

**THE IMPACT OF THE BROADCAST LEGISLATIVE REFORMS ON THE
NEWSROOM STAFF'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL
BROADCASTING CORPORATION (ZNBC)'S EDITORIAL OPERATIONS
AND NEWS CONTENT.**

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following people: My family: my wife Pamela and my children Luyando and Mambwe. My nieces Hibajene and Memory thank you for being so understanding and supportive. My Mother Edna and late father Joshua Hamasaka, you taught me perseverance but patience. Your inspiration is bearing fruit your spirit and legacy will always live on. I will never forget my late friend Lawrence Chileshe Katongo for his very encouraging words in this work.

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ABSTRACT

The 1980s and 1990s saw major changes in the political landscape of the media in many countries that were either reverting or emerging from repressive non-democratic regimes. Among the notable changes in media industry was the opening up of the national airwaves, which had been a state monopoly, to private sector and community participation. The democratic dispensation also put state broadcasters in the spot-light regarding their editorial content which was previously 'institutionalised' as belonging to the ruling regimes.

This study set out to investigate the extent to which broadcasting reform legislation meant to address the unfair coverage of contending voices on Zambia's public broadcaster has had an impact in reversing the situation in the newsroom. Using qualitative methods of investigation, the study established that while the ZNBC staff understand aspects of their role in their newsroom in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting and in line with the enacted legislation, they perceive that, in practice, they have to ensure that the news content still remains a reserve of a few voices in favour of the ruling regime. This was evidenced by testimonies from the news staff's complaints of continued editorial interference in their work by government leaders and government appointed gatekeepers, as well as self-censorship.

The study recommends, among other things, the full implementation of the recently enacted laws on the operations of ZNBC in order to achieve some minimum levels of being a public broadcaster. It further recommends a serious re-orientation of the ZNBC newsroom and management staff to the current legislative requirements so as to shift their mindset away from their traditionally-held views of thinking that news at that station is only for the ruling regime.

CHAPTER ONE

Thesis introduction

1. 0. Introduction

This study examines the impact of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) legislative reforms on the newsroom staff's perceptions of the ZNBC editorial operations and news content, located in the principles of public service broadcasting within the area of media studies.

To this end, the first chapter presents the general background to the problem, which generated the researcher's interest in undertaking the study. It situates the study in a global as well as a Zambian context. Further, it presents a statement of the problem, the objectives as well as the significance of the study and the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Background to the study

Public service broadcasting is still one of the institutions of political power in the context of emerging democracies in Africa, especially with the liberalisation and commercialisation of the media. It still remains the main source of news and opinion in Southern Africa and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it is important that public broadcasters, without undue interference, dedicate themselves to serving the functions of informing citizens about matters of public interest (Media Institute of Southern Africa -MISA 2002; African Charter on Broadcasting 2002)). But against a background of authoritarian control of state-owned broadcasters by many African governments, the challenge is to provide independent information and act as a public sphere where the views and opinions of all interested parties can be represented without interference. Some initial historical backtracking is necessary in order to understand current trends in the Zambian media.

The 1990s political transformations that characterised many African countries ushered in a new government of Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in Zambia in 1991. The United National Independence Party (UNIP), which ruled the country from independence in 1964, and as the sole legal party since 1973 up until 1991 was dislodged from power. Zambia became the first English-speaking country in Sub-

Saharan Africa to peacefully revert to multi-party democracy (Bayles and Szeftel 1999). The transition came because of popular dissatisfaction with one-party rule, and the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Sichone and Chikulo 1996: 9). The return to multiparty politics paved way for the formation of many political parties.

Under the one-party UNIP regime led by President Kenneth Kaunda, the state owned and the government-controlled the daily newspapers, *Times of Zambia* and *Daily Mail*, and their Sunday versions *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Mail* (Kasoma 2000). In addition, the ruling party was in full control of the then only broadcasting house, ZNBC, which operated the nation-wide radio and television station (Kasoma 1997). According to Kasoma (1997), both radio and television were extensively used for government propaganda, and no dissenting views or news were allowed on the station.

Therefore, the 1990s general international political climate that changed many countries around the world, including Zambia, towards democratisation led to the assumption that ZNBC could contribute to the democratic process by transforming itself from a state-owned and government-controlled broadcaster into a public service broadcasting media organisation. This was given impetus by the opposition party, MMD, which promised to privatise and free the public media, including ZNBC, due to the imbalanced coverage they received during campaigns (Moyo 1997). According to Matibini, the MMD in its manifesto recognised that:

Freedom of expression and the right to information are basic human rights. As such journalists will have to play an important role in promoting democracy and development in an MMD-led government (2006: 6).

But contrary to campaign promises, the MMD government when it came to power stopped at liberalising the media industry (enabling several private media houses to spring up after 1991), and has kept a strong hold on the public media (Kasoma 2000: 211). As a result, ZNBC's autonomy has often been called into question especially during elections because of the impartial coverage of contending voices. According to Banda (1998), there are several instances when ZNBC radio and television have

refused to air news items and programmes from opposition political parties. Political interference therefore plays a fundamental role in ZNBC's programming, starting with the fact that television cameras are assigned according to who will be at the centre of the event being covered (Banda 1998:112). Hence there is need for a clear policy that takes into account all the differing political and other opinions in the country to avoid complaints or accusations of imbalanced coverage towards the ruling party (Banda 1998:112).

The liberalisation of the airwaves since 1992 has enabled a number of investors to start up radio and television stations. The majority of these are religious stations, while the rest are either community or commercial stations. For example, there is Radio Ichengelo, Radio Chikuni owned by the Roman Catholic Church, Radio Christian Voice, Trinity Broadcasting Network and Mazabuka Community Radio (Banda, 1998). The conditions of the broadcasting licenses for religious stations do not permit them to air critical political broadcasts (Banda 1998). A few commercial radio stations such as Radio Phoenix, QFM, and 5FM cover political issues but limited reach, enforced by licensing restrictions, ensures they do not transmit nationwide. Today ZNBC, which has broader obligations and is publicly financed, remains the only nationwide public radio and television station open to political broadcasts.

Formally ZNBC is an autonomous institution established by an Act of Parliament (Act No 16 of 1987 and Amended in 2002). Under the 1987 Act, the Board that has been running ZNBC was appointed by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting and the government used the appointment system as a conduit for influence and interference on editorial matters (Banda 2002). Therefore, the Board hired and fired managerial staff, and as Asante (1997) argues, the appointment and dismissal of staff, or reward for exemplary behaviour is one way in which a government can directly control and manipulate the media. According to Kabwe (1997), media employees who refuse to follow the MMD line have been intimidated and harassed. In October 1996 for instance, controller of television programmes Ben Kangwa was suspended for allowing a paid-for UNIP advertisement in which Kaunda was announcing his party's decision to boycott the elections.

But the 2002 Amendment Act required that ZNBC be managed by an independent Board of Directors (see Chapter 3 for details). In return ZNBC was supposed to transform itself into a public broadcaster covering a diverse range of views in accordance with the principles of public service broadcasting without any political or commercial interference as discussed in Chapter 2.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study is therefore significant in that whereas ZNBC has largely operated under the influence of political regimes in the past without much regard for a diverse range of views, there is currently a public and legal requirement for the broadcaster to transform into a broadcaster that can provide a non-partisan content to the diversity of groups in society. The public is now also required to pay TV licenses, which deepens its stake in getting proper public service broadcasting. This study investigates whether these changes are sufficient to transform ZNBC. It does so by noting that change ultimately cannot be achieved without corresponding changes in the mindset and editorial orientation of journalists. Hence, the focus of this research is on whether the ZNBC newsroom staff perceive themselves of being responsive to public interest and concerns now rather than those of government and advertisers.

1.4 Objectives of the study

This study seeks to investigate whether the ZNBC news has become, in the views of people in the newsroom, more politically balanced in line with the requirements of a public service broadcaster, meaning a balance between parties, and between them and the public itself. With the changes in the political system and changes in the broadcasting field, the main interest is to examine the extent to which ZNBC newsroom staff members play a role in the mediation of pluralistic politics in their editorial content in accordance with the principals of public service broadcasting. The study therefore seeks to establish how the ZNBC news personnel perceive themselves in relation to the year 2002 ZNBC Amendment Act that requires the public broadcaster to play a national mandate of providing information to a diverse interest groups as well as what they think are the perceptions and expectations of the public, and how these affect their roles (see Chapter five).

The main thematic areas picked for this study and reasons are:

- Editorial independence: This probes members of the ZNBC newsroom staff on the amount of editorial independence they now have, since, as discussed in chapter two, this is key to achieving the principles of public service broadcasting.
- Licence fees and laws: Probes staff's perceptions on their role in the newsroom since members of the general public are now required to pay licence fees for TV.
- Policy context: This looks at how the internal policy framework has been understood and devised as regards meeting the principles of public service broadcasting.
- Audience perspectives: This probes how the ZNBC newsroom staff perceive their audience in the light of the legal changes and public expectations.

This study is premised on the hypothesis that whereas there have been legislative changes that require ZNBC to give fair coverage to the contending voices, little progress has been achieved in the implementation of this requirement as the state broadcaster has remained a propaganda tool for the ruling regime. This scenario gives undue advantage to the ruling party and therefore undermines the democratic process in the country.

1.4.1 Specific objectives of the study.

- To determine the extent to which the ZNBC newsroom staff perceive their role at the public broadcaster as according with democratic principles and current legislative requirements.
- To examine newsroom staff perceptions of the extent of government's interference in their editorial content.
- To determine perceptions about the extent to which ZNBC news allows for dissenting views in line with the commitments made at the inception of the TV licence fee and the principles of public service broadcasting.
- To examine the extent to which ZNBC editorial policies are perceived to have been transformed in compliance with the principles of public service broadcasting and legal provisions.

1.5 Research assumptions

This study has been guided by the assumption that ZNBC, as a public broadcaster in Zambia and the only one with a national reach, should be fully independent in all editorial and operational matters. At a minimum, there needs to be a strong statutory guarantee of independence and a clear prohibition of government interference in the public broadcaster's editorial content and operations. This independence is not an end in itself, but a prerequisite for principles of public service broadcasting and policies that include codified ethics on news and current affairs. The case is even stronger now for ZNBC to abide by impartial news reporting principles after the 2002 legal requirements that sought to transform the broadcaster into a truly autonomous institution with its staff making independent editorial decisions. Although there is widespread agreement that news is unavoidably influenced, and therefore 'biased', by organisational routines, production constraints, and journalistic values, the assumption here is that ZNBC newsroom staff exhibit a culture which should not be deliberately imbalanced to favour those in power due to inside or outside unprofessional interference. As a public broadcaster, the ZNBC board and its management is obliged to guarantee the rights of journalists and editors to make decisions on the basis of professional criteria, consistent with the principles of public service broadcasting, such as newsworthiness of an event or its relevance to the public's right to know regardless of the actors.

1.6 Methods of study

Qualitative research methods are the main techniques used for this study. This has meant interviewing people to understand their perspectives on a scene and to obtain descriptions that are normally unavailable for observation or to analyse certain kinds of discourse (see Lindlof 1995:5). As Bryman (1988) argues, qualitative research is deemed to be much more fluid and flexible than quantitative research in that it emphasises discovering unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans depending on the prevailing situation. Drawing from qualitative approach, the study used semi-structured interviews that promoted an active, open-ended dialogue with interviewees with a minimal guidance thereby allowing them considerable latitude to express themselves (Deacon 1999). The study used the most common type

of interviewing which is individual, face-to-face verbal interchange using an interview guide, as opposed to other forms as pointed out by Jankowski (1993).

Since the study focussed on the news aspect of ZNBC as a public institution with a national mandate to offer broadcasting consistent with the principles of public service broadcasting, a purposive sampling method to get subjects that were crucial to the validity of the study was used (Wimmer and Dommick 1991). In-depth interviews were conducted on the basis of the resulting selection. These interviews yielded descriptive and explanatory data from ZNBC newsroom staff and editorial decision makers. The respondents provided their personal experiences, views and interpretations regarding ZNBC news editorial decisions that result in the final news bulletins. In particular, the sampled staff for this research provided valuable information on their perceptions of roles and expectations as they carry out their work at the public broadcaster. Exploring this theme was clearly important in determining the extent to which the recently amended legislations that required ZNBC to adopt the principles of public service broadcasting have had an impact on the editorial content, culture and operations at the public broadcaster.

The study is theoretically conceptualised in the framework of the concepts of public service broadcasting and the public sphere as articulated by people such as Reith (cited in Tomaselli 1994) and Habermas (1989). It is also informed by a detailed review of literature on worldwide debates about public service broadcasting principles.

1.7 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter, titled “Introduction”, presents a general background to the study and offer a brief account of its concerns, objectives and methods.

Chapter two, titled “Theoretical perspectives and literature review”, is devoted to the theoretical considerations underlying the study. It presents a review of literature on debates surrounding public service broadcasting and its role in a democracy. It posits that public service broadcasting has a key role to play in enhancing public dialogue, an aspect located within the concept of the public sphere as articulated by Habermas

(1989). While recognising the challenges facing public service broadcasting institutions, the chapter argues that the implementation of the principles of public service broadcasting is vital to the promotional of democratic values in any society.

The third chapter, entitled “Media and political landscape in Zambia”, is a summation of the political situation in Zambia since independence in 1964. It examines the development of the broadcasting media industry in general and ZNBC in particular from independence to the present.

The fourth chapter, titled “Methods of data collection and analysis”, focuses on the methods, procedures and techniques employed by this study. It primarily gives a rationale for the adoption of qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis, that is, in-depth interviewing. The chapter also explains how data was processed and analysed.

The fifth chapter titled “Findings, interpretations and discussion”, presents and discusses the findings of the study in terms of four major themes, namely:

- Editorial independence
- Licence fees and laws
- Policy context
- Audience expectations

It also discusses the findings in accordance with the research issues and assumptions mentioned in the introduction. The impact of the introduction of TV licence fees in line with the principles of public service broadcasting on ZNBC staff perceptions is examined in relation to the issues raised in chapter two (theoretical perspectives and literature review). The chapter finally revisits the concepts of public sphere and the role of a public service broadcaster as discussed in the second chapter, in line with the study findings.

Finally, as its title indicates, chapter six is a conclusion which offers a discussion on study findings as well as recommendations on possible reforms and further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical perspectives and literature review.

2.0 Introduction.

This chapter, divided into seven sections, presents a review of literature on theoretical debates and arguments regarding public service broadcasting. The first section introduces the study and the choice of the theoretical framework. Sections two and three provide an overview of the concepts and key features of public service broadcasting which are the major theoretical frameworks employed in the study. For example, what constitutes public service broadcasting? What are its obligations and how is it expected to cover contending voices such as political parties and civil society groups?

The two sections trace the historical background of the public broadcasting principles to the current interpretations and applications. Section three particularly addresses the democratic public sphere perspectives in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting. It addresses questions such as: what is a public sphere and how, in this case, it relates to public service broadcasting news? Section four discusses the current challenges and crises that public service broadcasting institutions are faced with because of competition from commercial broadcasting institutions, technological advances as well as the changing social and political scenario.

Since this study focuses upon the news genre from the perspective of public service broadcasting as a public sphere, section five discusses the theoretical issues regarding the construction of news. The section particularly looks at the staff perceptions of their roles in meeting the aspects of public service broadcasting. This is because research shows that the production and reception of news is a socially constructed representation of reality and that news and current affairs are crucial in constructing our view of the world. How staff perceive the production and consumption of news content in line with the principles of public service broadcasting is the focus of this study. Section six defines the concept of editorial independence in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting as well as contextualising it within media

policies. The chapter ends with section seven which wraps up the main arguments raised in the discussion.

2.1 Theoretical framework.

This research is grounded in public sphere theory and the debates around the principles of public service broadcasting. These generally demand that a public broadcaster has some independence, as argued in section six, from both commercial interests and the government, and provides a national arena for a diversity of social groups to communicate with one another (McNair and Hibberd 2003: 272-283). Having adopted pluralistic politics in Zambia, the country's media institutions, as McQuail argues as a principle, should be located in the 'public sphere', and therefore, state-owned and public-funded media in particular should be open, in principle, to all as receivers and senders (McQuail 1994:12). As will be shown later in the chapter, the concept of 'public sphere' is conceptualised here as that realm of social life where the exchange of information can take place freely without state and/or corporate control (Dahlgren 1995; Habermas 1989). Legally bound to the principles of public service broadcasting, ZNBC should nowadays be an essential part of the public sphere providing access to all as per public service protocols (see Curran 2000: 135; Forster 1992:12).

Whereas there are several yardsticks to measure the attainment of public service broadcasting principles such as promoting local culture, non-partisan news could be rated as one of the most defining characteristics of the extent to which the public broadcaster has attained the principles of public service broadcasting. In terms of Habermas' stress on diverse and "rational" political information from which the best political choices can be made, the news genre is critical for achieving the principles of public service broadcasting for democracy in the public sphere (see also SABC Policies 2003:20). The ZNBC news staff is therefore expected to place the broadcaster in the public sphere, stand for integrity and be expected to set an agenda in the public interest against pressures that subvert it (see Blumler 1992). This is consistent with Mendel's (2000) argument that the media, especially national broadcasters funded out of the public purse, have historically formed a vital component of the public sphere in most countries. Therefore, the rationale for these broadcasters in enhancing public dialogue through impartial content, especially in

news, remains strong as they are expected to offer alternative programming to that provided by the commercial sector (Curran and Gurevitch 2000; McQuail 2000). Having introduced the theoretical focus of my study, the next section addresses the concept of public service broadcasting in more detail. It addresses issues such as what is public service broadcasting? Why might it be required? The section also gives a historical perspective on the genesis of the kind of institution specialising in public service broadcasting.

2.2 The concept of public service broadcasting.

According to Avery (1993), the concept of public service broadcasting can be traced to the documents prepared in support of the establishment of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). This institution of public service broadcasting embarked on an ethical mission of high moral responsibility to utilise the electromagnetic spectrum, a scarce public resource, to enhance the quality of life of all British citizens (Tomaselli 1994). Lord Reith (cited in Tomaselli 1994:127), identified four crucial elements of public service broadcasting:

- rejection of commercialism,
- extension of programmes to everyone in the community,
- the establishment of unified control over broadcasting,
- the maintenance of high standards.

The universal reach helped to constitute the public as members of a unitary public (Tomaselli 1994). Like Reith, McQuail (1994) emphasises universality of service and other aspects of public service broadcasting, views that are similar to the 1986 Peacock Committee in Britain. The committee, according to McQuail (1994), endorsed geographical universality of provision and reception for all tastes and interests, catering for minorities and having a concern for national identity, among other things.

Avery (1993) states that public service broadcasting was recreated across Western European democracies and beyond in various forms. At the core of each was a commitment to operating radio and television services in the public good. The principal paradigm adopted to accomplish this mission was the establishment of state-

owned broadcasting systems that either functioned as monopolies or as the dominant broadcasting institution. Funding came in the form of license fees, taxes or similar non-commercial options. Examples of these organisations include the Netherlands Broadcasting Foundation and Danish Broadcasting Corporation. However, there were notable violations of the set ideals, especially in Germany, France and Italy, as some broadcasting systems became the political mouthpiece for whoever was in power. Such abuse of the broadcasting institutions' mandate made public service broadcasting the subject of frequent political debates (Avery 1993).

In terms of the definition, Mendel (2000) notes that public service broadcasting is a unique concept that is too often misunderstood. He points out that some languages do not even have a term fully corresponding to the English word "public" and the closest translation appears to confer the notion of state/government/official. Hence, despite the numerous attempts at defining the concept (for instance, Dahlgren 1995; Syvertsen 1991; Tomaselli 1994; McQuail 2000 and McChesney 1997), McQuail (1994) point out that there has never been a universally accepted version of the theory of public service broadcasting, and the diversity of form is now greater than ever before as it has been implemented in many countries with varying degrees. He contends that emphasis in describing the concept should be on the general notion of 'the public interest' which should also deploy some notion of diversity. In demonstrating how problematic the description of the concept of public service broadcasting remains, Syvertsen writes:

To anyone who bothers to compare the different definitions present in the debate, it becomes apparent that these vary tremendously in shape and form. Some use the concept in order to describe a national system as a whole, others use it to describe certain institutions and others again use it to describe a mixture of programmes. There are substantial disagreements as to the precise characteristics should be included in the definitions (1992:17-18).

However, despite the fact that there is no universal definition of the concept of public service broadcasting, there are, at least, some common features that have been identified by scholars such as McQuail (2000) and McChesney (1997). These define public service broadcasting as a system of broadcasting that is publicly funded and

operated in a non-profit way and required by law to meet various informational needs of all citizens.

According to Mendel (2000), public service broadcasting is that part of the content of electronic media which seeks to promote the public interest in any given sector of life, be it education, health, basic infrastructure, social justice, freedom of expression, human rights, gender equity, political and cultural rights, etc.

In understanding this concept there is also need to distinguish between a public service broadcaster and other models such as public service broadcasting. The former is an institution dedicated to this form of broadcasting while the latter can be a kind of programming found or required even on commercial broadcasters.

In defining public service broadcasting, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) bureau for Development Policy and Democratic Governance Group came up with the table below that shows a distinction with the different broadcasting models.

Different broadcasting models

Type	State	Public Service	Commercial
Description	State authorities directly supervise the media system and have full control over content/ programming.	The media system is defined through a carefully articulated legislative framework in which the media is in public hands but management/ operations enjoy substantial programming autonomy.	Private ownership usually accompanied by some degree of state regulation.
Operating Rationale	Programming driven by political interests.	Programming driven by public interests.	Programming driven by commercial interests.
The Audience	Citizens	Citizens	Consumers
Revenue Sources	Taxes	Subscription fees from viewers/ listeners; State funding; Small amount of advertising.	Advertising; Private investment.

United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Development Policy Democratic Governance Group (October 2004).

The bureau pointed out that the media landscape of a country might include a range of broadcasters including commercial, community, state, and public service broadcasters. They stated that it is wrong to assume that these different types of broadcasting are all mutually exclusive. For example, broadcasting regulations might place public service obligations on commercial broadcasters. Most countries presently aspire to a mixed broadcasting system that includes both public service and

commercial broadcasters (and hybrids thereof) (UNDP 2004). For them, broadcasting systems can have any number of configurations: maintaining the state broadcaster but permitting significant private competition, privatising the state broadcaster in whole or in part, as well as permitting competition and/ or moving the state broadcaster into a public service model, for example (UNDP 2004).

Some scholars such as Wessberg (2004) have simplified the concept of public service broadcasting by identifying its key features. He points out that state-funded broadcasters exist in almost every country in the world but only some of these conform to the standards commonly associated with the principles of public service broadcasting. The following are some of the key features of public service broadcasting, especially as applicable to this study.

Firstly, the key goal of a public service broadcasting organisation, according to Barendt (1995), is for it to be detached from government and state influence to disseminate impartial and diverse information even if it may well be owned by the state. He argues that an independent and well-performing public broadcasting system examines public issues with an incisively critical eye by providing programmes that include public debate, cultural expressions and educational programming aside from entertainment. As a political force, a public service broadcasting institution has to be independent of not only political but also commercial pressure in order to achieve the journalistic ideals of political debate - namely representation, exposure and the mobilisation of citizens to participate in politics (McNair and Hibberd 2003: 272-283). Also the undermining of public broadcasting by the process of commercialisation has major implications for the quality of public debate (Boyd-Barrett 1995). Thus, public service broadcasting has the responsibility to provide services to a public that is more than a market. That is why the system is expected to serve communities that are not commercially attractive and produce types of programming that are not always popular or profitable (Tracey 1998; Tomaselli 2001, Wessberg 2004).

Therefore, the goal of public service broadcasting, especially by public service broadcasters which are publicly funded, is to provide quality broadcasting which meets the informational, entertainment and educational needs of the population while

respecting and promoting diversity (McQuail 1994). Satisfaction of this goal is impossible if the public service broadcasters are expected to compete for funds in the same way as commercial broadcasters (Tomaselli 1994:127). Commercial dependency, according to Tomaselli (1994), would inevitably lead to public broadcasters subjecting programme production and scheduling decisions to popularity tests rather than making such decisions in the public interest. Although many public service broadcasters now operate on a blend of public and commercial funding, relying entirely on private funding would clearly undermine the ability of such broadcasters to promote pluralism and other goals noted above. As a result, independence from commercial interests has always been an important justification for public service broadcasters. Mendel (2000) observes that while public service broadcasters should preferably be free of dependence on sponsorship by a commercial, profit-based organisation, in case such corporations wish to sponsor them, it should be possible to accept such sponsorship as being valid provided there is no relationship of vested interests by the commercial firm sponsoring. Hence the key reason for the existence of public service broadcasters is because they have purposes that are different from the commercial sector. It is because their goals are different from those of the market that they are able to do things that the market would not. Furthermore, the purposes of public service broadcasting is not only different from, but also complementary to, the activities of the private sector (Tomaselli 1994).

A second feature that is key to public service broadcasting as it applies to this study is that of impartiality. Barendt (1995) points out that impartiality is closely related to independence. If it is inappropriate for the government to use public funds to promote its particular viewpoint, it is equally inappropriate, given its public mandate, for a public service broadcaster to promote a certain position or support a particular political party. MISA (2002) argue that the duties of a public service broadcaster include the requirement to inform the public about matters of public interest and to provide impartial and in-depth news coverage across a range of views. According to Mendel (2000), public service broadcasters do not directly promote the use of a particular product or service in its programmes, nor would public service broadcasting promote a specific political creed, party, or ideology except where the intention is to inform and educate audiences about specific creeds in a non-propagandistic basis.

A third feature is that public service broadcasting should provide a variety of programmes, including shows of an educational and informative nature. In this, public service broadcasting, according to Barendt (1995), may be contrasted with commercial broadcasters in a number of countries, which are increasingly oriented towards low-cost options such as films and game shows.

Barendt posits a general tax on users as another feature of public service broadcasting organisations. As is clear from the following analysis, not all jurisdictions fund public service broadcasting through a general charge on users or a television license fee. Instead, in many countries the national legislative body, or parliament, directly votes funds for these broadcasters or requires that they raise revenue from advertising and sponsorships. A license fee, Barendt argues, has the advantage of being more stable and also less susceptible to government interference, although public bodies ultimately set the rate of the license fee and where relevant apportion it among these broadcasters (1995). At the same time, license fees may be difficult and/or costly to collect and may be difficult to introduce for political reasons, where they are not already in place as was the case in Zambia. In addition, a general fee may lead to the public broadcasting institutions being forced to compete for ratings, in order to justify the general charge, rather than concentrate on quality and diversity. At any rate, in charter and governance, a public broadcaster is often seen as a public institution and its primary funding sources as being public (Blumler 1992). Public service broadcasters therefore have the responsibility to use the public's money in ways that are efficient, effective and transparent. Where supported by public funds they are obligated to use that money wisely and in ways that provide the greatest value for their owners. The owners are all the people paying the fees required to finance their public services (Wessberg 2004).

