

**The Exploration of the Impact of
State Ownership on Uganda's *New Vision Newspaper's*
Social Role**

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ABSTRACT

The global trends of democratisation and privatisation that swept much of the developing world in the 1980s and 1990s led to significant changes in the conceptualisation, organisation and performance of the media. In Africa democratisation attained a new meaning with associated processes of liberalisation of broadcasting to end the monopoly of broadcasting by the state. The private media of the liberalised market is increasingly putting the public media system, both broadcast and print, under serious competition, and forcing them to adjust to changing circumstances. *The New Vision* newspaper in Uganda is one such public service media organisations that are owned by the state and yet have to compete in the new more democratic and liberalised environment.

This study set out to explore the extent to which state-ownership impacts on *The New Vision's* social role. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, I have established that although *The New Vision* is a public service medium for which government remains the major source of news, it does not in most cases give the state more or preferentially prominent coverage at the expense of other interest groups in society. On contrary, basing of the amount of coverage of civil society I established that *The New Vision* enabled the various groups public sphere to interact.

The newspaper to an extent also plays the democratic role of monitoring government although there was little evidence of monitoring of corporate abuse. The nature of The New Vision Statute, and the global trends that have changed the conduct of official and private business, have rendered the theories on the 1980s' development media theories increasingly inapplicable, forcing *The New Vision* to develop its own version of development journalism that is socially relevant.

The study recommends that whereas much of The New Vision Statute is progressive, sections of it should be removed to protect the newspaper from being manipulated by government functionaries, if the it is to continue enabling the public sphere. The

newspaper should also increase its monitoring of corporate abuse, and make internal reforms to improve the coverage of development related issues.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the way the state ownership of Uganda's *New Vision* newspaper constrains or promotes the democratic role of the media. It is concerned with the media and development, and the media and democracy issues. The term media and development refers to how the media can play a role in national development. The term media and democracy refers to how the mass media contribute to fostering a participatory society.

The New Vision was established as a government newspaper in 1986. The following year it was formally set up by an Act of Parliament as a parastatal called The New Vision Printing and Publishing Corporation. *The New Vision* newspaper is the main brand of the corporation's business. The statute requires the newspaper and the corporation to operate profitably, enjoy editorial independence, and to criticize government positively without necessarily becoming an institutional opposition to it (*The New Vision Statute* 1987). *The New Vision* newspaper thus operated in a unique environment of being fully owned by the state, and yet set up by an Act of Parliament to enjoy editorial independence and to operate commercially. It has to balance the interest of the government, the public interest and the business interests. *The New Vision* is a daily newspaper with the biggest national circulation of 36,000 copies and 42,000 copies for its Sunday edition (Steadman 2002). The other daily *The Monitor*, which is privately owned. *The New Vision* has four sister newspapers published in local regional languages. One of them, *Bukedde*, is also a daily, the rest are weeklies.

In 1986 the government of Uganda gave *The New Vision* a start-up package of an old printing press, a pick-up truck and 40 million Uganda Shillings. Since then the newspaper and its mother corporate have operated commercially and expanded through re-investment of profit and bank loans. *The New Vision* is an upmarket newspaper catering largely for an elite readership. The rest of the population are served by the local titles, which have regional peculiarities and are not mere translations of *The New Vision*.

The reason why *The New Vision* is significant for the study is that despite its total ownership by the state, the newspaper operates like a private business and competes effectively with the private media judging from its circulation and advertising volumes (Steadman 2002: 24). At the same time it criticizes government and exposes wrongdoing in a manner not usually expected of a state-owned media organization. In much of the developing world, particularly in Africa, state-owned media would be expected to describe the government in positive light and to promote government programmes. This thesis seeks to examine how *The New Vision* performs its democratic role of promoting a more just society, keeps watch against abuse and excesses by government and in the private sphere, and at the same time promotes national development. I intend to study *The New Vision* using interviews with key persons in government, the newspaper itself, and in civic society. I shall also examine related documents and correspondence as well as critically examining some texts published in the newspaper.

This chapter gives background to the study through both international and local perspective. It also provides a statement of the problem that informed my interest in this study. This chapter also sets out the objectives of the study, the key research issues, the significance of the study and structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

State-owned newspapers, the world over especially in Africa, are changing as the wave of democratization and technological changes bring in more private investment in the newspaper business. The print medium is undergoing the same phenomenon experienced by public service broadcasting where the twin processes of privatization and liberalization have made state-owned media face a stiff challenge from the private media that is more market-driven (Jjuuko 2002). Although the state-owned press in Uganda has coexisted with the private press since the country's independence in 1962, the global trends mentioned above have made the competition even more rigorous since 1992 when the government implemented privatization and liberalization of the economy. Not only public broadcast stations, but also the whole media industry, felt the impact of the liberalization of the media and the many

broadcasting stations that emerged now even private and state-owned newspapers had to compete for audience and advertising business.

The Vision newspaper, has witnessed increased competition from *The Monitor* newspaper that grew from a weekly to a daily, attracting substantial foreign investment from the Kenya-based Nation Media group in 2000 (Waweru 2003). The same time, *The New Vision* has to compete with over 75 registered FM radio stations in breaking the news and providing information (Steadman 2002: 14). The Vision Printing and Publishing Corporation Act 1987 mandated the company to publish government newspapers and other related businesses, to operate profitably, to voice opinions and to give positive criticism about government policies without becoming an institutional opposition to the government of the day. The newspaper is also mandated to foster the unity of Uganda, respect its sovereignty and to make the truth the guiding line and governing principle of *The New Vision* and its sister newspapers (*The New Vision Statute 1987:71*). This mandate assigned to *The New Vision* three important functions:

- (a) to be a public service organization reporting local and world events and news
- (b) to watch over government, its policies, institutions and functionaries
- (c) to foster the public sphere by voicing public opinions about government policies

This study investigates how the state-owned *New Vision* newspaper fulfils these ‘fourth estate’ functions of the media.

1. 2 Statement of the Problem

Prior to 1992, Government controlled large section of the economy. It owned over 100 parastatals, most of which survived on Government subsidies. The Government set the prices of key commodities, controlled foreign exchange trade, and had the monopoly over broadcasting. In 1992 under pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to restructure the economy, the government started to liberalize the economy by selling off or liquidating non-performing state corporations. The government also divested itself of most businesses where it had a monopoly and

opened them up to competition. Broadcasting was one such area where government opened up to competition from private operators.

These trends privatization and liberalization had a profound impact on the media landscape in Uganda. The liberalization of the airwaves in particular increased infusion of new media technologies. New FM radios opened up with news technologies including phone-in facilities and satellite broadcasting. International broadcasting companies like the BBC, Radio France International, and the South African Multi-Choice Satellite Television started direct broadcasts into Uganda. Democratization and globalization have created a new scenario in the Uganda media market where state-owned media institutions like *The New Vision* have to compete with the private media on equal terms for audiences and for business. Yet amidst all this competition, *The New Vision* has to fulfil its statutory mandate mentioned in section 1.1 above. However, the only research about the effects of commercialization on the public service media values has been limited to the broadcasting sector in Uganda (Jjuuko 2002). The rest has only been anecdotal (Balikuddembe 1992; Kiyaga 1997; Baguma et al in Muthoni 2002). Research has yet to be done on how a state-owned print newspaper balances its traditional public service values, ‘fourth estate’ need and commercial interests. The present study investigates the role of *The New Vision* in fulfilling both ‘fourth estate’ and development functions of the media.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

As is noted above, this study examines how the state –owned *New Vision* newspaper balances the democratic role of the media or the ‘fourth estate’ needs with the traditional public service role of promoting development. Specifically, it seeks to establish in what form and to what extent the newspaper performs the watchdog role over government and other centres of political and economic power. The study will also seek to establish how *The New Vision* contributes to the provision of a general public sphere in which various sections of the citizenry, civil society and government can talk to one another. The study will examine the limitations and restrictions *The New Vision* suffers as a result of its ownership and it will consider the degree to which

these limitations impact on the ability of the newspaper to fulfil its journalistic obligations, as outlined in *The New Vision Statute* of 1987.

This study also seeks to establish how *The New Vision* performs a developmental role. The study will locate the development media model in the 1970s critique of the power of the liberal democratic model used by the First World to dominate and control the flow of information to the Third World. This critique gave rise to the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) that argued for state control of local media to suit national objectives (McBride 1980). It is in the context of this NWICO that this study seeks to examine what specific national obligations state ownership imposes on *The New Vision* and how the newspaper fulfils these obligations. The general trend in many countries where the public service medium has met with stiff competition from the private media have seen public service media doing more of the watchdog role than the developmental role (Brumler 1992).

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

This study specifically seeks to:

- a) Establish the statutory and implied mandate of *The New Vision* newspaper.
- b) Examine to how the newspaper's reporters and editors understand both its democratic and developmental roles and the implications of government ownership of the newspaper on their practice.
- c) Establish the extent to which different groups of the public use the newspaper to talk to one another and to their government.
- d) How the newspaper organizes and presents development related material.

1.4 Research Issues and Assumptions

The key assumption for this study is that *The New Vision* newspaper has an integral part to play in the economic, social and political development of Uganda. This is primarily because the newspaper has a public mandate through state-ownership and also because it is a national newspaper with the widest reach across the country. In addition, this newspaper is the flag-bearer of the corporation that also publishes four local titles in the four regions of Uganda. The first assumption is that *The New Vision*,

as a state owned newspaper, would tend to report on government business and government officials more than other political interest groups and that it would largely portray government in a positive light. As a result, the other sections of society such as opposition groups, civil society will not get as much coverage as government. This assumption can be stretched to mean that *The New Vision* will give substantial space to government development programs and those from partner institutions that suit national objectives. The second assumption, arising from the traditional liberal view, is that state ownership of *The New Vision* subjects the newspaper to government interference in its editorial work. The liberals argue that information and debate can best be achieved through the free market. “The freedom of the market allows anyone to publish an opinion. This ensures that all significant points of view are aired, and that information is made available from varied sources” (Curran 2000: 127).

The third assumption is that the imperative to operate commercially and profitably subjects *The New Vision* to market pressure and potential market corruption that can limit the way the newspaper reports on abuse of economic power by private business. In a critique of the free market model to be discussed in depth later in this study, Curran (2000:122-123) says media organizations are in general now more market oriented and have extensive economic interests. Curran argues further that the free market is now a source of corruption that can limit critical oversight of government (2000:123). Furthermore pressure from advertisers can lead to a shrinking of editorial space and weaken investigative journalism meant to expose wrongdoing. This study will also seek to examine whether *The New Vision's* revenue from advertising is without cost to editorial independence and content.

1.5 Methods of the Study

This study is qualitative, using analysis of newspaper copy, questionnaires followed up by qualitative methods of in-depth unstructured interviews, and document analysis. This enables an institutional analysis of the organization. The theoretical framework that informs this study is based on the concepts of the media and democracy and the media and development as defined earlier. It is particularly informed by the debates on the media and democracy in Africa as articulated by Mowlana (1993), Haule

(1984) and Ronning (1999). The concept of the public sphere as discussed by different scholars has also contributed to this study (Masson 1995:11; Habermas 1989). It is also informed by the existing literature reviews on the media and democracy as well as the media and development issues located in the 1970s New World Information and Communication Order.

1.6 Thesis Outline

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter One gives the background to the study and the statement of the problem. It also provides the objectives of the research, its issues and assumptions, as well as the significance and methods of the study and the outline of the thesis. Chapter Two gives the theoretical perspectives of the study and a review of literature surrounding the debates of the media and democracy and the media and development and their relevance to Africa. Key sections in this chapter include the concepts of democracy and of development, the democratic role of the media, the concept of the public sphere and the media in development. Chapter Three is dedicated to the detailed history of *The New Vision* newspaper. This research feels that a thorough historical over-view of *The New Vision* is necessary for constructive discussion and a clear appreciation of key issues such as the control and ownership of the newspaper, its legal status, its philosophy, growth and the newspaper's main features today.

Chapter Four is a review and discussion of the methodology and methods used in this research. Chapter Five outlines the findings of the study, their interpretation and discussion of these findings. Chapter Six, which closes the thesis, contains the concluding reflections and recommendations that arise out this study. The thesis is written in a signpost style, with every section and every chapter linking to the next.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews gives an overview of the literature on the media and democracy and the media and development. The discussion starts with two of the four normative theories of the press as expounded by Siebert et al (1956). These are the liberal or free press theory and the social responsibility theory. Dennis McQuail (1987) and since added two normative theories: the Development Media theory and the Democratic Participant theory, which are also discussed. These theories form the frame for the main discussion that follows with a critique by Curran (2000) of the normative liberal theory in which he suggests an alternative way – a radical democratic system – of organizing the media to serve a more democratic purpose. This background is significant in that it describes the major philosophies along which societies organize media systems. In particular, Curran’s radical democratic model, which by and large incorporates the social responsibility model, makes a case for the centrality of public service media for a viable public sphere. I will argue that a discussion of the public service media is pertinent to the discussion of the state owned *The New Vision* newspaper.

The development media model is located in terms of the 1970s critique of the liberal democratic model used by the first world nations to dominate and control the information flow to the ‘third world’ nations. This critique led to the establishment by UNESCO of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) that argued for state control of media and the formulation of media policies to suit national ends. Based on these debates this chapter discusses the merits and demerits of state control of the media, whether the state is presumed to be controlling or enabling media performance and it applies to the history and development of *The New Vision*.

2.1 The Normative Press Theory

The normative theory of the press deals with ideas of how media ought to operate if certain social values are to be observed or attained. McQuail (1987) argues that this

kind of theory is important because it plays a part in shaping media institutions and informs the type of performance the audience and other actors in society expect from the media. Despite the different national peculiarities, general principles exist that can be used to classify national media cases. The normative theory developed after the two world wars with the realization that the mass media had developed some features considered problematic to the rest of society – like concentration of media ownership in a few hands. These developments stimulated policy – making from governments and supra-national organizations related to media performance.

