is ultimately appointed by government, hence a professionalisation process tightly controlled by the state.

The implications of this are that in cases of conflict between state interests and the practice of journalism, the statute gives the state an effective means of cracking down on critical or undesirable journalists under the guise of protecting

professionalism. As already argued in this chapter, the statutory approach to journalism in Uganda creates a division of duties between the control function and the promotion of professionalism function, and having explained the control and regulatory function in this section, the next section attempts to explore the professionalism and fellowship function.

5.1.2 The Professional Standards and Fellowship Function of the Statutory Approach

This function seeks to establish and promote professional standards and professional fellowship through the establishment of a professional body called the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU). According to the Press and Journalist Statute, the functions of the Institute include establishing and maintaining professional standards for journalists; fostering the spirit of professional fellowship among journalists and encouraging training and equipping journalists to enable them play their role in society. In regard to professionalism, the Institute is further mandated to advise on courses of study and conduct qualifying examinations and generally on matters related to professional education of journalists. The roles are to ensure maintenance of professional education of journalists, promote the usage of journalism which is not contrary to public morality, and encourage research in journalism for the advancement of professionalism (Section 15).

The Statute specifies three categories of membership, that is, full membership, associate membership, and honorary membership. However, the Statute creates a sort of caste system within the professional body with its definition of the qualities that qualify professionals within the three categories. Accordingly, full members are those who hold a University degree in journalism or mass communication, or any other university degree plus a qualification in journalism or mass communication, and have practiced journalism for at least one year (Section 16). Admission to the Institute for the categories of full membership and associate membership is by application (Sections 17, 18) and the executive committee has a right to approve, disapprove or even terminate membership under the following circumstances:

- a) Being of unsound mind
- b) Being bankrupt or insolvent
- c) Convicted of an offence under the Statute or an offence involving moral aptitude.

This means that membership and its tenure are determined by the Institute.

Apart from the full members, the rest of the members are either associate or honorary members whose qualification the general assembly is mandated to set. Much as there are three categories of membership, only members who fall under the category of full membership are eligible to vote and be voted into office. This provision therefore condemns journalists without university degrees to an observer or *ex officio* status in the affairs of journalism. The stratification of the professional body and disenfranchisement of certain categories of membership means that the assumption of equal status of members of the occupational community under professionalism as argued in Chapter Two does not apply under this approach. It also means that a sense of identity, colleague-loyalty and shared values that accrue from equality of status are missed out.

Unlike under the regulatory and control function of the statutory approach, whose leadership is ultimately appointed, the leadership of the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda is elected annually by the Institute at a general meeting. The leadership is composed of the President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant General Secretary and three other members (Section 19). There is evidence of less government interest in the running of the affairs of the institute, and according to the Statute, the involvement of the Minister of Information is limited to receiving the report of audited accounts of the Institute from the government Auditor General, and laying such report before Parliament (Section 26). This means that whereas the statutory approach seeks to promote professionalism, the state considers control and regulation of the profession as the most important aspects in which it should be directly involved, and considers promotion of professional standards and fellowship as matters that can be left to the practitioners to sort out with minimal involvement.

5.1.3 Codes of Ethics under the Statutory Approach

The Press and Journalist Statute has as its first schedule a Professional Code of Ethics which largely spells out the dos and don'ts of journalism. It includes such obligations and values as commitment to truth and accuracy, non-disclosure of sources, integrity, originality, right of reply, objectivity, and social responsibility. Hansard records quote a Member of Parliament who was on the select committee of Parliament which made the final draft of this law as saying that the contents of the code were sourced from the journalists themselves, and hence largely reflect the contents of conventional journalism codes (Hansard, 1995:159).

However, these are mandatory codes whose observance is not out of inculcation or free volition, but out of statutory obligation. According to the Statute, any journalist enrolled under the Statute is subjected to the professional code of ethics, and any person who contravenes any provision of the professional code of ethics commits a professional misconduct and is supposed to be dealt with by the disciplinary committee of the Media Council (Section 41). In such instance as is the case in other possible occasions of professional misconduct, the disciplinary committee, according to Section 34 may impose any or a combination of the following penalties:

- a) The journalist be admonished or be required to apologise to the aggrieved party in the manner specified by the committee including the same boldness of lettering on the page where the article appeared in the newspaper;
- b) The practicing certificate of the journalist be suspended for a specified period not exceeding six months (during which period the journalist cannot practice);
- c) The media organisation[s] which published the matter that led to the complaint pays compensation to a person who suffered loss or injury as a result of the misconduct.

After all or any of this is done, Section 36(2) provides that the secretary to the disciplinary committee shall ensure that an order of the committee is noted on the

register against the name of the affected journalist and shall send a certified copy of the committee's decision to the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda.

Hence in regard to codes of ethics, the statutory approach emphasises enforcement as opposed to being voluntarily observed, and punitive consequences as opposed to amicable settlement.

Whereas the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda which is the professional body of practitioners is mandated with establishing and promoting professional standards for journalists, matters to do with contravention are handled by the government appointed Media Council. This means that whereas practitioners and their leadership may promote professional consciousness of the profession, enforcement (as required under the statutory approach) of the codes (and other forms of professional misconduct) remains the preserve of the state as part of its control and regulatory function.

The statute further disowns the professional code of ethics from the practitioners by empowering the Minister to amend the codes (after consultations) by statutory instrument (Section 41 (3)). This means that although the codes might have originated from the practitioners, once they become part of the law, the power to define codes of ethics shifts from the practitioners to the state through the Minister responsible for information. Hence under the statutory approach, the professional and fellowship function of professionalisation concedes codes of ethics to the control and regulatory function.

As argued in chapter one, the statutory approach as defined by the Press and Journalist Statute received objection from the practitioners basically on two issues; the discriminatory nature of the membership and voting rights within the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda, and the control orientation of the government-appointed Media Council. Hence practitioners argued for another approach to professionalisation and went ahead to institutionalise the Independent Media Council as a self regulatory model of professionalisation. In the next section I explore in detail the self regulatory approach.

5.2 The Self Regulatory Approach to Professionalisation

The self regulatory approach to journalism of professionalisation is informed in general by the thinking that laws and political actions that repress freedom of expression are a disservice to society while effective self regulation is seen as the best approach for promoting high standards in the media. In the particular case of Uganda, the self regulatory option is a reaction to the government's enactment of the Press and Journalist Statute, which was intended to professionalise journalism. Before the Press and Journalist Statute was enacted, the Uganda Journalists Association (UJA) used to be the "professional association" for journalists. But much of its mandate rotated around addressing safety issues for journalists, especially in cases of conflict with government, and securing scholarships for journalists to attend short courses. It did by no means have (self) regulatory functions. By 1995, UJA had been significantly weakened by wrangling. According to Mwesige (2004), politics and economics were the major causes of wrangling that hindered the development of strong professional journalism associations in Uganda. When the Press and Journalist Statute provided for a strong regulatory function, Ugandan journalists realised the need for some form of regulation as a way of addressing some of the complaints about the media that gave justification to statutory action. However, the form of regulation advocated by the journalists was self regulation. The argument was that there was no need for government to regulate the media since the journalists had the means and capacity to regulate themselves. The idea of a self-regulatory mechanism has been spearheaded by The Eastern Africa Media Institute – Uganda Chapter together with Panos Eastern Africa, with financial support from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). On 14th February 2006, the Constitution of the Independent Media Council of Uganda was enacted by 15 founder journalists' associations. These are regional press associations whose membership comprises individual journalists from different regions of Uganda. Afterwards, an Interim Media Council was nominated by a follow-up meeting of the founder members. However it should be noted that not much has been done since then.

According to the Constitution of the Independent Media Council of Uganda, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, just like in the statutory approach,

are reaffirmed as fundamental to the observance of human rights and other freedoms. The freedom and independence of the media are cited as a cornerstone of a democratic society, but also recognising that freedoms are intrinsically tied to responsibilities, hence the obligation of the media to promote responsibility and professionalism based on a solid ethical foundation. It is important to note here that there is no divergence of perception of the connection between media and democracy by both the statutory and self-regulatory approaches (as will be further argued in the next chapter). Both view the media as a fundamental factor in democracy and freedom of the press as the enabling environment to pursue that function. However, they differ on the method to protect that intrinsic relationship. While the statutory approach prefers the control option in which the state presents itself as the trustee of the public interest, the self-regulatory approach adopts a peer review option in which the media practitioners see themselves as the most reliable trustees of the public's right to know, and, as such, protectors of media freedom, independence and diversity (See Preamble of the Constitution of the Independent Media Council of Uganda).

The Constitution of the Independent Media Council of Uganda defines the structural framework of the self-regulatory approach. Unlike the statutory approach which establishes a duality of functions between the Media Council and the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda as argued in the earlier sections of this chapter, the self-regulatory approach establishes a singular function and vests it in the Independent Media Council of Uganda.

According to the constitution (Article 4), the objectives of this council include the promotion of the growth of a responsible, free and independent media that adheres to the highest standards of journalism. The council is also mandated with dealing with complaints about the media, as well as enhancing the development of the media profession through activities such as training journalists.

The objectives also include the promotion of gender sensitivity, equality and balance in the media as well as promoting plurality and diversity of the media. The constitution further mandates the council with the function of keeping under review, and where appropriate, challenge any political, legislative, commercial or other developments that restrict the dissemination of information of public interest hence

infringing on the public's right to know. This can be interpreted to mean that the self regulatory approach to professionalism in the Ugandan sense sees itself in a broad sense as extending beyond the mere roles of press ombudsman to cover all aspects such as political, legislative or commercial factors that may endanger press freedom. Hence professionalism is interpreted as a holistic concept and the mandate of the council is seen beyond settling disputes arising out of media conduct to include lobbying and advocacy activities.

The membership of the council according to the constitution (Article 5) is institution based. While the statutory approach defines individual journalists as members, the self regulatory approach defines membership from an institutional point of view. Hence membership is categorised as follows: media houses, national professional journalists' associations, journalism training institutions, press clubs or regional journalists' associations or "any other media organisation whose activities contribute substantially to the objectives of the council as may be determined by the Board. Admission as a member is by application and cessation of membership is by own volition or expulsion.

The council has five main organs namely, the National Convention of all members, a 14-member Governing Board, an 8-member Ethics committee, the Secretariat and a 6-member Finance and Administration committee. The Ethics committee plays the central role with the rest of the organs playing a supportive role (Article 8). According to the constitution, the ethics committee which is constituted by the Board from among its members, conducts the main business of the council. It is supposed to handle all complaints about the conduct of the media and make decisions. The committee can carry out investigations on a case brought before it, arrange hearing and take appropriate action on any media malpractice. Such actions, according to the constitution, are but not limited to, dismissal or rejection of a complaint, amicable settlement or reconciliation between the parties, ordering the publication of an apology, temporary suspension of membership, or ordering of payment of damages or costs. There are no amounts specified for costs.

It is noted that the constitution does not allow legal representation, the argument being that the primary objective of the council is to promote amicable

settlement of cases and reconciliation. However, a legal opinion may be sought on matters of clarity, on request.

Unlike the statutory approach which attempts a definition of a journalist (though indirect), the self regulatory approach is silent on the definition of a journalist and has no specific qualifications for one to be considered a journalist. It appears that since this approach deals with institutions rather than individuals, the definition of who a journalist is, is left to the discretion of the member media institutions.

5.2.1 Code of Ethics under the Self-Regulatory Approach

While the constitution of the Independent Media Council of Uganda defines the structural nature of the self-regulatory approach, another document entitled “The Code of Conduct” defines the professional nature of the occupation of journalism. According to Haruna Kanabi, the Secretary of the Council (interview, July 2007), the code of ethics is the most important aspect of self-regulation. He argues that while the constitution is for procedural purposes, the code of ethics defines the heart and soul of professional journalism. It is defined as the code of ethics to govern the conduct and practice of all media practitioners, media owners and media institutions, which would also act as the basis for adjudication of disputes between the press, the public and government in Uganda by the Independent Media Council. While the statutory code of ethics in the Press and Journalist Statute is a one page, 9-point document, the code of ethics under the self-regulatory approach is a more detailed and broad document spelling out the values and detailed guidelines on what journalists or media organisations should do. For example on the values of Accuracy and Fairness, the Code states as follows:

A Journalist has the responsibility to ensure that the information he/she disseminates is accurate and fair and should not indulge in unfair comment, sensationalism, falsification, distortion or misrepresentation of facts. In this regard, news headlines must reflect the gravity or importance or accurately the content of the story. A journalist shall not disseminate information or allegations affecting the good standing of the government, an individual or organisation without having thoroughly investigated the details of the allegations. The government or individual or organisation against whom the allegations are levelled should whenever possible be given an opportunity to express themselves on the matter within the same publication or programme.

Whenever it is recognised that an inaccurate, misleading or distorted story has been published or broadcast, it should be corrected promptly. Corrections should present the correct information and should not restate the error except when clarity demands. Journalists, while free to be partisan, should distinguish clearly in their reports between comment, conjecture and fact. When compiling articles for publication or dissemination, media practitioners must check their facts properly. Before a media house publishes a report, the reporter and the editor must take all reasonable steps to check its accuracy. The facts should be reported in proper context. Caution must be taken when publishing stories that may cause harm to individuals, organisations or the public interest. Reasonable steps must be taken to ascertain the facts and include the response from the individual or organisation concerned (Code of Conduct, 2006).

The description above shows that while the statutory approach puts more emphasis on the structural organisation and control of the media as the basis of professionalism, the self-regulatory approach seems to put more emphasis on inculcation of the code of ethics as the basis of professionalism.

The Code also cites provisions on professional integrity, social responsibility, respect for privacy and human dignity, right to reply and collection, facts and opinions, letters to the editor, plagiarism, non-disclosure of sources, intrusion into grief, innocent relatives and friends, victims of sex crimes, protection of children, children in criminal cases, publication of pornographic material, gathering information, use of pictures, hatred and disadvantaged groups, obscenity, taste and tone in reporting, covering conflicts, undue pressure or influence, payment for information, recording interviews and telephone conversations, and finally advertisements. As with the value of fairness and balance noted in the previous paragraph, all the values cited in the code are explained in detail and journalists are guided on what to do and what not to do. In all it is a nine-page document as compared to the one page code of ethics under the statutory approach.

In these sections, I have cited the two main approaches to the professionalisation of journalists in Uganda, namely the statutory approach and the self regulatory approach and attempted to draw similarities and differences.

It should also be mentioned that while both approaches acknowledge the relationship between media and democracy and underline the importance of media to

democracy and hence the need for professionalisation, they differ in their interpretation of how that relationship should be natured and protected. While the statutory approach emphasises structural control and regulation, the self-regulatory approach emphasises internalisation of the code of ethics as a basis for creating a harmonious relationship between the media and the public. . It bears noting that that the time of conducting this research, both approaches were dormant, with the statutory approach having lacked broad support to operate. Whereas the Minister of Information has continued to appoint members to the Media Council as per the Press and Journalist Statute, on almost all occasions when the government has had issues to resolve with the media, they have resorted to the courts of law other than the Council. On the other hand, the self-regulatory approach has lacked the drive to kick off. After the appointment of the Interim Council in 2006, no activities have been recorded.

In the next section, an attempt is made to establish the level of public consciousness about the debate on journalism professionalisation in Uganda through the privately-owned *Monitor* and the state-owned *New Vision* newspapers.

5.3 Public Perceptions of Journalism Professionalisation in *The Monitor* and *New Vision* Newspapers

This section deals with perceptions of journalism professionalisation analysed from the opinion and analysis pages of *The Monitor* and *New Vision* newspapers, which were the two leading English newspapers during the time of the debate on The Press and Journalist Bill in 1995. They are still the leading newspapers up to today with a combined circulation of approximately 50,000 copies per day, and in terms of influencing public opinion (BBC World Service Trust, 2006). The purpose of this section is to compare the views from the public as expressed in these two newspapers, with the views of politicians and journalists as will be explored in the next chapter. The researcher acknowledges the potential limitation of using editorially-sanctioned readers' opinions as measures of public opinion on the subject of journalism professionalisation, given the fact that editorial content is ultimately constructed by editorial gatekeepers whose framing of what constitutes news is shaped by different

factors. However, the researcher's intention in using readers' opinions is not for their quantitative value, but the qualitative character of the arguments in these opinions.

The researcher notes that there was minimal visible participation in the debate regarding journalism professionalisation within the readership of the *Monitor* newspaper at least as was reflected in the pages of this paper. This position assumes that letters to the editor or opinions received from the readership were not rejected because of editorial considerations. In total, only three articles were found by this researcher in the period between May 1995 and July 1995 when the bill was finally passed into law. Two were published as letters, while the third was published in the features section as an opinion.

Generally there was both support and lack of it for the Press and Journalist Bill which sought to professionalise journalism in Uganda. From the readers' letters and opinions about the debate, it is evident that education was perceived as the core issue in the professionalisation debate and hence the contention was about whether the level of education of a professional is directly proportional to the level of professionalism he exhibits. In specific terms, the debate was whether Ugandan journalists needed university degrees in order to be recognised as professional journalists, as the Bill proposed.

The logicity of the requirement in the Press and Journalist Bill that full members of the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda, the professional body for journalists proposed by the Bill, must be university degree holders was challenged. Letter-writer Salongo Mitala Mukasa (*The Monitor*, 1995:7) argued that emphasis on having a degree misses the point because a degree does not necessarily imply competence or brightness. He wrote:

If there are two people, one holding a first class diploma in journalism from, let us say the Uganda Management Institute and another one boasting of a degree in Music Dance and Drama (MDD) of Makerere University, according to some members of the NRC [National Resistance Council, which was the Parliament that debated the professionalisation of journalists], the latter will be recognised to practice journalism in Uganda and be a legitimate member of NIJU [the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda].

To emphasise his point, he further made reference to the then British Prime Minister, John Major, who he argued was a high school dropout who had never been to

University. He rhetorically asked whether Paul Etyang [the Ugandan Minister of information then, who was in charge of the Bill, and a graduate himself] considered himself more suitable to govern Britain than John Major. To drive the point home, he cited the example of his own son: “My son qualified from Makerere University six years ago with BSc (Hons) in Forestry but up to now he is jobless! What use is his useless degree?” This question is assessed later in the next chapter.

There also seems to have been a feeling that the Bill’s clear classification of degree holders as professional journalists and the rest as associate journalists was contrary to global trends in professionalisation in regard to other professions. In a letter, Wilson Mulwany (*Monitor*, 1995:7) cited the engineering council of the United Kingdom, which allows people who do not have degrees to take part II examinations of the council after some time and then register them as chartered engineers. He concluded that there is no need to tighten life for journalists because a degree is not the most important thing in professionalism.

On the other hand and contrary to the foregoing views, in one letter journalism professionalism was equated to the level of education of journalists. In other words there was also support of the Bill’s requirement for journalists to have university degrees in order to be recognised as professional journalists, based on the argument that since the job of journalists is to inform, they should be exceptionally educated in order to hold the moral ground to inform. In another letter, Bobby Kigozi (*Monitor*, 1995:8) equated knowledge to professionalism in journalism and argued that while other professions could be excused for their shortcomings, journalism has no excuses. He wrote: “Lawyers lose cases through incompetence and ignorance. Doctors misdiagnose and sometimes operations fail. We make excuses for lawyers and doctors but we do not excuse the journalist who errs through ignorance because it is his business to know”. Kigozi further argued that for journalism to be a profession, it needed to possess elements that other professions possessed, specifically an exclusive body of knowledge that sets its practitioners apart from the masses. He asserted that such knowledge is amassed from long years of study and hard work and later tested on the street. “Anyone with a little genius can make an excellent wordsmith. The problem is he will remain a writer – and never a professional journalist”, he

concluded. Arguing that lack of scholarly training elicits contempt for journalists, Kigozi quoted Mark Twain, once an editor of an agricultural magazine (although not a reputed farmer), who was upset with the level of knowledge the journalists of his time had, and referred to them as “promoted shoemakers and apothecaries”:

Who write the dramatic critiques for the papers? Why a parcel of promoted shoemakers and apothecaries (medicine-men) who know just as much about good acting as I do about farming and no more? Who review books? People who never wrote one. Who do the heavy editorials on finance? People who have had the largest opportunity to know nothing about it. (Kigozi, 1995, cited in the *Monitor*, 1995:8)

Kigozi further argued that it is only geniuses who can make professional journalists without going to journalism schools, and according to him, “In Uganda I do not know of any journalist who does not have a university degree and is a genius”.

From the foregoing arguments, it can be argued that journalism professionalisation was perceived in different ways in *The Monitor* as represented by the readers’ contributions to the debate. While one equated it to academic education, others argued that education was not essential for professionalisation. What is evident however is that professionalisation was narrowly conceived in terms of its relationship to the level of education. Other fundamental issues regarding professionalism like codes of ethics and professional fellowship were not reflected in the public’s perception of the debate about journalism professionalisation.

The views expressed in the *New Vision* do not show much divergence from the views expressed in *The Monitor* in terms of focus and emphasis. However, the *New Vision* records a total of ten articles, four of which appeared in the letters’ pages, one on the commentary page, while five articles appeared in *Talk of the Town* which was a weekly pull-out within the *New Vision* dedicated to analysing topical issues. This particular issue was dedicated to journalism professionalisation. All views expressed commented on the requirement for a university degree for one to be recognised as a full member of the journalists’ professional body, and they were either in support or in opposition to the proposal. Francis Kanyeihamba (*New Vision*, 1995:5) noted that the Press Bill was a timely intervention to fill the void of professional standards and lack of recognition of journalism as a profession. His

emphasis was on the need for education and training as means of ensuring that journalists become “analytical writers and commentators”. He was positive about the idea of a professional body, as long as it is insulated from political influence, and believed that it signals the development of an independent and free press. Hence professionalism is equated not only to education, but also to the presence of institutions that guarantee professional autonomy, especially from politics.

John Aruku (*New Vision*, 1995:5) argued strongly for journalism to be recognised as a profession and journalists as professionals, and as such, for certain academic qualifications to be set as the minimum condition for one to belong to the profession. He noted that the distinction between people who can write and professional journalists is minimum academic qualifications. On who should set the standards, he delved into the statutory versus self-regulatory debate arguing that since journalists serve Ugandans, then Ugandans [through parliament] must set the standards.

Francis Gureme (*New Vision*, 1995:5) noted that instead of emphasising ethical values, much focus was put on academic qualifications which, according to him, were not that essential for professional excellence in journalism. He referred to the degree requirement as a “practical impossibility” and “an idealistic fancy”. He argued:

I assert that the essential attributes of a competent professional are not in the impressive degree certificate or the symbolic gown, hood and motor board donned at graduation. Indeed Winston Churchill, many rightly argue, was a far superior journalist than many graduate professionals of his time, and was rewarded accordingly. And we have certainly had a few Churchills of our own (*New Vision*, June 24, 1995:5).

Tony Nakibinge (*New Vision*, 1995:5) noted that while academic qualifications such as a degree or a diploma were desirable especially for journalists in management positions, the best application of journalistic skills was a different matter and not an exclusive preserve of those with academic qualifications. He called for journalism to be open to other people who hold expertise in different fields in addition to qualified journalists. He argued:

On the point of knowledge of subject matter, some subjects are better tackled by experts. If a quality paper was running an article on explaining the epidemiological trends in chronic lymphoblastic leukaemia in Uganda, what would they do? Use one of their regular journalists, or an articulate medical specialist to contribute an article? (*New Vision*, June 2, 1995:5).