As can be seen from the above arguments, the implementation of public service broadcasting principles is vital to the promotional of democratic values in any society. The next section discusses the democratic public sphere in relation to the public service broadcasting.

2.3 The role of public service broadcasting in a democratic public sphere.

The notion of public service broadcasting and public sphere is premised on the assumption that a public service broadcaster has a key role in the democratic public sphere. This theoretical angle, as it relates to this study, particularly assumes that a balanced news genre in public service broadcasting is potentially crucial for democracy and development within a given society (Curran 2000). It is, hence, widely acknowledged by scholars that in any democratic political system the media function as transmitters of political communication which originates outside the media organisation itself (McNair 1995, Curran 1995). The media also provide the structures and processes through which public conflicts maybe resolved, it is safe to say that the public service broadcasting media are an integral part of a society's democratic system (Negrine 1994). Democratic systems demand that individuals freely and collectively express themselves in making decisions that affect their welfare. McNair (1995) argues that the private political opinions of the individual become the public opinion of the people as a whole and this is reflected in the way they make democratic decisions such as in their voting patterns. Public opinion, in this sense, is formed in what German sociologist Jurgen Habermas has called 'the public sphere'.

Many scholars have come up with definitions of what constitutes a public sphere. For Josef Ernst, the public sphere is that distinctive discursive space within which individuals are combined to be able to assume the role of a politically powerful force (McNair 1996). Kuhn (1998) notes that the public sphere is an institutional framework and set of practices, which encourage wide and inclusive public debate about issues of social and political importance (in Randall 1998: 3). Habermas, in his 1962 work, conceptualises the public sphere as that realm of social life where the exchange of information and views on questions of common concern can take place so that public opinion can be formed. In fact, the earlier definition of public sphere by Habermas referred to a sphere of private people coming together as a public (Curran 1995: 135). In Habermas's account of the rise of democracy, historically the first version of the public sphere or space was represented by the 18th century coffee shops or debating societies, where active participants in political life met, discussed and formed political projects (McQuail 2000). An important task was to keep a check on government by way of an informed and influential public opinion. This was done

through private conversations in what was known as the 'bourgeois' public sphere mainly because the 'bourgeois' class patronised these coffee houses. This earlier conception of the public sphere by Habermas received much criticism from other scholars for idealising a bygone and elitist form of political life (Curran 1990).

Habermas later shifted his earlier position, no longer conceiving the public sphere as private individuals coming together as a single public but as a network for communicating information and points of view that connect the private world of everyday experience to the political system (Curran 1995: 135). However, the scale of modern society does not present a realistic situation where the majority of the citizens can physically present an issue at one forum. Hence, according to Habermas, the mass media have become the chief institutions of the public sphere (1989: 230). The public sphere is also viewed as being much more differentiated, pluralistic and organised than before. This conception offers hope that the media will facilitate meaningful debate and exhibit faith in the independence of media audiences.

The concept of public sphere includes a whole set of institutions within which public debates and decision-making are carried out such as the media, ad hoc committees, letters, submissions, public hearings, public inquiries, etc. This sphere should be characterised by general accessibility of information, free and unconstrained access, and possibilities for rational discussions (Syvertsen 1992: 27). Therefore, according to McNair (1994), the public sphere is no longer a bourgeois realm of politics but has expanded to include absolute majorities of the population in modern democratic societies. The media is now considered as a public sphere comprising the communicative institutions of society, through which facts and opinions are freely circulated. The media, as pointed out by McQuail, deals with public matters for public purposes, especially with issues around which public opinion can be expected to form. The media are therefore answerable for their activities to the wider society, and accountability takes place via laws, regulations and pressures from state and society (McQuail 1994: 12). The public sphere exists, in other words, in the active reasoning of the public through the media. It is via such discourse that public opinion is generated, which in turn shapes the policies of the state and the development of society as a whole (Habermas 1989: 7).

That the public sphere cannot be seen as a space operating in isolation from all other social, political and economic domains, as if it were a self-contained entity, is one of Habermas' central points. To understand the public sphere under any specific historical circumstances requires taking into account the larger societal figurations which both comprise its space and constitute the preconditions for its functioning. A society, argues Habermas, where democratic tendencies are weak and the structural features are highly inegalitarian is not going to give rise to healthy institutional structures for the public sphere. Policy issues around media institutions and their output are the most tangible and immediate expression of political attention to the public sphere. Such policy issues include the organisation, financing and legal framework of the media. The legal framework encompasses not only questions of ownership, control, procedures for licensing, rules for access, and so on, but also the freedoms and constraints on communication (Habermas 1989:12). The concept of 'public sphere' according to Habermas is therefore the practice of open exchange of views and discussion about issues of general social importance. In this study the public sphere is regarded more as a public forum, a source of knowledge and a basis for collective political action. For this public forum to be fair, Curran (2000) argues, it should be a neutral space within society, free of both the state or corporate control, in which the media should make available information affecting the public good and facilitate a free and reasoned public dialogue that guides the public direction of society. Curran (2002:158) writes that a model of public sphere offers:

A neutral zone where access to relevant information affecting the public good is widely available, where discussion is free of domination and where all those participating in public debate do so on an equal basis. The media facilitate this process by providing an arena of public debate, and by reconstituting private citizens as a public body in the form of public opinion. (Cited in McQuail 2000: 158).

Citizens need an impartial programming content from various contesting views in the public sphere to make informed decisions. Hence McQuail argues that the public sphere should be:

A notional 'space' which provides a more or less autonomous and open arena or forum for public debate. Access to the space is free, and

freedom of assembly, association and expression are guaranteed (2000: 157).

It is evident from the above discussion that the media, and for the purpose of this study, public service broadcasting, is particularly important in providing information to the citizens. Citizens need accurate information from the media as studies have shown a strong correlation between the media, and political decisions (see Domatob 1987). Knowledge is still closely associated with power, not least in the civic context, and for knowledge one needs both information and meaning (Dahlgren 2000). As Dahlgren puts it:

The increasingly referential symbolic media universe has become a significant agency of socialisation in the modern (western) world, and social experience becomes increasingly interwoven with media experience, or at least interpreted in terms made available by the media (2000: 324).

In modern democratic societies where political players compete for political power, the actors are becoming aware that the key to success lies in the use of the media. As McNair points out, the increased awareness of the central importance of media coverage has convinced many competing voices, such as political parties and members of the civil society, that they need to seek the aid of the media to achieve their aims (McNair 1995: 6).

Against this backdrop, the news genre in public service broadcasting has the role of mediating between contending voices in the public sphere by giving people a balanced access to the means through which they can debate on the core issues about their welfare, in a framework of democratic participation (Goldsmiths Media Group 2000). Public service broadcasting programming, and the news genre in particular, has contributed to the observable decline or rise of political actors in the public sphere (Garnham 1986). McNair (1995) identifies five functions of the media in ideal-type democratic society, which are crucial to an understanding of the relationship between media and democracy. Firstly the media must inform citizens of what is happening around them: democracy needs an informed citizenry, and the media are the chief vehicles for achieving this requirement. Secondly they must educate the people as to the meaning and significance of the facts. Thirdly, they must provide a platform for public political discourses, facilitating the formation of 'public opinion' and feeding

that opinion back where it came. Fourthly, the media must give publicity to government and political institutions. Finally, the media in democratic societies must serve as channels for the advocacy of political viewpoints. This point is further amplified by Murdock who notes that the media must act as a public sphere where citizens must have access to information and debates regarding decisions taken in the sphere of politics that will enable them to know and effectively assist them exercise their civil and political rights (Murdock 1995:21, Dahlgren 1995, Schlesinger 1986).

Thus the cornerstone of this study is the notion that public service broadcasting news must be a source of information that enables citizens to exercise informed choices on issues affecting them. And the news staff at a public service broadcaster such as ZNBC are key to the production of content that fairly represents contending voices in line with the principles of public service broadcasting. They should provide reliable reports, portrayals, analysis, discussions, debates and so forth about current affairs. The ZNBC news staff must therefore strive to make the broadcaster crucial to the success of democracy as it functions as public arena (see Keane 1991). What will become evident in the research findings is that while many interviewees believe ZNBC is less than “fair”, it is not clear how they would define what would constitute “fairness” and “balance”. However, as will be seen in the next section, public service broadcasting in general is currently faced with numerous challenges that may require some adjustments in order to be relevant to the modern societies.

2.4 Challenges of a public service broadcaster

Avery (1993) states that the national broadcasters funded out of the public purse have historically formed a vital component of the broadcasting sector in most countries. But the decline of the Reithian prototype of public service broadcasting was first noticed in Britain in the 1960s after the introduction of commercial broadcasting (Buscombe 2000). At the end of the BBC’s monopoly in 1956 with the coming of ITV, the British public broadcaster was forced into competition, and this gradually resulted in compromising the BBC’s public service broadcasting programming. According to Buscombe (2000), BBC’s programming was no longer representative of the increasing diverse tastes, interests and needs of an increasingly diverse society. This situation signalled the start of a shifting paradigm that began to dilute the Reithian model of public service broadcasting in Britain (Tracey 1998; Thomson

1990; Buscombe 2000). This led the UK and major European countries, followed by developing countries, to shift slowly towards the USA's system in which commercial broadcasting and public service broadcasting are combined in a dual system (McChesney 1997:3, cited by Fourie 2003). The previous clear distinction between three main types of national broadcasting systems, namely, a core public service system, or a private enterprise core system, or a state core system, started to blur into each other. The merging made up a mix of public, private and other types of broadcasters in which public service broadcasting still played a significant, but no longer dominant, role (Raboy, 2003:45). And in the last decades, public broadcasters worldwide have had to operate in an ever changing, competitive and deregulated environment. Amidst fierce competition, declining budgets, audience fragmentation and attacks against the legitimacy of its institutions, the new century for public service broadcasting began with uncertainty and change (Lanara 2002).

Significant shifts in media industries occurred around the 1980s and 1990s when governments around the world were affected by political and economic changes. According to Avery (1993), questions were being raised about the very notion of a public culture by conservative critics, and charges that public service broadcasting was a closed, elitist, and inbred institution were put forward by liberal critics. Furthermore, movement toward a global economy was having an ever-increasing impact on the way policy makers saw the products of radio and television. The free market viability of educational and cultural programming as successful commercial commodities, seemed to support the arguments of critics that public service broadcasting was no longer justified. Deregulation of communication industries was a prerequisite to the breakdown of international trade barriers, and the shift toward increased privatisation brought new players into what had been a closed system (Day 1995).

As a result, many governments began the exercise of de-regulating the airwaves permitting private satellite transmission via both encryption and free-to-air, in addition to public service and private channels (Blumler 1992). Therefore, the deregulation coupled with technological advances led to the proliferation of viewing and listening opportunities and changes in the content of broadcast material. The multiplication of channels has meant that competition has become stiffer and

audiences have fragmented (Mpofu 1996). This development has also impacted on developing countries, putting pressure on state-owned media that have often acted as a government mouthpiece up till now, highlighting to them that they needed to change and become politically impartial.

The overview is that, according to Lanara (2002), significant pressures are being exerted on public broadcasters since broadcasting has become a fundamentally more competitive industry than it was 20 years ago. The public service monopolies were originally designed to provide the entire supply of programming for the market. With the advent of terrestrial competition, followed by multichannel cable, satellite and then by the digital revolution, public broadcasters have to operate in a completely different competitive world, presenting substantial adaptive challenges. Moreover, the whole context of competition has changed under the impact of globalisation. The McKinsey Report commissioned by the BBC in 1999, reviewing the situation in 20 countries in four continents, registered the increased competition and the other constraints that make life for public service broadcasting difficult in the multichannel age. The survey specifies the problems facing public service broadcasting in terms of competition, funding, growing and choosing strategies.

Thus, public service broadcasters now have to come to terms with a host of essentially novel conditions. According to Blumler (1992), these include: the termination of the monopolistic way of public service broadcasters; an invasion of transnational forces at corporate, production and distribution levels; a shift from spectrum scarcity to multi-channel abundance; the unleashing of unprecedented competition for revenue and viewing shares; uncertainties about how the programming patterns on offer will be affected; and associated uncertainties about likely shifts of audience preferences, among others. In most societies where the above changes have taken place, public service broadcasting institutions are threatened with a sharp rise of commercial entities resulting in stiff competition for audiences who increasingly seek to be diverted (through entertainment) rather than represented.

In response, public service broadcasters are consequently opting for more entertainment programmes as well as dominant forms of commercial broadcasting (Keane 1991; Murdock 1992). These worldwide changes are premised on a 'new

information order' of market freedom (Herman and McChesney 1999). This market influenced-approach parallels a philosophy that the market is the only 'democratic' regulatory mechanism (McChesney 1997:3). In an effort to increase the numbers of the audience, one of the main outcomes of this paradigm (market approach) is to shift the emphasis of broadcasting from informing, educating and entertaining together with the concept of quality programming, to an emphasis on fulfilling commercial interests by supplying the people with what they want (Hoynes 1994:28).

The main argument in the new paradigm is that regulation should favour the contributions of technology to the creation of a vibrant economy and to the convenience of consumers. As a result, governments are increasingly seen not to intervene, but to rely on the industry's self-imposed controls and perceptions of social responsibility. Siune and Hultèn (1998), for example, argue that in market-based regulation the role of the government is limited to establishing a legal framework that facilitates commerce. This demonstrates the paradox facing public service broadcasters today whose quest for survival is being compromised by commercial considerations, and not considerations for public service principles and values. Hence, Murdock's (1994) view that the liberalisation and privatisation trends represent an unholy alliance between western governments' desperation for growth and competition with one another for that growth. This is coupled with multinational corporations in search of new world markets in electronic technology and information goods and services.

The result of this trend, Murdock (1992) argues, will be to shift the balance in the cultural sector between the market and public service decisively in favour of the market and to shift the dominant definition of public information from that of a public good to that of a private commodity where audiences will be seen as consumers rather than citizens. Thus, the overall consequence of liberalisation particularly in developing nations will be a gap between the number of voices in society and the number heard in the media. This is because the public media in the competition for audiences is likely to lose its values and norms and become more concentrated and homogenised to a point where the commercial interests may over affect their news content. For example, a mobile communication company, Zain Zambia, sponsors all the ZNBC main news bulletins for both radio and television. This could contradict

any news items that are negative of these sponsors. This will be evident in the next section which gives a brief insight into the theoretical arguments regarding the construction of news.

In summing up the complex issues regarding the public service broadcasters in the new age, Lanara (2002) notes that the challenge for public service broadcasters in a global digital framework is to grasp the inevitable changes which new technology brings, without undermining the needs of audiences and societies for cultural continuity and identity, an intellectual framework and an ethos of citizenship. Public broadcasters should play a central part in society and avoid strategies of marginal survival or commercialisation. They should not exist just as another commercial television channel that happens to be owned by the state; nor should they operate as an elitist ghetto for services and programmes the commercial sector finds unattractive. As will be shown in the next section, public service broadcasters, far from becoming irrelevant, have crucial roles to play in making society a more democratic society.

Barker (2000) argues that, contrary to what is supposed by many, the case for public service broadcasters in the new world of globalisation and localisation is increased not decreased. In particular as the new technology generates new forms of market power, the case for broadcasters with distinctly public purposes is enhanced. Moreover, as national regulation via legislation becomes less effective, the case for influencing the market via direct provision of public service programming becomes stronger rather than weaker. In the case of Zambia, all these economic pressures are compounded by challenges facing ZNBC from a political point of view.

2.5 Public service broadcasting and the quality of the news.

As earlier indicated, the potential for power, control and manipulation inherent in the media organisations in general and public service programming in particular provides citizens an opportunity for basic democratic rights of freedom to inform and be informed, of universal access to accurate and pluralistic information, of communicating freely and fully participating in society. But in order to have informed and enlightened citizens as a prerequisite for the operation and the existence of democracy, the news aspect of public service programming stands out as the most important. In this regard, the news genre in public broadcasting provides an

indispensable service to democratic society because it can foster a culture of citizenship, enable citizens to be better informed about social, political and cultural issues and empower them by providing in the digital age a public space, accessible to all, for democratic debate (Lanara 2002:11).

This study is therefore based on the premise that news is one of the key features that defines a public service broadcaster in relation to public service programming. It will particularly look at the staff perceptions of their roles in meeting this aspect of public service broadcasting at ZNBC. This is underlined by the arguments and research which point to the news being a socially constructed aspect in understanding our view of the world. News is influential in shaping the thinking of the people, particularly broadcasting news because much of what is said carries strong impact especially when a news organisation has spent many years promoting a reputation for truthfulness and impartiality (Domatob 1987). In this regard, although ZNBC has a propagandistic history, it was widely expected to become credible under the new dispensation from 2002 onwards.

In studying news, scholars have argued that news is a creation of journalistic process, an artefact (Fowler 1991: 13, Bell 1991: 155-174). For instance, Hall (1978) argues that:

The media do not simply and transparently report events, which are 'naturally' newsworthy in themselves. News is the end product of a complex process, which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories (Cited in Fowler 1991:12).

The Glasgow University Media Group describes television news as:

A sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society. From the accents of the newscasters to the vocabulary of camera angles, news is a highly mediated product (cited in Negrine 1994:54).

As part of their daily activities in media institutions such as ZNBC, journalists select what events and sources that should be included in news. The selection is

accompanied by transformation and differential treatment in presentation, according to numerous political, economical and social factors (Fowler 1991). The process of selection and inclusion, and, by implication, of exclusion, contradicts the view that the news media give a full and comprehensive account of world events (Negrine 1994). So journalists help construct a reality that is made up of beliefs as well as facts. In fact, most news is constructed within a framework of firm expectations, which are used to guide the deployment of available resources. For Schlesinger (1978), the news that is received on any given day is not as unpredictable as much journalistic mythology would have people believe, but rather, many of the doings of the world are timed to meet the needs of a production system in many respects bureaucratically organised.

As has been widely observed, news media select events for reporting according to a complex set of criteria of newsworthiness. Criteria that are probably more or less unconscious in editorial practice are referred to as news values (Fowler 1991). But news values and conceptions of the significance of events are also ideological. For Golding and Elliot (1995), news is ideological because it provides an integrated picture of reality and a worldview supportive of the interests of powerful social groups (cited in Negrine 1994). For the critical school of media studies, the products of the mass media are systematically organised to present a picture of the world to assist in the reproduction of the relations of domination existing in society. Murdock (1973) also argues that in all political and economic systems, news coincides with and reinforces the definition of the political situation evolved by the political elite. A similar observation was made by Schudson (1998) that the media reinforce the 'cultural hegemony' of dominant groups, that is, they make the existing distribution of power and rewards seem to follow from nature or common sense and succeed in making opposition views appear unreasonable, quixotic or utopian, perhaps even to dissenters (cited in Curran and Gurevitch 2000: 181).

This study, therefore, recognises that news is not just reported, but it is also interpreted, and interpreting any event involves -among other things- the beliefs, opinions, hopes and aspirations of those gathering, reporting and publishing the news. In that process, inevitably, ideology partly determines what gets reported, when it is reported and how the reporting is done. The media do not only define for the majority

of the population what significant events are taking place, but also offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events (Hall et al. 1978: 57). Therefore in this whole news production process, politicians tend to seek access to communication channels operated by the media organisations. Going further, political actors must construct and adjust their messages to the demands of formats and genres of those particular media. Hall (1978) and others have shown how even production schedules, and conventions for access to sources, affect the content and representation of news (see Schlesinger 1978). In news, there is heavy reliance on planning structure, which creates a routine agenda of predictable stories which provide the backbone of each day's production requirement (Schlesinger 1978). One would also argue that broadcast newsrooms have a limited work force and cover only the stories they think are most newsworthy. There is also always pressure and the constant problem of controlling work processes to meet deadlines or output times.

All the above need to be taken into account in the determination of what should be selected and included in public service broadcasting news genre. As a result, this study will critically address the aspect of news production at ZNBC with the above theoretical arguments in mind in order to discover the staff's perceptions of their roles in the news selection and production in line with the public service broadcasting principles which require that broadcast news be impartial, representing and accommodating all views (at least within the bounds of ideology and production schedules discussed above) so as to secure "fair" play for the purposes of democracy.

This means, as Schlesinger puts it, in public service broadcasting news:

There should be no predominant groups or interests in society, but rather that there are only competing blocs of interest, whose competition, which is sanctioned and guaranteed by the state, ensures that power is diffused and balanced and that no particular interest outweighs heavily (1978: 166).

While recognising the effects of ideological and production issues, this notion holds that news should represent all interests and points of view without evaluative commitment to any. This pointed was further noted by the campaign for the

liberalisation of broadcasting in Southern Africa. According to MISA, some of the principles and duties of public broadcasting include:

To meet the requirement of pluralism there needs to be a comprehensive, in-depth and impartial news and information coverage across a range of broadcasting outlets, in order to support a fair and informed debate. This includes a mix of international, national and local issues, local perspectives and comprehensive coverage of the political process, including parliament, political party conferences, national and local elections (cited in Barker 2000).

As can be seen, the news production process is not simply a set of technical routines, which enables the producers to secure an “undistorted” picture of reality. This thesis is predicated on the assumption that public broadcast news staff can and should consciously constitute a collective of ‘neutral’, non-partisan operatives whose adherence to principles of public service broadcasting regarding news genre upholds professionalism in the choice of content, and ensures that fact and value are held rigidly apart (Schlesinger 1978:164). This thesis looks at how the ZNBC staff construe themselves and their role against this background. The next section addresses the policy framework within the operations of a public service broadcaster and how this milieu can address key issues of balancing news as well as editorial independence in accordance with the principles of public service broadcasting.

2.6 Broadcast policies and the editorial independence of a public service broadcaster.

Within the theoretical arguments on the construction of news discussed in the previous section, it can be argued that some constructions are more valid than others. It is generally and widely expected that editorial policy and decision-making in all broadcasting institutions should, ideally, be free from interference by government, governing board, and commercial interests (Barker 2000). In appreciating the relevance and importance of editorial independence at a public service broadcaster, it is necessary to properly contextualise the subject of editorial independence in relation to institutional and overall media and regulatory policies. This is relevant in that the public service broadcasters are expected to be editorially independent and yet also to account editorially to the public (as distinct from the government) (Tleane and

Duncan, 2003, cited in Berger and Jjuuko 2007). Hence, while public service broadcasters are expected to be independent in the sense of having the ability to make decisions without being controlled by anyone else, there are defined editorial standards, especially in a public service broadcasting ethos, that must be observed within the 'independent' environment for the smooth of operation of any media institution to avoid abuse by both a journalist's personal ideologies or powerful entities in society.

MISA defines editorial independence as:

the right of journalists and editors to make decisions on the basis of professional criteria, consistent with international standards, such as the newsworthiness of an event or its relevance to the public's right to know and in accordance with international codes of ethics of journalism (cited in Barker 2000: 3).

In public service broadcasting, this means that programming and related decisions should be free from interference that prevents them from fulfilling their public mandates (Warren 1998). In this context, editorial independence provides a layer of insulation from any potential form of corrupting influence (Mendel 1998:10).

Berger and Jjuuko (2007) analysed editorial independence at four different levels. First, the concept of editorial independence protects the right of newsroom staff to make day-to-day decisions regarding editorial matters. This means journalists are provided with the right to make decisions on the basis of professional criteria such as newsworthiness of an event or its relevance to the public's right to know, and in accordance with the codes of ethics of journalism (Barker 2000). It is, in this interpretation, primarily independence from the biases and values of owners where such may be contrary to the norms of free and professional journalism (Berger 2003), but also independence from other groups that may provide funding – in this case, advertisers and business sponsors.

Secondly, Berger and Jjuuko (2007:95) argue that editorial independence is the independence of editorial as a whole from the exclusively economic imperatives of a media institution, and in particular from those staffers who are responsible not only for the integrity of editorial content, but for generating revenues for the business.

The third level addresses the notion of the extent to which reporters are, to a degree, independent of their editors. This relates to the professional autonomy and responsibility of each rank-and-file journalist. A fourth level is the independence of journalists from their sources (Berger 1997). The same authors therefore argue that underpinning these levels of editorial independence there needs to be institutional independence from government and the business sector. Such status should also be guaranteed by the regulatory bodies that oversee the activities of the public service broadcasters (Kupe 2003; cited in Berger and Jjuuko 2007). Hence, the need for the creation of regulatory bodies that are divorced from government in many countries to oversee the operations of the broadcasting sector.

Alongside editorial independence, public service broadcasters are also faced with a unique accountability to the public in whose name they operate. This accountability can potentially bring about a tension between editorial independence and public accountability (Berger and Jjuuko 2007). The authors argue:

Although other perspectives may not perceive any substantial dichotomy between these imperatives, a tension is particularly visible when they are viewed from the perspective of those within the institution. Editorial independence directs a public service broadcaster away from vested external interests. Public accountability pushes in the reverse direction towards externalities that are supposed to represent the general interests of the public (Berger and Jjuuko 2007:96).

This tension is usually addressed by having clear policies to spell out what the content is of “editorial independence”, and what criteria and mechanisms are required for “public accountability”. In addressing this tension, policies should consist of principles of general application: the morals, scruples and rules by which all specific editorial content of the broadcaster should be judged. Since this is the framework upon which the editorial procedures are implemented in the day-to-day operation of a public service broadcaster, Berger and Jjuuko (2007) argue that the policy should specify that independence means accountability in relation to professional journalism norms and ethical standards in the first instance. Yet, because even private broadcasters ought to be accountable to such standards, professional autonomy does not, on its own, specify what public accountability entails, nor how this frames and defines the activities of a specifically public service broadcaster.

This is where public service broadcasters policies also need to elaborate upon the meaning of a public service mandate and limitation. For example, David Jordan, Controller, BBC Editorial Policy says:

In a society which regards freedom of speech and expression as a fundamental right the underlying principle we apply to all our reporting is relatively straightforward. It is that in principle there is no subject we will not cover in our news bulletins. Nothing is censored. Nothing can be proscribed.

But in practice we operate within limits, some imposed by law and others self imposed, to our own freedom of speech (BBC online accessed 17 February 2008).