2.1.1 The Liberal Media Theory

Siebert et al (1956) argue that the liberal theory of the media emerged in 17th century Europe when the printed press struggled to emancipate itself from official control. The libertarian philosophy is based on the principle that man is rational and the prime unit of civilization (Siebert et al 1956:40). According to the liberal theory of the press, the main functions of the mass media are to inform and entertain. The press is also expected to assure financial independence through sales and marketing. The following principles express the notion of a free press under the libertarian model: that publication should be free from any prior censorship by any third party; any person should be free to publish; attacks on government officials in their official capacity should not be punished as long such attack does not undermine national security and private individuals' privacy (Siebert et al. 1956: 39-88). The other principles are that the publication of error should be equally protected with that of truth; that there should be no restriction on the collection, by legal means, of information for publication; that information should be sent and received across frontiers without restriction and that journalists should have a degree of autonomy within their workplace. Libertarian theory provides for informal controls through the self-righting process and through the free competition in the market place of opinions and entertainment. The state's function is to provide a stable framework within which individuals can interact (McQuail 1987: 113-118; Siebert et al 1956: 39-88).

Free press philosophers agree that there should be some restriction to this freedom of the press, but they do say what these should be. However some restrictions have, over a time, come to be accepted as being consistent with the libertarian model in modern democracies. These include the duty of the state to protect the reputations of individuals; the restriction and prohibition of the dissemination of obscene and indecent material; and restrictions on the press during national emergencies like war if there is clear and present danger (Siebert et al 1956: 39-88)). The libertarian theory has suffered criticism some of which are discussed in the next section that deals with the social responsibility media theory. The criticism mainly centres on the libertarian insistence on rationality, the theory of natural rights and free enterprises.

2.1.2 The Social Responsibility Media Theory

The Social Responsibility Theory originated in the 1947 Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press (McQuail 1987:116; Siebert et al 1956). A key reason for the Commission's inquiry into the working of 'free press' was the increasing monopolization of press ownership and the resulting inability of the 'free press' to be 'independence'. The technological and industrial revolution had improved the speed and efficiency of the press and introduced new media like television, movies and radio. Industrialization and new media technologies led to growing advertising volumes that replaced circulation sales as the major support for the press. In addition, these new technological development made it possible for a few owners to control newspaper chains. Media ownership became concentrated in a few hands and entry into the media market became too costly for many to afford (Peterson 1956:75).

Given these changes it was argued that freedom carries concomitant obligations, and that the press, which enjoys a privileged position (in a liberal democracy), is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society (Peterson 1956:74). The libertarian model works satisfactorily to the extent that the press recognizes its responsibilities, but when the press does not assume those responsibilities, then some other agency must ensure that it does. The social responsibility model accepts the six functions of the press expressed in the libertarian model, but expresses dissatisfaction with the way

media owners and operators interpret and carry out these functions (Peterson 1956: 74).

It suggests that the media have wielded too much power for their own ends with owners propagating their own opinions on politics and economics at the expense of opposing views; that the press has become subservient to big business and sometimes lets advertisers control editorial policies and editorial content; that the press has resisted social change; that the press has often paid more attention to the superficial and sensational than the significant in its coverage (Peterson 1956: 75). The press has also been criticized for invading the privacy of individuals without just cause, for endangering public morals and for being controlled by the business class who make it hard for new comers to enter the media industry. This last accusation also means that the free and open market place of ideas is threatened with extinction (1956: 78).

Drawing on the practices of media operators, Hutchins listed five conditions contemporary society requires of its press: to provide a truthful and comprehensive account of the day's events in a meaningful context; to serve as a forum of the exchange of comment and criticism; to project a representative picture of the groups that make up society; that the media portray accepted values in society and that the media give the public all the news it needs (Siebert et al, 1956: 87-91). The social responsibility model tries to reconcile three divergent principles: individual freedom and choice; media freedom; and media obligation to society. (McQuail 1987:116).

For the purposes of this study the following observations are worth noting. Whereas the free press model was born of a concept of negative liberty, "the freedom from", this social responsibility model is based on the concept of positive liberty, or "freedom for" doing work, but with responsibility to society (Peterson 1956). On government, the social responsibility model holds that the government must not only allow freedom, but it must also ensure that freedom can operate effectively and that the government should act, when necessary, to protect the freedom of its citizens when threatened even by private media owners.

2.2 Major Critiques of the Liberal Media Theory

2.2.1 Curran and the Rethinking of Media and Democracy

Curran (2000) provides critiques of the liberal theories of the media and democracy and points out that these theories are conceptually flawed because their objectives cannot be realized through a free market system. Looking at the organization of media systems in the 21st century, Curran argues further that the liberal theories give a narrow understanding of the democratic system and are idealistic in nature. He says that in theory the monopolization of media ownership under the free market model in effect restricts ideas in circulation (2000: 120).

2.2.2 The Free Market Watchdog and Market Corruption

The liberal theory holds that the main function of the media in a democratic society is to act as check on the state, to monitor the full range of activities and expose abuses of official authority. According to liberal theorists, once the media become subject to regulation by the state, they might lose their bite as a watchdog (Curran, 2000: 121). Berger (2000) for example writes: “Watchdogism is regarded as the epitome of democratic significance of both journalism and the media. Access to information held by the state is important in this outlook. Watchdogism focuses on the state and strips away its secretive features” (2000:84). Curran however, argues that while the watchdog role is important, it is time-worn and not as clear-cut as it seems, and it would not be correct in present times to make it the paramount role of the media. The media have changed from the principally public affairs oriented system that existed in the 18th century to being largely entertainment based today (2000:121-122). Even the media described as news media give a limited amount space and airtime to public affairs, investigative reporting and the exposure of official wrongdoing. Curran adds that the second way the watchdog argument is timeworn is that it takes government to be the sole object of press vigilance. He attributes this to the old view of government as the seat of power and centre of oppression: “This traditional view takes no account of the exercise of economic power and authority by shareholders in private business. The issue is no longer simply that the media are compromised by their links to big business: the media are big business themselves” (Curran 200: 122-123). He calls for a revised conception in which the media are conceived as a watchdog on both public and private power. He argues that most media are now profit oriented and stand to

gain from a business friendly government. Government is increasingly in need of business-friendly media because they have to woo and retain voter support (2000:123).

The biggest worry, according to Curran (2000), is that the market can give rise not to independent watchdogs serving the public interest but to corporate mercenaries that adjust their critical scrutiny to suit their private purpose. Berger (2000), reflecting on the African media situation, in the same vein bemoans the weakening of the liberal rhetoric of watchdog journalism caused by media owners who continue to impose restrictions; by media workers who engage in biased journalism; by powerful publicity apparatus representing influential vested interests that have snatched from journalists the initiative of setting news agendas; and journalists who prefer to reflect the status quo. Curran (2000: 124-127) says that another and more serious way the market can silence media watchdogs is by the private media – whose owners are part of the ruling system- collaborating with authoritarian regimes, as was the case in Latin America countries. He argues that in this case media attacks on official wrongdoing can be manipulatively sourced from those in power for their own purposes. Curran posits that the liberal theory fails to take into account the wider relations of power in which the media are situated (2000: 122-124).

But Ronning (1999) argues that the media as government watchdogs are still necessary in Africa where other democratic institutions are still weak (1999:120-121). Curran (2000) submits that both private and publicly owned media suffer constraints and that in both cases there are examples of journalistic resistance to control. He notes that in the case of public media there are generally established checks against undue control and manipulation of the media. These are sometimes enshrined in law or are achieved through representation on boards of persons from various political groups. Yet equivalent checks have not been developed to shield the private media from their corporate owners (2000: 127). In conclusion Curran (2000) says the watchdog role of the media is important but that this can no longer be entirely guaranteed under the free market system. What is important is to have a strategy that can shield the media from both private and public power and enable them serve the

wider public through critical surveillance of those in authority (2000:127). While the media's watchdog role in liberal theory is viewed as protecting society from abuse by those in authority, it also provides information and creates room for debate and the refinement of ideas in society.

2.2.3 The Role of Providing Information and Debate

The free market model holds that another cardinal principle for the media is to provide society with information to help the citizenry learn about their government. The media must also enable and promote the discussion of opinion in order to arrive at the greater good. (Milton and John Stuart Mill cited in Siebert et al 1956: 43-45). This channel of communication also helps to link government to the governed. In the liberal view this can best be achieved through the free market where the media can secure independence and generate wide-ranging debate. The freedom of the market, as conceived by Mill, allows anyone to publish an opinion and all view points are heard. There is value in this liberal idea because good governance thrives where decision-making processes involve people with opposing ideas. Out of this reasoned debate, society arrives at inclusive solutions (Siebert et al 1956: 43-45).

Curran (2000), however, posits that this ideal is also flawed and self-defeating in four ways. First, the free market is no longer as free as when it was conceptualized when costs were low and anyone could put up a 'stall' in the market place of ideas. Now the free market restricts the effective freedom to publish because the exorbitant costs of production make it difficult for newcomers to the media industry. Even those already in the practice are squeezed out by big business conglomerates that invest heavily in the media industry. Secondly, competitive market pressure pushes the media to increase entertainment and human-interest stories at the expense of public affairs stories. Thirdly, the free market produces media that serve a rich information menu for the elite, and a poor one for the general public. According to Curran (2000: 127-129), this stratification in information content restricts participant in public debate since only the elite, and not the general public, has access to the vital information necessary for a participatory society. Fourthly, the 'free' market pressure produces information that is simplified, decontextualised, stereotyped and action-

packed. This information does not explain social processes or news context. Curran (2000) says this undermines intelligent and rational debate (2000: 127-129). His criticism here of the liberal model echoes that made by social responsibility advocates (Siebert et al 1956: 87-91). The Hutchins Commission in particular recommended that the media project a representative picture of the constituent groups in society. This means that the media are required to be the voice of the people. Indeed this representative role is another key democratic function of the media in liberal theory.

2.3 The Alternative Route to Media Organization

After exposing the various flaws in the liberal theory, Curran (2000) suggests an alternative approach to the organization of the media system, which he also calls the Third Route, because of its departure from the traditional liberal theory and the authoritarian model. Where liberal theory views the media as a single institution with a common purpose, the radical democrats understand it as having different functions within the democratic system, calling for different structures and styles of journalism (Curran 2000: 140). The liberals stress the media's information role in a democratic society, while the radical democrats tend to stress the media's ideological-representative role. The liberal perspective locates the role of the media in a consensus model of society whereas the radical democrats locate it within a conflict model. To the liberals, representation is in relation to an undifferentiated aggregate of individuals in their dealing with government. But the radical democrats see the media's representational role in terms of representing opposed or competing publics with divergent views. Lastly the liberals conceive of the media as a vertical channel of communication between the individual and government, while the radical democrats view the media as a complex combination of vertical, horizontal and diagonal channels between individual, government, and pressure groups and special interest organizations. The role of the media in this case is to facilitate this complex system of representation (Curran 1991: 58).

The media system that Curran (2000) proposes includes a specialized media tier servicing the differentiated audiences that constitute the organized public sphere. This tier helps groups with special interests to debate issue of social identity and

common interest. It also enhances the effectiveness of different social groups. The media of the organized public sphere can be party newspapers or intra-group publications. Curran (2000) argues that the general media sector, which he calls the core category, should reach out to the general public sphere of heterogeneous publics. This sphere is the public domain occupied by individual members of society in their capacity as citizens. The principal media of the general public sphere are the public service media organizations. These public service media should work towards notions of general equity and should enable different groups to situate their interests in relations to others; should facilitate the democratic process; should inform the electorate about political choices and expose wrongdoing in both public and corporate life and should promote a culture of mutuality (2000: 140-147). In brief the public service media should help the various sections of society talk to one another. In order to ensure that public service media fulfil the above ideas they should be supported by tested strategies of public funding so they are not corrupted or hi-jacked by financial and corporate interests of big business; government should have a limited number of appointees to the boards; they should enjoy editorial independence and freedom guaranteed by law and the power of the editorial managers should be dispersed to avoid its concentration in few hands.

The point to note here is that the radical democratic model allows two traditions of journalism. One, which the public service model adopts, is a more balanced approach with some characteristics of the liberal tradition's notion of objective journalism. This strand of journalism celebrates the virtues separating fact from comment, and of balanced pluralism and the balancing of claim and counter-claim to avoid bias. However, to the radical democrats, balancing a story means drawing sources from all sides, the elite and non-elite, the establishment as well as dissidents. The other tradition is the adversarial- advocacy type particular to special interest groups. This tradition of the radicals uses advocacy as a way of redressing inequality. It justifies partisanship as a means of sustaining the values of minority groups. It also attacks objective journalism as lazy, passive and dependent on official sources (Curran 1991: 61).

Curran's (2000) proposed media system also provides for a professional media sector, a private enterprise sector and a social market sector. The professional and the social market sectors are mainly for providing more information for consumer choice and to promote competition. The private enterprise media sector is important in that it not only provides competition, but it also contributes potentially to a critical monitoring of political power – especially where there is close alliance of big business, the media and state power (2000: 146).

This is the ideal system that Curran (200) proposes in the radical democratic tradition. Its main trust is that the media must mediate other forces in society and not only between government and the individual. The media must find its location in the general public sphere if it is to enable different groups to talk to one another. Curran (2000) also makes the case for a public service media, organized in various ways, as the core media in modern society (2000: 146).

2.4 The Development Media Theory

This study now turns to the second major critique of the liberal theory discussed in section 2.2. In this critique, McQuail (1987: 120) argues the libertarian free market model and the social responsibility model are not an appropriate prescription for media systems in developing countries because of the variety of economic and political peculiarities there. He advocates a separate development theory of mass media because developing countries lack the conditions necessary for a developed mass communication system. These conditions include the communications infrastructure, the professional skills, the production and cultural resources as well as the available audience. McQuail's (1987) views on the development media theory is informed by the 1970s UNESCO debates for a New World International Information Order.

Two mainstream schools of thought informed these debates: the modernization school and the dependence school. The modernization school theorists like Lerner (1958), Katz and Lazerfeld (1955) believed in the unquestioning power of the media to induce change from traditional values, norms and attitudes to modern ones. Schramm (1964) emphasizes the crucial connection between availability of the mass media and

national development. He views the media's three functions as watchdogs against official abuse, teachers of change, and agents of modernization (1964: 263). According to Linden (1998), modernization scholars argue that the mass media are potentially significant in the development process both as an economic activity in its own right but also as a means of furthering other activities (1998: 74-76).