This position therefore signifies the practical difficulties of closing journalism to professionals only, given the fact that journalism covers other professional fields that may require technical knowledge which may not be possessed by a professional journalist.

Patrick Kiggundu (*New Vision*, 1995:4) delved into the public attitudes about journalists that seem to justify a form of enforced professionalisation that the Ugandan government adopted. He quoted a senior politician who noted that “it is easier to set oneself up as a journalist than become a harlot”. Kiggundu further noted that there was a deeply held view that Ugandan journalists “lack requisite papers for the job, [are] half-baked, and generally not up to the job of evaluating national issues”. He argued that this perception represented a contrast between Ugandan journalists and American journalists, noting that while Uganda journalists were rarely appreciated by the political class, their American counterparts, though criticised, were very much respected by the political class which thrived much on political commentary in newspapers, because they regarded their task as presenting news as commented on by persons who were some of the best in the profession and outside it.

The [US] opinion and editorial writers shape public policy. They act and are believed to be the anchors of the values and prescriptions which should guide the republic. They are products of the best universities and work for well-known newspapers like *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* ... They tend to come from the Ivy League colleges of the North East (*New Vision*, May 26:5).

In contrast, Kiggundu argued, “whereas [news]papers have to be read, the bureaucratic political and state elite in Uganda do not regard this crop of budding professionals [journalists] as fit to comment on their performance or bring into question the public propriety of their actions”. Kiggundu’s depiction of a contemptuous attitude of the Ugandan political class towards their journalists could explain why a statutory model of professionalisation was considered appropriate.

While Kiggundu did not explicitly endorse academic qualifications as a standard of professionalism, by drawing on the United States journalists, most of whom he refers to as “exceptionally well educated”, he seemed to implicitly indicate that education and social background should be desirable attributes of journalists if they are to elicit respectability, social status and legitimacy, elements that are essential in a structural-functional perception of professionals.

Kiggundu’s description of the public perception of journalists is corroborated by Deogratias Byabafumu (*New Vision*, 1995:11, 30) who noted that the Press Law’s origins seem to be in the respect (or lack of it) that journalists in Uganda commanded at that time. He articulated this position in the following opinion:

I think the reason journalists have not been well respected, but are feared, is every Tom, Dick, - forgive Harry, have got into the profession as though it was a general trade. They will intimidate an interviewee, but will not win his respect because either they are not well prepared to conduct a sober interview or they are asking for a favour. I have met lads aged 20, with no working experience, or attachment whatsoever, storming parties and claiming they are representatives of one paper or the other. After a few hours, they are the ones who stagger and collapse on the floor, much to the pitiful eye of a dignitary with his glass in hand, wondering if the double brandy has not been too much on the young man’s head (*New Vision*, May 31, 1995:30).

In spite of that opinion, Byabafumu thought much as education is desirable, it could not be used as the fundamental mark of professionalism. He cited examples of journalists in Uganda who excelled without degrees such as Willy Mukasa who was “the only reporter I knew in 20 years of newspapering career, whose story was so complete when he got his hands off the typewriter, that you would even think twice before you added a comma”, and Paul Waibale Sr, who “I bet my typing fingers will beat any Masters of Arts in Journalism holder to a good story, phrase by phrase and word by word”. He capped his argument with his own doubts about whether the university degree he got added anything to his editing abilities “although the intellectual stimulation I gained ... was a lot of fun”. In conclusion he argued that education level is not as important as the ability of a journalist to grasp his craft well and the ability to research and produce articles that are attractive and comprehensible.

Still within the academic qualifications argument, Paul Waibale Sr. (*New Vision*, 1995:31) argued that journalism falls within the realm of the arts and therefore its

mark of professionalism is in-born talent and substantial experience in the field. Education, he argued, is never an essential pre-requisite but only a “desirable catalyst”. He referred to the requirement in the law for journalists to be university graduates in order to be fully recognised as journalists as “an ill conceived absurdity”. He referred to mass communication graduates from Makerere University as “all novices who have a lot to learn from the people with the practical know-how”. In his opinion, “journalism is a discipline in which there is no substitute for experience, and the bottom line is what the writer delivers and not his qualifications”. This view therefore equates professionalism to practical know-how coupled with vast experience.

Jenkins Kiwanuka (*New Vision*, 1995:31) implied that the Press law reflected a crisis of confidence between the media and the political leadership occasioned by disregard of professional standards by Ugandan journalists. He further implied that the law could not be taken as a *bona fide* intention to professionalise journalists but as an opportunity to revenge against the offending journalists. He wrote:

Such abuses of the journalistic profession have left the political leaders bruised, bitter and swearing to hit back at the nearest possible opportunity. [Member of Parliament William] Wanendeya and others saw that opportunity in the media bill and readily seized it (*New Vision*, May 31:31).

Just like in *The Monitor*, the views as discussed in the foregoing paragraphs emphasised academic qualifications as an aspect of professionalism, leaving out other equally important aspects such as the codes of ethics. Even the requirement for annual licensing of journalists which is contested in the journalists’ perceptions as will be discussed in the next chapter, did not appear to be of concern in the public domain. Quantitatively, the *New Vision* carried more opinions and commentaries about the debate than *The Monitor* newspaper, but even then, as already noted, the focus remained the same – on academic qualifications. This means that the professionalisation debate was narrowly conceived even in the public domain. One can also conclude that whereas education is a fundamental characteristic in the discourse about professions, its domination of the debate about the professionalisation of Ugandan journalists seems to have a historical context. From the views of the readers of newspapers as explored in this section (including those who do not support

the degree requirement) it is evident that the educational standards and sometimes the social behaviour of Ugandan journalists left much to be desired. Education and licensing therefore seem to have been seen as the most effective means of bringing order to the journalism occupation and ensuring respectability.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the practical approaches to journalism professionalisation in Uganda in form of the statutory approach and the self-regulatory approach. It is evident from the two approaches that while professionalisation is seen as a desirable end given the functional role of the media to a democratic society, its interpretation and the means to achieve it differ. While the statutory approach mainly espoused by politicians seeks to control and regulate as a means of professionalising, the self-regulatory approach which is mainly espoused by journalists seeks to promote responsibility and ethical consciousness through peer review methods.

It is also evident from the two approaches to journalism professionalisation that there are differences regarding the interpretation of who the stakeholders in this process are. While the state and the political elite (through the statutory approach) see themselves as the protectors of the public interest against an unprofessional media and who should therefore guide the professionalisation process, the journalists (through the self-regulatory approach) see themselves as protectors of the public's right to know, who should ward off any attempts by powerful institutions such as the state and the political establishment to control the media through any means, be it professionalisation, in order to protect media freedom, independence and diversity as provided for in Article 4(7) of the constitution.

While the different approaches to professionalisation are said to be done for the sake of the public, it has been noted under section 5.3 of this chapter that there was minimal participation through the print media, in the professionalisation debate as evidenced in the articles that were published as letters and commentaries on the issue. This could mean that the Ugandan public as represented by the group of men whose views were published, does not yet see the media as an institution that could enable the expression of the full range of views and opinions across society to take

from. It could also mean that media freedom is in certain public opinion conceived narrowly as an occupational matter as opposed to its wider social value that gives meaning to freedom of expression.

In the next chapter I deal with the perceptions of journalism professionalisation by politicians in Uganda and how such perceptions relate to the democratic role of the media.

CHAPTER SIX
PERCEPTIONS BY UGANDAN POLITICIANS OF JOURNALISM
PROFESSIONALISATION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is a description of how politicians interpret journalism professionalisation in the context of the Ugandan debate. Politicians' views are analysed from the official record of Parliament, the *Hansard*, to determine the reasons they advanced in support or otherwise, of the statutory professionalisation model as represented in the Press and Journalist Statute. In other words, contributions by Members of Parliament to the Bill on what constitutes journalism professionalism and how it should be achieved are presented. Their views are grouped into themes and presented.

6.1 Politicians' Perceptions of Journalism Professionalisation

Politicians' perceptions are represented by the views of Members of the Sixth Parliament of Uganda who debated and passed a law to professionalise and regulate the practice of journalism. The Sixth Parliament was officially known as the National Resistance Council (NRC), which was the legislative arm of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) which had captured power in 1986. Its composition was of four main categories. First was the category of the original members of the political wing of the NRM during its struggle days. The second category was of presidential appointees who represented special political interests, while the third was of representatives of the National Resistance Army (NRA). The last category consisted of directly elected representatives of all the administrative counties in the country. The political ideology of the NRM was against institutionalised pluralism hence all NRC members were by law members of the Movement (which was assumed to be an amalgamation of political ideologies) as opposed to partisan political interests.

The idea of a press law is said to have taken shape eight years before the bill was finally passed into law in 1995, and is said to have been handled by four different

Ministers of Information (Hansard, 1995:152). However, other accounts indicate that the first draft was produced in 1990, but because of fierce opposition from media organisations which had allies in the NRC, it was shelved until a new version was produced in 1995 (Kayanja, 2002). The bill was finally passed into law in July 1995. Although it still contained contestable provisions, it is said to have been a better compromise than the earlier versions (*The Monitor*, 1995).

The views of the politicians, as is demonstrated in the following sections, are grouped into dominant themes that were identified by the researcher in the Hansard.

6.1.1 Media Freedom, Independence and Democracy

There is general acknowledgment of the important role of the media in democracy and hence the need to promote press freedom. Many Members of Parliament (MPs) argued that the media were such an important ingredient of the democratic society that they needed to be safeguarded. The Press and Journalist Bill was thus described by the then Minister of Information, Hon Paul Etyang as providing “a statutory safeguard to one of the major freedoms we cherish for our country, that is freedom of expression and freedom of the press” (Hansard, 1995:152). But he further argued that freedom of expression was not only of concern to the press, but was equally important to persons about whom expression is made, hence the need to protect the public interest. In this regard, he pointed out that government provides the necessary arbitration mechanism as a third party between the press and the public, hence the necessary role of government in journalism professionalisation. Another MP echoed the same support for the bill on account of the fact that it would ensure the independence and freedom of the press in Uganda because “there is no way we can receive (*sic*) a democratic society unless the press are given freedom to be watchdogs of the activities of everybody in this House” (Hansard, 1995:159). Yet another MP described the media as important in checking excessive power and likened power to a river whose capacity to overflow its banks needs to be constantly checked:

When River Nile is flowing from Jinja to Sudan and then to the Mediterranean [Sea], as long as it keeps within its banks, it is alright. But if along the way it can go over the banks, it can be very disastrous. So I also like (*sic*) the free press because it stops those who are powerful from becoming too powerful to

the verge of being dangerous. So, like power, I think we should have [a] free press, but a responsible press at the same time. It is not fair for the press; simply because it is free, to overflow its work (Hansard, 1995:161).

Others referred to freedom of the press as an important base for democracy which should be tolerated. As one MP argued:

You cannot talk of democracy minus a free press and if the press has a duty to inform members of the public correctly, it is also equally important that those about whom the press talks especially those of us in positions of leadership must have the stamina to tolerate the press (Hansard, 1995:176).

The foregoing arguments indicate general political support for the principle of a free press as necessary in a democratic society. However in the same arguments, MPs pointed out the fact that press freedom should not only be of interest to those who exercise it, but also to the “least and powerful” (Hansard, 1995:152) about whom expression is made, hence the need for mechanisms that both protect the press and also ensure that the press does not “overflow its work”. This then, coupled with one MP’s argument that there are no absolute freedoms (Hansard, 1995:165), seems to set the stage for justification of forms of regulation. Hence the MPs expressed the view of statutory professionalisation being a justifiable protective mechanism for the public from the perceived excesses of the media. What emerges from these expressions is that while the media are perceived as an important ingredient of a democratic society, the same democratic society is seen to have other diverse interests which equally need protection as much as the free press does.

6.1.2 Journalism as a Profession and Journalists as Professionals

MPs voiced a general concern that such an important occupation like journalism was not clearly defined and therefore not legally recognised. According to the MPs, something that is not defined cannot be recognised and journalism as such suffered that fate. Lack of definition implied susceptibility to abuse and lack of recognition implied lack of protections in case of any affronts. According to the Chairman of the Parliament Select Committee that was mandated to overhaul the original Bill (as described in chapter one), one of the major loopholes of the previous Bill was because it:

[D]id not give a clear definition of journalism and for that matter the Bill did not recognise journalism as a profession in the traditional sense because it did not state minimum standards for the profession nor did it state the professional code of conduct. The objective of this [overhauled] Bill therefore, is to ensure freedom of the press, to encourage and recognise responsible journalism, and to recognise journalism as a profession (Hansard, 1995:149).

From a sociological point of view, these views reflected a structural-functionalist perception of journalism whereby journalism is presented as the preserve of a special group with a noble function of facilitating the democratic process using specialised skills, and as such which needs clear and structured definition and description of who a journalist is, as well as clear definition of membership and its qualifications. This is well echoed by one MP who argued that the impact of the media on society in terms of its influence is too important to be left to “just any other person other than a professional” (Hansard, 1995:168). MPs also equated professionalism with responsibility arguing that much as the public needed the press for information, the public equally needed a responsible and professional press that published truth as opposed to falsehood (Hansard, 1995:177).

This structural-functional perception also means that journalism is paralleled with other professions “in the traditional sense” and journalists were perceived as professionals who should conform to the same description of a professional (having specified minimum qualifications) as other professionals. As one MP noted:

We drew parallels with other professions. First of all we insisted that if journalism is going to be a profession, therefore, the journalists must themselves be professionals. So if he is a professional journalist, his journalism will be respected because number one, he knows what he is talking about, therefore we insisted that there must be an institute that will set the standards (Hansard, 1995:159).

There was however a feeling that studying journalism in itself does not automatically make one a professional journalist. One MP expressed disappointment that his fellow MPs seemed to be content with the provision which set a degree as the requisite qualification for one to be a professional journalist. According to him, a professional must go through a long and rigorous period of study and examination at different stages in order to qualify to be a professional. He noted:

My biggest quarrel, I would like to have these professions established by law, but I think the biggest problem with these proposals, particularly Section 20, is that it does not make journalism a profession. If a person who was on the committee tells me that if a man has any degree say in military science, he can go for a weekend course at *The New Vision* and all of a sudden becomes a professional in journalism? Surely are we being serious? Can we pass such a law?" (Hansard, 1995:182).

He suggested a tighter system whereby journalism professional bodies set up qualifying examinations for people who want to qualify as professional journalists.

It is evident that the MPs' perception of journalism professionalisation was influenced by other highly professionalised occupations. In many of their submissions, they kept referring to other professions such as law, medicine, accountancy, and engineering from a structural perspective. This means that the unique nature of journalism as a function of freedom of expression was glossed over.

6.1.3 Perceived Role of Education in Professionalisation

One of the major emphases of the MP's discussions was on the perceived role of education in professionalisation. Most MPs perceived education as the engine of professionalism and seemed to attribute journalism's shortcomings to lack of adequate education. This appears to be the reason for their insistence on journalists having a university degree in order to be recognised. As argued in chapter five, the Press and Journalist Statute requires that a full member of the professional body called the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) must have a university degree in journalism, mass communication, or any other field, plus a post graduate qualification in journalism. One MP justified this by arguing that "standards must be set by those who have the knowledge and the only yardstick we could come up with was a minimum of a university degree plus a qualification in journalism or mass communication" (Hansard, 1995:181)

Education was further perceived by MPs as empowering the journalist with the wisdom to know what to publish and what not to publish. According to one MP, the difference between a wise man and a fool was that the wise man knows how to speak differently for conversation and communication while a fool permits all his ideas to fly out in different words. Hence education for journalists was seen as

empowering them to make decisions on what to publish and what to leave out. He further noted that the removal of state censorship (the Press and Journalist Statute repealed the Press Censorship and Correction Act which provided for official censorship) should be replaced by “self-censorship” by journalists, which comes with education, because according to him:

... [S]omebody who got a degree in agriculture [who is not a journalist] may be a better informed person than somebody from Senior Two [second year of high school]. Somebody who is well informed, a graduate, has probably a better view of the world. If he came across an article that he thinks might sell very well but damage the country, he has a better understanding of IMF, World Bank and so forth; he may opt not to publish that. That is why we believe the best way to handle this responsibility to them is to ensure that these gentlemen and ladies are well informed and have the capacity to judge on behalf of society” (Hansard, 1995:184).

The journalists’ duty to inform is tightly tied to their obligation to know. One MP argued that global challenges required people who were educated, be it in science, politics, economics or journalism. He further noted that since journalists were the “cornerstone” in building the nation, they must be among the most highly and broadly informed through study (Hansard, 1995:159-160). From these arguments, it is evident that MPs perceived academic education as tantamount to being knowledgeable. This implies that other forms of knowledge such as online resources that journalists can utilise to enrich and broaden their understanding of issues outside the formal academic system were not considered under this perception.

Contrary to what appeared to be the most frequently expressed view of academic qualifications as the determinant of professionalism, a minority perception that emerged from MPs’ views was that professionalism is not something that is legislated but something that takes time and effort hence the value of experience. One MP compared the competence of Ugandan journalists to that of foreign journalists on reputable news media and argued that the difference was experience:

When you look at CNN, you look at a man like Larry King, that man did not get there yesterday, he has been there for sometime, and you also hear of Robin White [of BBC], of course here [in Uganda] we are talking of Toya Kilama [veteran Ugandan TV broadcaster]. I am not saying that Toya Kilama is not material, but I am saying he has not had enough time and experience to help him develop the intellect that can guide the media (Hansard, 1995:170).

Some MPs regarded the degree requirement as unfair and not practical, and the question of what would happen to all the good journalists who do not have degrees arose. One MP wondered whether foreign journalists would be brought in instead. Another Army MP who happened to be an editor of an army magazine wondered whether he was out of job in spite of his experience: “I have been running a paper for the last nine years, but because I have no degree in mass communication, do you want me to stop?”

Some MPs felt that strict academic qualifications were creating unnecessary exclusivity which was against the spirit of mass communication. They argued that requiring people to have university degrees in order to practice journalism would alienate grassroots participation in the communication process. An MP opposed the provision of exclusive membership of NIJU based on academic qualifications appealing to parliament “to make sure that people who want to voluntarily contribute to this thing [of journalism] are also accommodated because in Ateso [one of the local languages in Uganda] why do you need to have a degree to write this language?” (Hansard, 1995:188).

This view which falls within the radical-democratic interpretation of journalism professionalism as discussed in chapter three brings into focus the place of grassroots forms of communication in a professionalised system. As the MP further observed;

You do not need a university degree, because an old woman in Soroti [Eastern Uganda] can inform you correctly where the rebels have been. I know education is very important, people have been talking about education, but what is so difficult in writing about an issue arising from an event which took place? (Hansard, 1995:188).

Another feeling expressed by some MPs was that the model of professionalisation advocated killed the spirit of participatory communication and as such one MP argued: “We should understand that masses, as it is mass communication, also want to enjoy freedom, to belong to this important field so that we collect(*sic*) and inform everybody in this world” (Hansard, 1995:188).

It is clear from these perceptions that there were politicians who saw journalism as a specialised and skilled profession which should be exclusive to those that qualify to be called so, as well as those who felt that journalism is part of the communication process in which everybody is entitled to participate regardless of their levels of education. It should however be noted that the former view was the most frequently expressed view. It appears that knowledge was considered more important than the exclusivity it seemed to create. In response to the concerns of exclusivity one MP gave the example of Makerere University where professors were in the minority but are the ones who “know” (see *The Monitor*, 1995:5). This could mean that participation is not seen in terms of numbers or masses, but in terms of quality.

6.1.4 Professionalisation as a Means of Regulation and Control

Some MPs perceived negative stories about people or institutions as tantamount to lack of professionalism. They argued for a protection mechanism against this. Hence for them, statutory professionalisation acted as that protection in form of rules. One MP articulated this position as follows:

There must be rules. But some members of the press think that there should be no rules. Why do they have rules in the Scandinavian [countries]? Nearly everywhere they have rules to protect the public, so that whatever you do is to protect rather than having diarrhoea of the pen”.

The same MP proposed amendments which in his opinion were necessary in order to achieve professionalism. From the amendments he proposed, professionalism for him, apart from the rules he supported, meant endeavouring to crosscheck information before publishing stories especially those concerning individuals, publishing only stories which promote moral and economic development, as well as rejecting stories that degrade human dignity. From this viewpoint, statutory professionalisation is that set of rules and guidelines that would shield the public from any shortcomings in journalism.

Closely related to the foregoing view, some MPs felt that with liberalisation which came along with multiplicity of media outlets, there was need for a clear mechanism of maintaining control in order to avoid unregulated foreign influence.

Statutory professionalisation was seen as that method. One MP underscored this feeling:

We are here swallowing cigarette like the picture on the Marlboro advertisement. We are just receiving ... we need first of all to be in charge of our own media. Today we have opened the space, radio, television and all, now I understand [Radio] France International is also on air. Now how many of us are sitting here who read French, who know French and are listening to what the French are communicating to our population, and be able to say look, Mr. France, I think you are directing us nowhere? (Hansard, 1995:169-170).

Professionalism was thus also viewed in terms of patriotism. Professionalisation was advocated for in order to prevent the media from promoting foreign concepts and a neo-colonial mentality among Ugandans. The media were viewed as potential conduits of cultural imperialism if not controlled. One MP took issue with the media for promoting slang that glorified foreign (particularly western) aspects of life, some of which degraded Africans. Such slang included *Kyeyo* [going for menial jobs in Europe and America], and *Muzungu wange* [literally meaning *my Whiteman* but contextually meaning a benefactor]. Promotion of such concepts in the media, according to this MP, was tantamount to lack of patriotism because it created a patron-client relationship between Europeans on one hand and Ugandans on the other. This ideological function of the media was seen as justification for regulation and control in form of statutory professionalisation.

Closely related to this was the issue of media and its relation to moral consciousness and social values. It appears that some MPs linked journalism professionalism to promoting public morality and particular social values in the Ugandan society. One MP expressed dissatisfaction with the law regulating the media for its apparent lack of strong checks against media programmes that he regarded as endangering the morality of the youth. He proposed censorship of radio programmes and films that did not conform to acceptable moral standards. Another however raised the relativity of social values and the dilemma of the media in such situations by asking whether photographing nudity in tribes where it is a way of life to be naked would be an infringement on social values “since some tribes do not cover themselves adequately in this country” (Hansard, 1995:164).

Some of the views expressed in support of statutory regulation had to do with perceived poor social manners and dressing habits of journalists. One MP welcomed the mandate of the Media Council to “discipline these fellows”. He elaborated:

When you look at some of these journalists being shabby, very very dirty fellows, sometimes with lice around their heads, is it really one of the ethics of journalism? Is that also journalism? Somebody comes in very dirty shoes, and is going before the President, is that the journalists’ culture? (Hansard, 1995:164).

On the other hand, Hansard records also indicate a perception of some of the provisions of the law as being unnecessarily restrictive of press freedom. Provisions specifically objected to included Section 6 of the Press and Journalist Statute which requires a proprietor of a mass media organisation to register with the Media Council the particulars of his editor once appointed, including his name and address, certified copies of the relevant testimonials and proof of his qualifications and experience, and such other particulars as may be prescribed by the Council. To this, one MP argued that since some media organisations are supposed to be private and are businesses, regulating who the personnel of such business should be left to the proprietor to be dictated by market logic. He wondered why a businessman who owned a newspaper “should be restricted as to who he can employ”. This is because in his opinion: “If he employs a wrong person, then that business will not work, people will reject it. So I look at this as another attempt yet to restrict the freedom of the press” (Hansard, 1995:161).