In addressing the editorial policies that govern the operations of a public service broadcaster, it is also important for the broadcaster to narrow its scope of operation within itself so that individual journalists do not feel sidelined or intimidated regarding certain actions in their news reporting or programming. There is therefore need for a clear policy on upward referrals during the routines of news production in case a reporter or producer is not sure about a particular story or programme. A clear policy on referral also ensures that a journalist is not unnecessarily interfered with in his or her work by others who may have personal interests in a particular news item or programme. For example, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has defined a mechanism for such consultative processes in news and programme production (See Appendix V). According to the SABC, the upward referral is viewed as a mutually empowering, nurturing and developmental approach for all the staff involved. It is said to be not intended to shift editorial decision-making upwards; it is intended, when required, to underpin collective decision-making and shared editorial responsibility — especially when staffs are faced with difficult decisions — and to underscore the interdependence of the Corporation's credibility and that of its editorial staff. According to the SABC:

Upward referral is not intended to disallow production and broadcasting of controversial and compelling programmes; it is intended to assist in maintaining the highest ethical and editorial standards. It further assumes that editorial staffs are familiar with the functions, duties and values of the public broadcaster and are in the best position to make editorial decisions (SABC Policies, 2006:6).

The practice of upward referral is described as giving journalists and other news staff an ideal mechanism for consultation, first with peers, and then with senior management, before taking a decision. Though critics may question such a system in terms of the extent to which an issue can be referred, as well as who determines what should be referred, it is however a good beginning in resolving issues of conflict in the newsroom that can protect journalists against internal interference.

What all this means ultimately is that investigating public broadcasting at ZNBC means examining the newsroom's editorial independence and its policies and procedures, and whether these avoid a situation where journalists are credibly accused of favouring one political party or interest group.

2.7 Conclusion

The chapter began by discussing the theoretical arguments regarding the concept of public service broadcasting and its key features. It later gave an understanding of the role of the media in general and public service broadcasting in the wider society where various opinions are communicated in democratic public sphere, and in the process mapped out the obligations ideally expected of an institution that is of public service. The public sphere perspective, as revealed in the fourth part of the discussion, amplifies the importance of public service broadcasting in the democratic process in society. The chapter also discussed contemporary challenges faced by the public service broadcasting entities in their effort to meet their obligations, and argued for the increased importance of public service programming in new, more competitive environments.

This was related to the final section that discussed arguments regarding the news production theory which established that while construction of news may be routine driven and ideological, it should ideally strive to represent all interests and points of view without evaluative commitment to any. It also addressed issues of editorial independence, news policies and the role of these in a public service broadcasting newsroom. The next chapter discusses the media and political landscape in Zambia in general and the ZNBC news genre in particular.

CHAPTER THREE

Media and political landscape in Zambia

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the political and media landscape of Zambia since independence to date. It will particularly pay attention to the development of the broadcast media industry, especially ZNBC, in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting and public sphere approach which are the main focus of the study. It will attempt to highlight the relationship that existed between politics and the media since independence and the transformations that took place in these spheres.

3.1 Brief history of broadcasting in Zambia.

As in many African countries, the development of the broadcast media in Zambia was directly linked to the objectives of the British Empire of using the media as a tool for communicating and controlling the governed. In Zambia, the national broadcaster, now Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), has gone through different phases since its founding pre-independence in 1964 to the present, largely according to the dictates of the ruling regimes. Harry Franklin, who was the Director of Information in the colonial administration, set up the first radio station in Lusaka in 1941 for the colonial government. This followed a series of amateur broadcasting activities on the Copperbelt Province by the European Amateur Wireless Clubs that conducted experimental broadcasts twice a week from 1939 (Kasoma 2002). A radio set called the “saucepan special” introduced in 1949 became the first popular mass-produced radio with 1,500 sets being sold within the first three months and in the next few years, 50,000 sets were imported. Later on, the invention of the transistor led to many households along the line of rail and other urban centres owing radio sets (Kasoma 2002). Television was introduced in 1961 to serve the mainly large mining and commercial community on the Copperbelt. According to Kasoma (2002), a private company, the London Rhodesia Company (Lonrho) started television broadcasting in Kitwe.

Shortly after independence in 1964, the new government took over direct control of many industries, including the only broadcaster then called Northern Rhodesia Broadcasting Services (NRBS) and became known as Zambia Broadcasting

Corporation (ZBC). This station now combined both radio and television services that had been moved from Kitwe to Lusaka to become part of the broadcasting system run and controlled by the government. The station was expected to operate along the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) model of providing serious educational and cultural programming that would be insulated from both political and commercial influence (Kasoma 2002:5; Chirwa 1997; Foster 1992:12; Tomaselli 1994:127).

Shortly afterwards, the station again changed from ZBC to Zambia Broadcasting Services (ZBS) and operated under the socialist notion of promoting what was to become a single-party and its government. As the only broadcaster then, the station operated as a non-profit making organisation that was directly controlled and funded by the national treasury until 1985 when it was required to commercialise and became the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) (Moyo 1997; Moore 1991).

3.2 Post-colonial political and media situation in Zambia

Zambia gained independence from Britain in 1964 under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda with his United National Independence Party (UNIP) which dominated the initial multiparty parliament until December 1972 when the country became a one-party state (Chikulo 1979; Mwanakatwe 1994). With the adoption of the One-Party Participatory Democracy system that banned all opposition political parties, UNIP became the sole political party. The political culture was based on intra-party electoral competition, that is, voters had to choose an individual within the party based on suitability and credibility, and not on a party label (Chikulo 1996; Mwanakatwe 1994; Kasoma 2002). During this period, both the press and broadcasting media had largely been integrated under government control. As Kasoma (1997) notes what followed was a period of almost total subjugation of the country's media. Kaunda used the media as tools for propagating his ideology, the philosophy of humanism, which he effectively used to silence all opposition and criticism. He maintained that the journalistic profession must develop as an integral part of the humanist transformation of Zambia (Kasoma 1989).

The media control was further assured by the requirement that for people to hold public office under presidential appointments they had to be members of Kaunda's party (Banda 1997). According to Matibini (2006), what also made things difficult

under the rule of Kaunda was the legal provision that allowed the President to take over all the broadcasting stations or any particular broadcasting station and direct its operations during the state of emergency so long as the president considered it expedient. This therefore meant that since Kaunda's government was in a state of emergency for most of his 27 years rule, ZNBC remained under direct government control because of these emergency powers that remained in force. Such sweeping powers in the law had a direct impact on the actual content of broadcasting (Matibini 2006).

In Zambia therefore, like the former Soviet Union, the media was seen as a propaganda tool for UNIP as a political party, even when they were owned by the state. Bagdikian (1983) has noted that communist authorities have always recognised that to control the public they must control information (Asante 1997). The party and its government (the term used to address UNIP government) controlled the major daily newspapers, *Times of Zambia* and *Zambia Daily Mail*, and their Sunday versions, *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Mail* (Kasoma 2000). In addition, they were in full control of ZNBC, which operates the nation-wide radio and television station (Kasoma 1997). According to Kasoma (1997), both radio and television were extensively used for government propaganda, and no dissenting views or news were allowed to be broadcast. This was within the wider context of a political situation in which political party and government bureaucracy were so fused together that they were one and the same thing (Banda 1997). As Dillon-Malon (1990) states, the rationale for this action was seen in Kaunda's ideology of humanism which was similar to the socialist notions of governing.

With this ideological framework, Moore (1991) argues that the Zambian media were seen, not as sovereign in their own right, but as tools for government to utilise in bringing about national integration. According to Banda (1997), this reportorial orientation was so embedded in the political structure that the media unwittingly or unconsciously accorded Kaunda the role of definer of both the content and placement of news items. His news invariably always came first regardless of the news value of what he was saying or doing (Kasoma 1997). Kasoma (1997) notes that there were instances where both radio and television news started off as the main headline of their news bulletins Kaunda playing golf or viewing game in a game park and then

much later in the bulletin reported some earth-shattering news of a disaster. The UNIP government treated ZNBC radio and television as government mouthpieces created to defend government policies and decisions.

3.3 Third Republic politics and the media in Zambia

The 1990s political transformations that characterised many African countries saw Kaunda yielding to pressure to allow the re-introduction of multi-party politics. One of the opposition parties that were formed following this move was the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) led by a former trade union leader Fredrick Chiluba. As an opposition party MMD promised to privatise and free the public media, including ZNBC, due to the imbalanced coverage they received during campaigns (Moyo 1997). But contrary to campaign promises, once in power the MMD government, while liberalising the media industry in terms of ownership (enabling several private media houses to spring up after 1991), kept a strong hold on the public media.

According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting policy document of 1996, the Chiluba government saw no need to rush into media reforms because there were adequate policies to handle the new political and economic transformation. The policy document states that the MMD government was committed to the promotion of a free press hence the decision to liberalise. It, however, noted that whereas government was trying to reform the media and provide more press freedom, the authorities would ensure that journalists did not maliciously ridicule members of the legislature, judiciary, or the executive, or indeed any citizen.

Government also put the blame on the poor standards of journalism in the country as reason for the delay in changing the status of state-owned media. They observed that it was dangerous for government to let go because the private media was always anti-government, hence the need for a media that would correct the negative publicity against government (Chirwa 1997; Kasoma 2002:19). The ruling party found it convenient to maintain the public media houses which they controlled (Chirwa 1997). Thus, in spite of the changes in government, journalists in the public media instead of becoming less partisan rather switched their allegiance from the previous Kaunda

regime to the MMD government, with most of their news consisting of official reactions to private media reports (Banda 1997).

According to Makayi (2002), there has been more rampant victimisation of journalists during the MMD's reign than at any other time in Zambia's history. Opposition parties and civil society groups such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) who felt betrayed by MMD vehemently opposed this and demanded what they believed would be "fair" media coverage from the public media because they were largely funded from public resources through the national treasury (MISA 2000). According to MISA, there were several other factors that made the association push for media policy reforms especially in the broadcast sector later in Chiluba's reign. The main one was the political victimisation of the MISA members, especially private radio stations, by the ruling MMD party politicians. MISA, furthermore, noted that the government-owned media was virtually inaccessible to opposing views to the MMD, contrary to the party's earlier promises. In fact when the MMD lost the battle to cleanse themselves of their bad governance record in the government media, they turned against the private media, labelling them as being irresponsible journalists who should be 'sorted out' for damaging the government's image (Kasoma 2002). This happened especially after Chiluba won a second term in office in 1996 but was fast losing his popularity because of the way he handled the presidential and parliamentary elections and the Republican Constitution among other things (Mulentambo 2002). According to the European Union elections observer mission cited in Matibini (2006), the Chiluba administration manipulated the electoral process and the media in their favour.

3.4. Broadcast pluralism evolution in Zambia

The liberalisation of airwaves since 1992 has enabled a number of investors to start up radio and television stations. The decision to open airwaves to private broadcasting might seem to be in line with the ideological basis on which the MMD government was voted into office following the multi-party elections of October 1991 (Maja-Pearce 1995, Banda 1997). But the majority of these are religious stations while the rest are either community or commercial stations (Banda, 1998, 2000). The first private broadcasting stations in Zambia were licensed in 1993 under Section 7 (1) of Zambia National Broadcasting (Licensing) Regulations, which were enacted in

December 1993. The first private radio station to be set up was the Radio Christian Voice, owned by British evangelist, Bob Edmonton (Banda 1997). The Catholic Church has been granted licenses to operate six radio stations; Yatsani Radio in Lusaka, Radio Ichengelo on the Copperbelt province, Radio Chikuni in Southern province, Radio Maria in Eastern province, Radio Liseli in the Western province and Radio Mano in Luapula province. The conditions of their broadcasting licenses for religious stations do not permit them to air political broadcasts (Banda 1998). They have been told in no uncertain terms that they should not veer into political reporting or else their licenses will be revoked (Banda 1998). Early in 2006, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Emmanuel Nyirenda wrote to all the private radio stations telling them to avoid operating outside their limitations because government would withhold their licenses if they did not do so (*Post Newspaper, May 17, 2006*). A number of these stations have, however, ignored these directives and still cover issues that are political in nature.

There are several commercial radio and television stations established after 1996 that cover political issues but do not transmit nation-wide such - as Radio Phoenix, Q FM, and Hot FM in Lusaka, Sky FM in Monze, Zambezi FM and Radio Musio-o-Tunya in Livingstone, Breeze FM in Chipata etc. Then there are several community radio stations such as Mazabuka Community Radio station, set up in February 2000 by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services and UNESCO, and Radio Lyambai in Mongu started in 2000 and many others located in various parts Zambia. To date none of these private and community radio stations covers nation-wide, and ZNBC which has broader obligations and is publicly financed, remains the only nation-wide public radio and television station and also open for political broadcasts.

3.5.1 Media law reforms

The first attempt to control ZNBC happened during the MMD's first months in government. The MMD's first Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Reverend Stan Kristafor, ordered the banning of a Muslim radio programme scheduled for broadcast by ZNBC on the basis that Zambia was a Christian country. Reverend Kristafor was himself a committed born-again christian, as was President Chiluba and several other members of the government. Other incidences of government control of the public broadcaster during the Chiluba era involved the

banning of the transmission of a live television discussion programme “Election Issues 2001” sponsored by Coalition 2001, a conglomerate of NGOs monitoring the 2001 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections. The NGOs later applied for an injunction against the banning of the programme in the courts of law to which the court upheld the injunction against state broadcaster. The court ruled that the state-owned ZNBC was wrong to interfere with the smooth running of the programme "Election Issues 2001" because the public had the right to know.

Against these and many other cases, media bodies in Zambia led by the MISA-Zambian chapter spearheaded media reforms aimed at changing the broadcast laws and transforming ZNBC into a fully-fledged public broadcaster that could cover all the political and civil society players in a balanced way. The support of other media associations such as the Zambia Media Women’s Association which represents the interests of women journalists in the country, Press Association of Zambia, which represents the interests of government owned media journalists, and the Society for Senior Journalists, which represents the interests of veteran journalists, and opposition members of parliament made it easier for MISA to accelerate the media reforms. With the help of the donor community, MISA managed to organise several media policy reform workshops and engaged several private law practitioners to draft the new media bills (Mulentambo 2002).

A real opportunity for media reforms came in 2001 when the MMD won a disputed third term in office under President Levy Mwanawasa with a significantly reduced majority. Among the disputes that were submitted to the courts of law as grounds for 2001 election nullification, was the partisan state media coverage in favour of MMD. Opposition parties, civil society organisations and election monitoring groups protested against what they called the ‘blatant bias’ of government media, particularly ZNBC, against the opposition parties (*The Post, January 15, 2002*). This also led to growing civil society demands to make ZNBC into what they regarded as a genuine public service broadcaster (Mulentambo 2002). After sustained pressure on the government to grant the corporation greater autonomy, the 1987 Act under which ZNBC came into being was amended in 2002 to remove some of the regulatory powers from the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services and to allow for the appointment of an independent board to run the national broadcaster.

The new Act also provided for TV licences, which are levied on those who own TV sets, to enable the station become more sustainable financially.

Some of the specific provisions that were included in the ZNBC Amendment Act that relate to the principles of public service broadcasting, and in particular to this study, are:

- a) to provide varied and balanced programming for all sections of the population;
- b) to serve the public interest;
- c) to meet high professional standards;
- d) to contribute to the development of free and informed opinions and as such, constitute an important element of the democratic process;
- e) to reflect as comprehensively as possible, the range of opinion and political, philosophical, religious, scientific and artistic trends;
- f) to defend democratic freedoms; and
- g) to broadcast news and current affairs programmes which shall be comprehensive, unbiased and independent and commentary which shall be clearly distinguished from news.

Further, the laws authorised the creation of an Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) answerable to the National Assembly to regulate the broadcasting industry (Matibini 2006). In regulating the broadcasting industry, including ZNBC, the IBA is empowered to, among other things:

- grant, review, suspend and cancel licences and frequencies for broadcasting and diffusion services in an open and transparent manner;
- to enforce the compliance of broadcasting and diffusion services with the conditions of the licences issued under the Act;
- to issue, to any or all broadcasters, advisory opinions relating to broadcasting standards and ethical conduct in broadcasting; and
- to receive, investigate and decide on complaints concerning broadcasting services (IBA Act 2002, cited in Matibini 2006:80).

According to Matibini (2006:84), ZNBC and every licensed broadcasting service is required, under the Act, to develop a code of professional standards which shall comply with, among other minimum standards:

- comprehensive, unbiased and independent news broadcasting and current affairs programmes with commentary clearly distinguished from news;
- observance of procedures for correcting factual errors and redressing unfairness; and
- observance of the principles of the right to reply.

ZNBC's legal mandate as a public broadcaster that is (in part) publicly funded it should, in principle, provide impartial editorial content. In general, this is also affirmed by the ZNBC Television Licence Task Force promotional statements (see Appendix IV) during the sensitisation period to persuade people to pay licence fees. In the ZNBC campaign dubbed 'when you pay it will show' the public broadcaster committed itself, among other things:

- To maintain the highest ethical standards of broadcasting.
- Balanced diverse news content. We are in particular committed to ensure that the cross section of the Zambian society is afforded the opportunity to express their views on matters of national interest. (ZNBC – Television Licence Task Force 2002),

The public broadcaster also has producers' and editorial guidelines which done in 1987 when it became a corporation and have now been revised to suit the current legislation, but at the time of this research, they were still awaiting approval by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and so could not be accessed.

The view for an impartial news coverage is further reinforced by the fact that ZNBC as an institution participated in the development of guidelines and principles for broadcast coverage of elections in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region. These guidelines (see Appendix III) were adopted in 2005 by the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA), a regional association of public broadcasters. Among the SABA guiding principles are that the public is entitled to accurate, fair, impartial and balanced information about the election procedures, and the positions of political parties/independents and/or candidates on issues.

Broadcasters are therefore committed to make every effort to present all available and

relevant information to the public. Broadcasters will further ensure that coverage of the elections will be designed to emphasise the relevance of elections and encourage participation by all citizens in the election process. According to a MISA- Zambia press statement (April 2006), during the launch of the guidelines, ZNBC committed itself to adhere to the principles of fairness, objectivity and impartiality in its editorial content.

3.5.2 Struggle for media laws implementation

With most of the concerns raised by the media fraternity, addressed by the ZNBC Amendment Act Number 20 of 2002 becoming law on 31st December 2002, there was great anticipation that the broadcasting regulatory framework would bring more autonomy for ZNBC. However, the implementation of this law had by the end of 2007 not been implemented, save for the introduction of the television licence fees. According to the provisions of the law, selected media bodies put forward names of people from different backgrounds to sit on the IBA and ZNBC board. But despite the of the ZNBC Amendment Act No. 20 of 2002, the old ZNBC Board of Directors continued to meet and make policy decisions contrary to the legal provisions regarding constituting of the board of directors. According to Matibini (2006), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services maintained that the Board of Directors would be disbanded only once the recruitment as provided by law was completed to avoid a vacuum.

Later in 2003, the parliamentary appointments committee chose various names to sit on both the IBA and ZNBC board as per legal provisions. These names were presented to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting who was expected then to present them to parliament for ratification (Mulentambo 2003). There was, however, contention between the minister and media bodies regarding the interpretation of the law on whether the minister had the power to veto the names or not. The minister contended that the names were merely recommendations and that government could not be silent in the entire process. The government argued that in making the appointments, the Minister could accept, reject, or indeed modify the recommendations in accordance with the law and on reasonable grounds. But the media bodies contended that the law does not empower the minister to adjust their selection, as doing so amounted to usurping the powers of parliament that was

mandated to ratify the names. This prompted the media bodies to sue government and seek a court interpretation of the law. The media bodies won a High Court judgement in 2005 and government was ordered to table the names before parliament without any adjustments. However, in an apparent attempt to further delay the process, government made an appeal to the Supreme Court (Matibini 2006). In its judgement in late 2007, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of government, arguing that the names to the minister were recommendations that could be treated as mere advice and so were not binding. Meanwhile the same ZNBC board has continued to operate. It therefore remains to be seen how far the legal provisions will be implemented after the court ruling, that had also dragged on the process, was disposed, and in regard to President Mwanawasa's statement in his 2008 state of the nation address that:

In relation to the media law reforms whose implementation commenced in 2002, I wish to report that that the ZNBC board of directors will be in place this year. The Independent Broadcasting Authority will also be made operational after the board members have been ratified by this house (Presidential Speech, January 11, 2008).

As will be shown in chapter five, there is also currently a lot of confusion regarding the editorial policy framework at ZNBC because of there is no clear policy position for the newsroom staff to follow.

3.6. ZNBC's current situation

In Zambia, like many African countries, broadcast media is still the most important source of news and entertainment. In a sample of 1.89 million households, 64 percent had a radio set and it was found to be the most common asset in homes (Banda 2006). Furthermore, the 2002 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey found that radio is the most used form of media. According to the survey (cited in Banda 2006), 55 percent of male and 45 percent of female parents and guardians listen to radio at least once in a week, while 22 and 28 percent respectively watch television. These figures are almost consistent with the Central Statistical Office (CSO) of 1998 which gave 61 per cent of the urban population and 58 per cent of the rural population as having a radio set, while 32 per cent of the urban population and six per cent of the rural population had a TV set at home. Particularly important for rural-dwellers is the ZNBC's Radio One, which broadcasts in seven vernacular languages.

By contrast, the most successful newspapers do not sell more than 30,000 copies per issue and circulate little outside the urban areas (CSO 1994, 2001).

In its present form, ZNBC has three state-run radio channels – Radios I, II, and IV – and one television channel which has a monopoly of nation-wide viewership. Radio I with a listening public of three million people broadcasts on FM along the line of rail and shortwave frequencies in seven main local languages: Bemba, Nyanja, Lozi, Tonga, Lunda, Luvale and Kaonde. Radio II with a listening public of 4.4 million people broadcasts on shortwave and FM in English while Radio IV with about 1.8 million people is mainly an FM musical channel that competes with the emerging private commercial radio stations (www.znbc.co.zm 2007). What is common about all the three radio outlets is the network news that is broadcast at 07:00hours, 13:15hours and 20:00hours everyday. The TV channel with a weekly audience of about 4.5 million people offers a range of news bulletins in English and the seven main local languages. The main English bulletins are broadcast at 10:00hrs, 19:00hrs and 22:00hrs on a daily basis.

Given these figures, it is clear that electronic media are far more important in terms of reach (and potential influence) than written media in Zambia. As a result, there is a special obligation on the government to ensure that its national broadcasting corporation is both equipped to fulfil its task of broadcasting news impartially and enjoys sufficient editorial independence to do so without fear or favour. The onus is also on the ZNBC staff members to demonstrate that they truly understand and implement the legal requirements of the new laws without any tendency to favour certain position or players in society.

But, as things stand, ZNBC has continued to be criticised for carrying content that unduly favours the government and the ruling party, at the expense of genuine public and opposition political parties' participation in the broadcasting service (see for instance, MISA News September, 2006). Matibini (2006) observes that political interference seems to play a big role in ZNBC's programming and news content despite the efforts that have been made to transform the corporation into an independent institution. Matibini's claims are further noted by the European Union Elections observer mission report (September 2006) on the Zambian media's

coverage of political players. The study did a content analysis of the main media houses namely *The Post*, *Times of Zambia*, *Zambia Daily Mail*, ZNBC and Radio Phoenix. According to the study, ZNBC news programming was tilted in favour of the ruling MMD. The study notes that ZNBC failed to provide balance between candidates towards the 2001 elections in key areas such as news (*The Post* 2002).

Further, an apparent disapproval of ZNBC's coverage of the opposition was widely seen when its reporters were constantly harassed by opposition political party supporters at meeting addressed by opposition leaders. The supporters claimed that even if ZNBC reporters covered their meetings, nothing would come out on the news or the facts would be distorted to favour the ruling party (*The Post*, August 30, 2006). The ZNBC pro-government stance was also been argued in the many complaints by the civil society such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). They strongly protested after the 2006 elections against what they called the 'blatant bias' of government media, particularly ZNBC television and radio channels, against the opposition parties (*The Post*, September 2006; *MISA News* September 30, 2006). Another civic organisation group, the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), observed that the public media were being used as campaign tools for the ruling MMD, and that this kind of "bias" was particularly prevalent with ZNBC and the *Times of Zambia* (Fodep 2006 Election Interim Report). FODEP observed that:

The public media in particular have a social responsibility to provide fair coverage and access to a cross-section of society without any form of discrimination. Though the Electoral Code of Conduct has a provision that aims at regulating the conduct of the media during election campaigns, the code is not being observed. The public media were being used as campaign tools for the ruling MMD. The coverage of political parties by the ZNBC, *Times of Zambia* and the *Daily Mail* was in most cases in favour of the ruling MMD (FODEP Interim Report, 2006).

There were also several letters to the editor in *The Post* complaining about ZNBC's coverage of political players. One person wrote:

May I air my views at the unfair coverage by ZNBC. Sata [opposition leader – CH] had a rally in Chawama, ZNBC could not cover the entire crowd. I saw the crowd for only 11 seconds on ZNBC news. Why should ZNBC broadcast all those nasty and colonial documentaries about MMD's activities this period such as the Gwembe projects and the Kariba Dam? (*The Post*, July 15, 2006).

In terms of revenue collection, ZNBC television licence fees have overtaken government grants to become the second largest source of revenue for the corporation. In 2005/2006, revenue from commercial sources, chiefly advertising, accounted for 70 percent, TV licences for 20 percent, dividends from Multi-Choice Zambia 7 percent while government funding stood at 3 percent (ZNBC Budget 2005/6). According to ZNBC Public Relations Manager Miriam Tonga, the corporation makes about 300 million Kwacha (About US\$70,000) per month from TV licences but this could improve with more compliance in paying TV licence fees (*The Post, March 25, 2006*). As of the 2003 to 2004 budget, ZNBC licence fees accounted for percent of the corporation's total revenue, and this amount was expected to rise as more people were being captured, while 75 percent still came from sale of advertising space.

The significance of the new laws, and as promised by ZNBC TV promotional leaflets and television adverts, is that since people now have to pay directly, they are especially entitled to expect a public service broadcaster free of any political or commercial influences and covering a diversity of groups (Curran and Gurevitch 2000; McQuail 2000; also see chapter two and Appendix IV). With the current competition for revenue with the private media houses, ZNBC may clearly be an example of a public service broadcasting institution that diverges from its public service role and serves its commercial interests. Already, all the ZNBC news bulletins (including news summaries) are sponsored by private companies for commercial interests. Hence one wonders whether ZNBC can carry a story that is critical of such an advertiser, especially if there are no clear editorial guidelines on how such conflicts can be resolved.

3.7 ZNBC's newsroom editorial process

In understanding the content of the ZNBC news bulletins, the newsroom's perception of which is the subject of this study in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting, it is important to briefly contextualise the newsroom processes from origination of story ideas to the final news bulletin. The main editorial team for ZNBC falls under the Director of Programmes who is the main gatekeeper for all ZNBC programmes and news. Below the Director of Programmes are several senior executives and a number of reporters who run the news content on a daily basis for

the public broadcaster. As earlier stated, the local languages news content is a mere translation of the main English content for each day.