2.4.1 Dependency and Modernization Schools

Dependency theorists argue that underdevelopment and development are two inter-related aspects of the same process (Linden 1998:81; Baran (1957) cited in Kunczik 1984:184). They blame growth constraints in the Third World on exploitation by industrialized countries. They even argue that the media systems are a means of maintaining cultural dependency. In their view the mass media are class media as they support the ruling elites (Hamelink 1983:22). Modernization scholars, on the other hand, focus on issues of liberty in the media, whereas dependency theorists urge for equality in the dissemination of information to ensure that more and unbiased information about developing countries is reported. Linden (1998), for instance, argues that both schools tend to see the process of development in terms of economic production and accumulation of capital and most use quantitative micro-economic variables in their analysis of development. Both models do not conceptualize the basic and strategic needs and interests of the ordinary people in Third World countries (1998:87). For his part, McQuail (1983) submits that communication theory in both developed and developing countries does not match this in actual practice. Both the modernization and dependency theories overestimate the factor of communication technology in developing countries (McQuail cited in Linden, 1998:88).

The UNESCO debates culminated in the call for a new information order that would enable developing nations take control of the local media to suit national ends. McQuail (1989) says that the normative elements of the development media theory are opposed to dependency and foreign domination. On the other hand they propose the use of the media in national development, and the autonomy and cultural identity of particular nation states. The media in development theory should accept and carry positive development tasks in line with established national policy. Freedom of the

media should be open to restriction according to the development needs of society and economic priorities. The media are also expected to give priority in their content to national culture and language, and its news and information should give priority to similar developing countries. According to this view the state has the right to intervene, restrict and censor the media or place them under direct control (McQuail 1989: 121).

In 1980 the McBride Commission, after six years of consultations, produced a report titled *Many Voices, One World* in which the Commission urges developing countries to integrate communication policies into their national development strategies. The Report aimed to establish democratic societal structures, to reduce the quantitative imbalance of information flows, and improve the quality of information and communication content. It also stresses that national governments are responsible for freedom of information and for redressing the imbalance in information flows between the developed and the developing countries. It sought to provide each with the telecommunication and media infrastructures best suited to its needs (McBride, 1980: 250). Governments in developing countries were expected to use national control of media systems to develop appropriate policies for national developments.

2.4.2 Critique of the Development Media Theory

Lent (1977) argues that the original vision of the founders of development journalism have gone off track. He notes that governments in developing nations realized that they could use development journalism to push their ideologies and campaigns by giving to the press subtle guidelines backed up with authoritarian machinery. He writes:

Those who conceived development journalism in the 1960s believed that because national development depends so heavily upon economics, there should be better trained and informed specialists, among them journalists to cover and report fully, impartially and simply the many problems of a developing nation. (1977:17).

This new value system, which sees the media as a tool for development and propagandizing for officialdom, contradicts and traditional value system of the free market model that sees the media as a watchdog on government and a supervisor of

the public good. The result has been that Third World leaders have redefined concepts such as democracy and press freedom to suit their goals, and to use authoritarianism to subordinate press freedom to development priorities (1977: 18).

Harris (1977) however, has a different view of the NWICO debates. Commenting on the Third World campaign for a new information order, he asserts that western countries have clouded the issue by erecting a smokescreen, designed to minimize the legitimacy of Third World demands. He argues that the West's arguments fail to draw a distinction between ownership and control, assuming that ownership necessarily implies control. Restrictions on the media and media workers do not necessarily follow from government ownership of the news media and the relationship between ownership and control is not so clear as commentators in the West suggest (1977:28).

In light of the differences with regard to development journalism, there has been debate about where to locate this new media theory. Ogan (1982) argues that a development journalist's relationship with government is, if anything, an adversarial one, where the journalist offers criticism of the development plan and their execution (1982:6). For Agarwalla (1979: 181) the job of the journalist on the development newsbeat is to critically examine, evaluate and report the relevance of a development project to national and local needs. Ogan (1982) argues that the concept of development journalism has at least two meanings. The first is as a development support communication system serving the development goals of the government in power. As such development journalism is akin to the authoritarian view of the press. Secondly, however, when the concept is defined to mean a critical examination, evaluation and report of the relevance and impact of development programs, development journalism demands that the mass media be independent of government. In this case development journalism is similar to the social responsibility view of the press (1982:10).

2.4.3 The Normative Development Media Theory

The normative development media theory that refers to critical examination, evaluation and report of the relevance and impact of development programs, assumes

that the media will pay sustained attention to the coverage of policies, programmes and events that deal with the improvement of people's quality of life. This theory places the journalist in the 'fourth estate of the realm' where he or she will act as the public watchdog. Scholars like Edeani (1993:126) have lent support to this perspective. Teheranian (1977) says that the media have roles in socio-economic development through giving productive support to industry, stimulating the public into consumptive habits. The media also supports socio-political development through mobilizing people, legitimizing authority and creating space for the citizens to take part in politics (Teheranian, 1977: 42-43). Rogers and Shoemaker (1970) have identified the media as playing a crucial role in education and scientific development not only through direct provision of space for science and education but also through the fall-out effects like imparting new knowledge to the audience.

However, Odhiambo (1991: 17-29) and Ng'wanikala (1981) argues that in Africa the development media theory, which is a communication support system, finds expression through development journalism that consciously covers events, policies and programmes dealing with the improvement of people's life. They argue further that development journalism can be realized through the public service media model in which the journalist is both a professional and a civil servant. As a professional, the journalist should report about the development programmes and but as a civil servant, the journalist has the obligation to support government policies and activities. McQuail (1987), informed by the 1970s NWICO debates and the 1980 McBride Commission report, recommends that national government have a central role in reshaping the media in individual countries to promote national development programmes for the common good.

Development priorities could not be left to the free market, whose prime motive is profit maximization. As a result of this, political leaders in developing countries particularly in Africa have tried to exercise firm control over the media, especially the public media, to direct them toward nation building (Musa 1997:137).

The development media theory is criticised by various scholars, for instance Linden (1998), who argues that it does not match contemporary media practice, and that African political leaders have hijacked it to keep the public media under tight grip to silence opposition views and to keep themselves in power. Linden (1998) notes that national planning in developing countries is often restricted to importation of Western media technology. He also observes that the public media in developing countries have basically three uses-in this order of priority; first, to support government in their search for stability, nation building and keeping in power; second, the media are used for instructional and education purposes; third, for local activities and entertainment. He noted that there has been little attempt in most developing countries to implement the McBride Report's recommendations. Linden (1998) explains that it is not in the best interest of regimes in developing nations to use the media system to empower populations or to support a democratic structure in society. In Asia and Africa state monopoly of media organizations continues and media activities are heavily urban centred (Linden, 1998:117-118).

Musa (1997) argues that many African political leaders have used the development media theory to control the media under the guise of making it promote development. Because of this and other factors that shape media culture in Africa, the development media theory needs to be refined. One such refinement is the distinction between a *development journalist* and a *developmental journalist* (Ogan 1982; Merrill 1995: 15 cited in Musa, 1997: 139). Kunczik (1988) defines a developmental journalist as one who only promotes the government point of view and who will not oppose, criticize or contradict government. A development journalist, on the other hand, is one who is committed to reporting development news without abandoning professional ethics and the public good. This type of journalist will give praise where it is due and apportion blame accordingly (Kunczik, 1988:83). This distinction is important for this study in that it will help in the analysis of whether the state-owned *New Vision* practices development or developmental journalism. Musa also makes the case that the development media theory lacks a universal criterion for determining the social scenarios and the different kinds of media appropriate to them. The deficiency enables government officials and media practitioners to explain the theory for parochial

interest in the guise of promoting national development. The third criticism is that the development media theory does not provide for the protection of press freedom. The power the theory gives to government to curtail press freedom in the interests of development works against the basic tenets of human rights (Musa 1997: 140).

Domatob and Hall (1983) acknowledge that development is a valid social goal and that the media have a contribution to make towards it. They also note that development journalism has had successes in sub - Saharan African especially in extending education to the rural people in Ivory Coast, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. They note however that many African leaders imposed state control of the media under the banner of development journalism, to suppress the media and media workers. They also note: “The emergence of an internationally accepted doctrine of development journalism has become a source of alibis and plausible excuses for some African regimes to shun open government in favour of ruthless repression” (1983: 19). While the use of the media for political control is legitimate, the fear of allowing the media to be used for any other purpose other than political control has prevented the use of development journalism to promote positive small-scale change (Domatob and Hall 1983: 31).

2.5 The Public Sphere and Civil Society: The African perspective

According to Berger (2002), scholars of the media and democracy issues in Africa have tended to use the liberal pluralist paradigm as applied in developed democracies without due regard to the local economic and social conditions in Africa. He argues that the two main perspectives – of civil society and the public sphere – have been used rather casually and that the concepts of civil society and the public sphere need to be re- examined in the African context. For purposes of this study I shall borrow the definition of civil society as the advanced by Sachikonye (1995a) and Ronning (1999). Sachikonye defines civil society as the aggregate of institutions whose members engage primarily in a complex of non-state activities, economic and cultural production voluntary associations and household life, who in this way preserve and

transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressure or controls on state institutions (Sachikonye 1995a: 399; 405).

Ronning shares this view, but adds an effective civil society must have an effective parliament, free market system and independent organizations (Ronning cited in Berger 2009: 9-11). Ronning (1999) treats the private press as part of civil society, whereas Masson (1999 cited in Berger 2002) considers it as quite different from civil society. The civil society paradigm presents several problems in the study of the media and democracy in Africa. Berger (2000) says it is difficult to define boundaries between civil society and the state. Secondly, this perspective portrays civil society as an oppositional force, and tends to create a combative attitude that the state is bad and civil society is good (Ronning 1997). The perspective has also been criticized for singling out media-government relationship, while excluding the way the media relate to civil society. It is pertinent to note here that the civil society perspective is concerned only with the non-state media, unlike the public sphere paradigm that looks at the media as a whole.

According to the traditional liberal theory, the government and individuals constitute the political system and the media's role is to help the individuals relate to their government. Curran (2000), however, says that this approach fails to appreciate that in contemporary society people are represented through political parties and by various interest groups in civil society. "A theory of the media and democracy must be related to the collective and institutional forms of the modern political system" (2000: 135). These groups constitute the modern public sphere, different from the one Habermas (1964) first described. Habermas (1984) argues that in 18th century Europe the public sphere constituted of privileged citizens who debated public affairs in a free and rational way through personal interaction and debates in the press to reach a consensus that influenced government; political decisions were not open to the play of power, but to argument based on evidence; issues discussed in this forum were a public good (cited in Curran 2000: 135).

Habermas (1989) has since refined his conception of the public sphere, which is now widened to include government and its organs, the civil service, political parties and

civil society. Curran (2000) argues that the new public sphere of different interest groups is important in that it can detect neglected issues. The media's role in this context is to help these interest groups make critical debates that can prompt a considered response from the political system (2000: 136).

The proponents of the civil society perspective actually want state-owned media privatized and deregulated for fear of unfair competition with the private media whereas the public sphere approach calls for the transformation of government media into properly public media with such obligations as provision for local languages and rural reach (Berger 2002). This issue is particularly relevant to this study in the context of the debate on how to transform *The New Vision*. The public sphere perspective also helps us understand the extent to which government-owned media might be considered part of the public sphere. Since the public sphere includes a cross section of voices then all the media, including government-owned media and the partisan press, have a place in it. The public service media address audiences not as media markets but as citizens.

2.5.1 Reform of the Public Service Model

The 1980s and 1990s saw major changes in the regulation of the media taking into account developments in satellite and cable broadcasting, globalization, and the new wave of democratization in many 'third world' countries. The developments put the traditional public service media in spotlight by exposing their inefficiencies, especially in the face of new private media organizations, particularly television. In his reflections on the public service media, Keane (1991) says a truly public service media system has a broad commitment to provide and to protect mixed and complementary programming schedules. He, however, attacks as myopic the notion that such media be treated as the paragon of quality, balance and universal accessibility. He advocates the reform and modernization of the existing models of public service media because the virtual monopoly of broadcasting which they enjoyed has made them complacent and insensitive to consumer choice. He adds that a revised public service model should consolidate the achievements of the old model – serving minorities, circulating knowledge and culture, stimulating criticism – but it must also aim to facilitate all forms

of life, tastes and opinions and to empower a plurality of citizens (1991: 117-127). A revised public service model needs legal and constitutional guarantees against state interference and support from an international civil society of freely communicating citizens. Keane (1991) also notes that a revised public service system must appreciate the role of entertainment in a democratic society (1991: 117-127).

The old public service media model still holds in most African countries where government have monopolized broadcasting since colonial times. Unlike broadcasting state-ownership of newspapers in most of Africa started after independence. The new governments also believed in tight press controls and monopoly of broadcasting. Encouraged by the 1970s UNESCO debates on the new international information order and the recommendations by the McBride Commission of 1980, African governments believed that control over broadcasting was necessary for national mobilization and as an instrument of power and symbol of sovereignty (Keane 1991: 145). However they went a step further and used this control to prevent political opponents from having a voice that could effectively reach the people. Kasoma (1999) notes that this situation deteriorated as one-party rule and military dictatorships spread across Africa (1999:3).

2.6 A Combined Approach?

The World Bank and the World Association of Newspapers proposed a new approach to the development role of the press in the 21st century. At a meeting in Zurich in 1999, the World Bank president and representatives of both private and state-owned newspapers from developed and developing countries urged the media to mainstream the development agenda in the new century. James Wolfenson (1999) argued that freedom of expression and freedom of the press are essential elements in the development process and that the flow of information has an economic and social impact. The new approach seeks to enable the media to cover development news and information within the World Bank's new Comprehensive Development Framework. This framework gives 13 facets of development in nation states. These are: financial system, governance, legal and the justice systems, the social safety net, education, health, environment. Other

facets are water and energy supplies, transportation, telecommunications, strategies for rural and urban areas and the private sector growth (World Bank/WAN Report 1999).

The proposed approach draws on the values of freedom, independence and the watchdog role of the media from the libertarian theory. It is also informed by social responsibility theory values of critical evaluation of government and being an educational instrument for the citizenry. It espouses the idea of a general public sphere, like the one Curran (2000) advocates and expands the development role of the media from the confines of the public service media, as conceptualized by McQuail (2000), to all media. This proposed approach is a combination of key aspects of the other approaches discussed earlier in this chapter. Its significance lies in the fact that it standardizes development goals from national to international level.