Closely related to this is the provision of Section 8(a) which provides that a person cannot be appointed editor of a mass media organisation if he is less than eighteen years of age. The perception of unnecessary restriction was again raised by the same MP who argued that this restriction was discriminatory. He asked: “Supposing I wanted to set up a newspaper and I was under 18, and I wanted to run my newspaper myself as an editor, why should anybody stop me employing my funds the way I want?” These objections led to debate about how journalism’s social value is perceived in comparison to other social services such as health. Thus, an MP justified the restriction on who should be an editor by comparing journalism to pharmacy and argued that “whoever establishes a drug shop when he is not a

pharmacist must have a qualified registered pharmacist. The same applies to journalism”. The objecting MP responded by arguing that “the damage of morality [because of bad journalism] may not be the same thing as death from a bad drug” (Hansard, 1995: 161).

The implications of this exchange begs the question whether journalism should be perceived as any other professional service and therefore be subject to similar regulations like other professional fields. This is the point raised by the MPs whose views correspond with radical democratic perception of media professionalism (as discussed in chapter three) who argued that journalism was part of freedom of expression which included the right to inform and be informed, and as such could not be subjected to the same procedures that create exclusivity in conventional approaches to professionalisation.

Much as the statutory model of professionalisation seems to have majority support among MPs according to the Hansard debates, the same records indicate support (though minimal) for a self-regulatory model of professionalisation. One MP argues that legislating regulation of a profession amounts to control. According to him;

Whereas I agree that such an institute [NIJU] is necessary, I thought it was for the professionals involved really to create such institute. Because once a government or we [MPs] start regulating it by legislation, then by implication we are also controlling it (Hansard, 1995:161).

A point of information from another MP raised the issue of the balance between the media’s social responsibility and their pursuit of profit. He argued that the urban orientation of the media was because “most of these press corporations are business enterprises whose most important target is profit” (Hansard, 1995:176), and whose target groups are in urban areas where the readership and money is. The importance of this point is in the response from the complaining MP who argued that professionalism was the key that opens all doors to success.

I am very aware of the fact that any newspaper must operate commercially. But before you think of making money, you must think of planning the pillar of your profession so firmly that the money will begin to generate itself (*sic*). If a newspaper works along professional lines properly, it will definitely make

money. We must begin from the point of professionalism before we think of making money (Hansard, 1995:176).

From this perspective, it appears that professionalism was perceived as the pillar upon which all aspects of the occupation depend.

This section has indicated that the politicians regarded journalism as a necessity for democratic governance and therefore the need to protect press freedom. However, it has also indicated that the politicians were conscious of the fact that freedom of the press should be seen in a broader perspective which should include the protection of the rights of those who are objects of this freedom. Hence professionalisation was seen as a guarantee for such rights and this guarantee was seen in statutory terms.

6.1.5 Perceptions of the Professional Code of Ethics

As stated in chapter five, the Press and Journalist Bill was a product of significant re-drafting of an earlier Bill by a Select Committee after observation that it contained loopholes (see also *Monitor* Editorial, May 15-17, 1995). In its report to the plenary of parliament about the changes it had made to the earlier Bill, the chairman of the select committee, Rev. Ongora Atwai, pointed out four loopholes of the earlier Bill, these being lack of a clear definition of journalism, lack of recognition of journalism as a profession, lack of specified minimum standards for the profession and lastly, lack of a specific professional code of conduct (Hansard, 1995: 149). That a code of ethics was pointed out as a significant omission in the earlier Bill indicates the place of codes of ethics in the politicians' understanding of professionalism. Hansard records reveal claims that there were "wide consultations" especially with journalists in regard to the contents of the code. An MP indicated that "much of what is reflected in the code of conduct is actually expressing the feelings of the journalists, because we consulted them, we consulted several codes of conduct from other countries and the journalists are actually in agreement with the kind of schedule, the kind of code of conduct that we came up with" (Hansard, 1995:159).

Whereas there is no direct evidence from the Hansard of any objections to contents of the code, there are indications that the inclusion of the code of conduct as

part of the law had to be justified so as to avoid objections. As noted in chapter five, the inclusion of the code of ethics makes it statutory and as Section 41 of the statute provides, all journalists enrolled under the statute are subject to the code and any contraventions are to be “dealt with by the disciplinary committee [of the Statutory Media Council]” (Section 41 {2}). Inclusion of the code also means that it is subject to Section 41(3) which empowers the Minister responsible for information to amend the First Schedule [Professional Code of Ethics] “by statutory instrument and after consultations with the [Media] Council”.

Implication of possible objection to the inclusion of the code is deduced in a member of the Select Committee’s explanation as to why the code was part of the law. According to him, “the journalists were actually the very people who insisted that this code of conduct should be part and parcel of this law and that is why we provided for it in the [first] schedule” (Hansard, 1995:159). However, in an informal discussion in 1999 between this researcher and the then Chairman of the Eastern African Media Institute - Uganda Chapter, who himself was heavily involved in opposing the Press and Journalists Bill, the late Amos Kajoba denied that journalists called for the inclusion of the code. He argued that, on the contrary, the MPs asked journalists to have a look at existing journalists’ codes. The journalists submitted one code that had been evolved by the Uganda Journalists Association (UJA) which was the umbrella journalists’ body at the time, only to then to learn that the code had been included as part of the law.

The importance of this point is not whether journalists agreed to the inclusion of the code in the law or not, but it is the implied importance that the politicians attached to the code of ethics and legitimising the proposal to make it part of the law. According to Rev Atwai, the code was perceived as a protection mechanism for the state and public against an unregulated press. He thinks that “if it [code of ethics] is adhered to and followed by the practising journalists, then we feel that the state will not be injured. The members of the public will also be protected” (Hansard, 1995:186). This implies that a statutory code of ethics was seen as a more reliable guarantor of state and public protection than a voluntary one, given the fact that the same code had existed before under the auspices of UJA, yet it had not been followed

according to the foregoing submission by the MP. This perception of professional associations not being able to enforce their own codes is also emphasised by Eliot (1988:187) when he argues:

A great many associations have a formal code of ethics, but few have any really viable machinery by which to search out violations and undertake effective action to correct them. By and large, professional associations tend to provide services to their members than to exercise control over their ethical or technical work behaviour.

6.2 Conclusions on Perceptions of Politicians

This chapter has been a discussion of the perceptions by politicians of journalism professionalisation as documented in the Hansard debates by MPs on the Bill that finally resulted into the Press and Journalist Statute, 1995. A number of conclusions emerge from these perceptions.

First it is evident that journalism's important role to society, especially in a democracy, is acknowledged. Hence there is almost unanimous support for press freedom and the need to respect it. Through this acknowledgement, there is desire to clearly define and recognise the occupation by stating the parameters of inclusion and exclusion. However, given its impact on society there is a clear expression of the need for a regulatory and control mechanism, hence the support for the Media Council and NIJU as key institutions.

Secondly, from a theoretical perspective, it is evident from MPs' debates that the dominant perception was a structural-functionalist view of professionalisation, in which a profession is seen as a structured entity with exclusive membership and a specific defined function to society. However, a minority radical-democratic view which perceived journalism as a participatory activity to which all masses are entitled was also reflected in the debates.

Thirdly the role of the state in the professionalisation process was seen as paramount to protecting and safeguarding the public interest, hence the statutory model in which government is seen as playing an active part.

Lastly it is evident that education was perceived as the core component of professionalism, to the extent that educated journalists are expected to exercise self-censorship as compared to less educated journalists.

The importance of these conclusions is that they will inform the analysis that will follow in chapter eight. In the next chapter I attempt to present the perceptions of journalism professionalisation by Ugandan journalists.

CHAPTER SEVEN
PERCEPTIONS BY UGANDAN JOURNALISTS OF JOURNALISM
PROFESSIONALISATION

7.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with journalists' perceptions of journalism professionalisation. Their perspective of the different aspects of professionalism and professionalisation such as definition, relationship between journalists and their clients and how it should be regulated, are described. Their views have been distilled into "Natural Meaning Units" (Kvale, 1996, cited in Chikunkuzeni, 1999), relevant extracts are presented here.

7.1 Journalists' Perceptions of Journalism Professionalisation

This section represents the recent perceptions of selected Ugandan journalists of journalism professionalisation as deduced from semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informant journalists. Six journalists were selected and interviewed based on their knowledge and participation in the debate on journalism professionalisation in 1995. It should be noted that these interviews were done between July and September 2007, thirteen years after the passing of the press law. Although some of the people are no longer in active journalism practice, their views were considered by this researcher as valuable given the positions they held before or after the enactment of the Press and Journalist Statute in 1995. One was the President of UJA, another a prominent member of the same association, while one is the third President of NIJU. This researcher notes that the interviews come thirteen years later, and is aware that interviewees are able to contextualise their views in light of what has transpired over these years. In order to create a link between politicians' historical views and the more contemporary views of journalists (and former journalists, both of whom are referred to as "journalist" below), the interview guide contained questions that were related to some of the provisions of the Press and Journalist Statute. Interviewees' views were then condensed into "Natural Meaning Units" (NMUs) as the basis for the argument below.

7.1.1 Interpretations of the Concepts of Profession, Professionalism and Professionalisation

There is a general perception of these concepts as involving a number of things and processes. One aspect in the interviewees' descriptions of their understanding of these concepts is the necessity for training. They believe a professional must be a trained person. However, the nature of training is varied in interpretation. While some indicate formal training or academic education (N1, T1), in which case the length of training becomes significant, others imply informal training that can take the form of apprenticeship (H1). One journalist indicates a combination of both theoretical and practical training (K1). The effect of training is perceived as imparting skills to a professional, in which case skills become an important ingredient of professionalism. But skills are seen as not general but specialised skills which enable the professional to fulfil his or her role in society in a specialised and systematic way. Hence a profession is perceived as a "specialised or systematic way of doing things" (K1, H1). Professionals are also perceived as guided by codes of ethics or conduct which are variably interpreted as principles, guidelines or procedures. Journalists perceive these codes as the heart and soul of professionalism. Professionalisation then becomes a process of integrating all these aspects. But in the process of professionalisation, the role of the news organisation as a socialising agent is emphasised.

When you leave university, you are simply a graduate, you are trained in journalism, but you are not yet a professional. When you take up the journalism career and begin applying the skills learnt at university, then you are beginning on the career path and professionalism. So the newspaper setting also constitutes a greater part of what we regard as professionalism (B3).

Whereas the news organisation is perceived as playing a crucial role in the socialisation of the professional, it is generally acknowledged among journalists that professionalism is achieved at two other levels as well, that is the level of the individual and the level of the professional organisation (M3, M4, M5, K5). Some, however, feel that the individual journalist is the most critical because he has the duty to internalise his role in society as a professional (K5, N1b). As one journalist notes;

The individual is the most important in all those categories because you start with yourself as an individual journalist. What do you want from this

profession that you have chosen? What can you get out of it, and how else can you add value to the society that you are working for? (N1b).

The fact that the individual is supposed to interact at three different levels in pursuit of professionalism is seen as exerting pressure on the individual journalist in terms of harmonising expectations at different levels (H2b). Hence most journalists acknowledge that in interpreting professionalism, there is sometimes a conflict of perception especially between the individual and the news organisation (K6). But such conflict is also cited between the professional association and the news organisation (M5). The news organisation being at the centre of conflict between individual journalists and sometimes professional associations, is because different news organisations are guided by different values and policies which are informed by ownership interests (K6, M19).

In addition to these, one journalist believes that understanding the special role of journalism in society is an essential part of professionalism. He argues:

Journalism is not for its own sake. Training presupposes that a person will go a distance further and appreciate the role of a trained journalist in society, and in doing that therefore we are looking at professionalism in terms of training by making a person appreciate what the media can do in building the democratic process (B2).

Regarding the relationship between journalism and other established professions like law and medicine, most journalists show reluctance in describing journalism as a profession. They cite the unique nature of journalism as distinguishing it from other professions, and therefore argue that it is a big mistake to handle journalism professionalisation as you would handle professionalisation of law or medicine (B8, K8, M6). One journalist outrightly dismisses journalism as a profession, arguing that it is mere art and talent and could not therefore be subjected to the concept of professionalisation. Citing his own experience, he argues:

You cannot professionalise journalism because many good journalists have never gone to school. Journalism is practical. That is why it was difficult to convince some of us to go back to school. We were writing very good articles, we had won the hearts of consumers (T4).

He further argues that journalism has no unique language like law and medicine “apart from things like intro, headline and kicker” (T4).

Journalism is perceived as unique compared to other professions for some of its unique attributes. It is perceived as managing a public medium that allows the public to express themselves (B8). It is also perceived as engendering freedom of expression by accommodating participatory forms of communication such as community media and citizen journalism (K7). One journalist even argues that because of information and communication technologies, journalism has become incompatible with exclusivity and market closure, aspects that are typical of traditional professions like medicine and law. He argues:

Locking out people is increasingly becoming difficult in this era of internet and all these participatory opportunities that it offers, with blogging and cell phones and You Tube. How can you talk about professionalising, [when] people would love to create their own content? So the situation has introduced a whole new ball game for journalism (M8).

Unlike in the traditional professions where academic qualifications and qualifying rigours are a necessity for a professional, experience in journalism is seen as a more crucial attribute of a professional than the education. The journalists feel that practical skills necessary to practice journalism are not acquired from journalism schools, hence even someone without a journalism school certificate can still be a journalist. One journalist articulates this thinking: “The difference between journalism and other professions is that you can become a journalist without going to a journalism college” (K7). Another thinks it would be “foolish” to ignore people who have experience in covering different areas such as health, because of academic qualifications (M7).

The relationship between journalists as professionals and their perceived “clients” who are their audiences also distinguishes journalism from other professions. While in traditional professions the relationship between the professional and his or her client is often controlled by the professional (see collegiate form of control in chapter two), the majority of the journalists interviewed indicated that the audiences control media content because of their capacity to reject (stop buying) media products that are not satisfying their information needs. This relationship is variously described as the media being “the servant of the public” (B5), as the public “setting the agenda” (K4), and as professionals needing to be “responsive to the needs of the consumers” (M2). Perhaps the most contextual description of this relationship

in Uganda is articulated by one journalist who argues that in Uganda, society has closed more newspapers than the government.

Journalists as professionals cannot determine the needs of their clients. It is automatic because society is like a human stomach. If you give it what it does not want, you vomit. So society can reject a newspaper and many newspapers in Uganda have not been closed by government, they have been rejected by society (T2).

As a departure from the rest, one journalist thinks that journalism is indeed a profession like medicine and law and should therefore be treated as such. She argues that much as it is a skill and talent, it is a calling that also requires minimum standards. “Absolutely journalism is a profession. Much as it is also skill and talent, it requires basic standards for anybody coming in if we are to be like teachers or doctors” (N4). She further argues that journalism adds value to information hence the need for specialised training and education like in other professions.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed in our constitution, but that does not mean that because you can express yourself you are therefore a journalist. For example, people can do simple medical things, but that does not make them doctors; we have herbalists, they know which herb cures, but they are not doctors. A journalist researches, adds value to information, goes to school to be able to get all the facts clear (N5).

In line with this perception of journalism as being at par with other professions, she differs from the majority of the journalists’ view of the relationship between journalists and their audiences as being controlled by the audiences. To the contrary, she argues that the audiences are there to consume information as it comes from the journalists. “The audiences cannot determine for us the kind of information we must give them. Our job is to tell them the story as it is and it is up to them to see what they think is right or wrong, because journalism is a mirror of society, the information gateway. Rather they should probably put questions on our standards, like what are the standards that you must have as a journalist for us to believe you” (N2).

Much as there is perceived reluctance among the journalists in this sample in describing journalism as a profession as argued in this section, the words “professional” and “professionalism” are easily invoked and related to journalism. Journalists draw a distinction between other communicators like bloggers and

themselves, based on the observance of journalistic guidelines and values. These are seen to distinguish a professional from a non professional (N5, H3, B3, B4, K15, T10, M3). In this interpretation of professionalism, the codes of ethics are regarded as the major guiding principles that determine journalism professionalism. All journalists interviewed regarded codes of ethics as the engine of journalism, and observance of such codes as the measure of professionalism (K16). One journalist describes it as a spiritual guide. “The code of conduct is important not as a control but as a guide. The code of conduct is like a tool that keeps on reminding you of your responsibility, that is why in many countries it is not enforced by government, it is not within the law, it is like a spiritual thing” (H9). Another argues that a code of conduct is fundamental to any profession and more so to journalism, since what the media disseminates influences people’s lives, the need for a set of values [code of ethics] becomes paramount (K16). In this perception of the media as having an influence on the lives of the people, codes are seen as a protection mechanism for both journalists and the public they serve (T11, B17).

There is unanimity among journalists interviewed that journalistic codes should be defined by journalists themselves as opposed to other external forces, and compliance should not be seen in legal terms. One journalist argues that breach of codes should only elicit moral blame, not punishment, because of the fundamentality of acts of communication.

Because acts of communication are so fundamental to the lives of the people, we should not over legislate and bring in laws, because if you do so, you are going to murder communication. Those acts of transgression against the codes are those that are acceptable in society as necessary for the good functioning of the community, and that is why we are saying that they should be codes of ethics that can only occasion a moral blame, but not punishment (B18).

One respondent thinks codes should be obeyed out of a sense of personal responsibility and passion for journalism (N8), while another thinks that it does not really matter whether the codes are statutory or not, the important issue being how members are willing to abide by them. For him, peer moral sanctions such as embarrassing those that flout the codes can have the same impact as criminal sanctions (M16). However, one journalist believes in enforcing codes of ethics since

members of a particular profession choose to belong to it voluntarily. “I believe in enforcing codes of conduct, provided it is not used selectively. The members should join an organisation knowing that these are the rules of the game, because they join willingly. So when they join, they must know that they have to abide by certain standards.” (T14).

From the foregoing views it seems that most of the interviewed journalists do not see journalism as a structured entity that fits into the traditional definitions of professions and are therefore reluctant to describe it as a profession from a structural-functional understanding of the term. As deduced from their arguments, journalism’s close connection to other forms of communication would disqualify it as a profession within a strict structural-functional interpretation that espouses exclusivity and elitism based on esoteric knowledge as discussed in chapter two. Its fluidity as an aspect of freedom of expression and the necessary intrusion of other forms of communication through technology has made restricting entry practically impossible. However, the fact that Ugandan journalists still perceive journalism as a unique aspect of expression, guided by unique principles and values, and their invocation of the terms “professional” and “professionalism” in reference to journalism could mean that the concept of profession and professionalisation are implicit. Perceived from a phenomenological perspective, journalists are seen as emphasising codes of ethics, and seeing these as a moral force and as being the personal responsibility of journalists as opposed to criminal sanctions to enforce compliance.

7.1.2 Perceptions of Statutory Professionalisation by Ugandan Journalists

As noted in chapter five, the Press and Journalist Statute, 1995, established a form of statutory professionalisation on Ugandan journalists through regulation of standards and conduct. Generally the idea of statutory professionalisation is not supported among journalists interviewed. Whereas they generally support a form of professionalisation, they differ on the approach.

Everybody talks about professionalism but the fact is we appreciate it very differently. Whereas we agree that there is need to professionalise the media in Uganda, we differ in the approaches and how we appreciate the word

professionalism. Therefore I differ with the approach that government took [of statutory professionalisation] (B10).

The bone of contention is the role of government in the professionalisation process. There are general doubts about the intentions of government and there is general mistrust about its ability to regulate the media without pursuing its own selfish interests especially of controlling the media. This is deduced from the historical relationship between the media and governments as entailing tensions:

The Statute creates a mandatory organisation called NIJU to which all journalists should belong. Knowing very well that the media and governments, especially in Africa, are not bedfellows, I am very skeptical about how a government-sponsored institution can manage and control the media. The government should have no role in issues of journalism professionalisation. Let us give the stakeholder, the journalist a chance to form a credible organisation (T9).

The government's real intention is interpreted as wanting to control the media through licensing and creating exclusive membership rather than professionalising.

It was like there were no journalists and government was introducing journalism in the country which was wrong. Secondly, they were not in a way setting up guidelines that were meant to empower, neither were they introducing skills. What they were coming up with were controls....one, limiting the people to enter the profession; two, controlling them through licensing and education of journalists. It was not professionalising, it was about control (H4).

However, there are journalists who feel that much as government's intervention in professionalising journalists was not the best, the prevailing professional circumstances among journalists then necessarily courted government intervention (M10, M11, K9, N6). They acknowledge that there was no proper mechanism among journalists to promote professionalism especially among many journalists who joined the profession with less education.

I can understand the circumstances under which parliament came up with that law. It is quite important for us to appreciate the circumstances. The circumstances were that a lot of people were tired of journalists, because journalists were regarded as people who have not gone to school, who are gossiping, who are inaccurate, always distorting information, and so forth and so forth. So many of the members of the committee who came up with the professionalisation requirement felt that it was the best way of calming the

more extremist elements in parliament who wanted actually tougher controls on the media (M10).

One journalist argues that the absence of a legal framework for journalism complicated the status of the profession and therefore that it was a good idea to have a law. “

The Press and Journalist Statute had both positives and negatives. The positive was that it was an attempt to put in place a legal framework for the media. There was need for a law, no doubt about that. This law did away with some of the [bad] laws that existed such as the power to ban newspapers. Broadly the move to bring a law was positive; at least it tried to give a clear legal framework for the media (K9).

However, in spite of acknowledging the circumstances, the interviewed journalists show discomfort that government came in. They use expressions like “given my suspicion of the state” (M12) and that the Press and Journalist Statute was “a very good idea, but establishing it by an act of parliament was a wrong forum” (N6). Another one, however, describes it as a win-win situation: “...yes government had its own agenda, but ultimately it was a good step forward” (K9).

However, government was not the only force seen as interested in controlling journalism in Uganda. According to one journalist, government was only an agent of other journalists who wanted to control journalism but did not have the means to. According to him, statutory professionalisation was the culmination of a power struggle between a few elite journalists and the majority rank and file journalists for the control of the profession. In this struggle, government is seen as an agent of the elite journalists.

I do not even think that the problem was professionalising journalism. We had a problem between those who were educated and those of us who had joined journalism when we did not have university degrees. The people who had degrees wanted to control the media but we were the majority. So they wanted to create an electoral college [of elite journalists instead of adult suffrage] (T5).

This view corresponds with the arguments raised in this chapter that appreciate the circumstances under which statutory professionalisation was introduced, being that the journalists had failed to organise themselves through their associations which

were characterised by wrangling (M11, see also chapter five, 5.2). Overall, what is discernible is that while there was both outright rejection of the law as well as acknowledgement of the circumstances under which the law was introduced, there is still general distrust for the state as a player in journalism professionalisation.

Apart from the discomfort about the role of the state, there are other specific provisions of the Press and Journalist Statute that journalists object to. First of all the establishment of a mandatory professional association of journalists called the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) is seen as an entry point of the state into the professional affairs of journalists. The interviewed journalists think the establishment of professional associations should be the responsibility of journalists and not external interests (T9). Further arguments indicate that there is objection to professional associations being formed by law since they are supposed to be voluntary associations.

I do not really believe that it should be the business of government or the state to form professional associations for journalists. It should not be imposed; it should come from the journalists themselves. The moment the state does that by law, it ceases to serve the purpose (B11).

Professional associations are therefore perceived as voluntary and set up by willing members. As stated earlier in this chapter, journalists' support for voluntary codes of ethics (over which professional associations are guardians) seems to stem from the view of professional associations being voluntary.