The operational structure is such that journalists meet every day around 08:30 in the morning in what is commonly referred to as the “diary meeting”. This meeting is normally chaired by the Assignment Editor who discusses the story ideas with reporters and approves them. Once the diary has been drawn up for the day, the reporters go in the field to gather the approved items or indeed anything that maybe newsworthy that may not have been submitted such as breaking news. On return from the field, reporters write stories in close consultation with the News Manager and the Assignment editor. These stories would also be handed to the sub-editors for possible grammatical and other errors. For the mid-day radio news bulletins, a lot of these stories that are not be deemed controversial (in the unwritten rules of ZNBC newsroom) can be approved by the news manager. Later in the afternoon, there is another editorial meeting that is chaired by the Director of programmes, comprising the News Manager, the Assignment Editor, the Controller News and Current Affairs and at times even the ZNBC Director General. In that meeting, the Assignment Editor and/or the News Manager present the day’s story lines that have been collected by reporters. The meeting scrutinises the stories and approves the ZNBC main TV news story line-up and other stories for subsequent news briefs.

As already argued, the purpose of a public service broadcaster is to give a balanced news coverage, but it is at any of the above stages in the process that a story can deviate from the principles of public service broadcasting.

3.8 Conclusion

The above discussion has provided a brief historical perspective of ZNBC from the time of inception during the colonial period in 1941 to the time the radio airwaves were liberalised during the 1990s and the subsequent steps towards making ZNBC a public service broadcaster. The chapter has also given a historical perspective by highlighting some of the key political and economic challenges that affected ZNBC and other media houses at every turn in the history of Zambia. The next chapter presents the methods of data collection and analysis employed by the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methods of data collection and analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to carry out this study. It discusses the research design, the physical location of the study, the population of the study, sampling methods, research procedures as well as data analysis and processing techniques. It also highlights some of the limitations to the study and the efforts made to overcome them. The above methodological approaches will be discussed in line with the questions raised in this study as well as their relevance to the aims of the study.

4.1 Research design.

This study employed qualitative methods of data collection. The choice of the qualitative approach tradition was due to its ability to use versatile techniques to understand social phenomena. It allows for more focused analysis of experience and perceptions (Lincoln and Guba 1995; Cantrell 1993). According to Lincoln and Guba, qualitative methods are important because of their reliance on the human being as the key instrument of research. They point out that:

Qualitative methods are extensions of normal human activities of looking, listening, speaking, reading and the like. We believe the human will therefore tend towards interviewing and observing than mining available documents and records (1995:199).

Bryman (1988) notes that interviews in particular are important in generating a rounded account of a particular group or organisation since they require minimum guidance from the researcher and allow “considerable latitude for the interviewees to express freely” (1988:46). He further points out that qualitative research is deemed to be much more fluid and flexible than quantitative research in that it emphasises discovering unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans in response to serendipitous occurrences (Bryman 1988). Hence the main technique that was used under this approach is the semi-structured interviews. This facilitated an active, open-ended dialogue with minimal guidance.

It also gave considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves (Deacon 1999). The face-to-face interview was the most common type of qualitative technique used, as opposed to other forms as pointed out by Jankowski (1993). It gives the research an opportunity to, among other things, interview people and understand their perspectives and obtain descriptions that are normally unavailable for observation (Lindlof 1995:5). As observed by Bryman (1988), the flexibility of this face-to-face verbal interchange or in-depth interviewing in this study was important to get a wider understanding and description of the problem from the respondents' personal perspectives as well as easy interpretation of the respondent's response and data analysis.

Aware of the weaknesses of this method as observed by Jankowski (1993) and Deacon (1999) where interviewees could have painted a glossy picture of the issue, the researcher used an interview guide which pushed interviewees to substantiate and elaborate on issues according to his agenda. For example, he asked them to identify the practical changes that have taken place to address civil society or political party criticisms of unbalanced coverage as observed by the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), in their 2002 post election report (FODEP 2002).

The study also followed the topic-focused interviews, which were intertwined with the non-structured technique that contains no pre-specified questions. This means those questions were not asked in any order. This gave respondents a chance to provide other details that might have been left out in the questioning. The advantage of this technique is that it gave respondents a chance to provide other information than what the interview guide mentioned and as a result new issues and questions of interest came up during interviews. All interviews were recorded on a hard disk audio recorder.

4.2 The physical location of the study

This study set out to investigate the news staff's perceptions of the impact of the introduction of television license fees on news at the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting. It was convenient for me and most of my respondents to carry out the study in Lusaka, Zambia, at the Mass Media Complex which houses the headquarters of ZNBC and is

the nerve centre of its national operations. It was appropriate to the study to conduct most of the interviews in the respondents' own environment (Deacon 1999). Four features describe the kind of interview approach that was used, following the lead of Mano about the interview:

It takes place with respondents known to have been involved in a particular experience and refers to situations that have been analysed prior to interview. It proceeds on the basis of an interview guide specifying topics related to the research hypothesis and it is focussed on the subjective experiences regarding the situations under study (1997: 33).

4.3 Population of study and sample selection

Whereas the study could have targeted all the ZNBC employees because of the various roles they play in the daily operations of the broadcaster, the research targeted those whose roles are vital or closely related to the news production for the public broadcaster's radio and TV channels. This is because of the focus of the study which was looking at the news aspect at ZNBC in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting. These employees were important because their perceptions affect the extent to which ZNBC news has been transformed. It was therefore important to interview the targeted staff to gauge how they understand their responsibility, roles and expectations from members of the general public in the new order. In line with the principles of public service broadcasting, the study was also interested in how these people perceived their own situation as creators of news for the nation, what they think about coverage of opposing views on issues in the changing media scene, pressure and interference from authority, and know what they do not like, not what they do. Themes such as editorial independence, licence fees and laws, ZNBC's editorial policy context and the staff's personal perceptions of their work in the newsroom were addressed in each interview. Therefore, the population that was crucial to this study was the ZNBC newsroom structure. It should be noted here that the news for ZNBC's local languages is a mere translation of the main English news bulletins. As a result, local languages sections have nothing to do with news content production other than merely translating what has been given to them by the main newsroom. The local languages staffers are therefore less relevant for this study. Thus they were not included as part of the purposive sampling method that gets subjects that are crucial to the validity of the study (Wimmer and Dommick 1991). In total

eight people were interviewed in the ZNBC newsroom structure, representing four from the lower level and four from the senior executive level. The whole structure or universe for the research was fifteen people.

To make meaningful findings, the researcher interviewed personnel in the newsroom structure at various levels as discussed in chapter two, because of the role they play in the final news content that can either suit or diverge from the principles of public service broadcasting. All the interviews were recorded with the knowledge of the interviewees.

4.4 Research procedure.

The researcher discussed the content of the research instruments with his supervisor, who advised him on how the instruments could capture information from the respondents. The supervisor advised him to consider arranging questions on the interview guide according to themes related to the study. The relevant authorities and respondents at ZNBC were very co-operative because of a relationship that exists between the institution and the research. Interview appointments with the various respondents were arranged to suit the times and venues convenient to them. Most interviews were carried out in their offices. Others were interviewed outside of the offices to avoid disturbances from fellow workers, friends and visitors while in office. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on how informative and patient the individual respondents were. As per qualitative method technique, probing was employed where the respondents had not clearly or adequately answered the questions. At the onset of each interview, the researcher explained to the respondents the purpose of the study, thus their consent was obtained in all cases. Due to the fact that the study targeted detailed qualitative data, he personally conducted all the interviews. All in all, data collection took four weeks as many of the respondents were busy with field assignments.

4.5 Data analysis and processing

This study used a widespread approach in media research which is thematic coding. This is a loosely inductive categorisation of interview or observational extracts with

reference to various concepts, headings or themes (Jensen 1982:247; Hansen et al 1998: 113; Holsti 1969:116). Wilbraham (2005:2) defines a theme as a single assertion about some subject. Thematic analysis does not merely rely on the specific use of words as units for categorisation, but relies on the coder to recognise certain themes or ideas in the text, and then allocate these to pre-determined categories (Beardsworth 1980, in Deacon et al 1999: 118). The study acknowledges the validity of Holsti's arguments that such thematic categorisation may be problematic and time consuming as well as laborious as the researcher has to make sure that he/she has gone through all the data to develop sufficient categories for data capturing (1999). Thematic analysis is also complex in that the unit of analysis is not so easily identifiable. This is because a single sentence can contain several assertions, all classifiable under a single theme or each classifiable under separate themes. As a result, it is important that in developing theme categories, the analyst must be able to detect the major motifs in the text and recognise them in their various forms (Berelson 1952:139).

Data analysis and processing began with the transcription of all the interviews after they were recorded. The information was then typed and manually analysed using themes and code categories in the interview guide and the conceptual framework. During the analysis, a list of beliefs, opinions, ideas, observations, statements and attitudes expressed for each topic (theme) of the interview were made.

Answers from the different respondents were compared to establish the most occurring responses and these were used in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The data were summarised in a narrative form and the most significant quotations used to illustrate the major findings of the study as presented in chapter five. Relevant literature is also used to discuss the findings of the study. The above is in line with Jensen and Jankowski's view that "drawing of conclusions centrally involves the researcher as an agent of analysis and interpretation" (1991:64).

4.6 Limitations of the study.

A few methodological, practical and theoretical limitations were encountered during the course of study. Some respondents, especially reporters, at the outset did not feel free to air their views for fear of negative repercussions. However, once it was

explained to them that the purpose of the study was mainly for academic purposes, and as a result it has very limited circulation, they became more responsive. The process was also helped by the fact that most of the respondents knew the researcher personally.

It should however be noted that the fact that the researcher is known to the respondents could have had its own unintended overall outcome of the research. For example, some respondents could have answered as a way of openly venting their anger at the ZNBC management and government officials. On the other hand, others could have withheld key information as they could not be sure of the researcher's relationship with their superiors, which could put them in trouble. All in all, the respondents cooperated with the study and its objectives.

Another possible limitation to the validity of this study is the period that the interview was conducted. As earlier indicated, the ZNBC Amendment Act was signed in December 2002 after a lot of debate and antagonism between different interest groups in Zambia. As a result, there was a lot of anxiety on the need for the speed implementation of the law both within and outside ZNBC newsroom, especially the opposition parties and civil society groups. The interviews for this study were conducted in the year 2007, five years after the law had been passed. This delay could, therefore, have had some negative repercussions and effect on the mindset of the newsroom staff who may have become impatient. Besides, September 2006 was an election year in Zambia. As a result, the respondents could still have had fresh memories of the difficulties they went through from the various contesting political parties and civil society groups during the election period. It is therefore possible that they could have given responses based on the previous years' political activities. The study was sensitive to all this, and probed deeply to locate responses in their context and interaction with the researcher.

By addressing potential limitations cited above, the study was successfully conducted. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the studying, in accordance with the research issues and assumptions mentioned in the first chapter. As will be seen, upon discussing the possible implications of the findings for the respondents, with the supervisor, it was agreed that the researcher should not use the actual names

and exact positions of the respondents in order to protect them because this is not an entirely confidential document. Gender identification terminologies and specific examples that might identify the interviewees have also been blurred.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings, interpretations and discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study on the ZNBC news staff's perceptions on the significance for editorial framework and news content, of the legislative changes made in 2002 in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting. The interpretations and discussions are dictated by the objectives of the study as stated in chapter one, and informed by the theoretical considerations and literature review in chapter two. This chapter thus situates the findings cited in this and previous chapters in theoretical framework of public service broadcasting, thus juxtaposing the expressed perceptions of ZNBC news and the ideal public service broadcasting news.

Due to the qualitative methodology employed in this study, the findings are presented in a narrative rather than the statistical form, based on four major themes as explained in the study objectives in chapter one, namely:

- a) editorial independence,
- b) licence fees and laws
- c) policy context
- d) audience expectations

5.2 Findings

This study was grounded in the theoretical approaches of the principles of public service broadcasting, which, as discussed in chapter two, generally demand that the public broadcaster has some independence from both the commercial arena and the state, and provides a national space for a diversity of social groups to communicate with one another (McNair & Hibberd 2003: 272-283). Hence, the study investigated whether the ZNBC news has become, in the views of people in the newsroom, more politically balanced in line with the requirement of the principles of public service broadcasting, meaning a fair balance between parties, and between them and the public itself (see Chapter two). According to McNair (1995), the importance of informed and knowledgeable electorates dictates that democratic politics must be pursued in the public arena. To meet these requirements, there needs to be

comprehensive, in-depth and impartial news coverage and information provision consistent with the principles of public service broadcasting, especially for public service broadcasters, in order to support a fair and informed national debate. Public broadcasters should therefore allow their personnel to strive to give equal political and other representation in the news without any unprofessional interference or guidance (Gurevitch 1982:135, in Keane 1991, 1995). With the current laws that sought to transform ZNBC into a public broadcasting media house, the case has been made stronger now for the national broadcaster to give impartial news coverage to all political parties and civil society organisations in line with the principles of public service broadcasting.

The study, therefore, sought to establish how the ZNBC news personnel perceived themselves in relation to the licence fee and public service broadcasting conversion as well as what they thought are the perceptions and expectations of the public, and how these affect their roles, especially in the face of political and commercial exigencies. However, from the research discussions with the ZNBC newsroom staff at the various levels that were selected for the study, nothing much has changed in the way ZNBC covers the various interest groups and political parties. Despite the current legal requirement and journalistic norms that dictate editorial autonomy and independence, ZNBC newsroom staff still face many challenges in their quest to meet the legal requirement of transforming the national broadcaster into one that covers contending voices as required by public broadcasting principles.

The following sections therefore present a summary of the findings of the research interviews with the ZNBC newsroom staff on the various relevant thematic areas of the study. As noted in chapter four, actual names, positions and gender identification terms have been withheld. Interviewees are represented by numbers and do not necessarily follow seniority or order in which they were conducted.

5.2.1 Editorial independence

Editorial independence is one of the key themes that was picked for the study of ZNBC newsroom. As earlier stated, news genre is regarded as one of the most important element of public service broadcasting in a democratic society (see Chapter two).

During the discussion on editorial interference with a senior executive I-2, it was clear that the ZNBC news staff could not freely do their work. I-2 said the newsroom faces challenges with both insiders and outsiders. I-2 complained that outsiders generally do not meet ZNBC's deadlines and they are not interested in finding out the operations of ZNBC and how they can be provided with news coverage.

I-2 further complained that there is also a lot of interference because outsiders tend to dictate the story lines to the news staff and instead of leaving it to the news staff's professional judgement. Specifically, the business world tend to think ZNBC should highlight their stories more than any other stories which are of wider national interest. They think that their commercial interests are above the national interest. According to I-2, politicians in the ruling party think that the major stakeholder of ZNBC is government, hence the news staff should agree with everything that they want to put across. On the other hand, the opposition, in I-2's view, tend to think that ZNBC is there to provide a forum where they can hurl insults at anyone, yet the broadcaster has a responsibility with nation building and national security and has to avoid breeding anarchy in the country.

Within the newsroom, I-2 said there are different perceptions of what the news should be and this is also a major challenge. I-2 remarked:

You will appreciate the ZNBC hierarchy is made in such a way that the assignment editor reports to certain people who are above their office in the newsgathering process and some positions are administrative. But you will find that, much as these positions should be more administrative than controlling content, they want to impress on the newsroom which I believe understands the process of newsgathering better than administrators who may have a totally blurred understanding of journalism. But because they are the administrators, they want the newsroom to focus on issues which they feel are very pertinent to them.

I-2 also cited interference with regard to religious beliefs. According I-2, some people in senior management would always want everything done by their churches to be highlighted. So, as an editorial team, the interviewee felt they are not doing a good

service to the Zambian people because the newsroom is very unbalanced in deciding what goes on air.

Similar sentiments were echoed by reporter I-5 who observed that the ZNBC editorial decisions are based on government interests. According to I-5, even when reporters go in the field to get a balanced story, they are normally frustrated because the final story as broadcast would not reflect a professional balance in reporting especially if it involves government. I-5 recalled a situation where a minister was implicated in a scandal. ZNBC reporters got all the facts right and several sources confirmed the story. The reporters submitted the story for news because it bordered on morality and integrity of leaders. But they were advised against pursuing such stories because they dented the image of government leaders. But according to I-5, similarly damaging stories involving opposition leaders were allowed and aired on ZNBC news.

I-5 also remembered a situation when members of civil society groups were demanding the removal some ruling party officials who were implicated in some corrupt activities. I-5 recalled:

We happened to be on the ground to cover that story with a camera. We covered those people who were protesting and calling for the resignation or dismissal of these senior party officials. We also had a chance to avail those senior officials to get their side of the story. We had to tighten up all the sides to come up with a very objective and balanced story. But to our surprise that story was completely curtailed and no reason was given.

It is from such actions that I-5 is persuaded that there is some kind of indirect interference. As a result, says this interviewee, ZNBC news staffers sometimes never bother to pursue such stories because they are aware that they will not be broadcast.

Evidence of editorial interference in the ZNBC news also came from the interview with a senior executive I-4. This respondent faces a lot of challenges when dealing with outsiders. In particular, I-4 thinks people do not understand ZNBC's mandate as a public broadcaster. The respondent wondered why many people question ZNBC's news judgement because some think even their funeral notices should be on news.

All politicians in government also feel they have the right to be in the ZNBC's 1900 hours main news, even when, in I-4's professional judgement, their stories do not deserve this.

For I-4, the political leadership in the country think that by virtue of ZNBC being a public broadcaster they feel whatever they say should be in the news. Ruling party politicians are always interfering in how ZNBC runs the news, according to I-4. The same interviewee expressed frustration that a minister or party official will say something in the privately-owned *Post* newspaper, but if they feel that they have been misquoted, they always run to ZNBC for correction instead of going back to *The Post*. I-4 remembers:

For example recently, Commerce and Trade Minister, Felix Mutati, gave a story to *The Post* newspaper about Chinese investors. Now he felt *The Post* misquoted him on the part where he was talking about too many Chinese labourers in the country. And he called the Permanent Secretary (abbreviated to PS - CH) for the Ministry of Broadcasting and Information. The PS was on the newsroom staff the whole day telling them to look for Mr. Mutati so that he corrects the story. Our reporters didn't even know the background to that story. They didn't even know how or in what context he was misquoted or whether he actually said that. Our reporters drove all over, even at his house he wasn't there. He was attending a birthday party for his child, and they had to follow him so that he could correct the story.

According to I-4, sometimes even when these government and MMD party officials say a particular statement and are correctly reported and captured by a ZNBC TV camera, they force the news staff to apologise and correct the story when they feel they are in trouble with their employer. I-4 said there is a lot political pressure on the ZNBC news, especially that the Information and Broadcasting Minister Mr. Mike Mulongoti openly said those who do not want to follow the government line can be dismissed. (This statement of the minister is discussed in the next chapter – CH). I-4 feels in the journalism profession it is difficult to find a job, so when dealing with issues of 'bread and butter' one has to abide by the political line. As result I-4 does personal censorship when dealing with anti-government stories. For example, in the 2006 national elections I-4 would cover the opposition parties and find difficult to find a suitable angle for the story since most of the issues from the opposition rallies would be anti-government. I-4 complained:

We would cover Sata's (opposition leader - CH) rally, and you know Sata is always controversial. He would say things and when you come here as a reporter, you come here and sit, you don't even know what to write. You sit on a computer, you don't know what to write because everything he was saying was anti-government. So sometimes you would struggle to find an angle.

I-4 also makes efforts to cover opposition and civil society groups. But, according to I-4, there is an unwritten rule that when such stories are aired, there has to be a government reaction or answer. In most cases, the ZNBC story would begin with a government reaction before the opposition view on the same issue is aired.

Another respondent, reporter I-7, complained of interference in the ZNBC editorial decisions. This interviewee acknowledges failure to perform to the best of the professional abilities due to interference and guidance in the newsroom. I-7 is even de-motivated because of feeling of being indoctrinated into thinking in a particular way that certain sources are a waste of effort as stories would not be aired. For I-7:

The main challenge is political interference because it comes from up there. Even when I know the right way to tackle a story, somebody will just come to say you have to do this and you know where there is authority and you are operating under a certain house style. There is nothing I can do.

I-7 is determined to do the best in the profession but leaves it to people in decision-making to either be unprofessional by watering down stories or doing away with them completely. I-7 remembers an encounter with a prominent person, who is also a ruling party sympathiser, who was facing prosecution. Reporters covered stories about the court proceedings but were later instructed to completely erase them from the ZNBC newsroom computer system. They were also warned never to follow-up these stories. Hence according to I-7, there is a reporters' decision to sometimes give up because they feel powerless to fight such a system.

I-7 also remembers a case involving a ruling party senior official who was being tried for corruption. Journalists would cover the court proceedings and do stories but they

were not aired. Eventually reporters received instructions to ignore that case because it was portraying a bad image of the ruling party. But the surprising thing to I-7 is that when the judgment came out in his favour, reporters were forced to go and pick the court ruling for news, an act which I-7 regards as unprofessional and unfair. The respondent also confirmed the tendency where the only time an anti- government or ruling party story can be aired is when there is a government reaction.

Another reporter, I-6 said there is political interference in how the newsroom treats stories that are against the government. However, I-6 believes that sometimes people in decision-making positions fear the unknown. They just practice exaggerated self-censorship even when there may not be any repercussions when airing certain stories. In the words of I-6:

I believe that sometimes there are no instructions as such. But over the years I think people have just come to know which line to follow and somehow they practice self-censorship. Often you hear people in the newsroom say things like: 'Ignore that story, I don't want problems. I just want to go home and be in peace'. Meaning that if there is a story that is very critical of government they will not use it because it might cost them their jobs.

Like I-4, this respondent also remembers a story where opposition parties' views were extensively covered in the private media in a narrative about a local bank that was awarded a contract to procure fuel on behalf of government without following laid-down tender procedures. ZNBC staff were directed to get a reaction from government sources even when they never knew anything about the story. Like other journalists, I-6 also confirmed the frustrations where an opposition or civil society story cannot be aired without a government reaction.

This researcher's with mid-level executive I-8 also revealed the perception that there was a lot of interference in the ZNBC news editorial decisions. I-8 also changes story angles to suit government positions because of being conditioned to do so. I-8 remarks:

Like for instance an event happens, instead of starting a story from the perspective of the public such as motorists complaining about fuel shortage,

you find that we are starting a story from government's position on what government is doing to mitigate the situation.

While I-8 knows what is supposed to be done at a public broadcaster in terms of news content, the respondent is in a position where even before a story gets anywhere it is censored because I-8 knows it would not pass the ZNBC editorial decisions. I-8 said there are fears and restrictions that can make someone in the newsroom be charged, get an undesirable transfer or even cost someone a job. I-8 also reiterated statements by fellow news team that an anti-government story can only run if it has a reaction from a government source.

For senior executive I-3, interference exists but it is not very direct. I-3 might not be told by anybody about what to do or what not to do, but believes that since ZNBC is a "government institution", government officials are to be given an upper hand in the news. I-3 believes that government activities have to be highlighted hence there are many ministers and the president in the news. I-3 allows opposition views on the news, but these should not be anti-government. When there is a statement from the opposition leader, I-3 makes sure the reporters go to the chief government spokesperson for a government reaction before the story can run. I-3 says whatever is decided in the editorial meeting is what goes on the news. If the editorial meeting thinks that a news story must be written in a certain way, then that is how it goes, otherwise there is no direct interference as such. I-3 observes:

The good thing about ZNBC is that we have stages, our stage is to deal with raw news and we will pass all the stories until that meeting I am talking about decides which story goes. But we have decided not to censor ourselves. We go and get stories and write the way they are without censoring ourselves. If we start censoring ourselves then it will mean all the stories will be so diluted by the time they are on air.

However, I-3 is always mindful that since ZNBC is "owned by government", whatever the respondent writes just becomes instinctively in support of government. I-3 adds:

It is like you work here for years, you get to know that this is what is supposed to be done. Everyone who works anywhere else, I am sure they have those editorial policies as well.

For senior executive I-1, the editorial committee goes through all the stories that have been collected, and depending on the story strength they decide the ones to go on a particular news bulletin. Regarding editorial independence, I-1 thinks Zambians should understand that ZNBC is a public institution which is owned by the government on their behalf. I-1 wished to encourage outsiders who feel not satisfied in the way certain stories are covered, to take interest in watching other news bulletins that are on the station. According to I-1, when people complain about not being covered, they particularly refer to the main evening news bulletin at 19:00 hours on TV. I-1 notes:

We also have the 22:00 hours news brief and then apart from that we have other news strands that are on radio and TV. Amazingly we also have news on TV at 10:00 hours in the mornings and 14:00 hours in the afternoons. But the general public do not look at these news bulletins and everybody wants to cling to the 19:00 hours news.

I-1 also thinks many people do not bring stories that warrant being on the 19:00 hours news, and this is why such stories find themselves on other news platforms such as district news on radio two. I-1 claimed that the news structure allows reporters to freely gather and write stories as they are. But this interviewee sees it as a duty and that of the editorial team to make sure that the stories are factual, correct spellings, correct names and correct figures. For I-1, if a story is not “balanced” the editorial management engages the reporters to do more work so that they can have “credible” stories. I-1 recalled receiving a lot of stories from reporters about public complaints on the poor services by Zain Mobile, a company that sponsors the news and many programmes on ZNBC. I-1 never ran these stories because the reporters never brought a reaction from Zain management. This position is, however, contrary to the views expressed by some reporters in the newsroom who said such stories are never transmitted due to conflicting interests. But according to I-1, money does not mean anything because, for example, if workers are on strike at the Zambia Electricity

Supply Company (ZESCO) through which ZNBC collects license fees, that has to be covered.

I-1 also said if a politician feels unfairly attacked or covered in another media organisation, ZNBC never allows a response on their behalf because these are not their stories. This is contrary to the views expressed by reporters who said they are normally sent to look for government politicians who feel unfairly treated in *The Post* newspaper. But when pressed to comment on the levels of interference, I-1 confirmed that there is what I-1 called 'a shadow out there' which one may not see but where one just gets a feeling that a certain story should be changed or discarded due to the 'invisible hand'. I-1 confirmed:

Sometimes when we sit down as an editorial committee to decide on a particular story we find ourselves changing stories to suit a particular style. Well that happens, it happens everywhere whether in a public or private institution. It depends on who you work for. Otherwise you shall not be happy. You might as well leave work and go elsewhere. Yes there is, I would not call it interference but just a question of giving directives.

I-1 confirmed receiving 'guidance' from senior management or government officials on the way to run a political story. But I-1 insisted that being given such guidance is not being interfered with because everyone gets guidance of some kind from somewhere to protect the integrity of the institution. I-1 said such guidance is quite common during the political calendar such as an election year. I-1 justified:

If I am given instructions by authorities then it becomes a problem because this is a directive or an instruction which I have to follow. If you don't want to follow these instructions the best thing you can do is to quit. So those are the rules at that point. It is not the question of what you believe in, but a question of following instructions.