Commenting on the proposed approach, Ninan (1999) argues that the media should transfer information about ups and downs of economic performance among vital players in the development process to serve the ‘nervous-system’ for business and financial activity in line with the globalization of the world’s financial system. He also suggests that the media should provide an independent assessment of the development process, pointing out shortcomings of particular programs. With regards to the media’s watchdog role. Rischard (1999) posits that the press must watch on governance and expose corruption because in many countries development programs have been retarded due to poor governance. In order for the media to play a meaningful role in development, Pike (1999) argues that a free press must interact with a free parliament where most development decisions are made. He adds that the media as a partner in development must also be held accountable for their actions. Commenting on the relevance of democratic accountability, Bengt (1999) says that development programs to tackle the economic problems in Third World countries cannot be fully effective and are often condemned to failure without open, fair and well-managed government served by a free and independent press. This World Bank approach is still just a proposal and only time will tell whether it does not suffer the criticism of Big Brother syndrome that Let (1977) made of the UNESCO and other supra national organizations which he accused of hijacking the development agenda in the 1970s.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the traditional liberal press theory and the social responsibility press theory as two main frameworks for organizing media in society. The chapter has reviewed two critiques that expose the flaws in the liberal theory's free market media. The first critique by Curran (2000) highlights the liberal model's narrow conception of the political system and the role of the media. He suggests an alternative model, the radical democratic perspective in which the media serve all sectors of society, and enables individuals government, and special interest groups to talk to one another. Curran's (2000) radical democratic model puts the public media at the core of the media system, which also includes private and special interest media. The public services media must be at the engine of the general public sphere. The second critique by McQuail focuses on communication in Third World countries. McQuail (1987) argues that the previous models, particularly the liberal model's free market ideal are not appropriate for developing countries which lack the key factors for a developed media system. McQuail (1987) draws through the 1970s debates that criticized the liberal model used by developed countries to control the flow of information to developing countries and the subsequent calls for a new information order. The development media model suggests that the media become a partner in development and that they should sacrifice some of their freedom for the sake of national development.

The development media model, informed by the McBride Commission Report of 1980, encourages national governments to take control of national media systems to make them serve national development objectives. This chapter explained that the public service media model in developing countries also has roots in this aspect of the development media model. The development media model however is found wanting since politicians, particularly in Africa, have hijacked it for selfish ends. This theoretical background traces the public service media in Africa to two main traditions: the radical democratic tradition and the development media tradition.

This theoretical framework informs my examination of the role of the state-owned *New Vision* newspaper which will be taken up in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY OF *THE NEW VISION* NEWSPAPER

3.1 Background Government Owned Press Before 1988

The history of public service media in Uganda dates back to British colonialism with the establishment of a broadcasting service following the Plymouth Report of 1937 and the Twinning Report of 1939 (Kayanja 1994), The Uganda Broadcasting Service was then established under the Colonial Ordinance Act and placed under full government control to serve the interest of the colonial administration (Balikuddembe 1992 cited in Jjuuko 2002, 32)

The colonial government did not interest itself in owning print media, although it allowed service local and regional newspapers to flourish. This was the situation until after Uganda's independence in 1962. The four main newspapers in the 1960s were Uganda Argus, an English daily owned by the Lonhro Group; *The East African Standard*, also an English daily published in Nairobi by the Standard Group, *Munno*, a Luganda language daily published by the Catholic Church, and *Taifa*, also a Luganda language daily published in Uganda by the Kenya Nation newspapers owned by the Aga Khan (Waibale 2003).

In 1966, the Government of Uganda launched a policy of nationalizing over 100 key foreign companies to face them to recruit more indigenous Ugandans and to give government an influence through share holding. The policy, referred to as the Nakivubo Pronouncement gave government between 49% and 51% stake in these foreign companies. Under this proclamation, the government acquired controlling shares in the *Uganda Argus*, the leading English newspaper at the time. The nationalization policy, according to government, was to make the companies relate more to national development priorities (The Nakivubo Pronouncement 1966). The government then was involved in the appointment of the top editors at the *Uganda Argus* and in setting the editorial policy of the newspaper. Although the ruling Uganda People's Congress (UPC) had its own newspaper, *The People*, it opted to nationalize the *Uganda Argus* largely because of its circulation and influence (Ochan 2003).

Following the 1972 coup d'état by General Amin against the civilian government of D. Milton Obote, the military regime renamed the *Uganda Argus* the *Voice of Uganda* and acquired full ownership of the newspaper after the other shareholders fled the country. The new government also appointed new top editors to take care of its interest. Ochan (2003) submits that the name *Voice of Uganda* was originally meant to portray an image that the government was for the people, but the newspaper degenerated into a government mouthpiece praising the president and attacking his foreign opponents. After the overthrow of Idi Amin's military regime in 1979, Obote and the Uganda People's Congress returned to power after an election and they renamed the newspaper, *Uganda Times*. New editors were appointed, but the general collapse of the economy under the military regime had reduced the newspaper's production capacity drastically. What was supposed to be a daily newspaper became more irregular appearing sometimes once a week (Ochieng 1992).

By the time the second Obote government fell in a coup in 1985, the newspaper was referred to not as *Uganda Times* but 'Uganda Sometimes' (Illakut 2003). Throughout the successive regimes, the newspaper survived on limited advertising and to a large extent on government subsidies. Commenting on broadcasting in Uganda, Balikuddembe (1992) argues that it was conceived, both in colonial and post-colonial times, to a great extent as serving the ruling power. This observation holds true even for government-owned newspapers in post-colonial Uganda as this section elaborates.

3.1.1 *The Private Press from 1986*

In 1986, the National Resistance Movement captured power and soon after it established *The New Vision* newspaper. The media landscape at the time consisted of a predominantly private and politically active press, and a government monopoly of broadcasting through Radio Uganda Television. Many newspapers mushroomed after the fall of Idi Amin in 1979, but due to the harsh economic conditions, the majority folded soon after. Gariyo (1993) says the prominent newspapers were: the *Weekly Topic*, whose owners sympathetic to the ideology of the new regime, the National Resistance Movement, which preferred an umbrella political organization to political

parties. The others were *The Citizen* and its sisters newspaper *Munnansi*. The opposition Democratic Party published both these newspapers weekly. *Munnansi*, *Munno* mentioned earlier and *Ngabo* were the main vernacular newspapers published in Luganda language. All the newspapers had suffered under the Uganda People's Congress government that ruled Uganda between 1980 and 1985. Wakabi (2003) submits that the UPC government banned the *Citizen*, *Ngabo*, *The Economy* and *Weekly Topic* newspapers for being too critical of its activities. These newspapers resumed production in 1986 under the new government. *The Weekly Topic* became the main private English newspaper sympathetic to, but critical of certain government policies and actions that the newspaper owners did not agree with. In 1992, all its editors and many of its staff reporters started *The Monitor* newspaper. *The Monitor* was to become the leading private newspaper from 1992 to date (Nakaweesa 1999).

3.2 Establishment of *The New Vision*

The New Vision was established in 1986 when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in Uganda after a five-year guerrilla war. The government promised that it was not a mere changing of the guard, but that it was bringing a fundamental change to the country through the politics of democracy, economic rejuvenation and moral rearmament (Museveni 1992). *The New vision* Newspaper derives its name from the ideology of bringing fundamental change to the country (Mayanja 2003). *The New Vision* started as an organ of NRM government to channel government policy and to highlight abuses in society at a time when police and the judiciary were weak, corrupt and under-funded. The newspaper was expected to expose abuses and to enable the public to communicate with their government (Mayanja 2003 Interview).

3.2.1 Ownership, Control and Financing.

The initial status of *The New Vision* was that of a government-owned newspaper although it did not have any legal instrument to that effect. An editor was picked from among the key members of the ruling NRM. The Government gave the newspaper a start-up package of shs 40m, an old printing press, premises including an office and a factory, and a pick-up truck. The newspaper was also granted a five-year tax holiday.

Most of the first staff came from the defunct government newspaper, *Uganda Times* (Pike 2003 Interview).

The New Vision acquired legal status in 1987 when it was established as a state-owned newspaper published by the New Vision Printing and Publishing Corporation. This corporate status was embodied in The New Vision Printing and Publishing Corporation Statute, (NVVPC Statute 1987), which also set out the business and editorial mandate of *The New Vision* newspaper (Tumusiime 2003 Interview). The newspaper is the flagship of the corporation and its main brand. Government control of the newspaper is invested in the Minister responsible for information who oversees the operations through the Board of Directors, which he appoints. Initially the board consisted of a number of MPs as representatives of the general public, and people representing various sections of society. Under new Standing Orders governing Parliament, MPs cannot sit on boards of directors for parastatal organizations.

The New Vision Board must however reflect mainstream religious groups, women, the Ministry of Information and the ruling NRM (Basoga 2002a). The Minister appoints the Editor-in-Chief who doubles as Managing Director, the Deputy Editor-in-Chief and the Corporate Secretary while other senior editorial and administrative staff members are appointed by the Board on recommendation.

The State therefore exercises *direct* control of *The Vision* in two ways: first, through the structured appointment of senior staff by the Minister and by his Board of Directors. The Board has a committee that monitors the editorial operations and content. Second, The New Vision Corporate is accountable to Parliament; must have its annual expenditure approved by the Minister of Information; its annual books of accounts are vetted by the Auditor General, who submits them to Parliament within the first three months of every financial year for scrutiny. In addition, the Minister submits an annual report on the performance of the Corporation to Cabinet. The New Vision Corporation also pays dividends to government, which is its sole shareholder. It is also required to operate commercial and profitably. The Statute states:

In the performance of its functions under this Statute, the Corporation shall have due to sound financial principles and shall conduct its business in such manner that in all transactions all the time, its revenue is sufficient for meeting charges including interest on capital and loans properly chargeable to revenue accounts; sufficient provision is made to provide for depreciation and loss; and any loss or bad debts are made up for in other transactions” (NVVPC) Statute, 1987:70).

Although the law allows *The New Vision* to access government grants, no such grant have been solicited apart from the start-up package (Musoke 2003).

3.2.2 The Editorial Mandate

As a newspaper, *The New Vision* is required:

- a) To establish an effective machinery for a viable coverage of events all-over the world and Uganda in particular.
- b) To ovoid public opinion and criticism of a given government policy justly and objectively, without becoming an institutional opposition to government or its interest.
- c) To uphold the unity of the Republic of Uganda and the people of Uganda at large.
- d) To propagate news and comment truthfully, honestly and fairly without jeopardizing peace and harmony in the country.
- e) To respect and up-hold the sovereignty and independence of Uganda and to come out firmly on matters affecting such sovereignty without affecting the truths, which must at all times be the guiding line and governing principle of the papers including sister newspapers (Appendix III, Page 104).

The mandate of *New Vision*, therefore, is that of a public media organization except that this is in print form whereas public media services in most countries are limited to broadcasting. The other difference is that although *The New Vision* is publicly owned and was financed initially by the government, the newspaper operates commercially, generating its own revenue, and pays taxes and dividends to government.

The mandate as stipulated in the Statute makes an interesting departure from the situation that usually prevails in publicly owned media. First, it does not state anywhere that *The New Vision* must always support government policy. It instead demands that the newspaper should voice public opinion and criticism of a given government policy. However, that criticism must not turn the newspaper into an ‘opposition institution’. This provision is in line with public service mandate of the media playing a lead role in the public sphere. The other provision of propagating news and comment honestly and truthfully re-enforces the newspaper’s role in the general public sphere. These provisions in the state Statute ideally give the newspaper latitude to enable all interest groups in society to talk to one another and to their government. Curran (2000) refers to this as the representative role of the media, whereby the media facilitate the vertical, horizontal and diagonal communication between groups in society (2000:58).

Second, the provision for voicing public on a given government policy also implies that *The New Vision* will generate debate and comment on development issues, since government policies in developing countries are, in many ways, concerned with national development. This makes the case for *The New Vision* to engage in some form of development journalism. That the development role, however, is not explicit in the law should not make it any less important to the newspaper. Kyazze (2003) argues that publicly owned media in Uganda, such as *Radio Uganda*, *Uganda Television* and *The New Vision*, have the widest reach and highest circulation respectively, and it is assumed that they exist to help promote the country’s social and economic programmes (2003:152).

Third, the statutory requirement to establish ‘an effective machine to cover events all over the world and Uganda in particular’ (NVPPC) Statute 1987) provides a vision for the newspaper to aim at reaching as many parts of the country as possible, even in places which are not commercially viable and where the private press of the free market would not reach. Fourth, the Statute specifically makes truth the guiding line and governing principle of the newspapers and thereby gives a legal guarantee for *The New Vision* to perform freely the role of watchdog on government and other sectors of

society and to expose wrongdoing through investigative stories as argued by theorists such as Curran (2000: 122), Berger (2002:84) and (Ronning 2002: 120-121)

3.2.3 Audience

The New Vision's audience is largely comprised of the elite; professionals, civil servants, the business community and people of middle to high-income levels. According to Wasswa (2003) *The New Vision* is an up-market newspaper for people who can interpret issues. The fact that it is the official English language limits its reach to the educated people in a country with an average literacy rate of 65% (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2000), Although the newspaper reaches most part of the country by mid-morning, 65% its readership is in the capital Kampala and the central region 20% in the Eastern, 15 % in the Western and 5% in the Northern regions. The capital and Central regions also happen to have the highest per capita income (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2000). The New Vision Circulation Manager explains that the audience are categorised using the income brackets measure:

The New Vision is an up-market newspaper. The majority of regular readers fall in the AB brackets. These are the high and middle level earner whose net incomes are above Shs 800,000 (\$400). This group includes professional people and civil servants, civic and other public officers as well as the people in business. Over 60% are in Kampala while the rest are spread across the country, mainly in towns. (Wasswa 2003a).