Voting rights are also seen as a point of contention. According to the law, only journalists with degrees are supposed to vote or be voted into office in the administrative structures of NIJU. This means that non-degree holders are effectively disenfranchised from running the affairs of the professional association. If they cannot vote or be voted into office, it means that they are considered as second-class journalists in the sense of the law. The question of who is a journalist or who should be a journalist is also reflected as contentious. One journalist wonders: "Now if a person who did political science or literature becomes an automatic member, but a person who has a diploma in journalism is an associate member, he cannot vote nor be voted, so who is a journalist?" (T5b).

There is a general feeling that whereas education is an important attribute of a journalist to enable him or her navigate the complex issues in society, setting mandatory minimum academic standards is superfluous, and if at all such standard setting ever becomes necessary, it should be left to the professionals themselves who better understand the dynamics of their profession (H6). One journalist argues that journalism is part of communication and communication takes place at different stages including the smallest stage [grassroots forms of communication], and therefore that minimum education standards would only serve to alienate the lower levels of communication (B13, B14).

As argued earlier in this section, there is also a view that minimum academic standards are not for purposes of professionalising, but as a means of control of who should vote or be voted for selfish reasons (T5, T5b). Hence the idea of rigid exclusivity based on education standards is not supported although education is perceived as offering a journalist a vantage position in society. One journalist suggests that the issue should be left to news organisations to determine who they employ and how they are deployed.

Matters to do with education qualifications should be left to the professionals to decide, perhaps a media house would know that someone with a diploma cannot be an editor. But that person can even be much better than someone with a degree. I think the law should not lock out people from coming into journalism. It should be flexible. But because you are dealing with a complex society and complex issues, you do not say that somebody who has finished Senior Two [second year of high school] should come and work as a journalist (K13).

One of the major objections to the law is the provision for licensing of journalists by a government-appointed council. All journalists interviewed rejected the idea of licensing and describe it as a means of controlling journalism. The general view is that licensing is used as a means of silencing critical journalism. One journalist thinks it is outright state control, hence dangerous to press freedom.

Licensing is a big danger. It can be a big threat to press freedom to the extent that it gives those who have the power to register some kind of powers to sieve who registers and who does not. It can be used adversely against journalists and journalism. It is a form of state control of the media, because it has the effect of closing out people you may not want (M14).

Licensing is not only objected to in as long as it is done by the state. The very idea of licensing is generally rejected regardless of who does it. Even if it is a professional organisation licensing journalists, it is seen as objectionable. “The government made the law such that the professional association would be the apparatus or tool they would use to control the licensing. I do not think journalists should have licenses to operate. I do not even think it should be the business of any professional association to offer licenses. The idea is that journalism associations are by willing members, by consensus and any form of regulation on members is only consensual” (B12).

Beyond implications for press freedom, licensing is also objected to in as much as it touches on the very essence of work as a means of survival. One journalist thinks it is an excessive means of control since the implications of its withdrawal affect not only the professional standing, but also livelihood. “The requirement for your license to be suspended for some misconduct is improper, because if you deny me the right to practice, then how I am I going to feed my family”? (T8). Therefore licensing is perceived as inherently objectionable for the different reasons cited.

7.1.3 Perceived Role of Journalistic Values in Professionalisation

As argued in the second section of this chapter, the interviewed journalists view codes of ethics as fundamental to the practice of journalism. These codes are regarded as the embodiment of the professionalism. These codes are regarded as the guide to professionalism and as the conscience of the profession. It is upon a perception of codes as the conscience of the profession that broad support for voluntary codes had been cited. The dominant argument is that professionalism and professionalisation should be seen in terms of appreciation of the codes of ethics as opposed to setting up structures. Since codes of ethics define journalistic values, it implies that inculcation and observance of professional values is regarded as fundamental to professionalisation. The much cited values include objectivity, fairness and balance as the core of journalism. Most of the journalists interviewed feel that while these are good values, they are more of an ideal than the norm. They argue that journalists should strive to achieve them but they cite practical difficulties in attainment. One

journalist perceives values such as objectivity as aiding the promotion of already dominant viewpoints.

Fairness is important, and attempting to be impartial, but there is a way in which society benefits from people who just decide to put their own agendas, because this notion of objectivity also has its limitations, it sometimes produces a certain kind of homogeneity of views where fringe views and all those that are not necessarily held by the majority are kind of ignored because of objectivity (M17).

This view conforms to the Marxist argument that professional values are the conduits through which political and economic forces influence the media to reproduce their dominant views (see chapter three).

Another argument is that the social and political interests as defined by media ownership make journalistic values more ideal than practical. This happens in cases where ownership interests and individual journalistic values clash, which is normally resolved in favour of ownership interests. In such cases, journalistic values may become only something that is desirable rather than actual (K17, see also K6). There is also the perception that journalistic values such as objectivity are idealistic because of individual contexts and experiences that shape our thinking and perception of issues. One editor cites the case of journalists from northern Uganda and how they are likely to cover the civil war in the north.

People [journalists] covering the war in the north who are from the area, they have their views, perhaps they are also victims, perhaps, they have their own views about the army, rebels, so their understanding, their work, their approach to work is conditioned by what they have gone through. You may not expect them to be so fair, at times, or to be objective (K17b).

He further argues that journalists' perception of their role in society as that of giving voice to the under-dog somehow blurs their objectivity without them even noticing it. "But there are many occasions when journalists don't even realise that they actually are not objective or that you also have to look at the other side, because journalists think that their obligation is to fight for the oppressed, for the minorities or the underprivileged" (K17). This view reflects the advocate model of professionalism as propounded by Janowitz (1975) in chapter three. Under this orientation, journalists see themselves as spokespersons of marginalised groups. From this perspective,

objectivity becomes a stumbling block to achieving this role. One journalist outrightly dismisses objectivity as non-existent.

That is theory. Who determines objectivity, who determines fairness? It is not there. Even if they are part of the code of ethics, certain things are put there when they are not practical. If you write and say there is corruption in government, the government will say this man is attacking us, there is corruption everywhere. So who determines objectivity? (T15).

However, an editor proposes that one of the ways of mitigating the practical difficulties of conforming to objectivity is by promoting multiple media.

I think that is why in the Windhoek Declaration there is a call for multiple media organisations, the more media, the higher the chances that all the views, all interests will come out because there must be realisation that there are occasions when a journalist fails to get the ideal. One journalist may see things in a different way, shaped by their own values (K18).

Most of the interviewed journalists feel that journalistic individual freedom to stick to journalistic values is compromised by the fact that news organisations also have their own values, policies and agendas as well. These values and policies are not informed by a single source but are variously interpreted from different forms of ownership. As one journalist notes;

There is no organisation which is fully independent. Each one has its own values and goals and the reason why it was set up. So anything which does not fall within that might not be able to come through, so you find that individual journalists are limited by ownership interests and values, and they don't have that kind of freedom to express themselves fully (H10).

As already noted in this chapter, sometimes there are tensions between individual journalistic conscience and the broad objectives of news organisations (K6, M19). One journalist thinks that media pluralism and diversity offer different options from which individual journalists can look for compatibility with their own professional values. "The truth about life is that each time you walk from your homestead you surrender some independence, because community and society cannot thrive by everybody exercising their freedom. That is why we are saying that there should be media pluralism and diversity to be able to accommodate all those individual journalistic aspirations in one way or the other" (B20).

There are other perceived influences on journalistic values beyond media ownership. There is overall acknowledgement that political and economic influences affect news content and can actually conflict with journalistic values. One journalist argues that in fragile states which are characterised by civil war [like Uganda], objectivity and impartiality are not practical because there are certain “sensitivities” about the war that journalists need to bear in mind when reporting (N10). In the same way, she argues, there are economic influences as well with the same effect since the media depend on commercial advertising other than other sources of income (N11). A former editor argues that these commercial interests see media consumers not in terms of readers or viewers of content, but in terms of buyers of their goods (B21). He thinks the political class (both the opposition and government) has the same interest of exerting influence on the media, the only difference being that government has at its disposal the state apparatus to enforce its interests while the opposition does not have that luxury (B22). A news editor thinks that the power of the media in influencing public opinion necessarily attracts the attention of both political and commercial influences which enforce their interests through advertising sanctions, denial of access to information, as well as planting information some of which happens to be false (K19). One of the journalists argues that in political contexts where political parties and other forms of countervailing forces to state power are not fully developed like in Uganda, the media takes on that mantle and necessarily becomes a target of political forces (H11). He argues that as a departure from the routine of arresting and prosecuting journalists, government has shifted from direct political controls to economic controls through ownership channels:

We are now seeing the strategy of containing the media changing from direct confrontation to economic strings. What the politicians have learnt, especially those in government, is that when they talk to the owners of the media organisations, they are likely to be more effective than directly confronting the media. It is like sort of if you want to do business with us, then you should make sure that this does not happen. So in a way the political agenda is fulfilled through the economic interests of the media (H12).

However, a training editor thinks that much as the socio-politico-economic context influences news content, the most important influence comes from journalists’ own professional notions and work routines. He cites the definition of news by journalists

and deadline pressures as limiting news content “probably a lot more than any other thing”. He further argues: “The fact that we can only cover a few things and not others means that what is news is limited. The fact that we think the prominence of a player is more important than some other factors means people who are prominent will end up being given more coverage even when smaller people may be in need of better coverage” (M21).

Summarising the foregoing views, it is generally acknowledged that journalistic values are desirable to guide the media in the path of professionalism. This would apparently imply that Ugandan journalists’ views conform to the liberal-pluralist view of media professionalism, and especially professional values such as objectivity, as a desirable aspect of journalism as a way of reflecting the pluralism and diversity in society. However doubts about the viability of values such as objectivity and impartiality, and their perceived effect of hushing minority views as expressed by some journalists, means that a Marxist interpretation of journalism professionalism is also evident. Coupled with the perceived inevitable influences from both powerful political and economic interests and how they affect professionalism, one can argue that a view according with a Marxist interpretation is evident among the Ugandan journalists sampled.

In spite of the dominant argument for voluntary codes of ethics as a basis for journalism professionalism and in spite of the rejection of statutory professionalisation as argued in this chapter, journalists still feel that there is need to regulate the relationship between journalists and their audiences as a way of protecting audiences against perceived media excesses, and also as a means of creating a credibility system for the media as a responsible institution. However, the form of regulation advocated for is self-regulation as opposed to other forms. One journalist articulates this position:

I agree that there should be regulation. I subscribe to minimum regulation, not maximum regulation. Journalists themselves should be doing this. It is their responsibility to be sensitive to social dynamics and disseminate information in a manner that promotes social harmony. Even at the news organisation, they should be able to know that there are things that are extremely harmful to society (B23).

From another angle, one journalist argues that the concept of the media being a market place of ideas is only feasible in developed societies. In undeveloped societies, he calls for some regulation to protect society.

When society is well developed like the Americans, the media can be a marketplace of ideas. When you come to our undeveloped societies, people believe in whatever media write or publish. In such gullible societies, you cannot allow that whoever comes in can write or publish. No. you have to regulate. Those who join journalism must be of a certain category, a certain calibre and of a certain education (T7).

He further argues that media associations should be responsible for regulation although government can only come in to help if they fail. The interviewed journalists in general believe that audiences' protection mechanisms such as non-statutory councils, right of reply and others present effective civil means of addressing complaints from society, but acknowledge that people should be free to seek redress elsewhere in case they are not satisfied.

7.1.4 Perceptions about the Democratic Role of the Media in Uganda

As argued in chapter five and in this chapter, the media is often perceived as functional to the democratic process. It is cited for its role of providing the medium of information for democratic purposes. Among the people interviewed, one journalist argues that like “doctors save lives, engineers build infrastructure, journalists do provide information and mobilisation for democratic development” (B2). However in spite of this normative role, there are factors cited by journalists which impede that role. There is a general feeling among journalists that in a country like Uganda where the state dominates all other sectors of society, and where the state has interests in influencing the media, the role of the media is bound to be interfered with. Journalists argue that the state uses its power to seek to control the media. It is argued that the necessary resources upon which the media depend for their existence are firmly controlled by the state in Uganda. One such resource is regulation of the broadcasting sector. One journalist believes that the state's control of broadcasting licensing and regulation through the Uganda Broadcasting Council has enabled it to control broadcasting content especially in critical times like elections.

I am not surprised that most of the radio frequencies are owned by people who are pro-government, because then the government has used the power of allocation to serve its interests against the interests of others. So I am not surprised if the content that comes from those radio stations is pro-government especially when it comes to elections. By and large, the government has succeeded in using its power, authority, political muscle and the legal framework to serve and perpetuate its interests (B25).

Besides direct control as argued in the foregoing paragraph, journalists believe that the Ugandan state actually has firm control over the private sector which supports the media through commercial advertising. One journalist even argues that private companies are in essence not private since they depend on government for their survival.

The state has influence even in companies which are not owned by government, in underdeveloped countries, the source of resources is government. Many private companies are actually government companies, because if they get business from government; they cannot risk antagonising it. Because everything depends on government, even these private companies are not private in the real sense (T18).

Beyond fearing to be associated with a media organisation that is seen to be anti-government, journalists believe that the government can crack the whip on private companies through its control of the tax system. Its control of the tax reward system and tax compliance scrutiny means that even private companies can be vulnerable to an angry government (K21).

Apart from its indirect control of the private sector, the state is perceived by most journalists (except N13) as the biggest source of advertising for any news media regardless of whether such media is government owned or private (K21, M25, H14, T18). Being the biggest source of revenue for the media and having control over the private sector means that the Ugandan state has immense influence over the media which gives it advantage to deal with critical media. However, a training editor feels that much as the state has such advantage, there is little effort from the media to test government.

Yes the state has the power to manoeuvre economic and political resources. Think about the supplements that the government departments run and all that, very often a lot of them contradict what the media have said previously about progress in these reports and so on, but I very rarely see stories that challenge

them, and I think part of it is because of the money that they are getting from the supplements. At the same time I do not see a deliberate effort not to cover the government adversely because of government's control over resources like advertising and so on (M25).

There is also a general feeling that the liberalisation of the Ugandan economy as well as the liberalisation of the broadcasting sector has expanded the frontiers for freedom of expression in the media. With over 100 radio stations and over 10 TV stations in the country, journalists reflect a general feeling that there are more opportunities for citizens to express themselves in the media. Market competition in the private sector is also seen as expanding the revenue base of the media through increased advertising volumes. Indeed one news editor thinks that market competition within the media industry itself has also forced the media to carry dissenting views in order to be seen to be credible before the market. "The media houses walk a tightrope because of competition, and are forced to let in some dissenting views which would not have been let in because they know that is the only way to survive in the market" (K23).

However, some journalists argue that much as opportunities for expression have been widened, there are noticeable negative consequences of market competition. One journalist notes that because of competition and the struggle for economic survival, there is a lot of marketeering and commercialism in the newspapers such as advertisers' supplements and pictures of corporate functions like parties at the expense of more participatory content like letters to the editor. In fact, he notes that while newspapers increase their volumes to accommodate advertisements and corporate oriented content, the readers' space in all news papers has never increased from one page (B26).

Another argues that because of competition, the media's pandering to perceived market tastes leaves out important issues uncovered in the media. "Yes, the liberalisation of the media industry has widened the horizons of debate. But at the same time the ferocious competition for profit has also meant that some important subjects that are not necessarily interesting are sometimes ignored" (M26). There is however a general feeling that freedom of expression in Uganda as offered by the market dynamics does not necessarily translate into checks and balances to state power. While the journalists surveyed generally agree that the Ugandan state is very

sensitive to negative information and that the Ugandan President is a regular writer to the Ugandan press and a regular guest to different radio stations (T20), they believe that the vibrant discussions in the end amount to only a charade as expressed by M27 as only an “illusion of influence and participation” in which participants in the debate psychologically feel satisfied with venting their anger against government although no tangible reforms arise from the debates (M27).

The relationship between grassroots voices as represented by civil society, and the media, is perceived by respondents as not sufficiently mutually beneficial to support democratic development. As discussed in chapter four, civil society is seen as a countervailing force on state power through its representation of grassroots concerns. Democratic media is therefore seen as offering a forum for expression to civil society. There is divided opinion among journalists on whether the media has provided democratic space to civil society. One feels that while the Ugandan media has attempted to give a platform to civil society, the platform has not been enough to be adequate especially in terms of depth and follow up (K25). Others however think that the media has played its role while civil society voices are not loud enough (N15, H16). Another view that emerges is that the most vocal civil society organisations are the rich and city-based NGOs while many especially community-based organisations are left unheard. “There have been attempts here to give civil society a voice, but I think it is not enough and I also think that the dominant civil society voices mainly from the capital city are mainly the bigger richer organisations. Very many CBOs do not necessarily get the kind of space and airtime that these bigger ones get, and I think that affects diversity and pluralism in the quality, in the sense that some voices are kept out” (M28). This is seen as partly because in Uganda there is no strong culture of local and regional media (M29) as well as the fact that rural media consists of small media organisations which lack the institutional capacity and the guts to run content that may displease government (K22).

Regarding the media’s role as a provider of a forum for political debate, journalists interviewed generally feel that while there appears to be vibrant political debate in the Ugandan media especially on private radio stations, the levels of capacity to debate freely differ greatly between Kampala-based radio stations and

rural stations. While Kampala-based stations are seen as experiencing less interference from government, rural media are regular targets of government functionaries who control and stifle debate on such stations. State-owned media, especially broadcast media is seen as renegeing from this responsibility. In the view of journalist respondents, there is no political debate on public media to talk about. There are also disparities cited between the print media and broadcast media. Print media is seen as more limited in its ability to offer a platform for political debate than broadcast media (K20, K22, T22, and B29). This means that the potential of the media to play its democratic role in Uganda recedes as you move farther from the city, and differs between print and broadcast media.

What these views suggest is a perception that the Ugandan media under pluralism play a partial role in regard to democracy, although under significant limitations imposed by the State. The question of how this broad and contemporary view relates to their assessment of the 1995 Press and Journalist Statute, as well as to the non-implementation of the law ever since, is discussed in more detail in the final chapter. However, at this stage it can be pointed out that analysed from the different media-democracy perspectives as argued in chapter four, there are significant limitations to journalism professionalism in all. Under the civil society perspective, the commercial orientation undermines democratically-relevant professionalism through profit-driven agenda, while under the public sphere perspective; the power of the state erodes the public service mandate that would guarantee journalism professionalism. This means that with state and corporate pressures abounding, journalism professionalism, whether perceived under a statutory approach or under a self-regulatory approach, faces significant limitations as regards its democratic significance.

7.2 Conclusion

This chapter has been an exploration of the perceptions of journalists about media professionalisation in Uganda. It can be concluded that unlike politicians who tend to interpret journalism professionalisation from a structural-functionalist perspective (see chapter six), and hence support for a structured and closed profession through

legislation, journalists on the other hand tend to understand journalism professionalisation from a phenomenological perspective through their support of a non-structured and self-defining sense of professionalisation that is guided by voluntary codes of ethics. From the point of view of the media studies approaches to journalism professionalism, it has been argued that several of the interviewees in this study tend to correspond with a Marxist interpretation through their acknowledgement of forces that override journalistic values. In the next chapter I attempt to analyse the implications of the findings (chapters five, six and seven) for journalism professionalisation, and what they mean for the democratic role of the media in Uganda, and then draw conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER EIGHT
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the findings of this study as presented in chapters five, six and seven, and how they relate to the diverse theoretical approaches to journalism professionalisation that have informed this study as discussed in chapters two and three. Politicians' and journalists' views about journalism professionalism are correlated with scholarly arguments to find convergences or divergences, and conclusions are drawn.

Scholarly arguments in this study have been grouped into two main categories, that is, approaches within sociology in general and approaches within media studies. Three main approaches to understanding professions have been identified within sociology, which are the structural-functionalist approach, the phenomenological approach and the power relations approach. Within media studies, three broad approaches have been identified as attempts to analyse journalism professionalism. These are the liberal-pluralist approach, the Marxist approach and the radical-democratic approach. Therefore this chapter is an attempt to understand politicians' and journalists' views within these approaches.

8.1 Professions and Legislation: The Case of Journalism

The findings of this study indicate that whereas both politicians and journalists seem to concur on a need to professionalise journalism and the value of professionalism, they greatly differ on the interpretation of what professionalisation constitutes and how it should be achieved. While politicians favoured professionalisation through legislation, journalists favour professionalisation through voluntary means of self-regulation. Politicians argued that a profession needs recognition and protections and this can only be done by a statute, hence legislation. Historically, legislation has been part of the professionalisation process linked to a structural-functionalist analysis of professions. Since under this analysis professions are seen as societies of people with

esoteric knowledge and specialised skills to serve society, legislation was called for to protect these skills against unnecessary intrusion and define regulatory parameters.

Wilensky (as discussed in chapter two, 2.2.1.1), one of the earliest proponents of structural-functionalism, identified agitation for public support and legal recognition as one of the five stages through which professions go to reach full professionalisation. Historically, ideal type professions (as explained in chapter two) like medicine and law have been recognised and protected by statute. Much of the agitation has been a call for protection by restricting entry into the profession, training procedures and accruing privileges of practitioners. But the difference between the Ugandan case and the classical cases is that while classic professions agitated to be recognised by statute, the findings of this study indicate that the 1995 Press and Journalist Statute, which sought to recognise and regulate journalism in Uganda, was a political initiative. It came as a bill to parliament through the initiative of government and was resisted by journalists. This means that while in other professions broadly, a statute has been sought voluntarily, journalism professionalisation in Uganda was imposed.

The fact that the findings of this study indicate that journalists perceive journalism not as a set of legal protections and institutional structures, but as a value system which is voluntarily embraced and voluntarily adhered to means that their interpretation of professionalism, especially in terms of how to achieve it, is different from that of politicians. This difference in interpretation of journalism professionalism raises the question of whether occupational values can be imposed by legislation. If a profession is not merely an aggregate of practitioners or a community of individuals sharing a common occupational identity (as Eliot, 1988, observes), but a set of highly elaborate ideologies and supra-individual values (as Jackson, 1970, notes), then legislation can only create an aggregate of practitioners but not values and ideologies. This is why historically legislation would come towards the end of the process of formation of occupational identity once values and ideologies had been developed. Even then it would be for the purpose of legal recognition, defining modes of entry and nature of privileges. In Uganda it is evident from the perceptions of journalists interviewed as well as politicians, that journalism did not have the attribute

of highly developed occupational values and consciousness that would ordinarily have preceded legislation. One can therefore argue that the statutory form of professionalisation in the form of the Press and Journalist Statute in Uganda, if we are to go by the structural-functional perception of the stages of development towards full professionalisation, was a case of putting the cart before the horse and had the effect of legally creating an occupational identity called journalism.

It has however been argued by Elliot (1972) that whereas legislation as an external intervention to professionalisation does not create occupational values, it can have the effect of creating occupational self-consciousness. He cites a precedent in the 18th century when attorneys and solicitors were mistrusted by society and therefore attracted a number of regulating Acts of Parliament of which one in 1729 instituted a regular system of articulated training. The first “Law Society” called “The Society of Gentleman Practisers in the Courts of Law and Equity” was formed soon afterwards as a reaction, and attempted to develop standard procedures for training and qualification, to supervise professional practice and to improve its quality, and to represent the interests of the attorneys in relation to the Bar and society in general. It flourished until 1825 when what is considered as an antecedent to the modern “Law Society” called “The Society of Attorneys, Solicitors, Proctors and others not being Barristers, practising in the Courts of Law and Equity in the United Kingdom” was formed. Elliot (1972:40) further argues: “The development of occupational consciousness seems to have been at least in part a response to external intervention as embodied in the Act of 1729 and public criticism of attorneys at this time. This factor of external intervention and influence has a continual, if not paradoxical, importance in fostering professional autonomy.”