There have also been instances when authorities have reminded I-1 of belonging to 'their' institution and so needing to follow the rules. As a result I-1 has been told to be mindful of certain opposition political rallies because the language they use is too anti-government. In addressing the situation, I-1 has advised some opposition

politicians to use civil and sober language as it is difficult for ZNBC to use such stories, despite them being aired on private broadcasting houses. I-1 accuses the political players both in the ruling and opposition parties that make the work of his editorial team difficult because of their appetite for power. I-1 complained:

People have been victims of suspensions here as far as I can remember in the last three elections ... people have been victimised for this and that. This is because they were trying to bring out the truth, but somebody somewhere felt offended and they suspended them. But for me that is what good journalism is all about. A good journalist is one who is suspended or fired for the truth that he/she brings out to the public

On the question of censorship, I-1 professes to never censor anyone, but to allow reporters to carry out stories freely. But I-1 makes sure stories are cleaned of certain terminologies that are too “strong” for the public institution and the population, such as derogatory language against others.

5.2.2 License fees and laws

On the legislative changes and licence fees that are currently charged because of the legal requirements, the ZNBC staff had a fair understanding of the promises that were made by the institution in order to encourage people to pay. However, the majority of the staff captured under this study felt not much had been done to fulfil the promises that were made, especially those relating to the newsroom and editorial freedoms.

But according to reporter, I-5 there has been significant improvement in terms of ZNBC’s ability to collect news materials from remote areas previously never covered. This is due to new equipment and vehicles that have been procured. However, these stories are still largely tilted towards government because of the editorial interference and self-censorship.

Similar sentiments come from another reporter I-7 who also recalls the ZNBC commitments especially in relation to giving impartial and balanced news coverage to all political parties regardless of their opinions. But I-7 feels nothing much has been done in achieving the commitments because of political interference. I-7 believes the

commitments may never be achieved as long as the Minister of Information continues to appoint people to sit on the ZNBC board, which this interviewee perceives as contrary to the current legal requirements. According to I-7, the politically-appointed board will continue to exert pressure on the senior executives who in turn interfere with the editorial independence in the newsroom in trying to protect their interests. In I-7's words:

It is still the same old ZNBC before enacting those laws and the same system. I think the only way is to remove certain powers from the Minister of Information that he has over the board and other people coming down there.

I-6, another reporter, thinks nothing has changed in the newsroom to abide by the legal requirements on the new laws as well as the commitments ZNBC made. The reporter thinks there is still a lot of self-censorship and intimidation, and people are still conscious of old repercussions of trying to "balance things up" because in the end it might cost one a job.

Senior executive I-4, also recalls the commitments that ZNBC made as part of the campaign to encourage people to pay TV licences. I-4 recalls ZNBC promising a balanced coverage of the opposing views in the news coverage. This news executive is, however, disappointed that instead of improving the ZNBC news coverage of opposing views, nothing has changed and the interviewee actually thinks the institution's coverage is even worse now. For I-4, whereas there have been improvements on the technical aspect with more equipment and vehicles, ZNBC's editorial independence is getting worse.

For senior executive I-3, the national broadcaster may not have achieved much but is currently striving to meet the commitments that were promised to the viewers and as required by the current legislation. However, I-3 also feels the broadcaster has let down the audience by not covering opposing views in the news coverage. I-3 says:

I have been to public places where I would be watching ZNBC news with people who do not know me. I have heard how people complain about our unbalanced coverage and I know that we are not doing a good job. This is not

to say we have no capacity to do better but it is just that there is an extent to which things are not just correct.

I-3's statements were echoed by a mid-level executive I-8 and senior executive I-2 who felt the system is so restrictive that one cannot do much outside of the internalised norms.

But for senior executive I-1, the idea of payment should be understood in “the right context”. I-1 argued that people pay the license fees not because they need to watch ZNBC TV but because they own a TV set that also enables them to watch other TV channels in Zambia. According to I-1, the fact that the license fee at its initial stage was put alongside ZNBC commitments was an idea of trying to win the audience because at that time there was only the ZNBC channel. I-1, however, admitted that not all is fine with ZNBC news coverage and programming despite improving on reception and coverage as well as opening a few regional news bureaus. This is because people now are demanding a more balanced coverage because of the TV licence fees they pay. I-1 admitted:

We have been able to go to far-flung places because we now have transport and cameras. But I would be lying if I say everything is okay because people still complain about unbalanced political news coverage and programming yet they pay license fee, and I cannot blame them.

However, I-1 feels that whereas people may have genuine complaints against ZNBC editorial, they should not compare the national broadcaster to the private sector which has a different mandate and motives for programming. I-1 believes that the ZNBC mandate as a public institution is to propagate developmental issues. As a result what may be transmitted on the private broadcasting stations may not run on ZNBC because of what the interviewee called “different guidelines” in place. I-1 also claimed that the standards of broadcasting have gone down in the country because of the private stations that can air anything for commercial value.

5.2.3 The policy context

As indicated in chapter three, with the recently-enacted ZNBC legislation, it was expected that the institution would correspondingly adjust its in-house news policies

to suit the legal requirements of being a public broadcaster. However, interviews with the journalists on how far these policies have been changed revealed that not much has been achieved.

Reporter I-5 said whereas there are moves to transform newsroom policies, there are deficiencies that make reporters merely perform in conformity with what is expected of them because of interference from senior managers. I-5 feels it is very difficult to separate the newsroom's policies from those of the gatekeepers at senior management level who always try to tilt story angles towards government or the ruling party. As a result, the existing policies at ZNBC, such as the SABA policies (see Appendix III) are merely on paper and not being followed by journalists because stories that follow such rules would not be accepted because of interference. I-5 feels civil society and opposition members' criticisms of ZNBC's editorial policies are justified largely because of the unfair coverage and treatment of news items where the ruling elites are always projected positively. Whereas I-5 experiences few restrictions in covering sources regardless of their views, this reporter also finds that the stories are always later twisted to suit a government position. For I-5, this is contrary to the SADC editorial guidelines, which are displayed in the ZNBC newsroom for reference, and which were adopted by the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA), to which ZNBC also subscribes.

For senior executive I-4, ZNBC may have written editorial policies along the principles of public service broadcasting lines, but these are not being followed because of the interference from management. This interviewee feels that the public's criticism and labelling of ZNBC as President Mwanawasa's broadcaster and anti-opposition are justified. I-4 attributes the numerous incidences where ZNBC reporters have been chased or vehicles stoned at opposition rallies to the poor coverage of opposition stories. I-4 feels it is unfortunate that the current government has continued on the same path of news interference despite revising the media laws and policies at ZNBC. I-4 also predicted that if the trend continues, anyone who would assume senior government office in future is likely to do the same despite having the laws and editorial policies in place. Even the SABA editorial policies that are displayed in the newsroom for reference are a waste of time because they are not being followed due

to “the invisible hand” directing journalists to follow certain sources as opposed to others.

Senior executive I-3 says the policies do exist but there is more that can be done to satisfy the Zambians through balanced news coverage. I-3 recalls that there have been several seminars and workshops where issues of ZNBC news policies were discussed but nothing has happened. I-3 normally approves certain stories to run in a particular manner, but people at another level sometimes change things to suit the position of the ruling elites, which is against the existing SABA editorial policies. I-3 said whereas reporters cover everyone, it is difficult to air opposition and civil society views unless there is an immediate government reaction or the statements are in support of the government position.

Concerns about lack of newsroom policies also came from the interview with another executive, I-2, who said they have no proper guidelines to follow because what currently exist are policies borrowed from the BBC a long time ago and those of SABA. The ZNBC policies have therefore not been changed to suit the current legal requirements to provide balanced news coverage in line with the principles of public service broadcasting. According to I-2, there are no news policies in place except for double standards in the treatment of stories where something may be protected on a particular day by a senior executive who keeps applying different rules for similar situations. I-2 recalls:

For instance you will be told today that presidential material should be two minutes news clip. Tomorrow the story will change, you try and use that to other political party presidents, it becomes a problem.

I-2 suspects that the lack of clear editorial guidelines is a deliberate ploy by the ruling elites and management to keep manipulating the newsroom to protect their interests. The only ZNBC policies I-2 is aware of are the producers’ guidelines which no one makes reference to because they are vague. According to this interviewee, even with the SABA policies, the only thing that is followed to some extent is the writing style. I-2 also feels the many criticisms against ZNBC’s imbalanced news coverage by

opposition political parties and members of the civil society were genuine to a large extent. I-2 remarked:

Opposition political parties feel they are given inadequate coverage. They have gone to private stations to air these concerns, and in some instances they have come to our newsroom and aired similar concerns. They have also complained that they have not been accommodated in regard to various political programmes that they want to do.

With regards to civil society organisations, I-2 claimed there is a tendency among these to want ZNBC to highlight certain issues in the way in which they want them highlighted, such as creating an impression that Zambia may be the poorest destination or the most mismanaged place in the world, because they are looking for donor-funding and hence creating a hopeless situation. I-2 also blamed people with personal inclinations in the newsroom structure who then affect newsgathering for opposition parties and civil society members. I-2 recalls situations where reporters may be given an assignment to cover opposition parties but deliberately delay in reaching the assignment so that they do not cover it. The opposition will then blame the institution, yet it is individuals who are tarnishing the newsroom. According to I-2, certain individuals in the newsroom even go to the extent of tampering with the recorded materials on tapes for the opposition so that stories do not run due to technical faults. So it is sometimes difficult for I-2 to tell the stage at which the story is tampered with because of personal inclinations and interference by the editorial committee. I-2 observed that some stories are even tampered with by senior executives after the editorial meeting has passed them. Hence, says I-2, reporters find it a waste of time to refer to the SABA guidelines, despite most of them having copies and receiving three month training by SABA on the same policies.

Senior executive I-1 remembers participating in revising the editorial guidelines in compliance with the new regulations as enacted in the new laws. But I-1 said the news policy guidelines were revised in consultation with the newsroom and the document was handed over to the ZNBC board and later the board handed it over to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. But almost four years now, the revised guidelines are still being studied by the ministry and nothing has changed. I-1 said

that at present the broadcasting house has no formal newsroom policies but relies on the producers' guidelines which have a chapter on how news must be treated, though there are no hard and fast rules on how to follow it because it has not been circulated to I-1's satisfaction to all the affected ZNBC employees. I-1 added:

At the moment, people just join ZNBC, they do not even know that there is a producers' guideline, because the document is only in three management offices. And even those who have it just look at it and they cannot even pass it on to other people. I cannot blame them mainly because it should be a cost to the corporation itself to make sure that everybody has access to these producers' guidelines.

I-1 is also aware of the criticisms against ZNBC's unbalanced news coverage by civil society, churches and everybody else including the members of the public, because ZNBC is always seen as a government propaganda tool even when it tries to do the best. I-1 said there have been cases where ZNBC journalists have been harassed at opposition or civil society political rallies because of the perceived imbalances in the coverage of news stories. I-1 believes that the criticisms were justified and that there is need to change the way the news, especially the prime viewing 19:00hours, is being packaged in order to address the concerns of all the stakeholders and comply with the principles of public service broadcasting requirements.

In terms of favouring certain sources, I-1 said the institution tries to cover every voice except those who want to issue vulgar statements meant to injure and libel other people. I-1 said the SADC editorial policies adopted by SABA play a very important role in the newsroom as I-1 refers to them quite often. I-1, however, was not sure whether journalists were referring to the guidelines despite these being made available in the newsroom.

In terms of fair time allocation, I-1 tries to be professional and believes that stakeholders need equal time, but for I-1 it is also the case that in journalism big names make big news. So for I-1 the ruling party president or official naturally deserves more time than the opposition presidents and officials. I-1 claimed:

You cannot compare the ruling party president to other presidents and this is the reality, even when others demand for the same. I think in general terms, it should be agreed that the guy who is sitting as Chief Executive of Zambia is

totally different from the guy who is not in that position at a particular time. I think as much as we have this freedom of expression sometimes we are kind of misunderstood.

Broadly, I-1 believes there is need to urgently put in place good editorial policies that would support the current legal reforms for the smooth operations of ZNBC and the newsroom content in particular.

5.2.4 Audience expectations

As earlier stated, the 2002 ZNBC legal provisions sought to transform the national broadcaster from an institution that promoted the views of the ruling regimes to one that would cover contending voices in Zambia in a balanced and fair way. And in achieving these provisions, there was an anticipated corresponding change in the mindsets of ZNBC journalists to being more responsive to public interest and concern now than they used to be. Interviews with ZNBC newsroom staff showed that they have a fair understanding of what is expected of them in relation to the licence fee and the principles of public service broadcasting conversion as well as the perceptions and expectations of the public, and how these affect their roles.

Reporter I-7 said the public expect to be informed about what is happening by covering both the ruling and opposition parties as well as civil society views. I-7 believes that in a democratic society, it is a reporter's duty to cover contending voices so that people can make informed decisions. I-7 is however limited and frustrated by the editorial interference that makes this person censor certain story ideas for fear of victimisation. The reporter looks forward to the day ZNBC would be fully independent of political pressures by allowing journalists to do professional work.

Another reporter, I-6, thinks that the public expect reporters to present views in a balanced manner to help them be well informed about issues concerning the country. I-6 also complained of the editorial interference as a hindrance to professional work in the ZNBC newsroom. I-6 believes the interference is even worse now after ministers started demanding more time allocation for their news clips on the ZNBC main news. I-6, however, claimed editorial independence may be difficult as it is the Zambian institutional set-up where other democratic institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), the judiciary, among others, are also not fully independent,

despite the laws guaranteeing them to be so. I-6 thinks ZNBC can improve if the set-up of the board can incorporate opposition members and if the appointment of the board is completely divorced from the Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

Another reporter, I-5, also knows that currently the choice of what goes on air, after being edited, still raises a lot of concerns from the audience as they feel they are not getting what they feel they are supposed to get. I-5 feels the choice of topics for the news, and how it is tilted and projected, is highly unbalanced. I-5 states:

The contending voices should be given equal chance to allow people get the right and divergent content to enable people make informed decisions.

I-5 tries to make the stories as balanced as possible but the editorial management do not allow opposition stories that do not have a government reaction, and even when they do, the time allocation would normally be heavily weighted towards the government position. I-5 also believes the problem of editorial interference can be addressed by having an independent board as provided by the new laws so that people would not be intimidated by government officials as they would be answerable to neutral people.

Personal perceptions about audience expectations also came from middle executive I-8 who claims to understand what is expected of journalists at a public broadcaster in a democratic set-up in terms of covering contending voices. But it is quite hard for I-8 because in as much as this respondent would want to apply professionalism in a certain manner, the unwritten rules of the organisation make it difficult to achieve. As a result, I-8 always looks for 'safe angles' in stories. I-8 regards the current situation where ministers and ruling party supporters are allocated more time in their news clips as being very unfair to audiences. I-8 also feels the full implementation of the current laws could be the answer to the current interference.

As a senior executive, I-4, equally knows the audience's expectations when covering divergent views in a democratic state, but blames a shortfall in meeting these on the prevailing system beyond journalists' powers at ZNBC. In knowing the responsibilities to cover contending voices, I-4 sometimes tries to run opposition

stories on days and times that I-4 thinks there will be less attention and presence by authorities to censor stories. For I-4:

Sometimes during weekends I try to run controversial stories because I know the bosses will not come from home to look at the stories. But usually when they hear the story they will phone me to remove the story so that it does not run in the subsequent bulletins.

I-4 knows the audience are put off with situations where of the entire 30 minutes of the prime viewing news bulletin at 19:00 hours, half will be about president Mwanawasa and his wife's activities and later government and ruling party supporters. I-4 also complained about political cadre mentality by people in senior management and a few newsroom staff. I-4 observed:

Some people here at ZNBC are ruling party political cadres. They will want a story changed or removed, claiming to have been called by the president when in fact they have not been. It is just people here fighting for favours from the ruling regimes.

I-4 also recalls experiencing unethical situations where people in the executive positions would be panicking to run a story from a pro-government small civil society organisation who may claim to have been sent by State House (Presidential official residence and offices) or senior ruling party officials. According to I-4:

It is unfortunate that some people in the newsroom structure tolerate such things without questioning on how the president can have time to send such groups to do things for him.

I-4 said these groups merely use the name of the president and State House in order to advance their own interests and ZNBC finds itself in this trap. I-4 therefore knows that as a public broadcaster ZNBC is supposed to embrace everybody because the public are the ones paying TV license fees and so has an obligation to give the public what they want to see. As a result, I-4 believes that people, especially in urban areas, merely watch ZNBC news for the sake of it and not that they believe in it.

Like colleagues, I-4 believes the way forward for ZNBC to attain a public service broadcaster status is to fully implement the revised media laws relating to ZNBC and the IBA so that the institution can operate autonomously as opposed to the current partial implementation which has left certain areas, such as the newsroom, rather stuck in past modes of being a government broadcaster. I-4 believes the current board that is reporting to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is illegal and has overstayed its term. I-4 also thinks the continued tenure by the current board is a deliberate ploy by those in authority to continue their heavy-handedness on ZNBC editorial content. I-4 is therefore hopeful that, if given leeway to operate professionally and without interference, the newsroom will be very vibrant and people will look forward to continue working for ZNBC as opposed to the current situation where people join for the sake of experience and then leave the institution.

Another senior executive I-3, also perceives that as a public service broadcaster, ZNBC is supposed to accommodate all various interest groups. I-3 points out:

Public service broadcasting entails that we collect different views because it is a public institution and give the stories to the public in an impartial manner in views and time allocation.

However, I-3, also blamed the language used by some opposition political party leaders who, to I-3, do not conform to ZNBC's standards. However, I-3, could not define these standards since there are no clear-cut editorial policies on ZNBC news. I-3 also believes the full implementation of the ZNBC and IBA Act can help in creating more freedom for editorial content since all the reporters at ZNBC know what is expected of them given the formal mandate, but the current circumstances make it difficult to give a good product.

Another executive, I-2, also reiterated the audiences' expectations of ZNBC news in terms of the need to cover all voices. But I-2 is faced with the same challenge of struggling with an "invisible hand" that to, I-2, is shaped mainly by personal opinions or opinions of administrators or those of government and ruling party officials which has not helped in building democracy in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting. I-2 notes:

Ideally, if we go by the SABA style, or the BBC handbook which we borrowed, ZNBC should be very impartial and provide balanced coverage to political parties and civil societies. But on our part, I feel we have not done enough to create a level playing field because if you watch our news it tends to take the slant towards the government of the day than opposition political parties and civil society.

I-2 thinks that as a newsroom staff, they are expected to divorce themselves from personal biases, and cover news for the interest of the audience, and the leadership and the nation at large so that people can make informed decisions based on the ZNBC news. I-2 blames personal prejudices for the way news is handled from the reporters, sub-editors and news editors, right up to the editorial committee where a story can keep changing to suit certain people or situations. I-2 complained:

I have seen stories even from reporters who have certain prejudices, the way they are written if you ask another reporter to do the same story, the angle and the tone of the voice also changes. So personal prejudices are always there.

I-2 believes ZNBC allocates more time to the ruling elite's views as opposed to divergent views which receive only a fraction. Broadly, I-2 thinks the running of newsroom - starting from the input which is the assignment editor's desk to the output which, ideally should be the desk of the news manager, who deals with output and the editorial committee - should be comprised of practicing journalists or those who have a broad knowledge and understanding of news and the ideals of public service broadcasting principles. I-2 feels the newsroom, as well as fully implementing the current legal reforms, would do well to have the director of programmes with little or no hand in the day-to-day managing of the news content. I-2 also feels ZNBC should also go back to a previous structure where there was a director of news who supervised the newsroom, and that the chief executive officer should concentrate on administrative issues of the institution and not interfere in the running of the newsroom.

I-2 also feels ZNBC should carefully scrutinise the media training institutions it draws its journalists from in order to avoid masqueraders in the profession who want to be trained at ZNBC because of the inadequacies at their training institutions. I-2 further

feels that ZNBC should re-train its current staff in the newsroom and other key departments dealing with content so that they can have a mindset which is more impartial in their approach to newsgathering, editing and dissemination and in line with the current legal reforms and the principles of public service broadcasting.

Executive I-1 admitted that ZNBC has lost audience to other players especially in Lusaka, but noted that it still enjoys a bigger audience in other parts of the country where there are no other competitors. I-1 believes the loss of audience is due to ZNBC's national outlook of issues where they would ignore certain stories that are not national in nature and concentrate on those that appeal to all Zambians and not only Lusaka. As a public institution, I-1 claimed anybody is free to say on ZNBC what he or she wants to, but it depends on the language they use. I-1 says:

People might have lost faith in us in the sense that they think we are a government mouthpiece and therefore if they ask for a TV camera we will not give them. I don't think that is a correct position. We do give cameras and recorders to all the NGOs who come to us in good time and we cover them.

I-1 gave an example where people from opposition political parties, civil society organisations and trade unions were covered when they gave condolences messages to the twelve victims of the mine tragedy in the Zambian mining town of Chingola. I-1 also thinks some of the sponsored discussion programmes on ZNBC by some civil society organisations is an example of a balanced allocation of space. But I-1 admitted that, having worked for some time at ZNBC, there are a lot of challenges being faced in dealing with the ruling regime. I-1 equally supports the idea of the full implementation of the new ZNBC laws in order to make the broadcaster more professional in its operations. I-1 agrees:

This is why I favour the idea of ZNBC perhaps being answerable to Parliament if possible because then what would happen is that ZNBC would be truly answerable to the public.

In summary, the interviewees' views about audiences' expectations all lead them to highlight certain principles that should be present in news content, but which are mostly not.

5.3 Conclusion.

This chapter presented the findings of this research. The focus has been on how ZNBC newsroom staffs perceive their role in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting, and how the new legal provisions have influenced their editorial work. From the findings, and as will be shown in the discussions in the next chapter, the study has established that despite the legal changes that pointed towards ZNBC's attainment of public broadcaster status as discussed in chapter two, in the views of the staff, the national broadcaster's news content is still interfered with by both insiders and outside forces. Besides for a lack of editorial independence in their view, there is also an absence of a clear public service broadcasting policy. Interviewees recognise the significance of the licence fee and the expectations of audiences, but perceive the institution as failing to respond in practice to these in a manner befitting a public service broadcaster,

In the next chapter, the study discusses the findings and makes concluding reflection by offering suggestions on transformation possibilities for the future of ZNBC as a public service broadcaster in Zambia.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion, recommendations and conclusion

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents concluding reflections and recommendations of the study. It gives a summary of the crisis of the present day ZNBC as a public broadcaster and its newsroom staff in attaining key principles of public service broadcasting and concludes by offering suggestions on reform possibilities for the future of the ZNBC news staff operations in the newsroom and the broadcaster. This has been done to help ZNBC to be more responsive to the responsibilities that public service broadcasting places squarely on its shoulders.

6.1 Discussion on the findings

As stated earlier, this study set out to find out the news staff's perceptions of the impact of the new broadcast laws on news at the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting. This study was particularly interested in the changes that the national broadcaster would have done to meet the requirements of the enacted legislation that requires it to be a public broadcaster able to meet the aspirations of the various interest groups through fair news coverage.

But as can be seen from the interview findings from the ZNBC newsroom staff, the broadcaster in its current arrangement is far from being a public arena that accommodates views of different players in society for the creation of a democratic society. Journalists at the institution say that they are still being interfered with in the execution of their daily editorial work in the newsroom in order to favour the ruling regime in the editorial content. What immediately comes to mind is that whereas there is a partially enabled legal environment for ZNBC to operate its news content autonomously, the institution has been made to hold on to the old culture of giving the ruling elites more favourable coverage, and thereby disregarding the legal reforms that sought to balance news coverage. Hence, some respondents' observations that the five-year delay to appoint an independent ZNBC board could be a deliberate attempt by those in authority to continue manipulating content at the institution to their

advantage could be correct. However, from the interviews, it is also clear that the mindset of ZNBC news staff has not been widely oriented to adopt the current journalistic requirements at a public broadcaster, despite having some idea of what is expected of them. ZNBC news staff have not been able to create a public sphere as defined by Scannell (1989) where a neutral space, free of both the government or corporate control, allows for making available information affecting the public good and for facilitating a free, open and reasoned public dialogue (in Gurevitch 1991; see also Keane 1995). As established from the interviews, ZNBC is perceived as an institution that takes sides when covering opposing views. In this study it has been shown that the ZNBC news is perceived by the public as pro-government.

This contrasts with the ZNBC amended legal provisions that require the state-owned public broadcaster to act as public sphere with an ethos of impartial public service, which includes the commitment to represent the full range of voices in society (Randall 1998: 247). These democratic requirements have been argued in chapter two which pointed out that public service broadcasting as an agency of representation is also obliged to encourage wide participation in society, including all parties and civil society groups. For instance, many still see the broadcaster as owned by government and property of the ruling elite, rather than being a state-owned public asset. It also appears that the ZNBC is not perceived to cover the views of individual citizens, because of its concern with government and ‘national affairs’.

The findings above are similar to those of Mano (1997) and Dahlgren (1995), where the latter points to the category of ordinary citizens in Zimbabwe who do not seem to make much entry into the “who category” of Zimbabwe Television (ZTV) reporters. This, Dahlgren contends, contradicts the public service philosophy which requires public service broadcasting to give space to as many diverse publics as possible. As McQuail (2000) and McChesney (1997) have argued, all citizens including the minorities should be availed some opportunities of representations on public channels (also see Thompson 1990; Mano 1995; and Habermas 1989).

With the significant democratic changes going on in Zambia, it is important that the people have public service media that takes care of the population as comprising citizens with full citizenship rights and not just as consumer or subjects. In doing so,

ZNBC journalists need an enabling environment that would allow them to experience themselves as being able to gather and process news content without any interference. They could even fight for “that enabling environment” by taking actions, even legal ones, in defence of the professional freedoms.

The interviews with journalists at ZNBC also indicated that whilst there is a certain amount of freedom in their selection of what should be covered as news, it is not guaranteed that all their stories would run or remain unchanged, and so their editorial freedom may not apply to certain situations. As established, most interviewees claimed that at times they found themselves in precarious situations when dealing with potentially controversial stories, or topics that might get them into trouble with authorities both at the station and in government. Such topics might well be politically-related, for instance, stories exposing the shortcomings of government ministers and top officials. This precludes ZNBC from fulfilling the journalistic role of watchdog, revealing abuses in the exercise of the state authority or securing redress against abuse of power (Curran 1991).