3.3 Staff and Upcountry Network

The New Vision has grown in size from 12 pages in 1986 to at least 52 pages today. Table 1 shows the average daily pagination over four year intervals. Its current editorial staff stands at 16 editors including the Editor-in-Chief and the Deputy Editor in Chief; 30 reporters and features writers, 24 sub-editors, 50 freelance journalists base at the head office and 40 correspondents spread in districts and regions countrywide. *The New Vision* maintains full established bureaus in 11 out of the 56 districts and correspondents in 15 others. Each bureau covers between two and three districts and is manned by at least two journalists. The editorial department of the newspaper comprises the following sections referred to here as desks; news section including the general desks, political desk and investigation desk; the business desk; the sub-editor's desk; the features section, including the general features, education,

children, entertainment, supplements and science; the sports desk and *Sunday Vision*, which produces the Sunday edition of the newspaper (Sseppuuya 2003).

Table 1: The Growth in pagination shown in four-year intervals

YEAR	TOTAL PAGES	NEWS PAGES	FEATURE PAGES	OP E PAGES	BUSIN PAGES	SPORT PAGES
1986	16	6	2	1	1	1
1990	16	6	3	1	1	2
1994	36	10	4	2	2	4
1998	40	10	6	2	3	5
2002	48	11	6	2	3	5
2003	52	12	6	2	4	5

Advertising-editorial space ratio 40-60

Source: New Vision Advertising Manager

According to Curran, (2000), the public service status of the media demands that they monitor the government but also other centers of power and influence in the free market. It also demands that the media not only report the events of the day but that they should enable citizens from various sections of the society and interest groups to talk to each other and to articulate their views to the government. That way, the public service media becomes the core media in the public sphere (Curran 2000: 120)).

As noted earlier, McQuail (1987) argues that the state should control public service media to make it contribute to national development and articulate development priorities. The examination of the democratic and the developmental roles of *New Vision* focuses on two sections of the editorial department, namely the news desk and the feature desk. These are the sections that produce the new, commentaries, investigations and development related stories. I shall briefly explain how they function.

The news desk, headed by the News Editor, generates all the news from around the country from its network of journalists. It also has four wire services that supply foreign news and pictures. Its political team of 10 journalists monitors government, Parliament, government agencies and all centers of power and influence, like local governments and political parties, and the Inspectorate of Government. Its

investigations arm, comprising eight journalists, works closely with the Editor-in-Chief, the deputy editor and news editor to investigate stories mainly related to corruption, abuse of office, business excesses and environmental degradation.

Table 2: Feature Desk Content Schedule

DAY					
MON.	Education visit	Health General Feature		Letters, Leader, Opinion Column	Lifestyle People
TUES.		Science	Women's Vision	Letters, Leader, Opinion Column	Lifestyle, People
WED.	Computer		Farming	Talk of the Town Letters, Opinion Column, Leaders	Lifestyle, People
THURS.		Law Report		Letters, Leader, Opinion Column	Lifestyle, Beauty Tips
FRID.				Letters, Leader, Opinion Column	Weekend Vision
SAT.	Children's Vision	Children's Travel	Children's Vision	Letters, Leader, Opinion Column	Leisure

Source: Barbara Kaija, Features Editor.

Table 3: News Desk: Daily Content Schedule

PAGE	MONDAY – FRIDAY
1	LEAD NEWS (Local or International)
2	LEAD NEWS (Continued)
3	NATIONAL NEWS/
4	NATIONAL NEWS/PARLIAMENT
5	PARLIAMENT/POLITICAL NEWS STORIES
6	NEWS (CITY AND BUGANDA REGIONS)
7	UPCOUNTRY NEWS (EAST)
8	UPCOUNTRY NEWS (NORTH)
9	UPCOUNTRY NEWS (WEST)
12	WORLD NEWS
13	AFRICA NEWS
14	REGIONAL NEWS (EAST, AFRICA)

Source: News Desk Records

The rest of the team comprises general beat reporters. The features desk has specialized team of journalists who write on children's affairs, entertainment, farming, health, environment and education. This desk also handles, and sometimes commissions, commentaries, opinions and analyses. Tables 2 and 3 show how the features desk, the news desk schedule their content (The New Vision Job Description Manual 2003).

3.4 Growth and Development of *The New Vision*

3.4.1 Effects of Liberalization

Uganda embraced the structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the late 1980s. The programmes were meant to bring competition into market that was previously served by the public sector (Kiyaga 1997). Under the programme, the government also listed over 100 state corporations for privatization, liquidation or for contract management to reduce the number of government subsidies to those corporations. Competition would make service delivery cheaper and more efficient.

According to Murdock (1994), this trend of privatization and deregulation has occurred to varying degrees in the broadcasting sector in Europe, America and Africa. In 1992, the government liberalized broadcasting, paving the way for the first private radio and television stations to compete with the state owned *Radio Uganda* and *Uganda Television*. In her study of the effects of commercialization on public broadcasting, Jjuuko (2002) notes that *Radio Uganda* was forced to adjust its programming schedules in favour of more entertainment and sponsored programmes during prime time. The study also shows a reduction in the number of public information programmes on the various channels of *Radio Uganda*.

Liberalization also affected the print media, particularly *The New Vision*. Before 1992, the newspaper was the prime provider of news and entertainment. It now had to compete with at least two private stations and the daily *Monitor* newspaper. By 2002, there were about 80 registered radio stations, 50 of them on air. The number of television stations increased to eight over the same period (Steadman and Associates, 2002). The private radios stations have three advantages over the newspaper: they

bring instant but de-contextualized news; they are interactive; and they are, by their nature, mostly entertainment based. These developments impacted on the print media in such a way that by 2002, *The New Vision*, which was still the leading provider of news and information, had on the whole lost to the private radio stations the advantage of breaking news (Consumer Insight 2003).

3.4.2 Innovations and Counter-Measures

Between 1992 and 2002, *The New Vision* implemented measures to improve the newspaper with the aim of increasing circulation, attracting more advertising, expanding its audience, and consolidating its position in the media market. First, more entertainment and specialized sections were introduced and full colour printing started in 1998. Second, in the same year, a British consultant redesigned the newspaper to give it a new identity and modern layout. The old design was characterized by a black and white masthead, long stories that continued to other pages, small pictures, and wide use of italicized headlines, long captions and an absence of graphic illustrations. The new design introduced a multi-colour masthead, modular layout of pages, use of short but crisply edited stories, big pictures and graphic illustrations. The changes increased circulation from 32,000 to 34,000 copies and advertising revenue increased considerably (Wamweta 2000).

Third, the corporation started a technological revolution that led to the installation of faster colour printing lines; the editorial and other departments were fully computerized to improve efficiency; and in order to speed up the flow of news, all journalists acquired cellular phones. A satellite system linking headquarters and bureaus was installed, and the traditional film roll cameras were replaced by digital cameras, which transfer pictures directly to computer thereby cutting out the time-consuming dark room process (Adriko 2003). *The Vision* has satellite news and picture feeds from Reuters, AFP, Xhina and Guardian news services. Fourth, in 2001, the newspaper adopted a new style of writing news moving away from the traditional 'inverted pyramid' of straight and de-contextualised news style to a more chatty or story-telling style. The purpose is to make reading news more interesting to an audience that is relying more on radio for breaking and entertainment. Wasswa

(2003) notes that many people do not have the time to read newspapers or even the money to buy them. Many are irregular buyers who opt to listen to radio for news and entertainment. He adds that innovations in the newspaper are necessary to win back readers.

3.5 The *New Vision* Today

The New Vision Corporation is one of the state enterprises that are supposed to be privatized either wholly or partially. The Public Enterprises Reform and Divestiture (PERD) Statute of 1992 placed it under the ‘strategic enterprises category’, which includes the Water, Housing, Telephone and Electricity utilities, in which government wants to retain a substantial interest. Under the PERD Statute, state enterprises that are marked for privatization are placed under the control of the Ministry of Finance to monitor their performance and make attractive to prospective investors. In June 2002 The New Vision Corporation was moved from the Ministry of Information to the Ministry of Finance, which also appointed a new board of directors. The Ministry of Finance has three representatives on the board while the Ministry of Information and the public each has one member. With effect from August 2002, the legal status of New Vision Corporation’s also changed to a limited liability company.

The proposal privatization of The New Vision Corporation met stiff resistance from several people in government, among them the former Information Minister, Basoga Nsandhu, who in a letter to the President stated that “the proposal partial sale of 47% of the corporation which, *The New Vision* and its sister newspapers, would make government lose two thirds of media influence.”

He continues

The privatization of The New Vision Corporation is not a prudent move politically. We have in the past during difficult times given guidance on content without compromising editorial content. This will cease with mere majority shareholding. Commercial considerations will become the driving force at the expense of informing the people correctly. The media is a powerful tool of influence, which should not be left to market forces alone. Even in the USA and other Western democracies, it is mandatory for private media to put public service before other considerations. *The New Vision* sets the agenda for public discussion for the electronic media and the general public. The state

must maintain control over the country's information system to ensure the public interest. *The New Vision* has shown it is self-sustaining. From Uganda Shillings 27m government capitalization in 1986, the company has grown to Uganda Shillings 8.9bn net turnover at the end of 2001-2002 financial year. (Basoga 2002b).

Basoga also warned that the privatization of *New Vision* was coming at a time of increased private media expansion and concentration. He noted Billionaire Madhivani's Channel TV has linked up with South Africa-based TV Africa; FM radio stations like the *Voice of Tooro*, *Central Broadcasting Service* and *Capital Radio* were extending their coverage to other parts of the country; *WBS Television* had opened a sister radio station, *Radio Simba FM*. He recommended that the government should retain the full ownership of the corporation, and by implication keep *The New Vision* and its sister newspapers. Basoga's fears reflect the criticism Curran makes of the free market media model, which he accuses of producing information rich media for the elite and information poor media for the general public, depriving the latter of vital information necessary for a participatory society (Curran 2000:127-129). Basoga's view, however, can also be interpreted in terms of maintaining control over public service media as an instrument of power as observed by scholars Keane (1991:145) and Kasoma (1999:3). The Minister of Finance, Gerald Ssendaula, reacting to Basoga in defence of the sale of *The New Vision*, said he trusted the editorial and entrepreneurial ability of the newspaper's management, given the financial performance over the years to maintain its lead and characteristics even after privatization.

The privatization will initially involve flotation of 30% shares in the New Vision Corporation on the Uganda Stock Market for sale to the general public, This is meant to give the public direct shareholding in the corporation to ensure, that the corporation, which publishes *The New Vision* and its sister newspapers is a truly public service medium owned by the people. The divestiture programme is a gradual process that will eventually lead to a complete withdrawal of government ownership. For now, however, government directing government policy at board and editorial level and using *The New Vision* and its sister papers for information dissemination to guide the country's political direction (Ssendaula 2002). However, the position of

government as stated by Ssendaula (2002) can be understood from the perspective of Curran's (2000) radical democratic theory regarding the enabling role of government in the provision of public service media. This study does not investigate the impact of these changes on the editorial performance of *The New Vision* or how its editorial policy will change. For now the newspaper's policy remains to provide factual, objective and balanced journalism that separates facts from opinion. It is a news-based newspaper that carries limited opinions –at most two commentaries a day.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the history and the development of *The New Vision* newspaper since its inception in 1986. It explained that the newspaper moved from a purely government funded newspaper, to being publicly owned with a corporate status, and finally to a company that is being prepared for privatization. *The New Vision's* mandate is regarded as that of a public service media organization with responsibilities spelt out in the law. This chapter explained the way the newspaper deals with the challenges of changing times to keep its position in the media market and in society. In particular, the chapter outlined the issues of ownership, control, funding and the mandate of *The New Vision*. The next chapter presents the methods of data collection and analysis used in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The techniques employed in the collection of data include: content analysis of newspaper copies, questionnaires in-depth interviews and document analysis. The theoretical frameworks that guided the employment of these techniques relate to the media and democracy as well as the media and development (see Chapter Two, pages 8- 9,17). To extract data on how present and past decision makers view the role and mandate of *The New Vision*, I used in-depth interviews. The guiding theme of the interviews and the questionnaires concerned the factors that inform the way *The New Vision* performs the democratic and the development roles of the media. The questions raised reflected specific sub-themes like the influence of the executive, relations with other institutions and interest groups, control, gate-keeping and journalist attitudes, as well as the influence of advertising and other business related factors.

I chose the qualitative research tradition because it stresses the need to see through the eyes of one's subjects and to understand social behaviour in its social context (Moore 1993:33). Lincoln and Guba (1995: 199) also observe that qualitative research methods allow for a more focused analysis of experiences and perceptions. In addition, this tradition allows for the use of several techniques to understand social phenomena. This process is known as triangulation. Bryman (1988) observes that one reason for the employment of a variety of techniques is that it allows inferences or leads drawn from one data source to be corroborated or followed up by another. Within this approach, quantitative and qualitative research methods are seen as different ways of examining the same research problem (1988: 47, 131). Bryman (1988:106) however observes that those who argue that the two research methodologies cannot be combined because they are based on mutually exclusive ontological and epistemological assumptions have resisted triangulation. Indeed Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) argue that the methodological question cannot be reduced to a question of methods, that methods must be fitted in a pre-determined methodology.

However, Bryman (1984:89), making a case for triangulation, observes that in social research there is no necessary relationship between methodology and technique. To this end Bryman (1988) suggests that researchers should attend to the full complexity of the social world and choose methods in relation to the research problems posed (1988:173). In this regard my research employed a triangulated, five-step approach to understanding how *The New Vision* fulfils the democratic and developmental role of the media. The stages are:

- (i) A review of the literature related to the debates on media and democracy and media and development with particular focus on public service media.
- (ii) A content analysis of 18 copies of *The New Vision*, taking one six-day week of each of three months August-October 2003. The content analysis was undertaken to establish relevant genre, recurrent themes and the frequency of coverage. It also sought to establish other variables like the definers of news and information.
- (iii) A questionnaire administered to 37 practising journalists at *The New Vision* conducted in early October 2003 to probe how their attitudes, opinions and work methods impact on the stories they write, particularly in the fields of democracy and development.
- (iv) In-depth interviews, using an interview guide, with a sample of past and current editors, members of *The Vision's* board of directors, and ministers of information. The in-depth interviews were informed by observations generated from the methods (ii)-(iv) above.
- (v) Analysis of documents at *The New Vision* and the Ministry of Information germane to this study.