Elliot’s thesis is important for comparative purposes. While the Press and Journalist Statute cannot be said to have created occupational values of journalism, its impact on creating occupational self-consciousness among Ugandan journalists is an issue that warrants further research. As both journalists and politicians have indicated in the findings of this study, the Statute was a culmination of dissatisfaction with the professional standards of Uganda journalists. The self-regulatory model of professionalisation as espoused by Ugandan journalists with its Independent Media

Council seems to have been a reaction to the reality and perceived consequences of official regulation through statute. Journalists sought to prove that they could regulate their own affairs without external intervention. The Press and Journalist Statute of 1995 could therefore be argued to have been as a 'rude awakening' for Ugandan journalists as was the Act of 1729 to British solicitors and attorneys. Both could have served as catalysts to occupational self-consciousness for journalism in Uganda, and Law in the United Kingdom respectively. Equally related to this point is a phenomenon described by Berger (2002) in the 1990s where journalists in southern Africa agreed to organise themselves through voluntary councils after governments there attempted to introduce government-controlled media councils to regulate the standards of journalists. Therefore the question of whether statutory actions have a positive impact on professional consciousness, and to what extent the Ugandan context conforms to this hypothesis would be an interesting issue for further research.

In regard to legislation being part of the professionalisation process, both the medical and legal professions in Uganda are recognised by statute in the Ugandan laws. The Advocates Act, 1970, creates the Law Council of the Uganda Law Society to regulate the legal profession. The Uganda Medical and Dental Practitioners Council Statute, 1996, creates the Medical and Dental Practitioners Council to regulate medical and dental practice. Likewise the Press and Journalist Statute creates the Media Council to regulate the journalism profession. But whereas both the Law Council and the Medical and Dental Practitioners Council are as statutory as the Media Council, the difference is that the Law and Medical Councils are controlled by professionals within those professions on a self-regulatory basis, while the Media Council is seen to be susceptible to state influence given the powers that the Minister of Information has over the council (see chapter five). The implication of this comparison of journalism to other professions in Uganda is that it shows different perceptions by government of professional regulation of different professions, and perhaps the special interest that government has in journalism professionalisation. While the government has seemed to feel comfortable with the medical and legal professions regulating themselves, it has preferred a conspicuous presence in the regulation of journalism. This lends credence to the view of the majority of journalists

interviewed in this study who indicated that the intention of government in putting in place regulatory mechanisms for the media under the Press and Journalist Statute was not to ensure professionalisation of journalism, but to ensure control of practice through statutory regulation, restriction of entry, and licensing.

8.2 Implications of Entry Restrictions and Licensing

Historically professions have acted as exclusive clubs of special people using different tools as means of exclusion. The tools have been mainly education and the license to practice. As Jackson (1970:7) notes:

They [professions] encompass specialised areas of knowledge which affect all individuals but where only a few can become expert. By virtue of their character these areas of knowledge assume a mystery, a quality of the sacred whereby they take on a distinct mystique which distinguishes them from more mundane matters. The professional necessarily becomes the high priest of that area of knowledge in which he is acknowledged to be competent.

Indeed the agitation for a statute has always been about having recognised legal authority to gauge and control entry, based on knowledge and skills, and issue licenses to shield the profession from ‘outsiders’, who according to Jackson (1970:10) are considered “irrational, dangerous and potentially corrupting to the purity of the rational *cognoscenti*”. As discussed in the findings of this study, the statutory approach to professionalisation in Uganda imposed entry restrictions based on a University degree as the minimum academic qualification for full members of the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU). Whereas entry for those who do not have degrees is not completely closed, they are reduced to mere listening posts regarding the affairs of the institute since they cannot vote on any matter nor be voted into office. As also noted in the findings, the statutory approach establishes a licensing regime controlled not by the professional association, but by a government-controlled regulatory body, the Media Council. This raises two issues for discussion: One, whether journalism is compatible with entry restrictions based on education standards, and two, if licensing is appropriate to journalism and what implications it holds for the practice.

This study has indicated that while Ugandan politicians have believed that academic education is a necessary component of professionalism, journalists interviewed generally believe that it is only a desirable component, and have thus rejected entry restrictions based on academic qualifications. The question of whether possession of a degree would be directly proportional to the level of professionalism of a Uganda journalist then arises. The issue of whether academic qualifications are essential to journalism has been a long and controversial debate in media studies and journalism practice (see Knudson, 1996). One of the disqualifications of journalism from being considered as a profession from a ‘trait’ approach as discussed in chapter two is that it does not have a distinct body of knowledge. As Jackson (1970:9) further explains;

The fields of knowledge for professions revolve around areas which are regarded as mysteries – they involve essentially sacred elements access to which is the privilege of *cognoscenti* – the professionals. In part they acquire their power from the formal academic training – the study of descriptive elements, combined with this are the elements of socialisation and initiation into the wider class ideology of the professional group.

Certainly journalism does not have this character. Even proponents of journalism being taught as an academic discipline acknowledges journalism’s complicated case. For instance De Burgh (2003:97) describes it as “quintessentially cross disciplinary” and hence argues that while History students have history and English students have literature as bodies of knowledge, journalism’s academic knowledge “probably draws from the social sciences but steals from elsewhere, hence the need to study sociology, politics, history and philosophy”. In spite of the fact that US universities have had journalism training since 1908 when the first journalism school was set up at Missouri University (followed by another at the University of Columbia in 1912), journalism in the US has not yet succeeded in finding a distinctive cognitive base (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

Even beyond the question of possession of a body of knowledge, journalism scholarship has grappled with the question of whether education of journalists has any influence on media content. Schultz (2002: 225-226) notes that while a higher education level may correlate with certain attitudes of journalists, it is hard to establish a direct link between journalists’ education and mass media content. In fact

he argues that empirical research indicates that traits such as individual attitudes, role perceptions and even ethics are influenced by other factors such as a society's political system or family upbringing rather than academic education. Further research done by Weaver and Wilhoit (cited in Shultz, 2002) came to almost a similar conclusion that journalists' role perceptions in terms of a "disseminator" role or an "interpretive" one, are determined by political orientation rather than academic education. One of the Ugandan journalists interviewed for this study implied that the introduction of statutory professionalisation was a case of wrong analysis of the situation (T6). This source said that the Uganda government thought that the media was being critical of its economic policies because journalists did not possess enough education to comprehend and distinguish between macro-economics and micro-economics, hence the need to impose minimum education standards. The journalist, however, argues that today *The Monitor* newspaper is dominated by university graduates and has some of the most educated journalists but it is still critical of government (T6). This view seems to confirm the research findings as discussed in the foregoing paragraphs that factors other than academic education account for journalists' role perceptions and professional orientation. From a political point of view, education becomes just a legitimising factor of a system that can exclude people for political reasons.

Although licensing in the Ugandan system is qualifications based, having the right qualifications is also not protection against being de-licensed. In fact, one of the journalists points out that the law does not give any safeguards against de-licensing (K12). Lack of safeguards means that the license can be used arbitrarily as a tool for non- professional related pursuits.

In the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute of Journalists, which has since 1890 been pursuing a social standing for journalists through statute without success was rejected again in 1977 when it presented a draft bill. That initiative provided for a Journalists' Registration Council of the United Kingdom; for the title journalist to be reserved for those registered; for a code of conduct; and for de-registration of those offending the code. The argument was that de-registration power posed dangers to freedom of expression if it resulted in becoming unemployable.

Whereas hostility to statutory involvement is shared by Ugandan journalists interviewed as indicated in this study regarding the role of education, the same research has also found that the journalists generally are supportive of the importance of a journalist being adequately educated in order to play a leadership role of providing the necessary information for democratic development. This finding correlates with the findings of a study by Mwesige (2004) which concludes that Ugandan journalists place more importance on journalism training in the university setting than their counterparts in western countries such as Britain. With current global trends and the growing sophistication of society, journalists need education to be able to make sense of the world as information brokers, to interrogate power centres and interests which might be concealed from the naked eye, scrutinise trends and make sense of the mass of information that is today available in society. The necessity for education is summed up by De Burgh (2003:110): “In order to perform their functions, journalists need an education which enables them to put themselves and their society in perspective, find out everything and question everything. Motor skills, yes, but also the intellectual confidence which comes from knowledge”. Academic education should therefore be perceived not as a means of restricting entry into journalism, but as a means of empowering the journalists to execute their role in society.

One of the journalists in the findings (K13) and indeed one of the politicians (Hansard, 1995:161) indicated that the issue of academic qualifications should be left to the news organisations (or owners) to determine the standards they require. The role of the labour market in regulating academic standards in journalism could therefore be an issue for further research. In the United Kingdom, while until the 1970’s there was almost no journalism training taking place in higher education institutions, Aldridge and Evetts (2003) note that journalism today is becoming graduate-entry because of demographic shifts and the changing financial regime in UK higher education.

In Uganda, as has been partly supported by the views of journalists, the major newspapers, that is *The New Vision*, *Daily Monitor*, *The Weekly Observer*, and the regional weekly *The East African* predominantly employ journalists with university

degrees. These are largely urban-based news organisations and this trend is significantly different from small rural-based media, because as noted in chapter six, they are small and institutionally. Mwesige (2004) indicates that 47% of his respondents had graduated from university. One can therefore postulate that even in Uganda, much mainstream journalism is tending toward graduate-entry. Indeed Kayanja (2002:161) notes that graduates of Mass Communication from Makerere University have “permeated” most Ugandan media outlets. However, although Mwesige (2004) thinks that this “hunger” for formal journalism education could be partly explained by the 1995 press law as discussed in this study, there is no evidence to suggest so. Among the reasons could be because almost all sectors of the formal labour market in Uganda are graduate-entry, and the fact that the Mass Communication department of Makerere University has flourished, plus the introduction of journalism courses at universities such as the Islamic University in Uganda, Uganda Christian University, and Kampala International University. Therefore the impact of factors other than the Press and Journalist Statute in changing the education profile of Ugandan journalists could lend itself to further research.

It therefore seems that using education as a tool for entry restriction into journalism can be rendered irrelevant because of the role of other factors such as the dynamics of the labour market, higher education and the role of the news organisation as an employing agency. In addition, other global trends like the increasing call for democratisation of communication through open access which has allowed more community participatory forms of communication and the invasion of professions through the internet which has introduced trends such as blogging and citizen journalism make the practice of market closure into journalism practically untenable. In Uganda, community radio style practices also have the same significance.

Licensing journalists has been perceived as a form of control by journalists in this study. Implicit in their views was the position that it does not matter who does it (whether government or a professional association). As far as it has the effect of sanctions which may include denial or withdrawal of the license, it has been objected to. Particular to this study is the feeling among journalists that a license regime as

spelt out in the Press and Journalist Statute is not for regulating standards, but is for the government to have means of cracking down on critical journalism. For some of the interviewees, the broader implication of licensing of journalists is the very link between journalism and freedom of expression. Radical-democratic thinking regards especially regards licensing of journalists as licensing freedom of expression which is seen as violating international charters on freedom of expression. Of equal importance is the view that as long as the license is tagged to work, withdrawal of which amounts to not being able to work, it becomes a violation of the right to work and earn sustenance through one's skills and profession.

As discussed at the end of this Chapter, since the enactment of the Press and Journalists Statute, no journalist in Uganda has actually been subjected to the provisions of requiring a license as a pre-requisite to practice. However, as long as the power to do so is still on the statute books it remains a threat to critical journalism. In 2007, the Media Council (the licensing body) wrote to all media organisations reminding their journalists of the duty to have practising licenses (interview with John Kakande). Although Kakande dismissed this as a means of raising income (licenses have to be paid for) for the cash-strapped Council, it could be an indicator that the license provision can be invoked when necessary. Even more recently, while inaugurating the 6th Media Council in February 2008, the Minister of Information was quoted as urging the new Council to enforce licensing. According to *Sunday Vision* Newspaper, the Minister instructed the council as follows:

You will have to prevail on journalists and editors to acquire annual certification for purposes of accountability, security and easy regulation. Annual certification of journalists is a requirement under sections 26-28 of the Press and Journalist Act (*Sunday Vision*, February 17, 2008:3).

Licensing therefore in as far as it puts conditions on journalism practice should be seen as a threat to the democratic role of the media.

8.3 Application of Findings to Johnson's Typology of Analysis

In chapter two I discussed the three main approaches to the study of professions and argued that while the structural-functionalist approach pioneered the study of

professions, it had many inadequacies which left many questions unanswered as identified by latter scholars. One of them, Terence Johnson, called for analysis of professions within the power relations approach which looks at professions as centres of power. The power relations approach is of interest to this study because it widens the understanding of the professionalisation process in Uganda beyond the limitations of a structural-functional analysis. It also helps to understand the power resources within the professionalisation debate and how such resources are utilised and to whose advantage. As argued in chapter two, Johnson (1972) looks at professions not as a pack of characteristics, but as means of controlling a profession. His analysis is defined by identification of the different forms of institutional control as manifested in the different professions. He identified three main types of occupational control. The collegiate form or classical professionalism is when the professional-client relationship is controlled by the professional. The patronage form is when the client controls the relationship, and the mediative form is when a third party mediates between the professional and the client. These are now related to the Uganda experience.

8.3.1 Professionalisation of Ugandan Journalists as a Collegiate form of Control

Analysed from a collegiate form of control, the nature of the professionalisation process can be said to have some correlation with some characteristics of this form. Under the collegiate form, codes of ethics are the point of reference and a source of role definition for the professional. The ideal of service is emphasised and is seen as fulfilling a crucial service to society. Under the self-regulatory approach and from the perceptions of journalists as discussed in chapter six, the codes of ethics are regarded by Ugandan journalists as a central point of reference for professionalism, as a value system. The findings have also indicated that both journalists and politicians regard journalism as a practice with significant impact on the democratic process.

However, from another perspective, the collegiate form of control relies on the power of the professional association to impose its authority on regulating entry and governing colleague-client relationship through occupationally defined codes. The statutory model of professionalisation which provided for a professional association

with powers to control entry is effectively redundant. The last general assembly of NIJU (which is supposed to be convened annually and new office bearers elected) in which this researcher participated took place in 2000. It has also been argued that the nature of journalism profession in Uganda is without strong professional associations because they have been characterised by economic and political wrangling. Hence the absence of a strong professional association in Uganda practically means that the collegiate form of control has largely been absent from professionalisation in Uganda.

Collegiate forms of control are also characterised by a “one-to-one” relationship between the professional and the client, which makes clients or consumers heterogeneous and vulnerable. But in the case of journalism which is a form of mass communication where the journalist is communicating to masses, the one-to-one model does not apply. Indeed Ugandan journalists have indicated that the professional-client relationship is controlled by powerful audiences who have the right to reject media products by withholding their readership, listenership or viewership. This coupled with the assertion that media content is much more controlled by ownership interests than journalistic initiative (see chapter six, 6.2.3) means that journalism in Uganda fails the basic assumption of the collegiate form of control, that the needs of the consumer are determined by the producer who also determines the means of meeting them.

8.3.2 Professionalisation in Uganda as a Patronage form of Occupational Control

Corporate forms of control are characterised by a single, small but powerful client who defines his own needs and the manner in which such needs are to be catered for. Such a client usually is difficult to exploit because he commands wide social bases of power. The statutory professionalisation model in Uganda fits into this form of control because the Ugandan state (or political class) saw itself as an ill-served client and used its legislative and executive powers to behave like a patron able to define journalism and how it should be practiced and regulated through the Press and Journalist Statute. Under this form, the professional who is the Ugandan journalist is subservient to the oligarchic control of the state through licensing, entry restrictions and statutory codes of ethics.

Ugandan journalists also indicated that economic influences on news content are rampant in the Ugandan media which exert pressure through advertising sanctions. This means that corporate interests become another variant of a patron with effective means of defining his needs. In Uganda market competition and the different forms of ownership have inhibited the growth of strong professional associations. As one journalist elaborates:

... what is happening is that the relationship among news organisations has been undermined by commercialism and competition. We have a situation whereby the main [print] media are owned, one by the commercial interest and the other by the government interest. It is very difficult for them to have a common line and because of that, it kind of undermines the building of strong professional associations, because strong associations need the support of the news organisations (B7).

This seems to conform to the argument as cited by Johnson (1972) that under the patronage form of control the professional occupation is fragmented because different patrons have different needs.

In the findings (see chapter six, 6.2.3), journalists cited conflict between journalistic individual value perceptions and the values of their organisations (which are determined by ownership interests), which conflict is usually resolved in favour of the news organisation. This also seems to conform to the argument that under the patronage form of control occupationally defined norms have less significance than corporately defined expectations. Therefore corporate interests coupled with oligarchic state controls seem to create formidable patrons subjugating the media in Uganda into several patron-client relationships.

8.3.3 Journalism Professionalisation as a Mediative form of Occupational Control

Under the mediative form of occupational control, the state deems it necessary to mediate the relationship between the producer and the consumer in as far as the nature of needs and means of satisfying them are concerned. The state usually comes in to regulate a service which is considered to be a public good. It usually legislates on who should practice and under what conditions, and in the process weakens the

power of occupational control on members. Under the mediative form, the functions of maintaining standards are taken over by state agencies and the professional association is transformed into an occupational pressure group losing its powers to prescribe the manner of practice.

There are a number of parallels between the mediative form of occupational control and the statutory professionalisation in Uganda. First of all, the Ugandan government deemed journalism an important service to society that needed statutory regulation. This is evident in the views of politicians as discussed in chapter six. They argued that the impact of media content on society was “too important to be left to just any other person than a professional” (Hansard, 1995:168) and that the balance of interests between the media and the public interest in the exercise of freedom of expression necessarily brings in a “third party namely the government” (Hansard, 1995:153). This means that government regarded journalism, being an aspect of freedom of expression, as a public good that needed to be regulated in order to protect the various interests as stakeholders. The Press and Journalist Statute becomes the embodiment of that need to intervene. As discussed in chapter five, the statute creates an agency in the form of the Media Council to regulate professional standards of journalists.

This means that the traditional journalists’ association, the Uganda Journalist Association (UJA) which was the umbrella professional body before the coming of the statute was reduced to a pressure group (as many of its duties were supposed to be taken over by the Media Council and NIJU). Indeed one MP confirmed this as he attempts to state the different mandates of UJA and NIJU. “I [would] believe UJA would largely look at the welfare of journalists, in other words, it is things like conditions of work in their places of work (*sic*), and how are journalists treated by their fellow men...so for every association of professionals, there is a counter professional organisation that looks only after professional standards [NIJU], not the welfare [UJA]” (Hansard: 1995:160). This means that the professional association which was created by journalists themselves was reduced to a welfare organisation.

Analysed from a power-relations approach, one can infer parallels between the nature of the professionalisation of journalists of Uganda, and Johnson’s typology

of analysis. However similarities are less evident in the collegiate type than they are apparent in the patronage and mediative forms of occupational control.

8.4 Implications for Media and Democracy in Uganda

It has been argued in this study that there is an intrinsic relationship between media and democracy. This has been reiterated by the dominant views of both politicians and journalists on the role that the media is believed to play in the democratic process. As one journalist has indicated, professionalism involves not only skills and values but also the internalisation and appreciation of the role of the media in the democratic process.

Journalism is not for its own sake. Training presupposes that a person will go a distance further and appreciate the role of a trained journalist in society, and in doing that therefore we are looking at professionalism in terms of training by making a person appreciate what the media can do in building the democratic process (B2).

It was argued in chapter four that in analysing the implications of the findings of this study to the democratic role of the media in Uganda, the political economy approach would be used. It was further argued that the classic approach to political economy where the economic is determinate of social relations was inappropriate in analysing the democratic role of the media in Uganda since its main assumptions of concentrated capital and a subordinate state are not applicable in Uganda where the state is the dominant institution and subordinates all other aspects of society (including the economic) to itself. Instead, Lee's (2001) argument that a liberal-pluralist variant of political economy was appropriate for conditions in Third World countries and post communist countries was preferred.

The liberal-pluralist approach to the political economy of the media considers the state (other than capital) to be the dominant shaper of economic and media policies. It assumes a repressive state that uses its power to threaten media freedom. Hence the state is seen as the enemy of democracy. The market, although subservient to the state, is seen as promoting diversity which is capable of countervailing arbitrary state power. In this equation, market diversity enables media pluralism and freedom through media professionalism which result into checks and balances in the market

place of ideas. The political economy of Uganda media shows some correspondence with, but also some divergence from, this model, and it underlines negative impacts for journalism conceived along lines of independent professional practice in the interests of democracy.

Normatively the liberal economic policy in Uganda coupled with the liberalisation of the broadcasting sector in 1993 expanded the frontiers for freedom of expression, through multiple media channels (especially radio) and an expanded revenue base from the liberalised corporate sector. With over 100 radio stations and 10 TV stations from one radio and TV station before 1993 when the state still monopolised broadcasting, one sees a wide range of choice of expression. Although the print press is still narrow (with only two leading dailies) one would think that the alternative offered by the broadcasting sector would exhibit widespread freedom of expression and access to diverse information. However, as argued in the findings chapter, there are a number of constraints. Journalists indicated that the Uganda state is the dominant player in the media industry because it controls the political and economic resources on which the media, whether private or government-owned, depend. Backing up this view are several factors and perceived factors that will now be discussed.

The Ugandan state controls a licensing regime for the broadcasting sector through distribution of broadcasting licences and frequency allocation. As one journalist indicated (see chapter six), there have been accusations that beneficiaries of licenses are usually pro-regime individuals who are likely to skew content in favour of the state. Although the broadcasting law provides for a regulator, the independence of the regulator has been a constant doubt and is seen to be “hardly enjoying any autonomy” in the face of a number of actions against radio stations that seem to be critical of government (Mbaine, 2005). For example in 2005, KFM, a radio station which is owned by the Nation Media Group, was closed for utterances of a talk show host which were construed to be too critical of the Ugandan president. Other cases include the closure of Choice FM and Kyoga Veritas FM over programmes that were considered to be insensitive of the security situation in the country (Committee for the Protection of Journalists - CPJ, 2006). During a public dialogue organised by Panos

Eastern Africa on digital broadcasting and its implications for regulation (attended by this researcher) in March 2007, one of the participants accused the Broadcasting Council of politicising frequency allocation. Given the fact that the easier and most popular frequencies are between 76 MHz and 90 MHz on the FM spectrum, he alleged that applicants who are reluctantly given frequencies (some applications for frequencies have been denied or delayed) are allocated in the unpopular zone especially over 100MHz. The state's control of licensing and frequency allocation effectively gives it intervention powers to secure its interests. This means that with the state in the control of such a vital resource, the democratic role of the media is constrained.

Some journalists interviewed in this study (K21, M25, H14, T18) indicated that the government runs the single biggest advertising portfolio upon which the media depend. Although there is a vibrant advertising sector in Uganda, it rotates around the telecoms, banking, and foods and beverages (and of recent digital broadcasting) sectors, which makes it narrow. With such a limited base upon which all media depend, the government (especially through the Ministry of Health) still holds sway. This implies that media content and even professional values are subject to the commercial logic as dictated by government. Advertising sanctions can have a big impact on media survival. A seven-year advertising ban imposed by government on *The Monitor* newspaper (in its early years) for being critical of government had a big impact on its competitiveness in the print sector (Kayanja, 2002) and is believed by some to have been one of the factors for the eventual sale of majority shares to the Nation Media Group (T17).