The findings of this study also indicate that ZNBC news is seen to act as a ‘rebuttal channel’ for government with regard to accusations made by the opposition and other people in the private media. The study has therefore established that ZNBC reporters’ coverage of political issues does not meet the required standards of impartiality and balanced treatment to all the political players and other opposing views. This, therefore, points to an inseparable relationship between ZNBC and the government, and the way in which the latter is able to circumscribe the agenda and autonomy of the former.

From the interviews, one gets the picture of ZNBC being strongly attached to the MMD government, and that the broadcaster enjoys no autonomy. Hence management has found itself in a dilemma where the current provisions of the law to have an independent ZNBC board have been seriously contested and then completely ignored by government ruling regime. As a result, whereas interviews with senior managers indicate that they equally know what is expected of them in meeting the principles of public service broadcasting at ZNBC as a public broadcaster, they equally face the same fate as journalists because they can easily be punished by the board that was

appointed by government. And yet this board is currently operating contrary to the provisions of the legislation that requires it to be approved by the National Assembly and enjoy security of tenure so that its members can discharge their work without negative repercussions. As seen from the interviews, the current board is perceived merely a rubber stamp for government instructions to the public broadcaster such that ruling officials easily overlook it when giving directives such as when reporters are made to look for certain government officials to correct negative statements covered in the privately owned media and when ZNBC had no role in the stories. This perspective is reinforced by the statement issued by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mike Mulongoti, that journalists working for the public media organisations cannot report anything negative of government as they can lose their jobs. Mulongoti was speaking when he addressed newly recruited journalists for the privately-owned *Post* newspaper at their offices. According to Mulongoti, even if the *Post* reported him negatively, he has no control over them and so he can just take them to the courts of law if offended. But for reporters working for ZNBC, *Daily Mail*, and *Times of Zambia*, they should know where their bread and butter comes from and so they should think twice before writing anything negative of the ruling regime as they risk losing their jobs (*Post*, September 10, 2007). The statement is similar to that of President Levy Mwanawasa who once said that government did not intend to change the state-owned media until the private media demonstrated a greater sense of responsibility. He said that the private media were so destructive that they could bring down a government in months were it not for the counter-balancing effects of state-owned media (*The Monitor*, January 11-15, 2002.). These positions are clearly against the ZNBC legislation. Hence, despite backed by law, ZNBC's purported 'autonomy' is illusory, and to all intents and purposes it remains as Banda (2002:10) put it, a de facto state information organ. The perceptions of the newsroom staff interviews for this study are therefore not surprising.

6.2 ZNBC Newsroom Crisis.

The relevant laws, the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (Amendment) Act and the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, were passed by parliament in 2002 and are in force. It would seem, therefore, that there was supposed to be a conducive environment for the public broadcaster to operate without interference. However,

enforcement or administration of the laws has been partial only, causing a legal limbo in this field.

In the case of the ZNBC (Amendment) Act, the television license fee clause has been effected, permitting the state broadcaster to collect fees from viewers. This was obviously in the interest of the state which seeks to cut down on its budgetary subsidies to ZNBC. The more important parts of both new acts, the transfer of controlling powers from the state to independent boards, have not been implemented. Appointment committees, consisting mainly of civil society representatives, have duly appointed the members of the boards, but the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services refused to pass on the names to parliament for ratification. As discussed, the case was in the courts and government position that they should have a final say seems to have been upheld in the Supreme Court ruling. As a result, the Information Minister may retain some influence with the names that would finally be submitted to the national assembly for ratification to run the ZNBC board.

The findings of this study have given credence to the hypothesis that ZNBC, as an institution, has not fully complied with the legal provisions of operating as an autonomous institution able to disseminate balanced information for the benefits of all citizens. This is based on the study's staff perceptions that there is abuse and political interference by those holding political power in the work of journalists at ZNBC newsroom. In making editorial decisions, journalists are not as free as they should be. The study clearly demonstrates that the role of public service broadcasting in the mediation of pluralistic politics is compromised by ZNBC's partial and unbalanced coverage of contending voices. This undermines the very democracy it is expected to promote. It is therefore clear that ZNBC news content by its newsroom staff is more likely to be a state service to the ruling party, and not a public service. From the study, it appears that there is a perceived disregard of the law by the ruling regime that wants to continue abusing the national broadcaster by promoting editorial content that is mainly positive of those in power to the disadvantage of other voices.

Whereas it has been established that the newsroom staff generally understand part of what is expected of them in their work at the at ZNBC, they have been subjected to do unprofessional work for fear of demotions from their offices, undesirable transfers, and even dismissal. The study has also established that the problem of editorial

interference is so rampant that some interviewed journalists have tended to censor themselves in covering issues that may not even necessarily be harmful to the ruling regime. Basing on the broadcaster's history of lack of editorial independence and government interference, the majority of journalists interviewed indicated that they are always cautious and give particular attention to self-censorship. As result, they have become accustomed to leaving the status quo undisturbed for fear of consequences, even when there may never be any repercussions to their professional work. This is partly because, whereas journalists know what is expected of them at ZNBC under the new laws, management at various levels have not officially sensitised the newsroom staff about them being able freely to cover contending voices in society.

The study has further established there is a confused perception among the ZNBC staff on the operational framework of the newsroom and editorial policies as a result of the legal changes. For example, the staff do not seem to understand how the law will regulate broadcasting through actual policy that would be adopted and how that policy would be monitored for effective implementation. Hence, the public interest in ZNBC's editorial content has been compromised by delays and stalled processes of policy development rather than clear editorial policies that should be applied by those in the newsroom in compliance with the principles of public service broadcasting as discussed in chapter two. Therefore, the ZNBC newsroom staff operate in an environment where a few refer to outdated producers guidelines, or to idealistic BBC and SABA policies, but where they are vulnerable to both inside and outside unprofessional interference. This is in part due to not having specific editorial policies that they can confidently refer to in case of threats to their professional work. The lack of clear policies about the current legal provisions should however be viewed in the wider context of state interference in the operations of the public broadcaster because of the information power it possesses.

The failure by ZNBC to prescribe editorial policies befitting the principles of public service broadcasting also raises issues of economic interests or interference. This is because ZNBC may be seriously compromised when covering business and corporate institutions such as Zain Zambia and the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO). For example, a mobile company, Zain Zambia currently sponsors both the

radio and TV main bulletins while the corporation collects its licence fees through the government-owned electricity supply company, ZESCO. With such statistics and the current lack of clear editorial policies, it is difficult to tell how ZNBC can professionally handle negative stories from these and other institutions that are at the heart of its revenue. Critics of advertising as a source of revenue argue that it has direct editorial influence on a broadcaster's ideological stance, and that public service television would be forced to accommodate the advertiser's ideological concerns (Curran 1991). This concern was also raised by one of the interviewees, although it did not emerge as a prominent issue among most interviewees.

What has been mainly established by this study is that mere legal reforms may not necessarily result cultural and in institutional reforms, especially where the state and the ruling elites may be threatened by their hold on to power. As the Zambian situation on the 2002 ZNBC Act has shown, the government is capable of abusing powers in delaying implementation of its own laws, while the ZNBC newsroom continues unreformed.

6.3 Recommendations and possible reforms

6.3.1 ZNBC institutional autonomy

The above discussion suggests that the democratic function of ZNBC is threatened by internal and external constraints. The public sphere which the public service broadcaster is supposed to provide in line with the principles of public service broadcasting is problematic because criticism of government is ignored. Yet, criticism, as pointed out by Hoynes (1994), is an essential ingredient of public service broadcasting. Therefore, this study has come up with recommendations that can help possibly transform ZNBC broadly, and the newsroom in particular, into a viable public service broadcasting institution.

One problem that this study has identified is that government has undermined the independence of ZNBC, and has thus restricted public debate through impartial news coverage and programming. This has been achieved through subtle means such as the appointment of staff through a government-appointed management board. As also noted by some respondents, it is recommended for the full implementation of the

current legislation in order to have an independent board. It is further recommended that government's power to appoint a board through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting be stopped, and that appointment to such boards must be by way of "enfranchising" representative national organisations and broadcasting staff to nominate or elect the members (Curran 1991: 107). MISA's view that members of the board should be 'appointed for a fixed term' preferably by public nomination or a process of public hearing, according to publicly available criteria which guarantee diversity of political, ethnic, social and professional background is one that this study validates and recommends (Barker 2000: 3). This will help serve to establish ZNBC as neutral, autonomous institution operating above partisan politics and social interests.

As per provisions of the law, the names nominated under such a transparent arrangement should be submitted for ratification to the National Assembly and the board should have the security of tenure. While the study is aware of the various debates or arguments on what constitutes the best model for broadcasting regulation, it suggests that the current ZNBC board should be answerable to the National Assembly or to an independently appointed overall broadcasting regulator. This board should only be removed by two-third majority vote in parliament when a serious issue of misconduct has been brought against it. Such a transparent appointment and ratification coupled with the security of tenure would insulate the board against government interference machinery in its operations. It is expected that the board appointed under such scrutiny would equally appoint a credible ZNBC Director General and management that would not interfere with the operations of the public broadcaster.

6.3.2 ZNBC Newsroom Editorial Independence

The study has revealed and confirmed that dominant news values can severely constrain the range of options within which reporters themselves can deal with political issues and national leadership (see Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 105). The journalists interviewed in this study regarded one standard as predominating when selecting, writing and approving stories. Clearly, such tendencies constrict the potential of the media to serve as a genuine 'marketplace of ideas' or to transcend the boundaries of the social and political mainstream. It is recommended that journalists

working for ZNBC as a public media should begin to redefine their role above and beyond their survival in ways that ‘do not entail their subordination to dominant particular interests’ (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 107).

With the appointment of an independent board implemented as proposed above and in the law, the ZNBC management team would at least be protected from government interference through fear of reprisals when covering opposing views. However, there would be need for a serious orientation of the newsroom staff and programmes production teams so that their cultural mindset is away from the oppressive mentality of the old system. There would be need to reassure staff in the newsroom that they are fully protected and insulated against any unprofessional interference from both inside and outside forces when covering contending voices. Alongside this assurance and orientation, there is need for clear editorial policies for ZNBC newsroom and programming operations that meet the demands and expectations of the audience in a democratic society. From the interviews it appears that the ZNBC management are also culprits in the interference on the operations of the newsroom. As noted, they may be doing so to protect their jobs since they are not insulated by an independent board. However, professional interference may continue even under a new arrangement if the newsroom staffs are not sufficiently qualified and experienced in their newsroom positions. There is therefore a need for ZNBC to engage qualified and experienced staff to run the newsroom according to the principles of public service broadcasting. Other than devising clear guidelines on the employment of staff, ZNBC management should also have clear policies on dismissals, departmental transfers, retirements, and other human resources guidelines, so as to avoid actions that may seem to be victimising staff for professional conduct. A clear way to address in-house interference in the operations of the ZNBC newsroom is by the introduction of an upward referral system of consultations as discussed in chapter two. This will protect journalists against unprofessional interference and guidance by both their peers and superiors.

It should also be realised that media freedoms should equally be checked to avoid personal or unethical conduct on the part of reporters to members of the general public. With the proposed system in place, It is also recommended that ZNBC, as an institution, be a member of the Media Ethics Council of Zambia (MECOZ). This is an

independent body where members of the public who feel unprofessionally reported by the member media organisations can appeal against such misconduct. Currently ZNBC is not member, hence their news reports and programmes are not subject to professional and independent scrutiny when people feel offended. The Independent Broadcasting Authority could also be given powers to check unprofessional conduct or content at any broadcasting media house, including ZNBC.

Finally, as acknowledged by the respondents in this study, there are currently some resentments among members of the general public who feel let down with the way ZNBC news content covers opposing views. This may account for the lack of cooperation among the general public in paying for the license fees when they are not seeing a positive change on the part of ZNBC news through a balanced coverage and impartial programming. It is hence anticipated that with the proposed measures in place, there may be less resistance to the payment of the ZNBC licence fees as people would value their financial contributions from the news and programming content that meets their expectations. This will lead to fuller realisation of the principles of public service broadcasting, in that, as noted by Blumler and Mitchell with licence fee, a public broadcasting institution can provide for a universal availability of a core of diverse and high-quality programming services, meaningful choices, integrity of civic communication and responsibility in projecting social and cultural images and identities in its programmes amongst other aspects (1994:237). ZNBC should also consider was consult the public on an ongoing basis such as by holding open meeting, inviting criticisms and suggestions, and setting up a complaints office.

6.4 Conclusion

The study set out to determine the ZNBC news staff's perceptions of their roles at the public broadcaster and how current legal reforms that require the institution to broadcast in accordance with the principles of public service broadcasting ethos have affected their work. It set out to find out the changes that have been effected in the ZNBC newsroom in order to meet the public expectations in the way the national broadcaster covers contending voices. Furthermore, in the context of the changes in the political system and the broadcasting field, the study was interested in examining the extent to which ZNBC played the role of public service broadcasting in the mediation of pluralistic politics since the introduction of the law that requires it to

meet informational needs of all citizens in a democratic society. The study has argued that public service broadcasting, as understood and practised at operational level in the newsroom, is important in the enhancement of democracy, especially in emerging democracies like Zambia.

The study has confirmed the hypothesis that despite a legal mandate, and despite collecting public money, ZNBC news, in the eyes of staff interviewed, is deliberately imbalanced in favour of the political party in government and does not adequately cover the opposition political parties and other civic organisations groups opposed to government. The study has shown that, whereas many on the news production team are aware of the public service broadcaster's role as expected by their audience, and as discussed in chapter two, there is perceived abuse, political interference, and self-censorship in their work at ZNBC newsroom on the part of those holding power.

It is from this perspective that the study has made the recommendations set out above in the belief that ZNBC newsroom can be transformed into a 'real' public service broadcaster which is representative of the many diverse individual and groups in society. Independence from both the state and commercial interests means that programming decisions should be made by ZNBC as a public service broadcaster on the basis of professional criteria and the public's right to know, rather than by pressure from political or commercial interests or journalistic self-censorship.

Although public service broadcasting internationally is affected by commercialisation, the significance of this in the ZNBC case could be focussed in further research, along with its policy implications. It is also worthwhile for future studies on this subject in Zambia to look at what would constitute a "fair" editorial balance in the news content. For instance, the current government may not even be interested in balance, but just suppression of critical content or 'balance' in regard to critical private media. Another instance is whether all political parties be given equal or proportional time news coverage regardless of their relative strength in society? Linked to this is how their political strength and appeal should be determined and by who? For example, if the political strength is to be determined by the parties' numerical representation in parliament, would that be fair for newly formed political forces that may clearly be gaining huge political ground?

Issues of whether news balancing should be for political parties only or should also include civil society groups and members of the general public should also be further explored in future studies or editorial regulatory frameworks for ZNBC as a public broadcaster. The question of whether “balance” should be in each story or over a period of time should also be addressed. Finally, the perceptions of staffers on what would, for them, constitute fairness and balance is as important to study as their views on current imbalance and unfairness.

The findings and recommendations of this research proposed above as well possible research areas identified could all assist in transforming the ZNBC into the public broadcaster that Zambians deserve.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview schedules and transcriptions

The information generated from these interviews is for academic purposes and will be treated with confidentiality.

General questions

A. Background information

1. Kindly tell me your position in the ZNBC news structure.
2. What does your position entail in the ZNBC news structure?

B. Editorial independence

3. What general challenges to your editorial independence do you encounter in your position as you carry out your work in the newsroom with:
 - outsiders?
 - fellow news team?
4. Do you experience any form of unprofessional interference or guidance in the course of your work? And if yes, how do you deal with issues of political or commercial interference? Can you give a specific example?
5. Do you receive any instructions or interference at any time from the authority on how you should treat certain issues that go against your editorial judgement? If yes, how do you deal with such instructions? Can you give a specific example?
6. Do you fear negative repercussions for running stories that are anti-government? Why/why not? What kind of repercussions?
7. Do you sometimes censor yourself in order to avoid possible adverse repercussions especially when dealing with stories that are anti-government? Can you give a specific example?
8. Do you feel compelled to follow-up a news story with government sources in cases where they have been a negative statement about them? If yes, do you do the same with opposing views in cases where they have been attacked by government sources.

C. Licence fees and laws

9. ZNBC made a number of commitments as part of the campaign to encourage people to pay TV licence fee. What do you know or recall about these?
10. To what extent do you think those commitments that relate to the newsroom have been achieved since the inception of the TV licence fees?
11. ZNBC currently charges license fees to its audience. In your view has there been any change in the production of news according to the principles of public service broadcasting since the introduction of these fees?

D. The policy context

12. Have ZNBC's newsroom policies been re-organised in compliance with the requirements of a public broadcaster, especially in the light of the new laws that require this of the ZNBC?
13. Do you have formal editorial policies specifically on the question of impartiality and even-handedness? If yes, what do they mean in terms of what ZNBC should be doing in terms of carrying pro- and anti- government news and views?
14. Are these formal policies followed in reality, or is there a different policy in actual practice and which deviates from the formal one?
15. What criticisms have been levelled against ZNBC news by members of the civil societies and opposition political parties, and do they have any merit?
16. Are there certain types of sources you feel you cannot cover due to their political inclinations which are against ZNBC's formal or informal institutional editorial policies? Similarly is there a preference that discriminates against perhaps opposition parties or former rulers? How about NGOs and international critics?
17. Can you tell me anything about the SADC editorial policies which were adopted by the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA) to which ZNBC also subscribes?
18. Do any of these formal policies play any role in your work such as you referring to them in discussions with your seniors and principles?

E. Personal perspectives

19. How does your concept of ZNBC's audience affect your choice of story selection and presentation?

20. How would you define news in relation to ZNBC's role as a public service broadcaster in a democratic society? How is it expected to cover contending voices such as political parties and civil society?
21. What examples of impartial news can you give me that you implement (or not implement)?
22. What is your self-concept of what is expected of you as a journalist at the public service broadcaster?
23. Do you feel that you have any prejudices which affect: (a) your choice, (b) sourcing, (c) angling your news stories?
24. When dealing with stories with sources of different viewpoints, what factors whether institutional or individual affect (a) your time allocation, (b) how the sources should be treated?
25. What should be done broadly to develop ZNBC's ability to be an institution that lives up to the principles of public service broadcasting ideals?
26. Do you have any additional information or comment?

Interview Transcriptions

I-2

The general challenges with outsiders is that usually they don't seem to meet deadlines even when they know when our bulletin is going to be aired. They are not interested in finding out mainly the operations of ZNBC and how best they can be provided with news coverage. If there are any companies that do this, they are very few.

The other challenge is with the business world. These will tend to think that we should highlight their stories more than any other stories which are of national interest and that the commercial interests are beyond the national interest. But we cannot do so because as a national broadcaster we have a national mandate, and much as we may have commercial interest among our listenership and viewership, national interests override those commercial interests.

With ruling party politicians, they tend to think because the major shareholder of ZNBC is government, we should agree with everything they want to put across.

With the opposition too they think that we are here to provide a forum where they can hurl insults at each other. But we have a responsibility of national building and national security. We therefore are faced with a large challenge of having to try not to breed anarchy in the country.

With fellow news team, we coordinate very well with a number of news organisations such as private. Of course we are seen as following the government line that is an impression and it can be argued for or against. Others tend to think that we are probably not as receptive but we would like to believe we are. We always share our news stories and also very forthcoming in receiving other news organisation's news stories.

Another challenge in terms of local news is that we are not so wide spread in terms of offices. We are only centred in Livingstone, Lusaka and the Copperbelt so we have a lot of challenges on issues of defamation, issues of libel, because we depend mostly on the Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS). Of course sometimes, some of the stories we receive do not really bring out the corporation's expectations or visions. For instance, this year we have a challenge of trying to let our mandate which is to focus more on developmental issues, so those are some of the challenges that we face.

Within the newsroom, there are also personal perceptions of what the news should be and this is a major challenge because there are personal perceptions and there are also professional perceptions or idealistic perceptions on what news should be and of course there is the company's perception on what news should be so it is a major challenge to try and harmonise the three.

There is to some extent a lot of unprofessional interference in what could be termed as guidance in the course of our work. We would appreciate if the ZNBC hierarchy is made in such a way that the assignment editor reports to certain people who are above that office in the newsgathering process. For example, some positions are

administrative but you will find that much as these positions should be more administrative than controlling content, they want to press on newsroom. I believe people in the newsroom understands the process of newsgathering much more than administrators who may have a totally blared understanding of journalism but because they are the administrators, they want the newsroom to focus on issues which they feel are very pertinent.

There is also interference with regards to religious beliefs. You find that if an administrator is in a specific religion, they want everything done by their church to be highlighted. There is also interference in terms of friends. You find that today somebody will be in court, and while in court the charge against that person is not really in their favour. But you find that the administrator will say please don't air that story because it's a friend. But tomorrow somebody else will be in court for a similar case and administrators will say we should have that story. As an editorial, it's a very big challenge and we feel we are not doing service to the Zambian people because we are being selective in what we are going to air depending on personal affections or friendships that one has.

In dealing with issues political and commercial interference, there is an editorial meeting where there are five people who have been to decide on the news. Hence, if one feels that a particular issue should have probably been highlighted or a certain story should have not been dropped, we minute it. We put it on record and give reasons so that should there be a query someone will be answerable to the shareholders of the Corporation who are the Zambian people. Someone will be to see that one categorically refused to take a particular position with reasons we serve the corporation with a mandate to the people and not so much the administrators or those interfering politically.

On commercial interference, similarly we have a daily report that is done by the newsroom. All these sorts of interference are tabulated within that report that is circulated to the administration of the corporation on a daily basis.

In terms of internal interference I would say that nobody in my time in the newsroom has picked the phone or come to me directly to say we cannot have this from

government or from politicians. The scenario usually is that you go to an editorial meeting and you find one of the members of the editorial committee, especially the chairperson, will tell you things like I do not think government will be happy with this story. In such cases I would not know whether they have received instructions or are practicing self-censorship. And how we deal with these is that usually they are subject to a vote by the editorial committee. But sometimes even after the editorial committee has decided on the story, there are situations where you find that the chairperson of the editorial committee, who is always the Director of Programmes, makes a final decision in consultation with the Director General to remove certain stories or temper with the news line-up. In such cases, I would not know what is discussed between the two and no reasons are given as to why stories are being dropped or why the line-up changes.

In terms of self-censorship, I would say yes there is a lot of self censorship because with time you learn the house style and what is acceptable to the particular media you work for. Most times reporters are discouraged from writing certain stories because they feel these stories will not be published or will not be aired so they kind of refrain. Sometimes it is a personal decision and not so much on that of editorial interference. The example I can give is the recent London high court ruling on president Chiluba, We sent a reporter to cover Chiluba's press conference. But this reporter did a very weak story because in his personal opinion, the corporation would not run such a story of Chiluba criticising Mwanawasa's government on how the sovereignty of the country was compromised. He censored himself greatly and the editorial team had to ask him to write what Chiluba said and the story was aired without any government interference.

On following up stories, we do stories where there have been negative comments about them. For example, we followed up the story on Vernon Mwaanga and his Katanga (CH- Democratic Republic of Congo) saga. In some cases he reacted while in others he did not. It was running story and we covered it right to the end until he was finally dropped from cabinet.

At the time we were implementing the ZNBC Act, there were indeed commitments

that ZNBC had made in order to encourage people to pay TV licence fees. These were to have better TV, better reception, have wider and balanced coverage, provision of children's programmes, among others that were clustered into ten.

In terms of meeting the commitments, we have seen the formation of the newsroom in Kitwe and Livingstone. ZNBC has also widened the coverage because transmitters have been installed in a lot of stations countrywide. Hence, we now we have at least 70% national coverage. In terms of news, we now reach a wider audience than before, but challenge that remains is for the Corporation to begin to not only reach these communities but also try and have news from them covered.

There has also been some improvement with the establishment of the newsrooms, for instance, for example, the one I talked about in Livingstone. We are starting to have more diverse news around the country. I hope we can quickly spread out and establish more regional stations and newsrooms so that we can have more national based news content in line with public service broadcaster principles. The other thing that has helped is that ZNBC realises that it has a national mandate as a public broadcaster and what we have done before we establish our own news points countrywide is that we signed up with community radio stations country wide who are ready to go on board to rebroadcast our news after we have broadcast it on our national station, and we feel that is mitigating the impact of our absence to broadcast to certain communities.

In terms of our own news policies, I would say that ZNBC we do not have our own news policies. What we have is what was mainly borrowed from the BBC and SABA news guidelines. And these have remained the same even after the ZNBC's revised laws.

Hence in terms of newsroom operations ZNBC does not have specific guidelines. What I have seen is a case of double standards. For example, an argument will be advanced to protect a certain story on a particular day, usually by the chairperson of the editorial committee who is usually the Directors of Programmes. So today they will advance an argument in relation to a particular story, tomorrow it will be a totally different picture. For instance, you will be told today that presidential material should be up to two minutes in terms of the news clip. Tomorrow the story will change, you

try and use that to other political party presidents, it becomes a problem. So we have no written policy provision that is straight on impartiality and even-handedness in newsgathering, packaging and dissemination. I think that it is a ploy to ensure that certain interests can be filtered through.

I think the only policies that are generally there are producers guidelines but we have no specific policies with regards to newsroom operations to help with the content. Even the so called producers guidelines were borrowed from SABA and are not followed to the book. So they are merely there for reporters to read but no one makes specific reference in the newsroom. The only thing that is followed on a day to day is probably the writing style of SABA and not impartiality.

In terms of criticism of ZNBC by various interest groups, there are many criticisms that have been levelled against us, mostly by politicians and civil society. Civil societies feel they are not given a voice on ZNBC to put their views across the nation. Opposition political parties also feel they are given inadequate coverage on ZNBC. Hence, they prefer private broadcasting stations to air their concerns. In some instances, they have also come to the newsroom to complain about lack of coverage of their activities. So they have cried foul that they have not been given an even playing field.

In terms of the merit of the criticism, I think they are valid to some extent though some of them are not realistic. For example, with regards to civil society, there is a tendency to want ZNBC to highlight certain issues in the way in which they want them highlighted. And mostly, the civil society want us to highlighted issues which create an impression that Zambia is in a hopeless situation with poverty or the most mismanaged place in the world. All because they are looking for donor funding hence they have to create this hopeless situation. Now ZNBC has a responsibility to practice not only development in journalism but to equally tell the truth. If we feel the findings of civil society, for instance, are contradicting those of Central Statistical Office and other studies that have been done by government, it becomes very difficult for ZNBC to portray these because we have the national interest at hand.

And for opposition political parties' criticisms, I think sometimes it is a two way

process. Maybe the Corporation has got inadequate resources and has not been able to cover them adequately, but they must also realise that it is also not every government or ruling party official who is always covered in the same breadth. For example, during elections, ZNBC follows the electoral code of conduct in which ample time to political parties is given sell their manifestoes to the voters on ZNBC. But what we see is that certain political parties come on board and embraced this idea while others are not there.