4.2 Physical Location of Study

The study was conducted in Kampala both at the headquarters *The New Vision* and in offices of the respective in-depth interview respondents. In analyzed newspaper copies from the Library of the Uganda Management Institute, which is located near *The New Vision* head offices. The library is a national book repository. *The New Vision* head office houses all administration and editorial staff, and the circulation

department. Since this study is an institutional analysis, it was appropriate that I conduct most of it where the institutional activities are concentrated.

4.3 The Population of Study

The population of this study consisted of a variety of respondents, but the focus was on policy and decision-makers and personnel vital to the day-to-day editorial activities of *The New Vision*. There were two sets of respondents: one category for the questionnaires and the other for the in-depth interviews. See Table 4.1 on page 52 and 4.2 on page 56) some of the respondents who answered questionnaires were followed up with in-depth interviews to probe further selected themes.

4.4 Methods

4.4.1 Review of Literature

I reviewed literature related to the theories of the media and democracy and the media and development to locate the study of the state-owned *New Vision* newspaper's role in the promotion of democratic values of the media and of national development. The critique by Curran (2000) of the free market media model and his alternative radical democratic model provide the frame for discussing *The New Vision* as a public service media organization. Chapter Two provides a detailed review of the related literature.

The literature reviewed points at a gap that this study endeavours to fill that is: how does the state – owned *New Vision* newspaper, which is supposed to operate commercially, balance the three roles of monitoring government, enabling various voices access the public sphere and promoting government development programs.

4.4.2 Content Analysis of Newspaper Copies

This study considered a universe of story content from the news, opinion, commentary and features pages of *The New Vision*, excluding Sundays from August 1 to October 31, 2003. The purpose was to establish the extent to which the placement of stories and their content illuminated the research question, which is the impact of state-ownership of the newspaper on its social role.

Through the analysis of stories, whose sample I explained below. I specifically sought to establish the following:

- (i) Whether government ownership of *The New Vision* resulted in the newspaper giving preferential treatment in placement and quantity to government news and information over news about other sections of society.
- (ii) Whether that ownership made *The New Vision* play a more public service role of providing information and less of the fourth estate or watchdog role.
- (iii) To what extent *The New Vision* enabled the public sphere by allowing various voices in society to talk to one another and to their government.
- (iv) And how the newspaper played the development role and which model of development it uses.

4.4.2.1 Sample, Unit of Analysis and Categories

A systematic random sampling method was used to select 18 copies of *The New Vision* newspaper from July to September 2003 from which I analyzed content of selected articles. One six-day week was selected from each month in the following pattern: the first week of July the second week of August and the third week of September. The purpose was to rule out the possibility of establishing a routine in the sampling frame (Deacon et al. 1999:46). This was particularly important because institutions like government tend to pattern their activities to monthly routines. Press briefings, for instance, are given at particular dates and days of the month. I also chose this period because it did not coincide with seasonal events like elections, which would dominate the stories during the period under study. This is also in line with the observations by Hansen et al. (1998) who note that in the analysis of more general types of coverage, not specifically tied to certain dates or periods, it is important to obtain a reasonably representative sample, which is not skewed or biased by the personal preferences of the researcher who might desire to prove a particular preconceived point, or by insufficient knowledge of the media and their social context.

Through this sampling I sought to establish the recurrent themes and frequency of stories that fell in the following genre: news, opinions and commentaries, letters, investigation and development-related stories. These genres helped create a frame for stories that were to be analysed to establish how government ownership of *The New*

Vision impacted on its social role. Berelson (1952) defines the content analysis as a research technique for the objective, systematic, quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (1952:147), while McQuail (2000) observes that for many purposes of analysis of mass communication, we need to characterise the content of particular media channels. Content analysis therefore quantifies salient features of a large number of texts and the statistics used to make broader inferences about the processes and politics of representation (Deacon et al. 1999:116).

The unit of analysis was a newspaper article of any of the above-mentioned genres where sources were either contributing to the public sphere, or playing the watchdog role or the development role. To qualify as a unit of analysis the message in the article had to be one of the following: prompting or contributing to debate or policy or issues of public concern, monitoring of government or other agencies and corporate concerns, or highlighting issues for attention of government, or where government officials were interacting with other interest groups and the public.

The categories for analysis on the coding sheet comprised: the genre, prominence of a story on a page, category of source, the context of the story, theme, target of message and the type of message (See Appendix II, Page 106). I chose these categories for three purposes: first, to establish the extent to which *The New Vision* enables government and other interest groups in Uganda talk to one another; second, to establish how the newspaper monitors government and other centres of power and influence; and thirdly, how it promotes national development. This is in line with the observation by Hansen et al. (1998) that:

Content analysis can provide some indication of the relative prominences and absences of key characteristics in media text, but the inferences that can be drawn from such indications depend entirely on the context and framework of interpretation by which the texts being analysed are circumscribed. (1998:95).

All in all I analysed 336 news and opinion articles from the 18 copies of *The New Vision* newspaper whose content contribute to the public sphere, provision of

information or watching over government or other centres of power. I also analysed 154 stories in the features section whose content was of a development nature. I entered the attributes of each article on a separate coding sheet by the ticking the corresponding option in every category. I used the right margin of the coding sheet for boxes that corresponded to the each category. Every option in each category was identified by a numerical value. I then transferred the data from the coding sheets into a SPSS statistical package, which I used to for analysis. I examined the frequency of various themes and categories and the correlation between various variables to establish in which context they recur, for what purposes and with which implications (Hansen et al. 1998:98).

I categorized the frequency of stories in their different genres: news, editorials, opinions, letters, and investigative stories. The news genre comprised of news stories published on the national news pages, which are normally pages 1-5; the editorial genre, contained stories that were published in a reserved and permanent space, where the newspaper puts its own point of view as opposed to other views; stories in the opinions genre were those opinions or commentaries published anywhere in the newspaper except the sport pages where the writers expressed views on any matter of general public interest. It did not, for instance, include opinions on fashion or issues like religion. The letters genre contained those opinions, views and observations published on the letters page whose content raised issues of general interest and concern while the investigations genre referred to those stories which probed and exposed wrongdoing in either government, its agencies and in the private domain. I later used the schedules containing these classifications to analyze the content using the public service principles and values to make observations on *The New Vision's* performance.

4.4.3 Analysis of the Data

I analyzed the data using the SPSS program by generating frequencies of occurrence in some cases by using cross-tabulations in others. Below I outline the steps I used to generate data relevant to the research question and issues.

- a) To establish the amount of coverage the newspaper gave to government and to other sectors of society, I generated two frequency tables one for the category of source variable and the other for the focus of message variable. The category of source variable referred to cases where the sources were the primary definers of news. The focus of the message variable referred to the main subjects of story content. (see Appendices VIII and IX Page 110)
- b) To understand how prominently *The New Vision* placed stories about the government and other sectors, I made two cross-tabulation was of the category of source variable and the story prominence variable, which showed whether the story in question was used as a lead on the pages, any other full story or a one-paragraph brief. The second cross-tabulation, closely related to the preceding one was of the focus of story variable and the story prominence variable. (See Appendices X, XI, Page 111).
- c) I also made the following analyses to establish how *The New Vision* fulfils both the public service role of providing information and the fourth estate or watchdog role:
- (i) I generated a frequency table of the genre of story to establish the volume of stories in each of these genres: news, letters, opinions and features and investigation. Whereas news stories are the most frequent medium for providing information, editorials, opinions and investigations are often used for monitoring purposes.
 - (ii) In addition to the above, I cross-tabulated the genre and focus of message and type of message variables to establish to what extent the newspaper played the watchdog role. The data in the type of message variable would be supportive, critical or explanatory. Stories whose content was of the watchdog nature should ordinarily be critical of the story subject. (See Appendix XII Page 112).
- d) The next level of analyze involved examining how *The New Vision* contributed to the functioning of the public sphere as outlined by Curran (2000). I used the following cross-tabulations of:

- (i) The category of source and the focus of the message variables to show how different groups use the newspaper to communicate with one another
 - (ii) The category of source and theme variables to understand the most recurrent themes in the public sphere.
 - (iii) And the category of source, focus of message and type of message variables. (Appendices XIII page 114 and XIV page 115).
- e) I also sought to understand how the newspaper performs the development role, for which I made the following analyses
- (i) A frequency table of the theme variable to show within the news genre the volume of stories concerning the government policy.
 - (ii) Review of the cross-tabulation of the category of source and theme mentioned in 4.4.3d above, and a cross-tabulation of the theme and focus of message variables. Appendix XV, Page 116). In this particular analysis, I sought to examine whether *The New Vision* tended to highlight positive stories about government policy (McQuail 1998).
 - (iii) I analyzed 154 feature stories from the features desk development section that covers women, education, children, health, agriculture, science, and environment. The analysis examined the source of the story (the primary definers of news), the focus of the story (the persons to whom the message was directed) and the type of message (either informational, critical of policy, supportive of policy or just raising problems of specific nature). The coding sheet used for entering data from the development related features stories was slightly different from the one I used for the other genres discussed above.

In conclusion, I analyzed the content from the newspaper articles using the SPSS program by employing frequency tables in some cases and cross tabulations in others. The observations obtained from the analysis of the data using the above methods informed the questions used in the questionnaire and the in-depth interviews with respondents.

4.4.4 Questionnaires

In light of the findings of the content analysis, I sought to contextualise these findings by probing the journalists who produce the newspaper content to establish how state ownership of the newspaper impacts on their journalistic practice. This was done by conducting a questionnaire survey, as the second method of research, among 37 *New Vision* journalists based at the headquarters (Table 4.1). I hoped that the survey would provide me with journalists' understanding of the implications of government ownership of the newspaper, their attitude to that situation and how those attitudes impact on the handling of news stories of the public sphere genre and development stories.

Table 4.1: Showing the Questionnaire Population of Study

Category of Writers	No in Simple	Out of
Feature s Writers	5	11
Political Writers	5	10
Investigation Reporters	5	7
Freelance Reporters	10	50
Business Writers	5	12
Section Heads	7	12
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	37	102

The questionnaires were distributed to journalists of different areas of specialization and employment status from a population of 102 as shown in Table 4.1 above. To achieve this, a stratified sampling method was employed. This method is used to separate the research population into distinct, non-overlapping strata, each containing subjects sharing similar characteristics (Deacon et al 1999). The elements were then randomly selected from each stratum using systematic sampling techniques. Stratified sampling ensured that the sample composition represents the important variables related to the research. In addition this sampling allowed elements in one stratum that had a small population to be deliberately non-proportionate (1999: 47).

I broke down the elements into the following dimensions and for each of the delineated dimensions; I developed indices that served as signposts for the respondents (Lazerfield 1958 cited in Bryman 1998: 23-24).

- a) The first dimension was how the journalists perceive government's ownership of the newspaper and how that ownership relates to their practice. Respondents were asked if government ownership means that they must support government 'all the time,' or 'sometimes,' or whether it has no impact on their journalistic practice.
- b) The second dimension was what the journalists considered to be *The New Vision's* social responsibilities from among the following: promotion of government policies, criticism of government and its policies, promoting national development, watching over abuse in government and its agencies. Other responsibilities were to monitor abuse and excesses in the private business, to provide information and to provide a forum for debate to all shades of opinion in order to enable people talk to one another and to their government.
- c) The third dimension probed the extent of government and other influences on the journalists' daily work. Here the respondents were asked to explain how the following impacted on their work: self-censorship, editor censorship, criticism by a government official, punitive action or interference in the angling or bias of stories. Respondents were asked to state whether the above factors influenced their work 'sometimes', 'always' or 'not at all.'
- d) Another dimension involved probing how the following categories interest influenced the journalists' writing: government interest, editor interest, national interest and personal interest. Respondents were asked to state whether any of the following factors influenced them 'always', 'often,' 'occasionally' or 'not all.
- e) I also probed the respondents to establish the advantages and disadvantages of working for a state-owned media organization on professional practice. In this regard, I asked the respondents to state how often their employment status in a government owned media house helped them get news ideas and tips, comments from government official, access to information in government hands, minimize attack from government attract or even scare off sources. The frequency of occurrence ranged from 'sometimes,' 'always,' 'rarely' or 'never.'

- f) The final dimension of involved probing the age brackets, duration of service and the employment status of the respondents. This information was important in determining at the analysis stage the relationship between these demographics and the nature of responses from the respondents.

4.4.5 How I Analyzed the Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire design (See Appendix I, Page 102) was of 13 closed questions, where respondents were required to tick what they believed were the most appropriate responses corresponding to their attitudes and observation. I used closed questions because they can be easily pre-coded and the responses put on a computer. Moreover, closed questions are less time-consuming for respondents to complete.

Each questionnaire formed a unit of analysis. Each response was considered a variable and allocated a numeric value, which was to be used for coding purposes. The right margin of the questionnaire pages was used to enter the code corresponding to the chosen option for a response. The data was then transferred from the coding sheet into a SPSS statistical programme, which I used to analyze the data. The analysis explored frequencies of responses and the correlation between various demographic and other variables.

The survey also enabled me to explore a number of different theoretical issues relevant to this research project. One issue explored related to the ideology of objectivity. Hackett (1984) observes that “traditional studies of objectivity and bias in news accounts assume that news can and ought to be objective, balanced and a reflection of the social reality and that the political attitudes of journalists or editorial decision-makers are a major determinant of news bias” (1984: 251). Questions probing the factors that influence the respondent’s writing and those asking respondents to rate the style of coverage of different interest groups sought to elicit views on objectivity. This was important because many respondents pointed at editor power as big influence on the writing, reflecting concern that editor power could result in news bias.

Building on the findings of the content analysis, I analyzed the respondents' answers to establish whether there is a bias among the journalists towards officialdom and to establish marginalization of voices outside the dominant elite circles. I hoped that subsequent qualitative research procedures of in-depth interviews would highlight the processes linking those variables (Hansen et al., 1998:256). I was particularly interested to explore my hypothesis that there would be a connection between the way journalists appreciate the ownership of *The New Vision* and their approach to political stories. Bibbie (1979) observes that quantitative research is preoccupied with establishing the causal relationship between concepts (1979:423).

One question specifically probed the journalists' views on the quality and coverage by their newspaper of other interest groups in Uganda like political parties. In another question respondents were asked to rate the factors that influenced their writing. I also hoped that by exploring the attitudes of the respondents, I would gain an insight into other theoretical issues pertinent to my research study.