Journalists (K21, T18) further indicated that government is not only the biggest single advertiser but also influences other private sector advertisers through its control of investment policy and the tax system (see also Kayanja, 2002). This means that ultimately the state controls advertising whether from itself or from other private sector sources and hence turns state-media relations into a patron-client relationship. In a country like Uganda where the media are essentially commercial and depend on advertising revenue for their survival, the impact of the state on their democratic role becomes not only the issue of serious concern, but also for the

survival of professional standards. In a marketised context, professional values become subordinate to market standards and in case of conflict the latter prevails. In such a situation, the tenure of a journalist who insists on professional values may become untenable. As McManus (cited in Aldridge and Evetts, 2003:9) explains, “ a reporter or editor in a profit maximising media firm who subordinates market standards to those of journalism may be tolerated about as long as a counter clerk at McDonald’s who refused to sell fried food”. The continuing trend of commercialisation in the Ugandan media is increasingly likely to have a negative impact on journalism professional standards.

Apart from economic resources, the state presides over a legal regime that includes colonial laws of sedition, criminal libel, and the 9/11 inspired Anti-Terrorism Act of 2002. This coupled with lack of legal protections for reporter–source confidentiality and a largely inoperational Access to Information Law means that the state presides over legal resources capable of negatively curtailing the democratic potential of the media. Over the years, many Ugandan journalists and editors have been questioned by the police, threatened with action or actually prosecuted in courts of law (Article 19, 2008; *The Monitor*, February 2008). The threat and actual experience of prosecution plus other means of coercion have the long term effect of instilling a sense of self-censorship and caution especially in regard to critical stories.

Onyango-Obbo (1998), an ex-editor of *The Monitor*, has attested to how self-censorship works and describes how the state even controls the justice system:

As you edit, you read and re-read every story that is likely to aggravate your case. You check out anything that might annoy your magistrate. You fight against the temptation to temper every line that might anger the government and get them to transfer the magistrate on the case, and bring a hard-line biased one who will be sure to nail you. We have been through five magistrates, one judge, and before a panel of awe-inspiring judges in the Constitutional Court. It is a subtle and intricate form of censorship, which is invisible except to the initiated.

The effect of a strangling legal regime on media and a sensitive state is that much media will skirt around sensitive political issues, and concentrate on exploiting the commercial market as they keep safe from the state by delving into “non-political

discourses” which according to Berlin (cited in Lee, 2001) is “negative freedom”. The media will remain vibrant but operate with taboos such as ideological areas which they feel unsafe to discuss. One such taboo created in Uganda is the issue of security, especially regarding the institution of the army. It takes brave journalists and editors to do critical and in-depth coverage of army and security issues in Uganda. Kayanja (2002) notes that the first affront against the media came two months after the government took power, and the issues of contention were security related, when Ndiwalana Kiwanuka, the editor of the *Focus*, was charged with sedition for writing about the army. Six months later, the *Weekend Digest* was banned for publishing a story concerning an attempted military coup. Reporters Without Borders (2004) in their annual report indicated that the war in the north of Uganda continued to be a taboo subject and several news media had been censored for breaching it.

Journalists have indicated in the findings that most radio stations in Uganda, especially those that are based upcountry, out of fear of closure and other legal actions by the government, prefer to carry social content that is seen as non-political. This also has the effect of creating conditions for sensational and tabloid media to develop. The tabloid media see the opportunity of making money from a thriving market system without antagonising the government. The emergence and success of newspapers such as *The Red Pepper* and *Bukedde* in Uganda (a number of other tabloid titles have come up and folded) could be linked to this logic. Tabloids usually thrive mostly on sex and violence themes. Tabloidisation and sensationalisation of the media has a negative impact on journalistic professionalism in a sense that they sometimes fabricate stories, intimidate legitimate complainants with more stories about them, and intrude into privacy (see Lee, 2001). In order to compete in the same market, even mainstream newspapers have adopted the gossip format on one or two pages. This is evident in *The New Vision*'s “*Have you heard*”, “*Political Gossip*”, and “*Corridors of Power*”, as well as the *Monitor*'s “*From the Grapevine*” and “*Political Spoof*”. The effect of this on the democratic role of the media is that democratic discourse in the media could become characterised by lack of analytical depth and runs the danger of being trivialised. The irony with this is that government interference in media regulation, typically couched in terms of addressing

professional standards, creates conditions for poor standards- but since these are outside the political arena, they remain unaddressed.

Another approach for offering insights into the democratic role of the media and professionalism in Uganda is the civil society approach. Under this approach, civil society is seen as almost a righteous collection of views and interests outside the state with the effect of offering checks and balances to the power of the state. Democratic media here is seen as offering a platform to a variety of civil society organisations, mainly Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) to express themselves on a wide range of views as a countervailing force (see Berger, 2002). Here the power of the state is seen as disruptive and the expansion of civil society is advocated. De-regulation and sometimes privatisation is called for, with community radio advocated for as becoming a significant broadcasting sector.

Whereas the liberalisation of the broadcasting industry in 1993 ushered in a variety of media outlets, especially commercial radio stations across the country in Uganda, journalists have indicated that there is less interaction between civil society organisations and the media. The media in Uganda have been said to offer inadequate space to NGOs (K25, M28), but on the other hand some journalists (N15, H16) have expressed the view that NGOs are not proactive in their media relations. Contrary to the foregoing views however, the existence of vibrant participatory live discussion programming that follow a community-media programming (locally called *Ebimeeza*) indicates a less anti-civil society dimension. The irony of private media in Uganda is that they still largely depend on advertisements from government departments for their survival. As journalists (see chapter six, 6.2.4) in this study have indicated, private media in as far as they depend on advertising revenue will still remain within government reach. Hence in as far as civil society is seen to be operating in the political realm, it suffers the same fate as other voices that seem to strain the relationship between the media and their patron, the government.

The nature of private media in Uganda, especially radio stations, is that of individually-owned, fragmented and institutionally weak media that are run on the basis of commercial logic more than anything else. Individual ownership as opposed

to institutional ownership means that such media are guided by individual pursuits rather than institutional values. Where core institutional values are lacking, the media become vulnerable to different forms of manipulation, including state intimidation. In terms of professional values, there is arguably a general perception in Uganda that most cases of unprofessional conduct such as extortion of money and concoction of stories are evidenced with journalists working for small radio stations (many rural-based). While this issue would require further research to verify, it points to the way that lack of institutional values may have an impact on media professionalism.

Because of this vulnerability, the private media in Uganda has arguably shunned civil society voices that are seen to be raising issues that concern government record. Lack of an independent culture in local and regional media in Uganda also seems to work against civil society representation. Whereas Kampala-based media exhibit vibrancy in terms of political expression, the situation is different upcountry. Lack of community media also account for the gap in civil society representation in the media. As observed in chapter six, there is a feeling that the media gives space mostly to big, Kampala-based and rich NGOs, ignoring the many CBO voices that are spread through the country. This is not surprising because it is those big NGOs that have budgets that are able to satisfy the commercial imperatives of the Ugandan media. The private media therefore are seen to be promoting an elitist agenda of civil society. It is evident that the civil society perspective of a community-based media sector that represents a variety of civil society voices to countervail state power is only idealistic in Uganda.

The democratic role of the media in Uganda seen from a public sphere approach indicates a vibrant media that offers a forum for public discussion of issues. Under this approach, the media is seen as enabling democratic and rational discourse as an expression of public life. As regards private media, in Uganda, the *Ebimeeza* (which is the local reference to live outdoor public discussion radio programmes as indicated in the previous paragraphs) have been seen as the epitome of the public sphere role of the media. There is vibrant and sometimes passionate discussion of public policy and in many cases, government is put on the spot (Mbaine, 2005).

It should be pointed out, however, that to the extent that private media constitute a public sphere, this role stops within Kampala. Journalists' interviews have indicated that outside Kampala, public discussions of a political nature are tightly controlled by especially Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) who are the official district government representatives, largely because the radio stations there are small businesses with no institutional structures and are largely run on individual owners' whims (T22). This means that this democratic role is largely the privilege of urban dwellers. In the public sphere perspective, state-owned media should be vital, given a public service mandate. However there is no such discussion on state-owned media, because whereas the Uganda Broadcasting Act 2005, was said to have transformed the former state broadcasters (Uganda Television and Radio Uganda) into a public service broadcaster called Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC), the change has arguably only been in name. UBC continues to pursue a state agenda and therefore offers no space for critical public discussion. A democracy monitoring group that monitored media coverage of the 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections published a report indicating that whereas UBC as a public-service medium was supposed to give equal coverage to the presidential contenders, it virtually ignored opposition candidates while it gave a lion's share to the incumbent President (DemGroup, 2006). Therefore in the equation of the media as playing a public sphere role in Uganda, public media is not there.

A case like this where the values of objectivity, fairness and balance are skewed by state-owned media in favour of the government, implies that professionalism as claimed to be promoted by the Press and Journalist Statute applies – at least in potential - only to the private media. It could also imply that the employees of UBC are seen not as journalists but as civil servants who should toe the government interest.

To sum up, numerous constraints epitomised in the overwhelming overt and covert control by the state of the critical economic and political resources that media depend on greatly curtails the democratic role of the media, in effect by rendering journalistic professionalism an aspiration at best, rather than a reality.

8.5 Conclusion

This study has contextualised the issue of journalism professionalisation in the Ugandan situation. It has explored views of politicians as well as journalists on the concept of journalism professionalisation. However, the views as presented in this study constitute those that were sampled, that is, the politicians who contributed to the debate in parliament as recorded in the Hansard, and the six journalists who were interviewed based on their active role during the height of the debate in Uganda. Therefore the conclusions and analysis are based on the views of those samples.

Whereas the Press and Journalist Statute, 1995, was presented as a means of professionalising journalism practice in Uganda by statutory recognition and setting regulatory and professional standards, this study has indicated that in order to appreciate the complexity of professionalising journalism, there is need to make recourse to the broad sociological debates that inform the debate on journalism professionalism. It has been established in this study that politicians generally understood professions from a structural-functionalist perspective which informed the classic professions like law and medicine, and therefore based the Press and Journalist Statute on a structural reproduction of those professions. However, as this study has indicated, a structural-functionalist perception of journalism raises serious complications given the fact that journalism is part of freedom of expression. As a result, the statute for example cannot answer questions about the place of community media or internet-based communicators within the law. Neither can it effectively address the licensing of journalists being seen as licensing freedom of expression. As this study has indicated, the issue of professionalising journalism has been an enduring debate within sociology and practitioners themselves (see chapters two and three), as well as policy makers and there seems to be no clear agreement on the approach. Solutions include liberal-pluralists who advocate for professional values of objectivity and balance that would effectively insulate the media from external influences to enable it promote pluralism and diversity. Others like the Marxists and radical democrats have dismissed professionalism on account that it promotes dominant viewpoints while ignoring marginal voices and indeed locking them out of the communication process. Yet others like Johnson (1972) have argued that the

answers lie in looking at professionals not from a definitional point of view, but from an analysis of how power is acquired, utilised and retained in the relationship between professionals and their clients.

However, the study has indicated that amidst all this, there is a claimed adherence to the critical role of the media in the democratic process by both politicians and journalists, as well as an overwhelming desire for professionalism among both groupings (see chapter six, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, and chapter seven, 7.1.1, 7.1.4). But whereas professionalism is mutually desired, there is ambiguity as to what professionalism means, and in particular the means of achieving it. These issues define the difference between journalists and politicians. Thus while politicians support a statutory approach, journalists believe in a self-regulatory approach. Nevertheless, this study has also shown mutual mistrust between journalists and politicians. The establishment of a government media council to regulate media practice means that politicians do not trust journalists to be able to regulate themselves. On the other hand, journalists' overwhelming rejection of statutory regulation and its associated aspects such as licensing means that they do not trust politicians' intentions of arrogating themselves such powers over the media. This is linked to the fact that they operate fundamentally with different notions of professionalism. For journalists, it embodies independence, while for politicians it embodies regulation and control. The study also indicates that there are internal tensions within journalists' views of professionalism especially in relation to the news organisations. Different interpretations of professionalism between news managers and individual journalists indicate that differences are not only with politicians, but also within the occupation. And whereas journalists feel that media pluralism offers a choice for practitioners to seek professionalism where they can find conformity with their professional values, pluralism in itself does not necessarily eliminate this tension.

It has also been indicated that various factors impede the media from playing its full democratic potential in society. This study has particularly offered insight into the power of the state in shaping media trends in Uganda, and how the media is vulnerable to a strong state. Although journalists themselves can fall short of ethical

expectations as Nyamnjoh (2005) argues, the professional consciousness of at least those media professionals interviewed here perceives frustration in powerful forces such as state, corporate and ownership interests which seem to be fused into one by virtue of state patronage over corporate and ownership interests.

This study sought to analyse how Ugandan politicians and journalists manifest diverse perspectives around the debate on journalism professionalisation and how such interpretation impacts on the democratic role of the media. The study has found out that there are two sets of distinct ideas on journalism professionalisation. The idea espoused by politicians is statutory professionalisation in which the state plays a major role through regulation and control. On the other hand, the journalists perceive professionalisation as nurtured by voluntarily and socially inculcated professional values. The study has also found out that both sets of understandings have their own complexities. While the statutory approach has complexities like how core elements of professionalism such as professional values can be imposed through legislation, the voluntary approach to professionalism also exhibits tensions within, especially stemming from the relationship between the professional and the news organisation regarding what constitutes professionalism.

The study has also suggested that the democratic role of the media can be curtailed with both perceptions of professionalism. It has been argued that statutory professionalisation especially in political contexts where the state is the dominant institution, brings media institutions within the control of the state which suppresses content of democratic value through a number of means. Neither does the self-regulatory perception protect media professionalism from the assault of commercial imperatives (and especially when fused with state patronage in regard to broadcasting licences and placement of advertising).

This research has therefore contributed to knowledge about the professionalisation of journalists' debate by offering a contextual analysis of Uganda, and offers a basis for studies elsewhere to extrapolate as to whether similar views and circumstances correlate to this study.

8.6 Recommendations

a) Further research

Earlier in this chapter, two specific areas were pointed out for further research. One is the broad question of whether statutory actions have an impact on arousing professional consciousness, secondly, and in particular, how other factors than the Press and Journalist Statute have impacted on the education profile of Ugandan journalists. There is need therefore for further research into the issue of whether or not the Press and Journalist Statute unintentionally impacted on the professional consciousness of Ugandan journalists by spurring a sense of independence in their conception of professionalisation, and if so to what extent. Secondly there is need for further research into the extent to which the Press and Journalist Statute has had an impact on the education profile of Ugandan journalists, as well as other factors that have shifted the profile towards graduate-entry.

It has also been noted that although the Press and Journalist Statute was purposely enacted to professionalise journalism in Uganda, the institutional framework of this statutory approach, that is, the Media Council and NIJU, is almost non-functional in practice (see chapter seven, 7.3.1). Given the passionate debates by politicians about the need to professionalise journalism through regulation and control as presented in chapter six, there is need for research to find out why the statute was never properly implemented. Was it because the state lacked the capacity to implement the law? Is it part of a wider problem between the legislature and the executive? Is there a pattern in Uganda of many laws not being implemented? Was there a lack of urgency because the statute achieved a quiescent press by the mere fact of it being passed? Was it because of opposition by journalists, or was there a feeling later that the law was superfluous or impractical? Answers to these questions and other factors would enrich knowledge about journalism professionalisation. At the same time, the limited project of this thesis would not necessarily be changed by whatever findings emerged from a review of why the law was not effectively implemented. The focus here has been on the arguments, rather than the practice (or non-practice as it turns out).

b) Formation of viable professional associations

It has been argued in this study that professionalism is achievable (in various inflections) at three levels, the level of the individual, the professional association, and the news organisation. However, it has also been indicated that journalists' professional associations in Uganda are all but non-existent. The Uganda Journalists Association (UJA) was reduced to a mere name by wrangling and problems of legitimacy. NIJU also failed the legitimacy test. Currently, there is nothing to indicate that NIJU actually exists in terms of infrastructure and leadership. Even editors' forums like the Uganda Newspaper Editors and Proprietors Association (UNEPA) are all but absent. With the assumption that the Ugandan media is commercialising (with its resultant fragmentation because of market competition), there is a need to explore a central occupational point of reference in terms of promoting professional values among Ugandan journalists.

c) Professionalism as a News Organisation concept

In the absence of strong professional associations, there is need to explore in detail how journalism professionalism can be inculcated into individual journalists at the news organisation level within the reality of different news organisations values and policies. Professionalism as a news organisation concept as proposed by Beam (1990) in chapter three, needs to be explored and its applicability to Ugandan journalism studied.

d) Legal reform of media laws

It has been argued that among the resources that the state uses to subjugate the media and control its democratic potential is the legal system which still contains a significant number of anti-press freedom laws. With the African Union's Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa (see Berger, 2007) calling for legal and policy reforms to ensure freedom of expression and media pluralism and diversity (as discussed in chapter one), there is need to ensure that the Ugandan legal regime conforms to the continental standards. There is therefore need for a media law review and a legal reform campaign aimed at eliminating legal loopholes that the state exploits to curtail the democratic potential of the media.

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What do you understand by a profession? *Extend to professionalism and professionalisation.*
2. What should in your opinion be the relationship between a professional and his/her client in defining needs and meeting them?
3. How in your opinion should professionalism be achieved? *Probe for role of individuals, professional organisations and employment institutions.*
4. How do journalists compare with other professionals like doctors or lawyers given the fact that freedom of expression entitles everyone to the right not only to be informed but also to inform?
b) Should journalism professionalisation then be pursued in the same way as professionalisation of other occupations like medicine? *If Yes, How, If no, probe for differences.*
5. What is your opinion about the Press and Journalist Act in which the Ugandan government seeks to professionalise the media? *Probe for reasons in support or against.*
6. The Act provides for registration of practitioners by a professional body and annual licensing of practitioners by a government appointed media council. Do you agree with that provision? *If yes, probe for justification and terms. If No , probe for objection and whether it is acceptable if not done by the state.*
7. The Act also provides for minimum qualifications (degree) to be a full member of the professional body (NIJU). Do you agree with the provision? *If yes, probe for who should set qualifications, what criteria. Also probe for the place of grassroots communications forms and citizens forums like ekimeeza, Blogs, and other forms of online communication.*
8. The Act also includes a code of conduct among its schedules. What is your opinion about the need for, who and how codes of conduct should be defined and enforced?

9. Among the codes is the obligation of Ugandan journalists to be objective, fair, impartial and balanced. Do you think such professional values are realistic or even necessary? *If Yes, probe for benefits. If No, Why?*
10. What is your opinion about the argument that journalistic individual freedom and journalistic diversity are greatly limited by news organisations' values (objectivity, fairness etc) and policies (news style) as enforced by editors?
11. How do political and economic influences in Uganda impede news organisations from the practice of professional journalism? *Probe for role of political and economic influences to content.*
12. In your opinion, is there any need to regulate the relationship between journalists (as information providers) and their audiences (as information consumers)? *If Yes, probe for benefits.*
13. If Yes, who should regulate this relationship and how? *Probe for forms such as statutory regulation, self regulation and co-regulation.*
 - b) Do you think audiences' protection mechanisms such as the right of reply press councils, and press ombudsman are adequate protections against perceived journalistic excesses?
14. What is your comment about the relationship between the state in Uganda and the political and economic resources upon which the media depend?
15. What is your comment about the impact of market competition in the media industry to expanding the opportunities for freedom of expression? *Probe for relationship to providing checks and balances.*
16. What is your comment on the relationship between the Ugandan media and civil society (NGOs, CBOs and social movements) in terms of the media providing space for grassroots voices? *Probe for impact on state power.*

APPENDIX II: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

Natural Meaning Units	Themes
<p>Interview A</p> <p>N1: I understand professionalism to mean someone who has achieved a certain level academically and practically in terms of what they do in a profession. I believe that a journalist should have minimum basic qualifications as a journalist, and also have some skills in writing, broadcasting, whatever field they decide specialise in.</p> <p>N1b: I think the individual is the most important in all those categories because you start with yourself as an individual journalist. What do you want from this profession that you have chosen? What can you get out of it, and how else can you add value to the society that you are working for?</p> <p>N2: The audiences cannot determine for us the kind of information we must give them. Our job is to tell them the story as it is and it is up to them to see what they think is right or wrong, because journalism is a mirror of society, the information gateway. Rather they should probably put questions on our standards, like what are the standards that you must have as a journalist for us to believe you.</p> <p>N3: You know each media house has its own in house code of ethics. Some are very stringent, others are not. That why sometimes we keep knocking each other as journalists and say I am a journalist are you are a journalist but we are doing completely different things. So media houses should set</p>	<p>Interview A</p> <p><i>She equates professionalism to a combination of academic qualifications and skills</i></p> <p><i>She thinks the individual journalist plays a fundamental role in the realisation of professionalism.</i></p> <p><i>She believes the relationship between journalists and their clients as far as content is concerned is controlled by journalists, not their audiences</i></p> <p><i>She calls for standardisation of codes of ethics among media houses so that the professional orientation of journalists is the same</i></p>

<p>standards if they want to treat their journalists as professionals, that are not very different or at least supplement the world wide codes of ethics so that a journalist here can be like a journalist anywhere.</p> <p>N4: Absolutely journalism is a profession. Much as it is also skill and talent, it requires basic standards for anybody coming in if we are to be like teachers or doctors.</p> <p>N5: Freedom of expression is guaranteed in our constitution, but that does not mean that because you can express yourself you are therefore a journalist. For example people can do simple medical things, but that does not make them doctors, we have herbalists, they know which herb cures, but they are not doctors. A journalist researches, adds value to information, goes to school to be able to get all the facts clear.</p> <p>N6: The Press and Journalist Statute was a very good idea, but establishing it by an act of parliament was the wrong forum. We need something to regulate us, monitor us and discipline us, but that can only be done by journalists themselves.</p> <p>N7: I think licensing journalists is prohibitive, somebody can remove your license and stop you from working because of all kinds of reasons, it could be political, economic, it could just be intimidation government can use that if they choose to, even individuals, even media houses.</p> <p>N8: We must have a code of conduct. Any profession must have a code of ethics. It might not be followed all the</p>	<p><i>She views journalism as being at par with other professions like medicine and teaching</i></p> <p><i>She believes that journalism is not automatically synonymous with freedom of expression. It is a special form of expression with clear guidelines and norms.</i></p> <p><i>She supports the idea of regulating a profession, but it should be self-regulation, not by government</i></p> <p><i>She views licensing as a control tool by those who may have the power to do so, hence threatening media independence.</i></p> <p><i>She views codes of ethics as the conscience of a profession which are inculcated and followed out of</i></p>
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<p>time but it gives you clear guidelines of what you must do as a professional. We must have guidelines that show us where we go and how we relate with other people. But enforcing them is difficult. If you like your profession and you are willing to respect it and sacrifice for it, then you are going to obey the code of ethics. It is a personal responsibility as a journalist for you to be ethical.</p> <p>N9: Professionally objectivity, fairness and impartiality are realistic because that is what we are supposed to be, but it depends on the circumstances under which you are working. Most of our journalists are poorly paid and this makes some of the ethical demands unrealistic.</p> <p>N10: In fragile states like ours where we have had civil wars like in the north, you cannot just write about the north, because anything you do can worsen the situation or make it better. So you have to be careful and a newspaper has to limit itself.</p> <p>N11: There are certain companies you cannot write about, unless you have enough money to cover your rent, salaries and a lot of other things which the newspapers do not have. Advertisers can dictate stories.</p> <p>N12: A very good independent media council that has the respect of media organisation can act as an alternative in case someone feels that right of reply is not sufficient redress.</p> <p>N13: Economics other than the state controls the media because this country is run mainly by the private sector. Of course government is the biggest</p>	<p><i>conviction and volition.</i></p> <p><i>She views professional values as an ideal which subject to circumstances makes them situational.</i></p> <p><i>She believes media content is determined by certain sensitivities especially related to the political and security situation.</i></p> <p><i>She believes economic pressures affect news content.</i></p> <p><i>She feels conventional audience protection mechanisms can be supplemented by self regulatory mechanisms in ensuring that audiences' complaints are addressed.</i></p> <p><i>She views economic as the main determinant of news content while the state has a minimal role.</i></p>
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<p>stakeholder but in terms of economic means, it is the private sector that makes the media survive basically.</p> <p>N14: On political coercion, it depends on the circumstances. If it is security or matters of national security, they [journalists] are bound to get some pushes here and there and that has happened quite a lot. It can be subtle but in the long run it has a very strong effect, or it can be instant if they just decide to close the newspaper or the radio station.</p> <p>N15: I think the media has played its role, the media has given civil society enough platform. The issue is that NGOs and CBOs have not exploited it as much as they should, because they have the opportunity to write, to speak and to provide information but they do not do that. They never come up as people on the ground who have the power to access information that sometimes that media cannot, to come up with that information and lead the media in that direction.</p> <p>N16: Liberalisation has opened the market and intensified competition. Journalists have more options of crossing from one newspaper to another. The general population also has choices over the media. If you refuse to give me space on your radio station, I go to another.</p> <p>N17: The people having more freedom to express themselves through the liberalised media does not necessarily check state power, but it does put you on the edge because now the public has access to all sorts of information.</p> <p>N18: Media provides a forum for</p>	<p><i>She thinks government is very sensitive to issues of national security and can thus cause political controls on the media.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks civil society is not proactive in its media relations. She thinks it is reactive</i></p> <p><i>She thinks liberalisation opens more professional options for journalists and expands the option for freedom of expression for the public.</i></p> <p><i>She views market competition as having a positive effect of putting government on its toes through people's views, although it does not necessarily result into policy reforms.</i></p>
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political debate, especially the private media. Not so for the government media, they are still stuck in the old order of government monopoly of the media.