Another thing for opposition political parties is that I think they have to learn to have civilised language for the citizens and other opponents. Their language is usually very confrontational and is not appropriate for a national television. And in such instances, we run dry stories where we can play around with the language but bring out their message. If we run a clip of such, it will just breed anarchy in the nation and as a public broadcaster it is not one of our functions to do so.

But generally, I think we do not have a discriminatory policy against anyone. I think the problem that we usually face is that sometimes we are not given ample time by NGOs and other people who would be interested to disseminate news. Like I said in the beginning, we have problems of people not wanting to understand the operations of the Corporation and just demand coverage yet it is very difficult for us in view of our limited resources.

But in saying that, I should admit that there are some political inclinations that can hinder coverage, these can start at any level, they can be at reporter level they can be at assignment editor level. There are personal inclinations that can affect news gathering. It is very difficult to divorce personal inclinations when carrying out duties that one is assigned to cover. For example, personal inclinations can be seen where an Assignment Editor assigns a reporter somewhere, but the reporter will delay because the cameramen are coordinated by another section which is the television. Newsroom coordinates reporters so even when we assign these reporters, you may find that when they go to get the cameraman they will waste all the time to just make the job suffer, so that by the time they will be getting to the assignment, the function will be over. So the political party will blame the corporation yet it is personal inclinations that are causing this. Sometimes there are issues of bad tape between the

camera and the edit suite, that tape can be tempered with, there are many times we have had bad tapes, we have tried to buy new tapes, some of the cases may be genuine but again the others may be deliberate. So it is difficult to tell at which stage a story is being tempered with because of personal inclinations and sometimes it can also be interference by the editorial committee. They might drop a story either the editorial committee or the two man show after the editorial committee, the Director General and the Director of Programmes.

In terms of being aware of the SABA guidelines, like I said everyone knows about them but no one makes specific reference to these policies when discussing for instance in the editorial meetings. No one does despite a lot of newsroom staff such as reporters, editors, subeditors, controller news and current affairs having copies of them. Besides three quarters of the newsrooms staff were attached to SABA on a three months basis. So they are very much aware of the SABA guideline and they are there, they have been circulated to every reporter in the newsroom and there are copies within the newsroom.

With regard to ZNBC's concept of audience with regards to news, of course we know that we cover 70% of the country's audience and we do know that we may have suffered criticism as a national broadcaster with respect to movies, soaps and musical, children's programs that we air but we know that despite the criticism, people do watch our news. And because usually we are the first point of government policy, government decisions, people are interested in knowing what is happening with regards to policy. So we are very much aware that we have wide a audience and we would like to believe that we have the widest audience in terms of news. So we are very mindful and we would like to see our news improve because we know that there are certain segments of news that are not given enough coverage. For instance, we do cover health issues but more of policy but we would like those covered more. We would like environment featured much more instead of the current scenario where we cover more of politics and business. We would also like to work harder on our sports segment and a lot of other segments that would be of interest to the Zambian people.

In terms of our challenges and way forward, I think ZNBC's has not one much in playing its role as a true public service broadcaster in a democratic society. We have

also been very politically inclined at the expense of developmental journalism. Our stories have also been not very investigative, hence they have mainly been on the surface and have not contributed to the political or democratic dispensation of this country. There is also always an invisible hand in our newsroom operations. So in relation to the principles of public service broadcasting, I think mainly the only thing we have responded to is that we have tried to be national. But we have not contributed to building democracy.

Ideally, if we go by the SABA style, of the BBC hand book of which we borrowed, ZNBC should be very impartial and provide balanced coverage to political parties and civil societies. But as things are now, our news tends to take the slant to the government of the day and not so much highlight issues of opposition political parties and civil society.

As an individual, I think what is expected of me is to divorce the self, remove all personal bias and cover news for the interest of the viewers and the leadership at large and that I should ensure that I carry balanced stories. I should cover stories and ensure that they have been investigated, balanced to give the Zambian people an informed opinion a properly informed and investigated opinion on which they will shape their decisions.

In terms of the running of the newsroom, I think that firstly what ZNBC needs to do in my opinion is that the running of the newsroom starting from the input, which is the assignment editor's desk to the output which ideally should be that desk of the news manager, should be managed by professional journalists who are not compromised.

Secondly, the newsroom management should also retain to its old structure where the director of programmes had little or no hand in the day-to-day managing of the newsroom and that it should go back to its initial structure where there was a director of news who oversaw the running of the newsroom. In the same vein, the chief executive officer should also concentrate on administrative issues of the institution and not provide interference in the running of the newsroom. I think that journalism is as profession that should be respected and guarded and its not for every Jim and Jack

to walk in and dictate terms to professional journalists on the running of the newsroom.

Thirdly, I recommend that ZNBC clearly scrutinise the training institutions from which it draws its journalists. It is not every institution in this country that masquerades as a training institution for journalists that you should go and employ journalist to take on board as employees of the corporation because some of them are very inadequately trained and the newsroom cannot be used as a training ground for basic requirements or modules in journalism as this is a serious risk to the profession.

I-5

In terms of challenges with outsiders, we normally have problems with the government and ruling party officials who feel they have a stake in ZNBC because of the ownership structure. The situation is also worsened by the fact that there has not been a clear-cut editorial police for ZNBC newsroom. What I may call editorial decisions are centred around what the government reaction might be to a certain story. Hence a journalist may go out to get a story as professional as possible, but there are many players to be consulted.

On the challenges with the fellow news team, I sometimes feel my colleagues have no depth in their coverage of stories.

On the interference in coverage of stories, I think it is a routine thing from time to time. I encounter certain kinds of interference which to some extent I would say it is unwarranted knowing too well what my calling in terms of duty entails. And to this effect we will try to resist as much as possible but again it depends on where this kind of interference is coming from. There might be interference from outsiders we could out rightly deal with. But then if it is a question of the powers that be or somebody in the circles I have to refer that to my immediate superiors. These would in turn follow the hierarchy and go another level knowing too well that what we are trying to do is

for public interest. But, of course, our superiors sometimes tend to alter stories may be for one or two selfish.

For example, there have been instances where we get facts about a minister being involved in a certain scandal. Maybe you are even there when this minister is being harassed. We would tell our seniors the nature of the story and that it is of public interest. But our superiors would advise us to ignore the story because it borders on morality and integrity of national leaders which is not good for the country.

But if a similar negative story involves a public figure in the opposition, we do broadcast them. So we try as much as possible to push these stories, but when you cannot push the door further, you leave it at that. There are times I have done stories which I thought were researched enough to merit airtime. But the seniors would merely remove it without giving me a satisfactory explanation.

For example, I happened to be on the ground with a camera to cover protesters calling for the resignation or dismissal of some senior ruling party officials. We even had a chance to avail those senior officials with their side of the story. We had to tighten up all the sides to come up with a very objective and balanced story. That story was done to the best of my abilities both for TV and Radio but to my surprise it was just curtailed and no reason was given.

It is from such acts that I sometimes censor myself not to cover such stories again because it is a waste of time. But that has never demotivated me. I do my part without any fear of repercussions and give others to do theirs, but of course it is quite frustrating.

In terms of the license fees and new laws, and the commitment ZNBC made, I fully I understand them especially those relating to news coverage. To some extent I would say there has been a step in the right direction. For example, there has been relative progress towards those relating to capturing activities in the rural areas as we now assign people to cover them. But we still have problems with the content because of the invisible hand that tries to alter stories to suit particular interests.

On the policy context, I would say there has been some re-organisation, though as much as we try to perform our duties in conformity with what is expected of us, there are other short comings which come from above which are not necessarily as a result of the newsroom performance.

In terms of impartiality, we try to cover both sides, at least at the lever of the reporter and subeditor, like I said stories, especially those relating to the coverage political parties always attract the attention of superiors and can be altered anytime.

I therefore think the criticism from members of the civil society, politicians and other stakeholders do have some merit in terms of not giving them balanced coverage. For example, there could be a big anti-government demonstration on a certain issue by the civil society and opposition parties. But when we cover these stories, we are told by our superiors to start with a government reaction and condemnation on demonstrators before we cover the issue and the protestors.

My personal perspectives on the issue of our news is that at the moment the choice of what goes on air or content of some stories after being edited still raises a lot of concerns from the audience. Our audiences strongly feel they are not getting what they feel they are supposed to get, especially after the introduction of the license fees. I think the contending voices should be given equal chance to allow citizens get whatever their views and make a decision. Divergent views are important and this is what ZNBC is aspiring to do.

Otherwise, personally, I have no prejudices on who cover. I would cover anyone from any angle of my choice depending on my news judgment but of course my superiors may not obliged to tell me what they want use. Even on time allocation for news clips, we do not have a standard format on who should get how many minutes. It depends on the news value, but of course we tend to allocate more time to the Republican President, and sometimes ministers as opposed to opposition leaders.

As a way forward, I would recommend that the legislation on ZNBC's autonomy should be fully implemented and strengthened so that government can withdraw its invisible hand and let ZNBC newsroom operate independently.

I-1

To start with the ZNBC operational structure I would say that the programmes department is the biggest here at ZNBC mainly because the core business here is to produce radio and TV programmes as well as radio and TV news. The department itself has three sections, we have the radio section, we have the TV section, we equally have the newsroom section. Additionally, we have the transcription and the video section that also belong to the department of programmes.

Now as regards this interview we are dealing with today which is more related to news, I would like to narrow it down to the news section. Currently the controller of news and current affairs reports to the director of programs. The news and current affairs controller is more like a deputy managing editor of the newspaper who in turn reports to the managing editor. Below the controller news and current affairs, we have the assignment editor, you also have the news manager and below the assignment editor you have the structure of the reporters, these are the people that go in the field to gather or collect information. Their job basically is to report what is being said out there by who ever it is. And then bring the gathered information to ZNBC and then later the news manager and his team look at this story, they act as gatekeepers if you like. So what usually happens is that at the end of the day, the assignment editor comes up with the editorial or a revised diary, so it is called, and then we hold an editorial meeting which is chaired by the director of programmes. In this editorial committee we go through all the stories that have been collected during the day and determined by strength you know which one can fit in which news bulletin and things like that.

In terms of editorial independence, Well I think first of all it must be understood that ZNBC is a public institution which is owned by the government on behalf of the people out there, so we call them stakeholders. There are general editorial dependence that we encounter especially from outsiders who feel that sometimes we

do not satisfy their viewership or listenership by way of carrying out certain stories. You see we only have one main news bulletin on TV especially the 19:00 hours television news. We also have the 22:00 hours news brief and then apart from that we have other news strands that are on radio and TV. But we now have news on TV at 10:00 hours in the mornings and 14:00hours in the afternoon, but the problem is that the general public do not look at these news strands as everybody wants to cling to the 19:00 hours news. Now because of that, every Jim and Jack feels that if they are not featured on the 19:00 hours news then we are biased and they feel that they are not being heard, which is totally untrue.

So yes we have a lot of challenges to sort out with most of the outsiders because some of these people bring story angles that do not warrant to be at 19:00 hours news, hence we put some of these stories to other news platforms. Besides, if it is economic news, we have programs that fit in with the economic issue, if its health news we have programmes that deal with health, with education and staff like that.

In terms of challenges with fellow news teams, I believe that the duty of the reporter is to go out there gather news, collect it and put it in a format that is acceptable with our style book or the producers guidelines, if you like. What happens is that when they go out there and gather news, we give them all the independence to do a professional job, but you know when they come back here, it is our duty to make sure that the stories are factual, correct spellings, correct names, correct figures, and things like. But if we find that the story is kind of biased, you know totally biased, as an editorial team, we always engage our reporter to do more on those stories so that we have credible stories. I will tell you for instance that of late we have had stories on Zain (CH- Mobile telecommunication company). For instance people have been complaining about Zain. But you see if the reporter is out there and just carry out negative issues about Zain without necessary talking to the Zain management itself to give their position we do not run such stories. Basically we would say this is not our story. I can give another example, if some of these politicians for instance feature on a different Platform like on radio Phoenix or any other private radio or TV station and they attack somebody and that somebody comes to react on our platform on what was carried out on other radio or TV stations, we would refuse. But I think it is important

for the public to understand that we have guidelines that we follow and these guidelines are there to be followed and we cannot break away from them.

In terms of interference I would say that there is some interference. Speaking as a professional journalist, I would say there is what we might call a shadow out there which you may not see but you can tell sometimes when you have sat down as an editorial committee to decide on a particular story and then all of a sudden we change the story. That happens and I think it happens everywhere whether in a public institution or in a private institution it depends on who you work for. Otherwise you shall not be happy. You might as well leave work and work elsewhere. So yes there is interference, though I would not call it interference per say, but just a question of giving directives.

The way we deal with issues of political interference in nature is that the chairman has to seek guidance first of all and direct the editorial meeting. I would always protect the integrity and the decision by the committee but if I am given an instruction by my supervisor then it becomes a problem because this is directive or instruction that has to be followed. If you do not want to follow the instructions or directives, the best thing you can do is to quit. So those are the rules at that point it is not the question of what you believe in but it is a question of an instruction to the institution.

For commercial interests, as I said Zain for instance, MTN we are mindful because for us they are all our clients Zain, MTN, CELLZ, if a guy from Zain would say something bad about MTN we are not going to run that story. If a person from MTN says something against Zain we are not going to run that story. But if one our clients such as Zambian Breweries or Zain or MTN have a negative, we have to follow the principles of journalism, its not a question of because they give us money and therefore we should do a quick good spin on them no. I think if there is something drastically wrong we must run that story whether they are our friends or not. Money does not mean anything, for instance, I will give you a perfect example of ZESCO (Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation). You know ZESCO are our very good clients because we collect money from our TV licenses through their bills, but that does not mean that if there is a problem at ZESCO we should not report about it. If

the workers are on strike for instance at ZESCO we should not report because they are our partners I do not think that is the way we should be operating.

The thing is that I think previously they could have been interference from authorities but of late I do not think unless you point out and I think interference would usually come in when you are in a political calendar year such as a election period, then you see these things clearly. But otherwise after any political calendar year has passed it is like authorities tell themselves they now have nothing to do with us. But of course once in while they will remind you that you belong to ZNBC and this is our institution so it is a catch 22 kind of situation.

But during a calendar period that I talked about, you may be told to be mindful of a political rally of somebody because perhaps of the language that they are using. For instance we always tell the opposition political players not to use their own local languages when they addressing rallies. We encourage them to use both their local language and English so that if you are going to use a point in our news bulletin which is run in English we would prefer it is in English. But if they are going to start their rally from 14:00 to 18:00 speaking Bemba, for instance, it becomes a problem for us to run such stories on our English News. We can do the sub titling but that takes long. And we always tell them that for us as radio and TV its very important to use civil and sober language. It does not help anybody to use strong and crude language either on radio or TV as a way of trying to stress a point. As a public broadcaster, we do not accept such language though I know they use it private broadcasting houses.

From where I stand, I have been through many things in the journalism profession. So for me my advice is to do a truthful good job of a story that is not biased that does not injure anybody but to bring out the truth. It is the political players themselves that tend to make our job difficult because they want to be in political power. Those in government and those who are not in government they are all fighting for the same thing. But I think at the end of the day it is the journalists that suffer and this is why as a journalist one would say journalism is a thankless job. One should not practice journalism in order to get favours from anybody. If we have that in mind then I think we would do our jobs without fear.

When we are doing these programmes during a political calendar year, there is no need for anybody to censor themselves. As I said earlier a good journalist is the one who brings out the truth. But it depends on how that truth is treated so personally I do not censor myself but would like to express myself in the best way I can.

On our commitments as a result of the introduction of license fees and laws, I think the idea of license fees should be understood in right context. People pay the license fees not because they need to watch ZNBC TV, but people pay license fees because they own a TV. That license fee you pay enables you to watch Mobi TV, Muvi TV, DSTV including ZNBC. That is what the license fee is all about. Now the fact that the license fee at its initial stage was put along side ZNBC commitments was an idea of trying to win the audience because at that time there was only one channel and that was ZNBC. So for me it is a good strategy that is intended to improve the programming on ZNBC TV. You can imagine that from zero to what we are collecting monthly it is something. Of course that amount of money is nothing compared to our expenditure.

I can say that for a number of commitments that we made we have, been able to for buy more facilities, equipment, transport, editing facilities. And because of that we have been able to send our reporters even outside Lusaka, previously everything was centred in Lusaka or Kitwe. But now we have been able to open an office in Livingstone because of license fees and we are hoping to extend this to other provinces. We have been able to go to far flung places because we have transport, because we have cameras. But realistically, we are not yet there, I would be lying if I say everything is okay. Everything is not okay because people still complain that they pay K3000 license fee and they do not see anything good on TV you can not blame them. Zambia is a country where everybody has a freedom of expression. But perhaps they will be coming from an ignorant point of view. Because what has happens, the more players we have in the market the more we are sharing our viewership and the mandate that ZNBC has is totally different from the mandate that private broadcasting houses such as Muvi TV, that mobi TV has. Ours is a public institution and ours is to propagate developmental issues. What may run on Muvi TV may not run on ZNBC because we have our guidelines in place. In fact I would

challenge you and say look you go to this same private stations and find out if they have any style or producers guidelines they don't have any. For them it is a question of running anything. As a result, even the standards of broadcasting have been lowered of commercial value by the private houses. For them, it is a question of if I can on my screen show a naked woman I am able to attract more viewers than if I talk about education in Solwezi. So those are the examples that you need to understand.

So for me I think license fee is most welcome I know that we cannot satisfy everybody but the truth of the matter is that people need to be educated at all times and I want to say that yes people are not satisfied because some of the commitments we made have not satisfied them. It is very true especially where it relates to news, especially where it relates to political parties we have not met some of these commitments. But unlike previously you would have no opposition political face on TV, now we do have them but it is once in a while.

But it is also the way some of these opposition political party leaders behave and approach us. Unfortunately, everybody tends to think that they can behave like the president of the party, that is different, if a president of the party calls me now and says look I have a press conference here can I have a camera now I know it is important I will send a camera. Or if he tells his press secretary I will know that this is worthy doing but if some leader come and says I want a camera at the expense of the other more important stories, I will not give them the camera.

In terms of the ZNBC policy framework, especially as it relates to news, I remember sometime back the office of the Director of Programmes was tasked to come up with news policy guidelines in consultation with the newsroom. That document was done and handed over to our board and in turn the board handed over this news policy to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It is still there and being studied. So we are waiting for the response from the ministry so that we can put it in place.

But for now we have the producers' guidelines which everybody follows or must follow. The producers guidelines has a chapter on the news, how news must be treated whether for or against. So we have a policy that is followed but not to the latter as there are no hard and fast rules. So we do deviate from rules sometimes, but

I think what is important is that the guidelines are there and must be followed to the latter.

Of course the limitation is that I think these producers' guidelines have not been widely circulated to my expectation. Otherwise, what should happen is that each employee of ZNBC should have a copy so that they can follow. At the moment, people just join ZNBC, they don't even know that there is a producers' guidelines. Even the senior managers who have them do not even use circulate them. But I cannot blame them mainly because it should be a cost to the Corporation itself to make sure that everybody has access to this producers' guideline.

On the public criticisms ZNBC, I am aware that there have been these criticisms by the civil society, political parties, churches and everybody else including the members of the public because ZNBC is seen as favouring the ruling regime even when it tries to do the best that it can. It is always seen as a government propaganda tool. I think we need to change that by addressing the tailoring of our news, especially the 19 hours news to cover other contending voices. And this is what we are trying to do. I also think that we need to move away from too much political stories to developmental. Perhaps that can cool down the hearts of all the stakeholders. Because right now I can tell you people believe that ZNBC is biased and people think that ZNBC is a government tool for propaganda. You can't blame them for that, it is because of what they see but even when there are issues of trying to change the whole concept, people don't appreciate.

As I said, we try to cover everybody equally but what we don't do is to broadcast statements that are libellous or vulgar especially by some of these opposition political party leaders. But at the same time we send some of our news crews to some of these political parties' rallies but our journalist are harassed. But nobody says anything about it and when we complain it is like it is very normal for journalists from ZNBC to be insulted or should be harassed at these political rallies, which is most unfortunate.

So we cover everybody including those that criticise us since we are just a conveyor belt of news so if you come here and say ZNBC is rubbish, we will put it on the news because you have said it. That is what we are there for.

Other than the producers' guidelines, we also follow the SABA guidelines since we are active members there. These play a very important role and from time to time we do refer to them.

On my personal perspectives regarding the current ZNBC Act, as I said, since the liberalisation of the airwaves, we have many players either on TV or radio and as such admittedly ZNBC has lost audience to other players especially in Lusaka. Mainly because we have a big population here in this town and people will choose to which station they want to listen to. But in terms of country arrangement I think you would say that ZNBC has a bigger audience. Because of its reach and therefore people are able to tune to ZNBC. We have transmitters in every corner of the country and so forth but the community radio stations also compliment our activities. So because of that, naturally we would want to tell our stories such that they entice or attract viewers and listeners.

So yes, people might have lost faith in us in the sense that they think we are merely a government tool for propaganda and therefore if they ask for a camera we will not give them. But I don't think that is a correct position. We do give cameras and recorders to all the NGOs who come to us in good time and we cover them.

For instance of late when there was this tragedy of the twelve people that died in Chingola over the weekend, many people sent messages from political parties to NGOs and so forth, we carried their voices, NGOs, political Parties, Labour movements. We have done that. The constitution review Process, if you remember we did run a program by CRC where we featured all the stakeholders to voice their opinions on the Constitution Review Process. Even now we have programs that are run by Media Institute of Southern Africa and Transparency International where we feature some of these different divergent views. But because of self-censorship a ZNBC journalist will not go to somebody and ask about constitution in such a way that he is just favouring the opposition party, it becomes a problem. So what we

would usually do is if an NGO says something on the constitutional making process, for example, we would equally want to get a voice from the government. And if it is the government, we would also go to the opposite side so that we are seen to be balanced.

Personally, working at a public service broadcaster, there are a lot of challenges that I have faced before and that I continue facing. And I think unless these challenges are smoothed, I am afraid it will continue being rough working as public broadcaster. This is why I support the idea of having all these new laws as regards the operations of this public institution. This is why I favour the idea of ZNBC perhaps being answerable to parliament if possible because then what would happen is that ZNBC would be truly answerable to the public.

Again from a professional point of view, I think it is important that when you allocate time to all the stakeholders it must be equal time. Yes in journalism there are things like big names makes big news, so if you are going to compare this president and the other president, at the end of the day, naturally the president who is currently ruling will get more time. You cannot compare him to other presidents and this is just a reality. But in a situation where you have a political calendar the others will also feel they need equal time which is correct at that period yes you must give them air time, you must give them equal time. Because you want the citizens out there to make an informed choice of on their next leader will be. But I think in general terms, it should be agreed that the guy who is sitting as chief executive of Zambia is totally different from the guy who is not in that position at that particular time. And because of that it is like animal farm, I mean there is prominence in these things. And that is the way it works. I think as much as we have this freedom of expression sometimes we are kind of misunderstood.

Finally I want to say that I think journalism once again is a thankless job and journalist must forge ahead working with that in their background in their thinking that they are there to bring our what is true. They are there to record issues without being biased and that they are there to record these issues without putting their own opinions in a story. I think that is what is important for me.

The challenges I face with outsiders are that most outsiders don't really understand our mandate as ZNBC. We are a public broadcaster and sometimes it is really difficult to work with certain sectors of society. Some, even when you are trying to do something may be you are trying to follow-up, they think we have to follow certain instructions. Some people tend question our news judgment. Yet some people would want even none news issues like a death notice should be aired as a news story just because we are public broadcasting house.

Sometimes we face these challenges. Some challenges are political in nature. All the government ministers would want to be in the news and they all want to feel up 19 hours news yet it is only 20 to 25 minutes. They think whatever they say is newsworthy and so it is really difficult to strike a balance between professionalism and reality.

The challenges with fellow news team are that some think they are too big to be supervised. There are others who just don't understand why they come for work and you have to be really pushy so that you achieve the results at the end of the day. But really we try to work as a team because I think news is all about working as a team and if you don't you won't achieve the desired results.

In terms of interference, there is plenty of it. The ruling political leadership in our country feel that or they think that by virtue of ZNBC being a public broadcaster they feel they own us. And for them whatever they say, we have to cover it. They are always interfering in how we run our news so much so that sometimes it is so frustrating. Sometimes they will say something in the privately owned *Post* newspaper and when they feel that they have been misquoted, they always run back to us and expect us to run that correction instead of going back, yet it was not our story. For example, on Saturday a minister was talking about Chinese investors. Now he felt the *Post* misquoted him on the part where he was talking about too many Chinese

labourers in the country. And he called the Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The PS information was on us the whole day, telling us to look for the minister so that he corrects the story. We didn't even know the background of that story. We didn't even know how or in what context he was misquoted or whether he actually said that. But we had to look for him, we drove all over, we went to his house he wasn't there, he was attending a birthday party for his child we had to follow him. So that he can correct that story. So sometimes those are the kind of challenges we face.

You can imagine, there are times when we correctly capture their statement on camera and we put it on TV, but when they are in trouble with their employer they will say that I was misquoted even when they are in the picture. So we are forced to apologise for. For example, our minister of Information and Broadcasting and even the president is on record of having said that if you don't want to follow our line, we will part company. And in the journalism profession it is difficult to find a job, so when you are dealing with issues of bread and butter you have to bend and follow the political line.

On self-censorship, I would say yes we do censor especially opposition. You know you go to a rally, I will give an example of the last general elections, you would cover opposition leader Michael Sata's rally and you know Sata is always controversial. He would say things and when you come here as a reporter, you come here and sit, you don't even know what to write. You sit on a computer you don't know what to write because everything he was saying was strongly anti-government. So sometimes you would struggle to find an angle. I remember one time one of our reporters completely failed to write anything from Sata's rally, yet he said a lot of things. Hence, even when we follow opposing views, we are always in doubt whether such stories would run at all, so we end up censoring ourselves.

On license fees and laws and the commitments we made, I would say we did a lot of campaigns when the TV license act was being passed in parliament to entice people to pay because by law everyone is supposed to pay TV license. We promised to give a balanced and equal coverage to everybody and we will strive to live by our mandate as public. But in terms of fulfilling our promises I would say nothing has changed. If

anything, things are even worse now than before in terms of news content. Perhaps we may now have more facilities and such things, but editorially, we are worse.

On the policy framework, I would say we do have some written guidelines to do with fair and balanced coverage, but because of interference we don't follow these. So the editorial policy is there and people are willing to follow it. But when it comes to implementation it is not there at all.