4.4.6 In-depth Interviews

A purposeful sampling technique was employed to select respondents for the in-depth interviews because the study aimed at specific and in-depth information from certain categories of officials who were or are currently directly involved in decision-making regarding the editorial functioning of *The New Vision*.

I conducted in-depth interviews with past and current policy makers and implementers, like members of *The New Vision's* board of directors, editorial managers and selected journalists (Table 4.2).

Lofland (1971) notes that the essence of an in-depth research interview is the guided conversation and its objective is to elicit rich detailed material that can be used in qualitative analysis to establish which kinds of things are happening (1971:76). I conducted the interviews using a loose collection of themes pertinent to this study. As Bryman (1988) observes, in-depth interviews require minimum guidance from the researcher and as such they are important in generating a rounded account of a

particular group or organization. In addition, in-depth interviews are flexible and allow the respondent to give his view of the world (1988: 46). The interviews were useful in this study in that they enabled me to get a wider understanding of the problem from the respondent's own perspective through the interpretation of the respondent's answers and the analysis of data.

Table 4.2: Showing the In-depth Interview Population of Study

TYPE OF RESPONDENT	NUMBER
Ex-Information Ministers	2
Movement Information Director	1
Ex- <i>New Vision</i> Directors	2
Editor-In-Chief	1
News Editor	1
Reporters	5
Section Editors	7
Sales Manager	1
Circulation Manager	1
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	21

The interviews also helped in establishing a variety of opinion concerning particular topics. The policy makers were important in understanding government expectation of *The New Vision* other than what is stated in *The New Vision Statute 1987*, and whether they perceived the newspaper to be fulfilling those expectations. The interviews particularly probed how the minister exercised control over the newspapers, and their views on the role of *The New Vision* in the promotion of the public sphere and development.. *The Vision* directors were asked about issues of control and editorial policy, with particular reference to how intervention is done at board level to ensure that the newspaper performs its democratic and developmental roles. I also conducted an interview with the Director of Information at the Movement Secretariat, which acts as the party headquarters for the ruling Movement government. The Secretariat oversees strategy, organization and implementation of the political decisions of the government. The Director of Information has, in the past, made interventions concerning *The New Vision's* editorial policy. The interview focused on those interventions and what the Movement views the roles of the newspaper to be.

The interviews with the Editor-in-Chief who also doubles as Managing Director, and with his deputy probed issues of control and government intervention, editorial decision-making and policy, balancing the editorial and business interest, as well as the watching role. Working within the framework of the normative development media theory as outlined in 2.4.3 (Page 21), I also conducted interviews with several features writers to probe their understanding of the development role of the newspaper. One of the issues I was keen to explore was the applicability of Kunzick's (1988) definition of a development journalist to *New Vision* writers¹. I hypothesize that the attitude journalists to their work informs the way *New Vision* performs the development role (1988:83).

The section heads, who for purposes of this study were limited to the News, Features, Sunday, Chief Sub, Business, Science and Parliament editors, were asked to explain the main factors that inform the routine editorial decisions they make and how these editors balance the editorial freedom with the interests of government and other key groups in society.

4.5. Research Procedure

I discussed the contents of my research instruments with my supervisors, who suggested how I could use them to capture data from the respondents. The supervisors then provided me with a letter of introduction to relevant authorities especially outlining my research topic and objectives. The letter served as a useful instrument in getting information from official outside *The New Vision* establishment and for getting access to relevant documents at the Ministry of Information.

I compiled background library data about *The New Vision* and talked to a number of secondary informants on the history of the newspaper in particular and the public

¹ Kunzick (1988) defines a development journalist as one who only promotes the government point of view and who will not oppose, criticise or even contradict government. A development journalist, on the other hand, is one who is committed to reporting development news without abandoning his professional ethics and the public good. This type of journalist will give praise where it is due and apportion blame accordingly (Kunzick, 1988:83).

service media Uganda in general. I approached *The New Vision* management and explained my research area and requested access to selected information and documents. The officers I approached provided me with the necessary information that helped me focus on research issues. I also secured permission from management to interview staff, particularly journalists, in the course of the research. I then approached officials at the Uganda Management Institute for permission to use their library for content analysis. The resulting analysis provided me with the structure and nature of coverage by *The New Vision* of news and information pertaining to the issues of the public sphere and development. Based on this analysis I proceeded with the second stage of the research, which involved designing questionnaires to be administered to respondents sampled from *The New Vision* journalists.

The analysis of the questionnaires informed the sampling of respondents for in-depth interviews. I made appointments with various officials at their convenience in their offices. Interviews with journalists were conducted largely after working hours when they felt more relaxed and free to talk. Two of the interviews were conducted by telephone because the journalists were away on official assignment. The telephone interviews nonetheless, yielded positive results. I endeavoured to get the cooperation of the respondents all the time and I had to reschedule some interviews to adjust to their availability. Being on the staff at *The New Vision* made the administration of questionnaires easy.

The duration of the interviews ranged between 30 minutes to one hour depending on the themes and how informative the respondents were. I employed the probing technique in case where I felt the respondents had not satisfactorily answered the questions. I started each interview with an introduction of the research aims and I made sure I got the interviewee's consent before starting the interview.

4.6 Data Processing and Analysis

I employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques in processing and analysis of data obtained during the fieldwork, going through four stages. The first stage involved the processing of content from the 18 newspaper copies that had been sampled from

the total published between July and September 2003. At the survey stage, the data was entered according to genre and themes, date and day of publication, category of source and type of message. The other categories were the target of message, the prominence of the story on a page and the content of the message. There were five main genres: news, commentary and editorial, investigation and letters. There was a provision in each genre for entering the type and number of definers for news and information. Using quantitative techniques, I counted the frequency of items coded to establish the amount and style of coverage per topic. Using the conceptual framework, I then summarized the findings in a narrative form under three broad themes of the public sphere, watchdog and development. These themes reflect the main roles of public service media. The findings from this analysis provided a general view and guideline for understanding the amount and style of coverage of those themes by *The New Vision*. The subsequent stages of analysis probed the factors that influence the amount and style of coverage.

The second stage involved processing and analyzing data from the returned questionnaires. The responses were coded according to themes and categories. The themes were: ownership, control and gate keeping, freedom and independence, diversity and access, objectivity and relations with society. Qualitative techniques were employed to categorize beliefs, attitudes, observations and practices. However, quantitative methods were used to analyse the frequency of responses from the various categories of respondents to establish patterns and trends. The most frequently occurring responses were used in the interpretation of data and the findings were summarized in a narrative form.

The third stage involved transcribing all taped in-depth interviews. The responses were summarized and typed manually. They were analyzed using themes and code categories in the interview guide and the conceptual framework. Two margins were created on the interview report sheets where opinions, observations, statements and comments were coded. Statements and quotations were coded in the left margin, while observations and opinions were coded in the right margin. Again, in this case, answers from the different respondents were compared to find the most frequently

occurring responses, which were used in the analysis and interpretation of data. The findings were summarized in a narrative form. The salient quotations were used in the interpretation of data. At the interpretation stage, the findings from each research instrument were compared to establish the relationship between variables within the context of the conceptual framework. The analysis and interpretation also reflected on relevant and reviewed literature to discuss the overall findings of the study.

4.7 Limitation of the Study

I encountered a few methodological and practical limitations during the study. In the first instance some interviewees were reluctant to cooperate fully or in reference to particular questions out of fear of management or political or government reaction. In all these cases, I strived to explain the intentions of the study and the academic nature of the research. Several journalists preferred to have the interviews outside the office and after-working hours. This helped obtain the cooperation of the reluctant respondents. The second limitation was the availability of respondents.

Whereas I made all effort to adjust to the respondent's schedules, in a few cases it proved practically impossible to conduct a face-to-face interview when respondents were out of the location of research for the duration of the study. In this case, I proposed cellular telephone interviews at my expense, which were accepted. I could not record the interview so I took elaborate notes.

These limitations notwithstanding, the study was conducted successfully. Chapter Five that follows discusses the findings of the study according to the research issues and the assumptions mentioned in Chapter One.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This study set out to examine how state-ownership impacts on the way *The New Vision* newspaper balances the democratic and development functions of the media. These functions, on the one hand, include the responsibility to promote a more just society by keeping watch over government and other private centres of power and on the other to enable the public sphere, and to promote national development. The study is based on the assumption that despite the state-owned media's traditional public service mandate of providing information and promoting development, *The Vision* is becoming increasingly market-oriented in the way it manages newspaper content; and because of its ownership by the state, the newspaper gives greater and more positive coverage to government as opposed to other groups in society. These two factors influence the way the newspaper balances its roles. In this chapter I discuss the findings of the study that were informed by the objectivities outlined in Chapter One and the theoretical framework and literature review in Chapter Two. This chapter combines the findings of the content analysis of 336 stories in the news, opinion, commentary and letters genre and 154 stories of the development genres, from sampled copies of *The New Vision*. Other findings were from questionnaires, document analysis and in-depth interviews. The analysis of content provides the basic findings, which are supported by explanations and comments by in-depth interviews with journalists and other sources that have a direct bearing on the performance of *The New Vision* (See Chapter 4, Pages 51-56). The findings are presented in a narrative form supported by illustrations and they are discussed within the perspective of the research questions and issues mentioned in the previous chapters.

5.1 Coverage of Government

The first assumption of this study was that *The New Vision*, because of its ownership by the government, gives preferential coverage to news and information of the views of government at the expense of information from other actors in society. Preferential treatment here refers to more stories supporting the government and its points of view,

more positive coverage and more prominent placement of stories. The findings from the content analysis revealed that the coverage of news sourced from government officials including the President, ministers, and security personnel made up 48.9% of all stories.

Category of Source

	Frequency	Percentage
President	14	4.2
Minister	60	17.9
MP or MPs	45	13.4
Civil leader (s)	17	5.1
Opposition politician	11	3.3
Religious leader	18	5.4
Private Individual(s)	56	16.7
Business Person	6	1.8
Civil Society member	50	14.9
Security official	32	9.5
Other government officer	12	3.6
Newspaper's own	14	4.2
Staff	335	99.7
Total	336	100.0

Table 5.1: Showing the category of source

Table 5.2 Various categories as main subject of stories

	Frequency	Percent
President	29	8.6
Minister	46	13.7
MP(s)	35	10.4
Civic leadership	14	4.2
Opposition politician	39	11.6
Religious leader	14	4.2
Private Individuals	27	8.0
Business Person or Group	20	6.0
Civil society member	32	9.5
Security Personnel	30	8.9
General Public	50	14.9
Total	336	100.0

At the same time, the stories where government officials formed the main subject of the message contributed 41.6%. (See Tables 5.1 and 5.2 on Page 61) stories that were sourced specifically from opposition politicians made up 3.3%, civil society 19% and the business community just 1.8%. This means that although the newspaper depended more on government as a block source, it also accommodated other source in almost equal measure and the reader was bound to get alternative views about various issues

in the public domain. Government ownership therefore did not limit the amount of alternative views that are published in *The New Vision*.

In terms of prominence, stories about government in total and its agencies received more prominent placement than those about other individual sections of society. (See Appendices X, Page 111) Reports about government officials that were lead stories on a page aggregated 41% compared to 27.9%, as a combined total for stories about the opposition and civil society. In addition, reports about government official that were published as other full stories on a page totalled 39.2% as opposed to 23.7% for stories about the opposition and civil society. Even in brief stories carried as sidebars on the news page, government coverage was more at 41.6% compared to 25% for the opposition and civil society.

This preferential treatment also applies to a limited extent when one considers whether the message in the stories was ‘critical’, ‘supportive’ or ‘explanatory.’ The findings from the content analysis shows that the majority of stories examined were critical of the persons they were focused on, whether in or outside government. (Appendix XII, Page 112). Over 80% of stories about the president and ministers were critical of them for various reasons. Equally 57% of stories about MPs were also critical and a similar percentage was negative towards security forces. In similar pattern, about 80% of reports about opposition politicians were also negative in tone. However, less than half (46.9%) of stories about civil society were negative while 28% were supportive of activities of individuals in civil society. Where government officials were the source of the news, however, *The New Vision* gave more space to stories that were supportive of government programs or activities. The subsequently lowered the percentage of negative stories arising from government sources.

Of all the stories where the President was the source, 21.4% were supportive of the story subject, 64% critical and 14.3% were explanatory. The tone of the message in the stories was determined by reading each story, assessing the thrust of the key words used particularly verbs and adjectives, and judging whether on the whole the story criticized, supported or merely explained a given issue or point of view. On

average, less than half the stories from ministers, security personnel and other government officials were negative, the rest being either supportive of government or merely explaining government policies or activities. The findings show that other voices did not have as much opportunity to publish message supportive of their activities as the government voices. The findings from the content analysis, therefore, confirm the first assumption that *New Vision* gives more prominent coverage to news about government than about other actors. At the same time, while the newspaper published a lot of stories critical of the government, it also provided considerable space to the government to support its members, policies and activities. Therefore government ownership of *The New Vision* is a powerful tool for social control in that even when the government is subject of much criticism, still its views and policies will be propagated. This also means that the newspaper, irrespective of the critical stories it carried about government officials, remains a government mouthpiece.

5.1.1 How Journalists Understand Government Ownership

The findings from the questionnaires administered to journalists and from in-depth interviews conducted with some of them and other respondents throw important light on the content analysis findings discussed above. The treatment given to government news and information can be explained in the way journalists at *The New Vision* understand the role of the newspaper and its ownership by the government.