Interview B

B1: Professionalism presupposes that a person is trained in the field of journalism, understands what journalism is, and the skills in terms of writing, investigating, research, editing and so on.

B2: Journalism is not for its own sake. Training presupposes that a person will go a distance further and appreciate the role of trained journalist in society, and in doing that therefore we are looking at professionalism in terms of training by making a person appreciate what the media can do in building the democratic process. Like doctors save lives, engineers build infrastructure, journalists do provide information and mobilisation for democratic development.

B3: There is also the issue of how those trained people become professionals. Because a trained journalist is not yet a professional. You begin building professionalism when you start working. When you leave university, you are simply a graduate, you are trained in journalism, but you are not yet a professional. When you take up the journalism career and begin applying the skills learnt at university, then you are beginning on the career path and professionalism. So the newspaper setting also constitutes a greater part of what we regard as professionalism.

She thinks the role of the media as a forum for political debate is only played by the private media. In spite of liberalisation, state media has not seen itself as a public media.

Interview B

He views professionalism in terms of skills training

He views the media as a function of democracy hence skills training should be complemented by inculcation of that perception.

He sees the work place as a critical institution in inculcating professionalism.

<p>B4: If you have a newspaper which begins to redirect the skills of journalists by applying them to social change, then that newspaper is trying to build professionalism as far as journalism is concerned. But many newspapers do not do that, they just allow journalists to come and do whatever they want, write simple stories, they never go into public affairs reporting- the story behind the story.</p> <p>B5: The media is simply the servant of the public. It is a messenger of the public that simply relay messages. They are kind of a mirror of society, reflecting the image, the aspirations, the anger, the feeling, and the barometer of society.</p> <p>B6: Journalists associations enable the journalist to negotiate with the government over his rights, and negotiate with the media houses. In Uganda professionalism is operating more at the news organisation level, but I think we have not yet reached a point where news organisations realise that they need to work as a team to defend certain collective rights.</p> <p>B7: I think what is happening is that the relationship among news organisations has been undermined by commercialism and competition. We have a situation whereby the main [print] media are owned, one by the commercial interest and the other by the government interest. It is very difficult for them to have a common line and because of that, it kind of undermines the building of strong professional associations, because strong associations need the support of the news organisations.</p>	<p><i>For him, professionalism means fulfilling the functional role of the media as a change agent.</i></p> <p><i>He views the media s playing a subordinate role to their audiences.</i></p> <p><i>He views professional associations as playing a critical role in the professionalisation process because they create unity of purpose among diverse media organisations.</i></p> <p><i>He believes market competition between leading media organisations undermines professionalism at the level of the professional organisation.</i></p>
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<p>B8: Journalism as a profession is so unique as compared to other professions because it is managing a public medium which permits the public to express themselves through the profession.</p> <p>B9: You cannot say that journalism professionalisation is realised in the same way as lawyers do. The principle of professionalisation of journalists is the same but the practice is different.</p> <p>B10: Everybody talks about professionalism but the fact is we appreciate it very differently. Whereas we agree that there is need to professionalise the media in Uganda, we differ in the approaches and how we appreciate the word professionalism. Therefore I differ with the approach that government took [of statutory professionalisation].</p> <p>B11: I do not really believe that it should be the business of government or the state to form professional associations for journalists. It should not be imposed; it should come from the journalists themselves. The moment the state does that by law, it ceases to serve the purpose.</p> <p>B12: The government made the law such that the professional association would be the apparatus or tool they would use to control the licensing. I do not think journalists should have licenses to operate. The idea is that journalism associations are by willing members, by consensus and any form of regulation on members is only consensual.</p> <p>B13: Whereas education and training are important, I do not think it should</p>	<p><i>He views journalism as a special profession and therefore not at par with other professions</i></p> <p><i>He believes that whereas journalism professionalisation is desirable, it cannot be done the same way as other professions.</i></p> <p><i>He believes professionalisation is necessary but differs on approach</i></p> <p><i>He thinks professionalisation should be driven by external factors, especially the state.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks that statutory professionalisation is a form of control of the profession through means such as licenses.</i></p> <p><i>He recognises information and communication as a right which should</i></p>
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<p>be a requirement by law for someone to be able to practice. I believe that information is a right, communication is a right and we should appreciate that it operates from the smallest to the highest level. It [education] becomes more necessary as the process of communication becomes sophisticated.</p> <p>B14: Even with training, the roles of managing information become more sophisticated, the people who are trained become better managers than those who are not trained, but because of the nature of this profession and the fact that communication starts at the small scale, you cannot say that before the village operates a newsletter they should have a graduate because none of them could be a graduate.</p> <p>B15: Journalism is a medium that has some attributes in terms of how it is managed and controlled by a certain calibre of people. People can put up blogs but it does not mean that since they are expressing themselves, therefore they are journalists. For example I can go to the street and sing. We all know how to sing but we are not singers as such. So whereas technology allows these people to have their blogs, there is an element of moderation that is in one way or the other inevitable, that there must be a centre, journalism centralises the activity of communication.</p> <p>B17: For any association there should be a code of conduct as long as that code is not legally binding, otherwise it becomes law.</p> <p>B18: Because acts of communication are so fundamental to the lives of the people, we should not over legislate</p>	<p><i>be enjoyed regardless of education, which is seen as alienating community forms of communication.</i></p> <p><i>He values education and training, but he thinks it should not be used to create exclusivity in the communication process.</i></p> <p><i>He believes the universal right of expression does not make everybody who expresses himself in some form a journalist. He sees journalism as a unique form of managing the communication process.</i></p> <p><i>He sees codes as voluntarily inculcated values.</i></p> <p><i>He is opposed to statutory codes, and thinks such codes are more than what is necessary to maintain order.</i></p>
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<p>and bring in laws, because if you do so, you are going to murder communication. Those acts of transgression against the codes are those that are acceptable in society as necessary for the good functioning of the community, and that is why we are saying that they should be codes of ethics that can only occasion a moral blame, but not punishment.</p> <p>B19: Professional values are simple guidelines, otherwise how do you measure objectivity or fairness?</p> <p>B20: The truth about life is that each time you walk from your homestead you surrender some independence, because community and society cannot thrive by everybody exercising their freedom. That is why we are saying that there should be media pluralism and diversity to be able to accommodate all those individual journalistic aspirations in one way or the other.</p> <p>B21: What happens is that there is a very strong influence always from the commercial people. They want to use readers and consumers of the media to be able to market their goods. They see readers not in terms of readers of content, but in terms of buyers of their goods. People who are more powerful tend to have more negotiating power and therefore, those that wield commercial influence tend to have a lot of money, hence greater propensity to use that muscle to influence the media.</p> <p>B22: Political powers, just like the commercial interests, tend to exert some influence, either from within government or from outside government. The biggest and most</p>	<p><i>He sees objectivity and fairness as more of ideals that should be pursued.</i></p> <p><i>He believes media pluralism and diversity compensate for lost journalistic freedoms due to news organisations values and policies.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks objectivity and other professional values are constantly under threat of being compromised by powerful commercial forces.</i></p> <p><i>He sees government with its apparatus as the biggest threat to media independence from control.</i></p>
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dangerous is that which comes from government [as opposed to the opposition] because then it uses the state apparatus against the media, which is so strong.

B23: I agree that there should be regulation. I subscribe to minimum regulation, not maximum regulation. Journalists themselves should be doing this. It is their responsibility to be sensitive to social dynamics and disseminate information in a manner that promotes social harmony. Even at the news organisation, they should be able to know that there are things that are extremely harmful to society.

B24: The idea is that you should try to limit as much as possible state control in communication as we want also to limit state control in our private lives. There are sometimes minimally agreed level of protection that everyone would agree. But media should occasion little control because the harm that results from acts of speech is sometimes very minimal therefore regulation should be as minimal as possible.

B25: Right of reply should be enough. I think we should be as tolerant as possible to transgressions against us in forms of speech and where remedies are justified; they should also be as minimal; as possible.

B25: The state largely controls the economic and political resources that the media depend on through regulation. For example I am not surprised that most of the radio frequencies are owned by people who are pro-government, because then the government has used the power of allocation to serve its interests against

He believes that there is a possibility of the media being excessive, hence the need for regulation.

He believes that state regulation goes beyond what is minimally agreed as necessary to protect the public interest.

He believes in the principle of minimum remedies, hence he believes that the existing audience protection mechanisms are sufficient.

He looks at regulation as a tool by which government makes the media subservient to its interests.

the interests of others. So I am not surprised if the content that comes from those radio stations is pro-government especially when it comes to elections. By and large, the government has succeeded in using its power, authority, political muscle and the legal framework to serve and perpetuate its interests.

B26: Market competition has expanded freedom of expression to the greatest extent, but today one of the biggest threats to the media is economic survival. We are seeing a lot of commercialism and marketeering in the newspapers. We are seeing many advertisers' supplements, more pictures of launching this and that, and more pictures of corporate institutions having their parties. We are not seeing equal space growing when it comes to the letters for example, the letters remain one page.

B27: Whereas we are seeing a proliferation of radio stations which the government is controlling by and large in terms of licensing, this is not matched by a proliferation of newspapers because newspapers are considered risky business. We still have a few newspapers and we have not even seen regional newspapers.

B28: I think the proliferation of radio stations has tried to offer a platform for civil society voices but still this is limited by the level of ownership. We have seen the state for example coming hard on banning *ebimeeza* [live outdoor broadcasting programming]. I do not think that potential is being fully utilised. Many radio stations would not allow putting voices that would bring them in conflict with government.

He believes that market competition has driven the media to pandering to the interests of advertisers thus reducing space for public interest issues.

He sees print media as adopting a more critical approach to reporting than radio

He thinks civil society participation is limited by the nature of topic of discussion. Topics with a social economic nature are considered innocent while political topics are considered too risky and are likely not to be allowed.

<p>When it comes to political topics, there is still a hurdle.</p> <p>B29: Talk shows are becoming very popular. In fact people are having a problem to choose where to go, but it tends to be more city/urban based because it serves the elites. If you go to the countryside, you do not see more of those charged debates on FM stations because they would not even allow it. We are not seeing local governments being put to account on issues pertaining to the discharge of power being discussed as is the case in Kampala FM stations.</p> <p>B30: The vibrant debate has influence on the exercise of political power, that is why the president is a common caller in. it shows some level of discomfort that the government takes it seriously because the elite run the state and also define public opinion one way or another. So I think the government is feeling uncomfortable otherwise they would not be resorting to those actions of trying to ban, close them and the president calling in.</p> <p>Interview T</p> <p>T1: A professional must have gone for formal training for sometime, not a day, not two or three days, not a week, but for a bit of time like a year or two years. A professional must also have a code of ethics. A profession must be able to regulate itself because you can have a good code of ethics when you cannot regulate yourselves. Professionalism then is adhering and respecting the code of ethics.</p> <p>T2: Journalists as professionals cannot determine the needs of their clients. It</p>	<p><i>He thinks the media is effectively offering a platform for public discussion to elites in the City but due to controls, does not perform that role upcountry.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks vibrant political debates in the media have an effect on the exercise of state power</i></p> <p>Interview T</p> <p><i>He perceives long training, code of ethics and capacity for self regulation as components of a profession.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of the professional-client relationship model, he thinks society</i></p>
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<p>is automatic because society is like a human stomach. If you give it what it does not want, you vomit. So society can reject a newspaper and many newspapers in Uganda have not been closed by government, they have been rejected by society.</p> <p>T3: There is no way you can professionalise journalism. First of all journalism is a talent. Secondly you cannot legislate for objectivity. Thirdly journalism has no unique language like law and medicine, apart from things like an intro, headline or a kicker.</p> <p>T4: You cannot professionalise journalism because many good journalists have never gone to school. Journalism is practical. That is why it was difficult to convince some of us to go back to school. We were writing very good articles, we had won the hearts of consumers. But a journalist must be highly educated and knowledgeable to face challenges from other people. But it is up to the individual to appreciate that and decide whether he wants to remain a radio commentator, a presenter or use that as a springboard.</p> <p>T5: I do not even think that the problem was professionalising journalism. We had a problem between those who were educated and those of us who had joined journalism when we did not have university degrees. The people who had degrees wanted to control the media but we were the majority.</p> <p>T5b: Now if a person who did political science or literature becomes an automatic member, but a person who has a diploma in journalism is an associate member, he cannot vote nor</p>	<p><i>determines news content and hence regulates the media.</i></p> <p><i>He believes it is wrong to compare journalism to the traditional professions like medicine and law.</i></p> <p><i>He believes education empowers a journalist to face the challenges of being an information broker, but it should be a personal decision.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks the professionalisation debate was a power struggle amongst practitioners for the control of the profession.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks the description of who a journalist is in the law was ambiguous and unfair.</i></p>
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<p>be voted, so who is a journalist?</p> <p>T6: There was also a feeling by the President [of Uganda] that journalists were criticising his government because they were lowly educated. But are they not criticising the government now. For example The Monitor has the most educated journalists, but isn't it criticising government? Today, Uganda's media is dominated by university graduates but it is critical.</p> <p>T7: When society is well developed like the Americans, the media can be a market place of ideas. When you come to our undeveloped societies, people believe in whatever media write or publish. In such gullible societies, you cannot allow that whoever comes in can write or publish. No. you have to regulate. Those who join journalism must be of a certain category, a certain calibre and of a certain education.</p> <p>T8: The requirement for your license to be suspended for some misconduct is improper, because if you deny me the right to practice, then how I am I going to feed my family?</p> <p>T9: The Statute creates a mandatory organisation called NIJU to which all journalists should belong. Knowing very well that the media and governments, especially in Africa are not bedfellows, I am very sceptical about how a government sponsored institution can manage and control the media. The government should have no role in issues of journalism professionalisation. Let us give the stakeholder, the journalist a chance to form a credible organisation. Government can only come in to help if the journalists have failed to regulate</p>	<p><i>He believes the debate on professionalisation was based on the wrong analysis of the problem.</i></p> <p><i>He believes different levels of development in society demand different approaches to regulation.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks licensing creates excessive control and violates the right to earn a living through work</i></p> <p><i>He strongly believes in self-regulation but does not rule out government intervention in case self regulation fails, which would create co-regulation.</i></p>
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<p>themselves.</p> <p>T10: Other categories of communicators are not journalists. A journalist cannot be like a peasant, therefore peasants cannot be journalists, because peasants do not appreciate or understand certain issues.</p> <p>T11: In fact if you make a peasant a moderator you are creating havoc. I think that is the problem with radio stations. When they were formed, they thought the best suited people to work in radio stations are the dramactors. Everything has been dramatised. Serious issues have been dramatised.</p> <p>T12: I think journalists must have a certain level of education to appreciate certain things, to be able to interpret things for the peasant society.</p> <p>T13: The journalists themselves should draw up codes of ethics. The code should be to protect [journalists and public], and nobody should use it to blackmail or stifle media freedom.</p> <p>T14: I believe in enforcing codes of conduct, provided it is not used selectively. The members should join an organisation knowing that these are the rules of the game, because they join willingly. So when they join, they must know that they have to abide by certain standards.</p> <p>T15: That is theory. Who determines objectivity, who determines fairness? It is not there. Even if they are part of the code of ethics, certain things are put there when they are not practical. If you write and say there is corruption in government, the government will say this man is attacking us, there is</p>	<p><i>He perceives journalism as an elitist occupation.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks trivialisation of public affairs issues is cause by other categories of communicators taking over the role of journalists in radio.</i></p> <p><i>He sees the role of a journalist as an interpreter of complex society issues which makes education fundamental.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks codes of ethics are necessary for protecting both the journalists and the public.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks codes of ethics should be binding to members who join a professional organisation willingly.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks some professional values are ambiguous and not achievable.</i></p>
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corruption everywhere. So who determines objectivity?

T16: Journalists think that when someone sets up a newspaper or radio, they intent to help society. A journalist has a social contract with society, but a manger or owner does not have that contract. A man like Wavamunno [owner of Mercedes Benz franchise in Uganda] has his interests, so if you are working with WBSTV [Wavamunno's TV] you should know that you cannot antagonise Germans. So journalistic freedom is limited by ownership interests.

T17: Politics influences news. For example The Monitor Newspaper was forces to sell to the Nation Media Group because it was denied adverts by government. Economics also matters. If you pursue a noble objective which does not appeal to society, what happens?

T18: The state has influence even in companies which are not owned by government, in underdeveloped countries, the source of resources is government. Many private companies are actually government companies, because if they get business from government, they cannot risk antagonising it. Because everything depends on government, even these private companies are not private in the real sense.

T19: I do not believe that liberalisation has expanded freedom of expression, because how many strong media institutions do we have? I do not see them. If you get media institutions which rely on their own income, other than government, and can only get

He sees constant tension between ownership interests and journalistic values, which is resolved in favour of owners.

He thinks media always live with economic and political influences to news content and are not independent of those variables.

He believes even private media is susceptible to government control as long as it depends on advertising revenue.

He believes that weak media institutions cannot promote freedom of expression against assault from government.

income from private companies and circulation, then they will be strong. That is not the case in Uganda.

T20: I do not think the media is strong enough to check state power. It is only that the government is very sensitive to negative publicity, because this is a government which used the atrocities of negative government to take state power. So it fears to do what others did. Therefore we do not have strong independent media institutions in the real sense (these are semi government institutions because they rely on the government indirectly). They do not receive funding from the state directly, but because they rely on companies which have connections, which fear to antagonise government, they are indirectly owned by government.

T21: Somehow the media has provided a forum for political debate because people in leadership are not fools. They know the circulation of these newspapers. Why does the President go to all the radio stations whenever he travels upcountry? He goes to *Kimeeza* to debate.

T22: Upcountry some RDCs are controlling radio stations, but hat is timidity. If the President goes to debate on radio stations, how can an RDC intimidate you?

Interview K

K1: A profession is a specialised way of doing a job. It has principles. Guidelines, dos and don'ts. In the same way the media has its dos and don'ts, has its own ethics, and its own guidelines.

He thinks the media is not strong enough institutionally to offer space to civil society groups for purposes of checking state power.

He acknowledges the media as a platform for public discussion which role is also acknowledged by government.

He says government functionaries interfere with media freedom especially upcountry as compared to the city.

Interview K

He believes journalism is a profession because it has systematic guidelines and ethics.

<p>K2: Professionalism means people are trained in that art, who have the necessary theoretical and practical training and are able to practice journalism as a profession. Because if a journalist is trained, people do not expect him to do certain things, the way you conduct yourself, the way you source this information, the way you disseminate, etc.</p>	<p><i>He understands professionalism as possessing the necessary theoretical and practical training to be able to appreciate the guidelines of a profession</i></p>
<p>K3: Professionalisation assumes that people can carry out the activities related to journalism when they are not necessarily trained. For example in this country there have been people who are trying to practice, because it is tied to other freedoms such as freedom of expression. You have newspapers which are published when not necessarily edited or compiled by trained people. They are people who have no attachment to journalism, perhaps their driving force is politics. Professionalisation means training the people who are not trained, and perhaps legally recognising journalism as a profession like other professions.</p>	<p><i>He interprets professionalisation as a process of training in professional skills and legal recognition.</i></p>
<p>K4: Our clients are the general public, the audiences. They want information in form of education or entertainment. There are always questions whether what we are giving out is what the public needs. You make that judgement according to how many people read your paper. If you do not give them what they want, they won't read your paper. If you give them what they want, you see sales going up, because people are making a choice. In a way the public sets the agenda.</p>	<p><i>He sees the media-audience relationship as controlled by audiences who silently set the agenda.</i></p>
<p>K5: In pursuing professionalism, the individual is very important because he has to understand his role as a</p>	<p><i>He views the individual as crucial to professionalism through internalisation of his role as a professional.</i></p>

<p>professional, but also the news organisation is important because that is where the professional exercises his professionalism.</p> <p>K6: It happens very often that there is a conflict between the individual and his organisation regarding professional values, for instance if the owners take a decision, political, social or religious against publishing of a certain story, of course the individual may not be in agreement, but since they control the media house, what else can they do?</p> <p>K7: The difference between journalism and other professions is that you can become a journalist without going to a journalism college, but ultimately you will have to learn the primary ethical issues. You may not have the academic certificate, but legitimately you must learn the values, the dos and don'ts. Journalism is expanding with things like community journalism and citizen journalism where people themselves write what they want to be published without control from journalists.</p> <p>K8: I think there is a big difference between journalists and other professions as we know them. I think this has been part of the problem, because a lot of people do not understand this distinction, they think that journalism is similar to law and medicine, and therefore they want to prescribe the same legal framework, and we are saying no, they are different.</p> <p>K9: The Press and Journalist Statute had both positives and negatives. The positive was that it was an attempt to put in place a legal framework for the media. There was need for a law, no</p>	<p><i>He thinks tension between individual journalists and ownership interests over professional values are part and parcel of the media setting.</i></p> <p><i>He sees journalism as an open profession but only to those who are willing to learn and internalise journalistic professional values.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks the archetypal professionalisation approaches do not apply to journalism.</i></p> <p><i>He sees legal recognition of the media as a positive aspect of the law.</i></p>
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doubt about that. This law did away with some of the [bad] laws that existed such as the power to ban newspapers. Broadly the move to bring a law was positive at least it tried to give a clear legal framework for the media. Yes government had its own agenda, but ultimately it was a good step forward.