In terms of public criticisms of the ZNBC news, we have received a lot of them. Some people even say we are President Mwanawasa's broadcaster. We are anti-opposition. But again they have merit of course because everybody perceives that. I can tell you that as a result of such public perceptions, nowadays we don't even bother to cover anti-government riots because we have had two cars stoned. But the unfortunate thing is that it is not only this government that behaves like this, even the previous one behaved the same. And my view is that even the opposition parties now would probably do the same if they are in power now. So as journalists, we are normally put off.

You can imagine that even the opposition leaders are not interested to talk to us at all because they feel it is waste of time as the story will not run anyway. I tell you if I or any ZNBC reporter called Sata for a story now he will slum the phone on you. He will not even bother to talk to you unless he has a news conference, then he has no choice, you are there, but we just avoid. Even NGOs feel sidelined by ZNBC news coverage. I can give you an example of the Constitution debate right now, there are certain churches that are obviously those who are in support of government you obviously cover but we can't walk up to those that are anti-government such as the Archbishop of Lusaka.

Even when we cover opposing views, we have to make sure we get a government position to react, something we do not always do with government statements. For example, there was a press conference last week by churches opposed to the current constitutional review process, we wrote the story but then we had to back it up with a government reaction.

The times we attempt to run some opposition or anti-government stories are weekends when we know the boss is not around. We can run such stories for the mid-day news (13:15 hours), and runaway. But of course when they hear the story at their homes, they will start phoning to have the story removed from the subsequent bulletins and that would be done as the bosses direct.

Personally, I do not think we meet the audience expectations on our news content no wonder they complain. You can have about 15 minutes of 19:00 hours main news bulletin all President Mwanawasa, the first lady, government officials. And I think it puts off our audience. As journalists here, we have the capacity to do better. We know what should be done without these problems of interference from outside and inside. I sometimes tend to think some people here at ZNBC are ruling political party cadres. And they are holding high offices and even in the newsroom. We sometimes have people here merely claiming they have been called by the president to change a story when in actual fact they haven't even been called by anyone. You have these people who are just trying to suppress information because I personally don't think the president doesn't want to see Sata insulting him on TV, he would want to watch that. There are people who want to be linked to the powers that be for favours even when it is not there.

Even outside we have had these small civil society groups coming with statements claiming to have been sent by State House. And because people here don't really sit down to question how the entire president can assign this person, they end up running around trying to squeeze such stories. Sometimes that house is used in vain for people to advanced their own interests and I think for us as ZNBC it is really unfortunate that we actually tolerate such.

Otherwise, like I said, we know what is expected of ZNBC as a public broadcaster. We are supposed to embrace everybody because the public are the ones paying TV license and we have an obligation to give the public what they want to see. But I can tell you right now, I know for a fact that people just watch, especially in Lusaka and other urban areas, people just watch news on ZNBC. It's the only programme that is being watched. So if we can change the face of news. Imagine what kind of impact we will have as a public broadcaster.

As a way forward, I would strongly urge authorities to quickly implement the new ZNBC and Independent Broadcasting Acts which have only been partially implemented leaving other things hanging. Even the current ZNBC board has overstayed and is illegal going by the current laws, but nobody is even talking about it right now. I think it is a deliberate effort by the government to continue having a heavy hand on ZNBC. But as an institution I think we would want to breakaway from that trend.

Otherwise, I think there is a lot of potential at ZNBC and the kind of people we have in the newsroom are hard workers who would want to make a difference. They are dedicated to duty but they are frustrated because of interferences. What is even more frustrating is that this political interference is mainly concentrated on news than other programs. So if we are allowed or given leeway to operate to professionally our news content will be very vibrant and employees in the newsroom will look forward to staying on at ZNBC to fulfil their dreams.

I-3

In terms of interference it might not be directly, meaning someone might not tell me what to do. From years of working here I know what is expected of me at this government institution. I for example know that since ZNBC is a Government institution, the government of the day is given an upper hand in editorial content. The government activities have to be highlighted in most cases hence you see a lot of ministers and the president on our news, because the government owns this institution. So even new employees from colleges have to acquaint themselves with our operations and make them conform to what we do here. For me if there is any interference it might be at a higher level of this institution. Otherwise, most times we try to balance statements from opposition parties by getting a comment from government sources as well.

We have editorial meetings and whatever is decided in that meeting is what goes on the news. If the editorial meeting thinks that the news a story must be written in a certain way then that's how it goes otherwise there is no directly interference as such.

So for me, this being an institution owned by the government it is now inborn that I have to give favourable content to the government of the day. It is like you work here for years, you get to know that this is what is supposed to be done. Everyone who works anywhere else I am sure they have those editorial policies as well.

But as reporters we have also encouraged them to go out there get the stories, write the way they are suppose to be without censoring themselves. The meeting I am talking about decides the final content.

In terms of license fees and the fulfilling our commitments, we are trying our best though I wouldn't say we have completely achieved everything but slowly one day we will realise and be on top of things.

Of course, our major difficult is that civil societies and opposition political parties rarely see themselves on our news. When they do, it is usually in support of the government. We need to seriously work on that anomaly. What we can do may be is to make things level by airing each and every person. Each person must have a voice each person must be on our news. But in the last two weeks or so we haven't aired any opposition political party. But like I said, unless a minister is reacting to that story immediately then it will not go on air.

My personal feelings are that somehow I feel we have let down our audience. I have been to places where people would be watching our news and they just tune to something else in protest. So I can tell that we are not doing a good job. Not that we can't do that good job, but it is just that there is an extent where things are not just correct.

I know that we are expected to cover all parties, all civil groups, anybody with a voice, women, children are supposed to be on our news. We are supposed to cover all stories, everybody, every face, should have been in the news but we end up may be covering the government. For example, if we had a breaking news story right now, it will mean pulling the camera from a minister who is speaking, but that is almost

impossible. Otherwise, public service broadcaster entails that we collect the news, it's a public institution, give balanced stories to the public as they are supposed to.

But I should also mention that as a national broadcaster, some opposition party's language might not conform to our standard. So you find that by the time they want to say a point, they would have said so many words which are not so palatable to air on TV. And so we keep cutting and editing them, but that makes the whole end up with a lot of jump cuts. So there are some opposition leaders who have a tendency of saying things which are not good for TV.

But I think every reporter who works here knows what is supposed to be done, but it is just circumstances that lead us not to perform to people's expectations. We know what we are here for, we were trained and we have the ability and quality to give a good product.

I-7

In terms of editorial independence, the challenges are many. But the main challenge I encounter that I feel does not make me perform to my best I think is political interference whether it is coming from up there. It affects me and as such I am forced to think in a certain way like I know that if I speak to this source, the story will not run and that is frustration on its own. It is demotivating. The problem of political interference comes from up there with government and senior managers here. I would know that this is the right way to tackle this story but somebody will just come to say you have to do this and you know where there is authority and you are operating under a certain house style, there is nothing you can do.

Because of this interference, my motto has been that I do the best in my profession and then it is up to the people up there to decide whether to be unprofessional or not. I think during my work at ZNBC I have tried to be as professional as possible. To follow the professional guidelines that I am required to follow as a reporter and leave it with the people out there. The editors and the people that sit in the editorial meeting

decide whether to water down the story or to do away with it. I think that would be their task not me.

Sometimes I even find myself covering stories that involve friends to some senior managers here. For example, I once did a story involving prominent person. I was ordered to completely erase the story from the system by one senior manager because of their connections, yet it was of public interest. So those are some of the challenges that I encounter. But you know I cannot fight authority. Sometimes I end up doing things as they wish.

I have tried to cover other voices but I know that when it gets here definitely the story will not run. As a result, I end up censoring myself instead of bothering myself doing something that is not workable. For example, there was a story about one ruling party official appearing in courts for corruption. I reached a stage where each time I went into court and sometimes I would sit through morning and afternoon I write my stories, and its not aired. Eventually I received instructions that actually this person, ignore, do not write stories about this person because it's portraying a bad image of the ruling party. And eventually what happened because of the frustrations I just told myself that I am not going to cover that story anymore and I never covered it up to the end. But then the surprising thing when the judgment came out it was in his favour and I was forced to go and pick the judgment. So that is how unprofessional and unfair sometimes things can be.

The system here is such that if you get a story which is ant-government the only time it will run is if you get a reaction from government but if there is no reaction, then the story is not run at all. So you try to get reaction from government but if they are uncooperative there is nothing you can do, it just becomes a dead story.

On the license fees and laws and how we have met our commitments, I clearly remember those to do with impartial news coverage. But I don't think much have been done because we still have this political interference. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting is still in charge of selecting on who gets on the ZNBC board. It is still the same old ZNBC before enacting of those laws. I think the only way is to remove certain powers from the minister that he has over the board and

other people coming down there. Otherwise, as long as the situation continues as it is I don't think there will be any change. The status quo will continue.

On policy context, as far as I am concerned, I don't think much has been done. We have seen some of the commitments that ZNBC made but these are just on paper. Nothing has been done it still the same old system. Still the same old house style which is unwritten. But we all know the dos and don'ts here, contrary to what is on paper.

We have received several valid criticisms from members of the public. The major ones are that we concentrate so much on government officials. We do not write on issues that affect the masses out there, we would rather focus on a political story, and probably even personalities. Those are the major criticisms that we have received and actually the entire news is about government, without giving a voice to other people outside government. Even people like NGOs are deemed to be anti-government, and understandably so they cannot run on our screen. A typical example is on the current on-going constitution. The system at the moment is that you only get positive stories or rather stories that seem to be for the government side of argument. But the ones that are anti they don't run.

I am aware of the SADC editorial policies and ZNBC picked some they felt they could implement or rather they localised them, but all these are just on paper. They are not being followed at all.

My personal viewpoints on this subject are that I know that the public expects me to inform them on what is going on or rather to be a conveyor belt of what they would not easily access. In a democratic society when I am getting stories especially things to do with government policies, my role is to inform people about policies and also get their views even ones opposed to government.

I would therefore like a ZNBC that would be free from political interference and other editorial independence. Let it run like other institutions that are autonomous of government. We therefore need a full implementation of the new ZNBC Act.

The challenges that I face in the course of my editorial work are many. Firstly, with the outsiders, I have discovered that generally the business community are very secretive. They don't really like disclosing information unless it benefits them by that I mean they want to gain publicity out of every interview that you do with them rather than give information that will be valuable. With the fellow news team, I guess it is merely the question of struggling for limited equipment to cover assignments.

And in terms of content, I must say there is some political interference that is largely to do with how we treat the stories that are against the government. Usually such stories will not be treated favourably if they are too critical of government, they will not be aired on our channel. There may not be direct instructions on how I should do the story, but over the years I think we have come to know which line to follow, and somehow we practice self censorship. Often you hear people in the newsroom complaining that a story should not be done in a particular way because they don't want problems. They just want to go home and be in peace meaning that if there is a story that is very critical of government they will not use it because it might cost them their jobs.

We always try to clarify the government position even if a story was generated by the private media. I remember recently there was a story about the fuel shortage and it was said that some bank was involved in the procurement of fuel. The opposition picked the story and flipped it into the negative in the private media. We had to follow it up with the government officials for reactions even though ourselves we did not have it initially. And most of the times you find that we cannot air a story until we get the reaction from the government.

In terms of our commitments made during the revision of the ZNBC Act, an attempt has been made to reach more areas in terms of editorial content and radius. We now have reporters going into rural Zambia to gather news stories from places where we never did before.

But what we have not changed is the heavy control on the editorial content. There is still a lot of self-censorship and intimidation. People are still conscious about the repercussions of trying to balance things up because in the end it might cost you your job.

In terms of editorial policy, I think there is a one, but I am not aware. But most of us are guided by professional ethics. May be unwritten policies because I don't think I remember seeing official policies here.

Hence, we mainly write about the president, his ministers and other government officials as opposed to putting opposition leaders or even just general ordinary citizens, especially on our 19:00 hours news which is the main one.

But what we usually do as reporters is to write things the way they are and leave it to the editorial team to decide. It really depends on the editorial committee to decide whether they want to use the material or not. And I don't think they have ever said no you cannot cover this one or no you must always cover this and not this one I don't think so.

But personally, I think the public expect us to present views in a balanced manner and also take coverage outside Lusaka. People also expect us to cover other views rather than government officials. This is because in as far as democracy is concerned, I think as a public broadcaster, my role as a reporter is to communicate as much information that would help the public to be well informed as possible.

But the problem is that the final decision on content is not dependant on reporters but on the editorial team.

But again, independence is quite a difficult thing. For example, look at the judiciary, look at the Ant-Corruption Commission, and even the police. They are all accused of being biased.

In terms of editorial independence, I think the challenges we face are many, as you know we are a public broadcaster and we are state owned and controlled. So government has a huge stake in most of our operations, whether we like it or not. So editorial independence is there but just to a certain extent, because there are things that we can broadcast and others we can't for political reasons. Political interference is there, for instance, an event happens, instead of starting a story from the perspective the public speaking out against government, you find that we are starting a story from government's position.

For example, recently there was fuel shortage, instead of starting the story from the perspective of the motorists who are feeling the pinch or who are directly affected, we had to start from the perspective of what government was doing to mitigate the situation. So we do practice self-censorship as we have been conditioned to write news in a specific way. If I see a story about an opposition leader, I will know that if I do not treat it well it will land me in problems. So sometimes a reporter is even reluctant to go and cover a particular event, because one can just tell that I will not even go there because I know am wasting my time, that story will not run. So you find that I would have a story but abandon it even before it gets anywhere. So there are restrictions that are there we know what can go and what can't. And one even be dismissed or charged.

I am fully aware we made some commitments, but more still needs to be done to realise their fulfilment.

I am not sure we have editorial policies that we follow. For instance editors will say a story must be balanced and follow the tenets that govern the journalism profession. But later they change for fear of the repercussions I talked about.

As a result, members of the public complain that our news is always giving governments perspective and mostly we are always covering the president and the first lady. Hence they insist that they are not seeing the benefits of why they are

paying the K3000 or the TV license fee. So I think generally people feel that we are not doing well, we are not living up to their expectations. And I think the criticisms are correct to a certain extent. You know why I say they might be correct to a certain extent, I mean we always give priority to government stories rather than the community.

Personally, despite some of these interferences, I think sometimes we do try as much as possible to cover opposing views. For example, in 2006 tripartite elections people accused us of preferring the ruling party. They might have been right to a certain but we tried as much as possible to give a voice to the other parties as well.

But of course as you know, as a professional you might want to apply yourself in a certain manner but the rules or the organisation may limit you. So for opposing views, we always try to find what I may call safe angles in a story.

So it is standard now that all government leaders such as ministers or anybody related to government should have about two minutes of sound bite for the president and one minute thirty seconds for other government leaders. For the others, we allocate time depending on what they are saying. For example, if it is something that you know it is not positive of government, it will just be a flash. Meaning someone will just say a sentence or two and it is cut. But if they are saying something that is positive of government, it may go to 50 seconds, a minute.

My final thoughts are that it would be better if ZNBC, especially the newsroom, can be left to operate independently. Of course I doubt if that can be achieved because of the huge interest that authorities have in this organisation. But if it is implemented to the latter then I think it would really help us to move away from the current situation where we are heavily leaning towards the government.

Appendix II: SADC'S SABA election reporting guidelines

Guidelines and Principles for Broadcast Coverage of Elections in the SADC Region

Preamble

We, the Chief Executives of public broadcasting services in the Southern African Development Community (SADC),

Guided by the laws of our individual countries and the protocols, conventions, guidelines and treaties endorsed, signed, and/or ratified by our governments in the region in their desire to ensure the success of democratic processes, and in particular: the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002), the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2004), the SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport (2001) and the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (1997)

Determined to create regional principles to guide coverage of elections,

Dedicated to highlighting the duty of all broadcasters, large or small, rich or poor, to contribute to and ensure free, fair and transparent elections in any way they can,

Committed to ensuring free and fair elections,

Hereby agree on and adopt the Broadcasting Code of Conduct for Covering Elections as follows

A. Editorial Guidelines

Article 1

The aim of election coverage is to ensure that the electorate is empowered to make an informed choice.

In light of this, the public is entitled to accurate, fair impartial and balanced information about the election procedures, and the positions of political parties/independents and/or candidates on issues. Broadcasters are therefore committed to make every effort to present all available and relevant information to the public.

Broadcasters will further ensure that coverage of the elections will be designed to emphasise the relevance of elections and encourage participation by all citizens in the election process.

Article 2

Broadcasters will ensure that they focus on issues of relevance and interest to citizens and not purely cover events of political parties/contestants.

Article 3

Broadcasters will provide opportunities for the public to take part in political debates on election issues. Participants of such broadcasts must be as representative as possible of different views and sectors of society.

Article 4

Broadcasters have the responsibility to treat all political parties/contestants equitably. They shall to this end facilitate fair play.

Equitable treatment does not mean equal treatment nor does it mean that broadcasters will abandon their news values and/or processes. Equitable treatment means fair treatment in both news, current affairs and discussion programmes. Fairness is achieved over time. It is unlikely to be achieved in a single programme. Broadcasters will be consistent in their treatment of political parties/contestants.

Broadcasters will not only rely on political parties or candidates to bring information but will proactively seek out information and participation in discussions.

Article 5

In an election campaign there is a risk of incumbents trying to use their position to advance their election prospect. Broadcasters should regard with caution any statement or action by an official of an incumbent party and need to check thoroughly whether for example public appearances of government officials are strictly on government business or part of their election campaign.

Article 6

Broadcasters will make sure that any impression of one-sidedness is avoided in all programming. They must act and be seen to be acting in a fair and independent manner and not be influenced by political or other interests.

Staff members who hold political office, and/or are office bearers with a political party, and/or active in political campaigning and/or standing for parliament, will not be allowed to broadcast and/or participate in editorial decision making during the election period.

Staff members, in the execution of their duties, will not wear or exhibit symbols or colours or appear with clothes or insignia associated with any political party or contestant during the election period.

Broadcasters and their staff members will not accept gifts, favours or special treatment by political parties or other interests that compromise their professional integrity.

Article 7

Broadcasters will afford political parties and/or candidates the right of reply where a report aired under the editorial responsibility of the broadcaster contains inaccurate information or unfair criticism based on a distortion of facts. The opportunity to reply must be given within at least 24 hours in a programme of similar weight and audience. Broadcasters should in this regard take special care immediately prior to the election date in order to ensure timely correction of such distortions.

In instances of conflict about this right of reply, broadcasters shall ensure timeous independent arbitration.

Article 8

Broadcasters shall not broadcast views that could incite violence or advocate hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion or political conviction, and that constitute incitement to cause harm.

Article 9

Public opinion polls should be treated with caution and in reporting the findings of such polls broadcasters shall inform the public on the source of the poll, the commissioning agency, the period of time over which it was conducted, the sample size and the likely margin of error. Similar care must be applied when dealing with exit polls.

Article 10

Broadcasters have an obligation to inform the public of the election results, as they become available. Special care should be taken to ensure the accuracy of all results broadcast.

B. Guidelines on party election broadcasts and political advertisements

1. Definitions

1.1 Party election broadcasts are free time slots allocated to political parties/contestants to inform the electorate of their policies.

1.2. Political advertisements are paid for advertisements intended to advance the interests of any political party.

2. Guidelines

2.1 Broadcasters shall where applicable in terms of country laws afford political parties/contestants equitable and fair access to party election broadcasts and political advertisements.

2.2 Broadcasters shall ensure in such instances that they develop transparent formulae for calculating the allocation of air time, including the amount of time and the time of broadcast, to be provided to individual political parties/ contestants.

2.3 Broadcasters shall timeously develop guidelines on submission of such party election broadcasts and political advertisements including details of the required formats and technical standards. Broadcasters shall publish them widely.

2.4 Broadcasters shall develop transparent mechanisms and procedures to ensure that political advertisements and party election broadcasts are not unilaterally edited or amended without consent of political parties and contestants. Such alterations are only possible if such advertisements or broadcasts do not comply with reasonable technical standards, laws of the country or any electoral codes.

2.5 Should a political party or contestant in such instances refuse to edit or amend such advertisement or broadcast, the broadcaster has the right to refuse to air it. Broadcasters should be indemnified by political parties against any cost, damage or loss incurred or sustained as a result of any claim arising from such broadcasts or advertisements.

C. Implementation

In order to effect implementation of these guidelines and principles, broadcasters will:

Develop editorial codes and policies or review existing codes using these guidelines as minimum standards, and ensure awareness of such codes.

Publish these guidelines and any other internal codes to enable the public to monitor the performance of the broadcaster and hold it accountable.

Establish internal complaints procedures to channel and resolve complaints from the public. Broadcasters will encourage aggrieved parties to use existing independent arbitration mechanisms.

Ensure proper planning and resource allocation for election coverage.

Ensure that staff members are adequately trained in order to fulfil obligations as required by these guidelines and principles.

D. Requirements for the implementation of these Guidelines and Principles

In order to adhere to and implement these guidelines, broadcasters require:

To be allowed to operate in an environment free of violence and intimidation. All electoral stakeholders must respect the rights of broadcasters to cover the elections. Any electoral institutions shall make all stakeholders aware of the role of broadcasters.

Adequate, additional state funding for coverage of the election period through government, parliament, and or any electoral commission.

Appendix III

ZNBC Licence task force commitments

ZNBC TV Licence. “When you pay it will show.
Our commitments”.

To maintain the highest ethical standards of broadcasting.

To increase transmission hours and to reach a wider coverage area for both radio and TV.

Balanced diverse news content. We are in particular committed to ensure that the cross section of the Zambian society is afforded the opportunity to express their views on matters of national interest.

Better programming in all areas of television and radio with special regard to all interest groups.

New interesting children's programmes with special regard to educational programmes.

Source quality foreign programmes that will supplement the local ones.
To be accountable in our use of public money.

Improve the content and quality of our local productions by establishing ZNBC presence in rural areas.

Increase our support in the promotion of local soaps, drama and all sports.
Be more accessible to all our customers, viewers and listeners and respond to their concerns.

Appendix IV: SABC upward referral

EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND UPWARD REFERRAL

For purposes of the Editorial Code and of all the policies that flow from it, it is understood that the authority for editorial decisions is vested in the editorial staff. Aside from the process of upward referral which is outlined in this section, editorial staff are required to ask for advice from the Office of the Chief Legal Advisor on any matter that may have legal implications for the SABC. (In addition, Legal guidelines for editorial staff are available from the Legal Department). However, the final decision whether to broadcast, and in what form, lies with the editorial staff, not their legal advisors. The aim is to safeguard the editorial process and maintain clear responsibility for the decision to broadcast.

The SABC as a corporation, and thereby the CEO as the Editor in Chief, exerts editorial authority and control over, and bears responsibility for the content of, all the programmes produced, commissioned and broadcast by the SABC. All the editorial staff in news and programming abide by the Editorial Code that commits them to the

highest standards of objectivity, accuracy, fairness, impartiality and balance. The onus is on each of them to ensure that the provisions of broadcasting and other legislation are complied with, the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters and regulations issued by ICASA are adhered to, and the policies of the corporation are observed. It is the responsibility of the senior news and programming executives to establish the necessary systems and processes to achieve compliance with the Editorial Code and Editorial Policies. These are the Managing Director: News, the Heads of Radio News, TV News and SABC Africa, the Managing Director: Public Service Broadcasting, the Managing Director: PCBS, the TV channel Heads and the radio station managers.

Editorial staff are expected to use their judgement regarding the parameters of the Code and the editorial policies. If they are unsure of anything, or a problem arises, they should consult the next most senior person in the editorial chain of responsibility. This is upward referral. It is an empowering approach that exists in other public broadcasters around the world. It presumes editorial staff are familiar with the functions, duties and values of the public broadcaster and are in the best position to make editorial decisions. The practice of upward referral gives journalists and other programming staff an ideal mechanism for consultation, first with peers and then with senior management, before taking a decision that could have consequences for the corporation. The SABC Board is finally responsible for evaluating the compliance of staff and management with editorial policies.

For working journalists and other programming staff the single fact of having a daily or, for some media, an hourly deadline means that time is of the essence and snap judgements are the order of the day. These decisions are taken in the heat of the moment, which could be in a highly emotionally charged situation such as a public demonstration, or in the quiet of an office during a daily diary meeting. An opportunity missed because of inflexible upward referral procedures could mean a rival's scooping a news story. However, mistakes that could be expensive for the SABC in terms of legal costs and claims for damages, or loss of credibility, require strict adherence to clear rules for upward referral — for protection of both the corporation and the professional integrity of those concerned. The credibility of the corporation and that of its news and programming staff are interdependent.

It is difficult to say what constitutes an extraordinary event or situation. As a general rule, when editorial staff are not sure whether a decision is likely to have a negative effect or wider implications, as a matter of course they should refer it to their immediate senior. That person in turn would refer it further, to the appropriate person or decision-making forum. In addition, even when specific editorial guidance is not being sought, programmes or news items that are controversial or likely to have an extraordinary impact on the corporation or in the community should be reported in advance to the senior news and programming executives (as listed above), who in turn may decide to notify top management.

MANDATORY REFERRAL — GROUP EXECUTIVE AND BOARD

As a rule, and in accordance with the SABC's policies on Authority and Delegation, any matter that could have major financial, image, or public response implications is to be referred to, and approved by, Group Executive. This makes it mandatory to refer any extraordinary matter, whether it involves issues of overspending or the public standing of the corporation, for approval by Group Executive and/or the Board before proceeding on any course of action that could bind the corporation legally, or expose it to legal or financial claim.

MANDATORY REFERRAL — MANAGING DIRECTOR OF NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS, HEAD OF RADIO NEWS AND HEAD OF TV NEWS

As a rule, and as a matter of policy to protect the public interest, the national interest, the interests of the SABC and its staff, as well as the individual rights and interests of editorial staff and journalistic sources, it is understood that the authority for editorial decisions is vested in the editorial staff. To ensure adequate protection of these numerous — and sometimes competing — interests, every news organisation and broadcasting operation establishes a referral system as part of the editorial process.

If anyone on the news staff does not refer an issue upwards, that person will be held responsible for the editorial decision taken. The following matters are to be referred to the Head of either Radio or TV News or SABC Africa, or discussed in advance at daily planning and editorial meetings:

- Any instance in which it becomes necessary and is deemed to be in the public interest to gather information to which the public normally does not have access.
- Interviews with criminals and people wanted by police.
- Any proposal to grant anonymity to anyone trying to evade the law.
- Payment for information.
- Broadcasting of any recording made originally for other legal purposes, such as a recording of the proceedings at a meeting.
- Disclosure of the details of a serious crime that were obtained surreptitiously or unofficially.
- Requests from external parties to view, listen to, or obtain untransmitted recorded material.
- Commissioning of opinion polls.

The daily practice of upward referral has evolved over time and has not been documented, or written into a manual or style guide. This practice will continue to develop, and as editorial policies are updated constantly to reflect the prevailing social values and international best practice, it will be refined further.