K10: The negative part of it is that they thought that because you do not have an elaborate legal framework, some of the unethical issues were a result of lack of a law, and I think even the argument at that time was that because you do not have trained journalists, that is why there are unprofessional media houses. Their emphasis was on training and qualifications. And I think that is where the problem came from. A lot of people at that time did not have degrees.

K11: The implication of a license is that he who licenses you can also withdraw or withhold our license, in which case you cannot work.

K12: It does not matter whether it is government or a private body, as long as it is licensing, it is bad. It can be influenced. I think the fear is that imagine this is your profession, you are practising and someone administratively withdraws your license, and I think the law does not provide for safeguards.

K13: Matters to do with education qualifications should be left to the professionals to decide, perhaps a media house would know that someone with a diploma cannot be an editor. But that person can even be much better than someone with a degree. I think the law should not lock out people from

He thinks a wrong analysis of the problem as being lack of training and a defined legal framework led to conflict between journalists and the political establishment.

He thinks the license can be used by government as a tool to control journalists including denial of work.

He believes licensing is inherently objectionable regardless of whether it is government or a journalists association doing it.

He believes while education is necessary for a journalist to navigate the complex society, it should not be legislated. It should be left to individuals and employing organisation to handle.

coming into journalism. It should be flexible. But because you are dealing with a complex society and complex issues, you do not say that somebody who has finished Senior two should come and work as a journalist.

K14: Community media would still need an editor who understands media laws, somebody with basic knowledge about the law of defamation; otherwise you are going to publish defamatory issues and infringe on other people's rights, because freedom of expression is such that you do not injure the rights of others.

K15: Bloggers cannot be regarded as journalists. They are only stretching the freedom of speech. The internet has simply widened the extent freedom of speech, people can now freely put anything on the internet, bloggers simply put their own things and views on the internet, they are not even guided by things like right of reply, or value correction, or fairness, when he gets annoyed, he puts it on the internet. So there is no way you can give bloggers the category of a journalist.

K16: A code of conduct is fundamental to any profession, if you don't have a code of conduct, then what will be the difference between you the journalist and somebody else who is simply expressing himself? The journalist is not simply communicating, he has a sense of guidelines which he must uphold, otherwise he ceases to be a professional. Since what the media disseminates influences the lives of people, then it is important that it must have a set of values.

He thinks community media cannot be divorced from journalistic guidelines, hence it needs trained people.

He thinks journalism is distinguished from other forms of expression by its commitment to professional values such as right of reply

He perceives codes of ethics as the distinguishing factor between professional journalists and other communicators

<p>K17: Professional values such as objectivity are the ideal we strive for, but they are not always achieved, it may be case to case, it may be because also different media houses serve different interests, social or economic or political. Those somehow influence their actions. But there are many occasions when journalists don't even realise that they actually are not objective or that you also have to look at the other side, because journalists think that their obligation is to fight for the oppressed, for the minorities or the underprivileged.</p> <p>K17b: Another example are the people covering the war in the north who are from the area, they have their views, perhaps they are also victims, perhaps, they have their own views about the army, rebels, so their understanding, their work, their approach to work is conditioned by what they have gone through. You may not expect them to be so fair, at times, or to be objective.</p> <p>K18: I think that is why in the Windhoek Declaration there is a call for multiple media organisations, the more media, the higher the chances that all the views, all interests will come out because there must be realisation that there are occasions when a journalist fails to get the ideal. One journalist may see things in a different way, shaped by their own values.</p> <p>K19: Because the media is a very powerful tool in influencing public opinion and largely politicians achieve their agenda by influencing public opinion they [media] become a target of government and business. They plant stories, false stories, they can pressurise, and they can also make it</p>	<p><i>He thinks journalists professional orientation as advocates for underprivileged biases objectivity.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks journalists' individual experiences shape their views and hence affect objectivity.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks media pluralism and diversity somehow compensates for failure to be objective.</i></p> <p><i>He believes the power of the media makes it a necessary target by those who seek to influence attitudes be it political or commercial.</i></p>
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impossible for the media to access information where government has control. The commercial interests can use advertising sanctions.

K20: I believe in self regulation, although I have one reservation that if you do not have the top media houses on board, then you can't effect self regulation. The major players in the industry must first and foremost sign, because if they do not, then it would be a crisis. They may even refuse to go there if there are complaints brought against them. Then the complainant won't have any option but to go to court.

K21: It doesn't matter so much whether the media is private or government owned because at the end of the day even those which are private want to do business. The government is not only the biggest business provider for the media, but also the business community, no matter what their political philosophy is, are sensitive not to be seen to be associating with people who are seen to be on the opposite with government. So they may not even give you business because the government may even use the tax system to fail them.

K22: Upcountry the state functionaries attract bigger crowds. Where as a radio station here can criticise the minister or even the president, that is different in the rural areas. The media there are smaller units and therefore are more vulnerable. The minister can even call and make orders to the media owner. Most of these are small media houses with few resources, they are very vulnerable, and institutionally they are weak, are not firm on the ground, they

He thinks self-regulation can only work if it is accepted by all, especially the major media houses.

He believes that commercialisation makes the media whether private or public, vulnerable to government control

He believes that the ability to resist government pressure varies between city based radio stations which are institutionally stronger, and rural based stations which are institutionally weak.

may not want to confront the powers that be.

K23: The media houses walk a tight rope because of competition, and are forced to let in some dissenting views which would not have been let in because they know that is the only way to survive in the market.

K24: I think this diversity has the effect of checking state power, because if you listen to what the president and the ministers say, there is no doubt that they listen to the radios and they get very upset when they are attacked. They are sensitive and when something happens, they take a lot of time to try top explain.

K25: I do not think that civil society voices have come out very loudly, in many instances civil society has used the media a lot, but perhaps the media need to give civil society more space. Although the media picks stories from them, I think there is not much follow-up.

K26: On the whole, especially in the capital [city], you have to deal with two scenarios, I think the media upcountry face a lot of pressures, I do not think they do encourage a lot of debate as the case is in the capital. For some upcountry stations, you even pay to be able to debate yet debate should be free. In the capital yes I think the media has facilitated debate on a whole range of issues.

K27: The debate in the papers is not be lively as the case is on the radio, because with radio or TV, you only need to bring people on the panel, you have all these contending views, this

He believes that market competition forces media houses to diversify views in order to increase their audiences.

He thinks diverse voices have the effect of checking state power as they elicit reactions from government.

He thinks the media is not offering enough space for civil society voices.

He thinks while city media provide a forum for political debate, there are limitations for upcountry media because of political pressure.

He thinks public discussion of issues in more vibrant in the broadcasting media that in the print because of technological differences in production.

one says this, the other says that, and it is more enriching. The print media is limited by space. It is only on a few occasions that you give an issues wider coverage and more space. So I think radio stations have made the media more vibrant because of their inclusiveness and interactivity.

Interview M

M1: Practitioners of a particular trade require specialised training, and have some kind of code of ethics, of conduct, and that they can face sanctions if they flout that code. Professionalisation then would involve a movement towards instituting that kind of specialised training for journalists as well as instituting codes of ethics under which they work.

M2: There must be some degree of collaboration between consumers and professionals. Basically professionals have to be responsive to the needs (as opposed to wants) of consumers. Journalists should be responsive to the needs of their audiences by addressing real issues and challenges. That is where this whole notion of relevance comes into play.

M3: The professional should be willing to learn the tools of trade and abide by the standards as well as share experiences with his professional peers. That is why this concept of fellowship is critical.

M4: The professional organisation would create the necessary environment for dialoguing, networking and discoursing, but above all set the standards on the basis of the collective will of the professionals.

Interview M

He associates professionalisation with training and codes of ethics.

He thinks the relationship between journalists and their audiences should be mutual but journalists should offer what is relevant to the lives of the people.

He believes professionalism is a multi-stage process

He thinks the professional organisation plays a socialising role for the professional.

<p>M5: The employment agency should provide the facilities and resources for the professional, but sometimes the needs of the employment agency [news organisation] and the professional organisations clash.</p> <p>M6: I think it is wrong to compare journalism to medicine or other professions. It is a much fluid thing. I do not know whether it is even important to have a profession as such. It is important to have specialised training for practitioners but you cannot in the name of professionalism then close the doors to others who do not have those requisite requirements.</p> <p>M7: Think about a guy who has immense experience in health issues and can write about them, should you close him out because he does not have the requisite qualifications? That would be foolish.</p> <p>M8: Locking out people is increasingly becoming difficult in this era of internet and all these participatory opportunities that it offers, with blogging and cell phones and YouTube. How can you talk about professionalising, people would love to create their own content. So the situation has introduced a whole new ball game for journalism.</p> <p>M9: I recognise the dangers of both sides, for instance, one of the biggest dangers of the new forms of communication or these proliferating forms like blogs and YouTube and all that is that verification has been blown by the way side. People hear rumours and all that and they publish as fact.</p>	<p><i>He thinks sometimes news organisations and professional organisations have conflicting interpretations of what constitutes professionalism.</i></p> <p><i>He believes there is no justification for market closure based on academic qualifications.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks in journalism experience is fundamental to professionalism.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks technology has made journalism professionalisation through exclusivity an irrelevant debate.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks new forms of communication have complicated journalistic values and routines like verification.</i></p>
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<p>M10: I can understand the circumstances under which parliament came up with that law. It is quite important for us to appreciate the circumstances. The circumstances were that a lot of people were tired of journalists, because journalists were regarded as people who have not gone to school, who are gossiping, who are inaccurate, always distorting information, and so forth and so forth. So many of the members of the committee who came up with the professionalisation requirement felt that it was the best way of calming the more extremist elements in parliament who wanted actually tougher controls on the media.</p> <p>M11: Well what would they have done in our case, because the journalists had clearly failed to organise themselves, We had UJA[Uganda Journalists Association] but we were not doing much by way of creating some kind of fellowship of journalists and respecting and adhering to our own standards.</p> <p>M12: Obviously from where I stand and given my suspicion of the state, I would have preferred it if journalists and media owners here had been organised enough to create their own mechanisms to regulate themselves.</p> <p>M13: Registration is OK, because it is all about membership. It provided information on who is a journalist, who is practicing where, especially for researchers. I do not see any dangers of having some kind of, whether it is statutory or non statutory organisation that has a sense of who is in this field.</p> <p>M14: Licensing is a big danger. It can be a big threat to press freedom to the</p>	<p><i>He looks at the Press and Journalist Statute as a necessary product of the state of journalism professionalism at that time.</i></p> <p><i>He believes the failure of self regulation would almost necessarily bring in the government as a regulator.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks the state is not a good regulator.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks registration whether statutory or not, helps provide the vital information about journalists for researchers.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks licensing is a form of state control of the media.</i></p>
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extent that it gives those who have the power to register some kind of powers to sieve who registers and who does not. It can be used adversely against journalists and journalism. It is a form of state control of the media, because it has the effect of closing out people you may not want.

M15: I think the code of ethics should come from the journalists themselves, but it should also be responsive to the needs of the public. It needs to be some kind of participatory approach, where you have to take into consideration of the views of the journalists, the people they serve (the public) as well as the organisations that employ journalists.

M16: It does not matter whether the code of ethics is part of the law or not, the important thing is how members respect it, the kind of commitment that members have to conform to the code, so you can have a code that is statutory that members do not respect. You can have one that is voluntary that members respect and also... for me the important thing is how members own it.

M17: Fairness is important, and attempting to be impartial, but there is a way in which society benefits from people who just decide to put their own agendas, because this notion of objectivity also have its limitations, it sometimes produces a certain kind of homogeneity of views where fringe views and all those that are not necessarily held by the majority are kind of ignored because of objectivity.

M18: There is no significant limitation of journalistic freedom because of news organisational values, especially if journalists choose where to work, no

He thinks codes of ethics should not be professional centred. They need to reflect the need of clients.

He thinks what is material about codes is how members appreciate and internalise them, not whether they are statutory or not.

He thinks one of the limitations of objectivity as a professional value is its tendency to submerge minority views.

He thinks journalists' choice of organisations with whom they share values limits loss of individual freedom.

body forces one to work where they work, so you probably want to work in an organisation that in some ways believes in the values you stand for, you are not going to work in a blatantly partisan publication that promotes say a conservative agenda when you are a dyed in the wool liberal.

M19: But every now and then there are times when individual conscience is compromised by the values of organisations, I am thinking for example about the Christians in Uganda who for whatever reasons do not believe in gay rights and rights of homosexuals and there may be news organisations that are more tolerant of minorities and all that. In that situation you are going to see a conflict between house policy and the conscience of individuals.

M20: I think the socio-political environment within which the media operates definitely affects the kind of content that they produce. But I think more importantly content is influenced by professional notions and routines probably a lot more than any other thing. The standards by which journalists define what news is and the deadline pressures and all those routines through which journalists work have a lot of effect on news content.

M21: The fact that we can only cover a few things and not others means that what is news is limited. The fact that we think the prominence of a player is more important than some other factors means people who are prominent will end up being given more coverage even when smaller people may be in need of better coverage.

He believes nevertheless conflict between house policy and individual conscience of journalists is sometimes inevitable.

He thinks that professional notions and routines influence news content more than political and economic factors.

He regards prominence as one of those notions that limit news coverage.

<p>M22: I have never believed that simply because a person is appointed by the President necessarily makes it difficult for that person to be independent. For me the challenge is how in the face of statutory regulation, do we have people who are responsive, how do we have mechanisms that are responsive to the requirements of independence and integrity and all that, for me that is a more important thing.</p> <p>M23: The danger in Uganda is that a lot of times regulation has been confused with control. The state very often ends up using regulation as a method to control the media, to make the media subservient to the interests of the state, to make the media less bold and critical of the state and all that.</p> <p>M24: A lot of the laws we have can never be justified in situations where you have other civil mechanisms for redressing the so-called wrongs committed by the media. For me I think they are sufficient (civil mechanisms), following comprehensive codes of ethics to the full would be enough not to warrant criminal prosecution of journalists. I think the key thing is a credible mechanism of monitoring and having some kind of sanctions on violations of the ethics. I imagine, if you are found guilty by your peers of consistently distorting information and taking money for bribes, they can still find a way of embarrassing you that basically makes it difficult for you to continue practicing.</p> <p>M25: Yes the state has the power to manoeuvre economic and political resources. Think about the supplements that the government departments run and all that, very often a lot of them</p>	<p><i>He thinks whether statutory or not, integrity and responsiveness of the players is the most important factor.</i></p> <p><i>He acknowledges that statutory regulation is more likely to be used as a tool for control of the media by the state, than not.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks if a mechanism that ensures compliance with codes is in place, there would be less chances of the public suing.</i></p> <p><i>He believes the state being the biggest advertiser affects the content and the critical edge of both private and public media alike.</i></p>
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contradict what the media have said previously about progress in these reports and so on, but I very rarely see stories that challenge them, and I think part of it is because of the money that they are getting from the supplements. At the same time I do not see a deliberate effort not to cover the government adversely because of government's control over resources like advertising and so on.

M26: Yes, the liberalisation of the media industry has widened the horizons of debates. But at the same time the ferocious competition for profit has also meant that some important subjects that are not necessarily interesting are sometimes ignored.

M27: But this does not result into checking state power. Not always, in fact I argue somewhere else that a lot of good opportunities where the public have direct access to the media to talk about the government, criticise, have created an illusion of influence and participation, because people feel that they have participated, they feel that since government has responded to what they have said they think yes we are pressing the government, but at the end of the day, how often does the government act because of public outcry?

M28: There have been attempts here to do give civil society a voice, but I think it is not enough and I also think that the dominant civil society voices mainly from the capital city are mainly the bigger richer organisations. Very many CBOs do not necessarily get the kind of space and airtime that these bigger ones get, and I think that affects diversity

He believes market competition for profit marginalises important issues which do not necessarily have commercial logic.

He thinks vibrant debates do not necessarily result into checks and balances, but only create illusions of influence and participation among citizens.

He thinks the media favours the bigger and richer Civil society organisations and marginalises the smaller ones which are normally rural based.

and pluralism in the quality, in the sense that some voices are kept out.

M29: It's a pity in Uganda when you talk about pluralism and diversity in the media and the contribution of the media, we still do not have a strong culture of local media because in other countries where you have local radio and local television, newspapers, at least chances of community media giving space to the voices in those areas are much higher than here where the leading media still remain the main national media.

M30: Well, there is no other institution that provides such a platform for political debate in Uganda. It may not be sufficient, but it is the best in the circumstances. I think that of course that debate is very often adulterated, partly because it is inclusive in the case of radio stations for instance and their talk shows, in the newspapers sometimes that debate is adulterated because some of the people who are spearheading it are not necessarily informed, or have not carried out sufficient research.

Interview H

H1: A profession is the systematic way of doing something, following the set up procedures, e.g. if it about cooking, I think there are set up procedures of providing a meal, and then when you master that, you become a professional in that way. The same thing applies to journalism. That we have journalism of writing, journalism of the microphone, but there are set up guidelines and procedures. If you follow those, then to me you are a professional.

He thinks lack of a strong culture of local media means that community-based organisations are less heard by the national media which is the dominant media.

He thinks while the media offers a platform, the debate is adulterated by lack of research and being uninformed.

Interview H

He perceives a profession as a systematic way of doing things guided by set up procedures.

<p>H2: Sometimes we tend to think for the people, and it so happens that people want it, sometimes you tend to think for the people and it backfires and you find yourself that you have to do it the way the people want it. So that relationship is such that you either give us what we want or you come up with what satisfies us.</p> <p>H2b: Professionalism being pursued at three different levels offers challenges for the individual to fulfil all the expectations.</p> <p>H3: If someone wants to exercise his freedom of expression by starting a [community] newspaper to disseminate his views, he has to learn the journalistic guidelines.</p> <p>H4: It was like there were no journalists and government was introducing journalism in the country which was wrong. Secondly, they were not in a way setting up guidelines that were meant to empower, neither were they introducing skills, What they were coming up with were control on one, limiting the people to enter the profession, two, controlling them through licensing, education of journalists. It was not professionalising, it was about control.</p> <p>H5: I don't support licensing; neither do I support enrolment as part of the roles of government set up bodies. I don't think that is right. Any form of regulation should be left to the professionals themselves to determine, who should be enrolled, and at what level. If it is done by the professionals or the people within the profession trying to streamline their activities, their work, I have no problem with that.</p>	<p><i>He thinks in regard to information, audiences determine what they want to be given through their power to reject or accept.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks varied expectations at different levels are a challenge to the individual.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks that community forms of communication which take the form of journalism cannot be divorced from journalistic guidelines.</i></p> <p><i>He views the Press and Journalist Statute as a ploy by government to control the media as opposed to Professionalisation.</i></p> <p><i>He sees licensing as a tool which government uses to control journalists</i></p>
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But licensing in as far as it means giving you a permit, even if it was to be done by a professional organisation, I would not support it.

H6: My view on this as I have said earlier is that it should be better left to the professional organisations to act as watchdogs over their own colleagues coz they will understand more what the professional entails and then they would also understand more the different categories.

H7: Still these people who want to have their own community radio or media, yes they have their right, but they need to be visited [by professional associations], let them get the ABC of how to do it [journalism], not by saying that no you cannot do it, but we can only make them our friends and say you can do it better through guidance, or on top of you, you have somebody who can help you to do this.

H8: We must accept that as technology develops, new challenges are emerging. So we need to look at them as a different category but when it is about the media and I call my website a news provider, then that website should definitely abide by the code of conduct.

H9: I think the code of conduct is important not as a control but as a guide. The code of conduct is like a tool that keeps on reminding you of your responsibility, that is why in many countries it is not enforced by government, it is not within the law, it is like a spiritual think. You cannot enforce a code, you can only keep on reminding the professionals about their responsibility, and when they breach it we can only expose you and shame

He thinks issues of the appropriate education for journalists to be professionals belong to the realm of professional organisations, not politicians.

He thinks community forms of media need to be monitored and trained by professional associations on journalistic guidelines.

He acknowledges the complications technology brings to journalism but he thinks once a blogger calls himself a journalist, he should then be bound by the journalistic code.

He sees the code as a moral guide and any breaches elicit moral sanctions.

<p>you. In a society which cherishes its values, this peer isolation works very well.</p> <p>H10: There is no organisation which is fully independent. Each one has its own values and goals and the reason why it was set up. So anything which does not fall within that might not be able to come through, so you find that individual journalists are limited by ownership interests and values, and they don't have that kind of freedom to express themselves fully.</p> <p>H11: We should look at our political reality where you do not have what I would call grounded political parties and political thinkers. So you end up having the media being looked at as an official opposition because of the stories and opinions that they publish. In that sense, the political and economic pressures are brought to bear.</p> <p>H12: We are now seeing the strategy of containing the media changing from direct confrontation to economic strings. What the politicians have learnt especially those in government is that when they talk to the owners of the media organisations, they are likely to be more effective than directly confronting the media. It is like sort of if you want to do business with us, then you should make sure that this does not happen. So in a way the political agenda is fulfilled through the economic interests of the media.</p> <p>H13: Even in countries where these [audiences' protection mechanisms] are tested mechanisms; there are people who would still want to take the legal option. For example in the Netherlands a complainant who felt he had not been</p>	<p><i>He perceives ownership interests and values as impeding individual journalistic values.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks in societies where the opposition is weak, the media's critical role is seen as aiding the opposition and thus makes them targets of government influence.</i></p> <p><i>He notes that subtle controls through economic pressures have replaced directly methods like taking journalists to court.</i></p> <p><i>He believes people who do not feel that press councils are addressing their complaints satisfactorily can pursue other means.</i></p>
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<p>satisfied about the decision of the press council decided to form an organisation called “People Against the Councils”.</p> <p>H14: The state is the biggest spender, the state is the biggest advertiser, the state is still the biggest employer, and of course it has control over the resources. The biggest revenue of the media is from advertisement, and it is from different departments of government.</p> <p>H15: There is no real completion. We are talking of two daily newspapers that is the <i>Monitor</i> and <i>New Vision</i>. When you look at the radios, it is also something different. It is only in the central region where you could say that radios are trying to compete, but there is no really genuine competition, and the market is really so small. With radio there is no new programming because of market competition. What I see in radio is more of copy and paste, they you do the same, talk shows everywhere, sports, then we see on every radio the same stuff.</p> <p>H16: You talk of the CBOs and NGOs. I don’t think they are agenda driven; they are more of organisations that are set up just to access some funds. True there are those that are genuine, but they are not many, and they do not reflect the views of the people, of course if you go down to the grassroots, you cannot say that there is someone who is talking on behalf of farmers and their voices are heard.</p> <p>H17: There is nothing like what you would call substantial political debate in the media. The focus is now more economic, and I do not see more of what you would call an intellectual</p>	<p><i>He thinks that the state’s marshalling of vast resources that media depend on makes the media necessarily subservient.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks the narrow print market reduces competition</i></p> <p><i>He thinks civil society organisations lack credibility and hence are not representatives of grassroots concerns.</i></p> <p><i>He thinks lack of substantial political debate in the media is partly because of a weak civil society that is not aggressive.</i></p>
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<p>debate intended to influence government policy and bring about change. Even on the radios yes you have so many talk shows, but as you know it more of talking and talking and it is left at that. This is not exactly a problem of the media but the society itself is weak and it is not aggressive to achieve what it wants.</p>	
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