The journalists were asked what government ownership of *The New Vision* meant to their professional practice. Of 34 respondents representing different kinds of employment status and duration of service, about 15% said that the ownership meant that they must support the government “all the time”. However, 44% understood that ownership to mean that they should “sometimes” support the government, while a similar percentage said it that it had “nothing to do” with their work (Table 5.3). In the editor category, none of the six editors said that they must support the government all the time, but 66% said they should be supportive of the government sometimes while 33% submitted that the ownership was not related to their work. The age factor also contributed to the type of response to this question. Whereas two thirds of journalists aged between 20 and 30 years did not see any connection between

government ownership and their practice, a third in the 30-35 years age bracket said they should sometimes support the government. More than half of the older group aged 35 years and above also said they that sometimes they ought to support the government. (Table 5.4)

Table 5.3 What Individual Journalists Understand by Government Ownership

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	That must support govt all the time	5	13.2	14.7
	That I Support govt sometimes	15	39.5	44.1
	Has no relation to my work	14	36.8	41.2
	Total	34	89.5	100.0
Missing	System	4	10.5	
Total		38	100.0	

Table 5.4 Journalists' understanding of govt ownership by duration of service

	Duration of Service				Total
	1-2 years	3-4 years	5-10 years	Over 10 Years	
That I must support govt all the time		20.0%	11.8%	33.3%	14.7%
		2.9%	5.9%	5.9%	14.7%
That I support govt sometimes	16.7%	80.0%	35.3%	66.7%	41.1%
	2.9%	11.8%	17.6%	11.8%	41.1%
Has no relation to my work	83.3%		52.9%		41.2%
	14.7%		26.5%		41.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	17.6%	14.7%	50.0%	17.6%	100.0%

Table 5.5 Profile of journalist respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	20-25 years	5	13.2
	26-30 years	7	18.4
	31-35 years	10	26.3
	Above 35 years	12	31.6
	Total	34	89.5
Missing	System	4	10.5
Total		38	100.0

The age factor is socially significant in that the older the journalists, the more they expressed consciousness of government ownership. Kakande, a news editor, said in an interview that the older journalists were already practicing journalists in other newspapers by the time the current government came to power.

We worked under very oppressive regimes. We are more conscious of the consequences of frustrating government when you are in its employment. But it is also true that the older we become the more important it is for us to lead a more settled life. We try to avoid anything that can be rock the boat.

According to Kakande, the younger journalists have grown up knowing only one regime and as such they would tend to be more radical in their perception of the implications of government ownership. The argument that older journalists – who form 31% of the sample – want to settle down is significant because most editors fall in this group. This means that the editors, who are the gatekeepers, will most often not allow views that are contrary to the government's interest. This attitude explains the paucity of contrary opinion outside the news pages.

The duration of service variable also revealed an interesting pattern. Whereas 80% of journalists with fewer than two-year's experience submitted that there was no link between government ownership of the newspaper and their work, this perception changed with years of practice. None of the journalists with more experience dismissed this relationship, with 75% of those with three to four years' newsroom experience saying that they must sometimes support the government. Just over half (52%) of those with five to 10 years of work said there was no link, yet 66% of journalists with at least 10 years newsroom experience said they must support the government sometimes. (See Table 5.4).

The awareness of the government interest increases with years of service, a fact that points to a systematic process of socialization during which journalists come to learn how to accommodate the government point of view. One factor that has already been mentioned is the older journalists who occupy editor positions and ensure that stories comply with the official editorial policy. Interviews with various journalists indicate that they believe their job security is closely linked to serving the government interest. The implication of this process of socialization is that the journalists will withhold or downplay contrary views and only highlight those views that support the government

point of view. This also explains the findings of the content analysis that show that there were very few opinions pieces written by the newspaper's own staff – and these were generally supportive of government policy or actions--probably as a way of playing it safe. Candia, a *New Vision* freelance journalist with four year experience, explained in a follow-up interview why many young journalists thought that government ownership of the newspaper had nothing to do with their work.

The implications of government ownership are subtle and they are learned through experience. There is no formal induction process for reporters. New recruits come with textbook ideas of objectivity and balance. They have not internalized the realities of the workplace.

Kiwanuka, a journalist with 10 years experience, adds that the reporters learn the government interest with time, and there many things that are done outside the established editorial policy. Musamali, also a freelance journalist makes the following observation:

You do not need to be told that this angle is acceptable or not. You work out these things quietly over the years. This is my fifth year here and I have learned what is acceptable and what is not. You eventually get a working formula.

The findings from the different respondents, therefore, show that the perception of how government ownership relates to their work changes with newsroom experience. The journalists are socialized into the understanding that they must be conscious of the fact that the government owns the newspaper and that they must, in their work, sometimes support the government interest. The consequences for not following this line include having a reporter's copy either rejected or changed to downplay the criticism of government. In some cases it can provoke a caution from the editor. However, most journalists interviewed said following this line has a direct relationship with job security. Young journalists fresh from college have not experienced the subtle ways in which the government influences their work. The increased consideration of the government interest over the years means that journalists learn over time, from various interventions, how to accommodate the government point of view. Editors are normally picked from the more experienced journalists and the higher consideration for the government interest among older

journalists, among them editors, could be linked to job security, as News Editor Kakande notes:

You have to think about the position of the newspaper and what reaction the story might prompt from the government. You can use the same facts, but highlight one point of view and downplay another. You may stick one view, which is very critical of government deep inside the story, or you balance the facts with a comment from the government to pre-empt a reaction.

5.1.2 Journalists' views on the newspaper's social roles

Journalists' socialization also informs their view on the newspaper's social roles. Over 70% of respondents said that they expected *The New Vision* to promote national development, to provide information and propagate government policies, and to watch over government and its agencies (See Appendix XVI, Page 117). However, only 39% said the newspaper should criticize the government, 50% submitted that it should monitor abuses and excesses in private business and 52% were of the view that the newspaper should provide a platform for debate.

One important observation stands out in the way journalists view the newspaper's role vis-à-vis the government. Whereas there was a high percentage of journalists who believe that the newspaper should monitor abuses and excesses in government, a much smaller group viewed criticism of government as a social responsibility of the newspaper. This partly explains the findings of the content analysis where stories focused on government officials were largely critical of them, probably because of the journalists' belief in monitoring abuses in government. As mentioned earlier on Page 64, about half of the stories from government sources were either supportive or government policy or explained its position or activity. This is a reflection of the journalists' strong belief that the newspaper should promote government policies and national development.

5.1.3 Factors influencing writing

The high percentage of stories that were critical of the persons they focused on prompted further probing into the factors that influence the journalists' writing and

the various interventions that shaped the journalists' stories. I asked the respondents to explain how the following factors influence their writing: government interest, news value, editor interest, national interest and; personal interest. Other factors to consider were social responsibility and the interest of sources. The respondents were asked whether the factors "never" influenced them "at all" or whether they influenced them "occasionally", "often" or "always". An analysis of the findings revealed a high consideration for the perceived government interest. Just over half (53%) of respondents said they occasionally consider the government interest, while 25% said they often consider it when writing (Table 5.6).

Apart from news values that, quite naturally, scored highest (84%) in informing their writing, editor influence also came out as a major factor with nearly 69% saying it occasionally influences them and 15% saying they experienced editor influence more often. In cumulative terms, editor influence scored higher than government influence. Osike, a senior reporter, said that consideration for the government interest come with particular stories.

During the election period, you certainly know the government interests and you angle your stories accordingly. But in day-to-day writing, I am not bothered about what government thinks. That is the editor's problem. The editors can influence the story.

Half of the respondents said personal interest occasionally influenced their writing, while 15% said they considered it more often. Musamali, a freelance reporter said in an interview that personal interest often influenced his writing

When I am writing about a subject I like, I do it with greater enthusiasm. I politics when I write about the opposition, I do so with a lot of enthusiasm, because I belong to there. But when I am handling the ruling Movement or the government, I have to be more careful, get all facts right, Should anything go wrong, it can easily be blamed on my political views. I avoid controversy.

Despite their status, freelance at *The New Vision* share many common facilities with their staff journalists including newsroom access, telephone and transport money for assignments. News Editor, John Kakande said in an interview that over 90% of all staff journalists started as freelancers. Freelance journalists will normally try to follow

the line because they believe it is major qualification to getting into staff ranks. In addition journalists also identified social responsibility as a key factor that always influences their writing scoring 39% respectively. The majority said the interest of sources was at most a minor consideration.

The three factors that stand out as most influencing to the position taken when writing are news values, government interest and editor interest. The editor interest is closely woven to the government interest because the editor is the custodian of the government interest. The government appoints the editor-in-charge of *The New Vision* on a two-year renewable contract. His prime interest is to ensure that the stories, especially political stories, do not radically contradict or antagonize the ideology of the party in power. This is in line with observations by Reese (1997) who posits that the editing process is particularly compatible with hegemonic requirements. Editors rise to their positions after internalizing the norms of the journalistic paradigm and are more in touch with the values of the establishment.

The journalists also identified levels of censorship and occasional sanctions as factors that shape their writing. The respondents were also asked to explain how often they experienced the following interventions in their journalistic work: self-censorship whereby the journalists of out experience just deliberately withhold information knowing it will not be accepted by the editors for publication; editor censorship whereby the editors received a report's copy but go beyond the normal editing of facts and grammar to removing or toning down parts of a story that are deemed sensitive to the government; criticism by a government official, punitive action or interference in angling of stories at *The New Vision*. Responses to the question of self-censorship revealed a very positive inclination with 69.7% saying that they "sometimes" exercise self-censorship while 18.2% said they "always" censor themselves. A similar trend was observed with regard to editor censorship where 64.7% of the respondents, including all editors, said they sometimes suffered editor censorship and 26.5% said editors always censored their stories.

The majority of respondents (82%) said they are **sometimes** criticized by a government official over a story they have handled yet 12% said they **always** come under criticism from government officials. The majority of respondents (74.2%), however, said they had **never** suffered any punitive action as a result of stories deemed not favourable to government. A quarter of them, nevertheless, said they are sometimes punished mainly by being suspended from their respective areas of coverage for up to six months. In one case a respondent said he had been suspended from work for a month after his story provoked a backlash from the government, which demanded that action be taken against him. Nearly 60% of respondents said they ‘sometimes’ experience interference in the way they angle stories at *New Vision* while 40% said they ‘always’ experience such interference from editors in the way stories are angled. This compares closely with the 64% of respondents who said they experienced some degree of intervention. Kiwanuka, a freelance reporter said

There is a sort of sieve at the news editor’s desk which allows some story angles and rejected others. One time I quoted the Luweero District leader as saying that President Yoweri Museveni introduced guerrilla warfare to Uganda. The news editor refused to use my story, saying such a story cannot be used in *The New Vision*

Pike, the editor-in-chief, rejected the notion that there is an element of government censorship, but he said that disputes normally arise between reporters and editors on the one hand and government officials on the other. He said that in Uganda, as anywhere, government officials will call media organizations, both private and public, to complain or even quarrel about something. This is how Pike described it:

It is the normal hurly burly of politics. When they call to complain or criticize, you cannot call that harassment. That is the normal business of journalism. If you cannot stand the heat, just get out of the kitchen. The question is not how good the government is; rather-how free is the press?

Pike’s views are in line with Harris (1977; 28) who posits that there is a clear distinction between ownership and control, and that restrictions on the media and media workers do not necessarily follow from government ownership of the media.

Pike argued that the fundamental role of the newspaper is to say all that has to be said, to float different points of view and to provide information.

Put everything in the open, establish the facts and then float the facts for debate. Ultimately society reaches a consensus on what actually happened and what should happen in the future. To me that is the fundamental role of newspapers.

Pike described the guiding principle of his relations with government to which both parties have stuck that: as long as you get facts right, you will not get into trouble. He was actually confirming that government sometimes interferes in the running of the newspaper. He said, however, that the newspaper has had minor troubles with government but that these are ‘the rough and tough of journalism.’ He submitted that the only time a news story was ever pulled from the newspaper after it had gone to press was in 1998, and ironically, on the insistence of the American Embassy in Uganda, which pressured the Uganda government to cause the censorship of a story about American spy satellite equipment that had been installed in western Uganda at the start of the Uganda/Rwanda invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Pike interview 2003).

In conclusion, the above findings show that *The New Vision* newspaper gives more coverage to government news and information than to news from any other single sector in society because the newspaper staff deem news government gives to them to be privileged. The nature of coverage is shaped by the way the journalists interpret the implications of government ownership of the newspaper; by what they believe are the newspaper’s social roles; and by the various interventions and influences that impact on the way they write. Editor influence is identified a strong factor, which is closely related to the government interest as mentioned earlier that the government appoints the editor-in-chief of *The New Vision* by a two-year renewable contract; and that his prime interest is to ensure that the stories, especially political stories, do not radically contradict or antagonize the ideology of the party in power. Although the editor-in-chief professes the traditional libertarian theory of the press, the journalists’ testimonies and the type of coverage point at a fundamental contradiction of perception as to the role of the newspaper. The editor-in-chief was quoted earlier

saying that the fundamental role of the newspaper is to put everything in the open (Pike interview 2003). Indeed *The New Vision Statute* discussed in Chapter Three allows the newspaper to enjoy editorial independence and to voice public criticism of government policies; however, the journalists who produce the newspaper are socialized into the understanding that they must always take into consideration the government interest. Their perception of government ownership of the newspaper and the various direct and subtler interventions in their practice reinforce the ‘pro-government influence’ the newspaper. The next section discusses how the newspaper performs the watchdog role.

5.2 The Watchdog function

The second assumption of this study was that because of being owned by the government, *The New Vision* would tend to play a more traditional public service role of providing a variety of information to cater for the various groups in society including minorities in the context of public ownership of broadcast media, like the BBC (Jjuuko 2002). In this case *The New Vision* would be more concerned about the public interest than the interest of the government, and that it would also play the traditional liberal democratic function of watching over excesses in government and in other centres of power (Siebert et al 1956: 43-45; Keane 1991:117-127). This study, therefore, examined how much the newspaper performed the watchdog role.

5.2.1 Monitoring through news stories

Findings from the content analysis of the newspaper reveal that nearly 80% of all stories were news stories, 5.4% were editorials, 6.3% were opinions and commentaries, 0.9% were investigative, while letters to the editor made up to 7.7%. The news stories are the most common medium of diffusing information about daily happenings, which is the core function of daily newspaper. Editorials, opinions and investigations, which are often used as commentary to monitor centres of power, contributed only 20% as Table 5.6 shows:

Given that the majority of stories were critical of the persons they focused on, it is my argument that the content was of a ‘watchdog’ nature. Majority of the stories critical

of the government were sourced from the opposition and civil society, and the critical stories from the government sources mainly focused on individuals within the opposition and civil society.

Table 5.6 **Type of Story**

	Frequency	Percent
New	267	79.5
Editorial	18	5.4
Opinion	21	6.3
Investigation	3	.9
Letter	26	7.7
Total	336	100.0

Monitoring of government through news stories occurs during organized meetings and press conferences. However, *The New Vision* journalists also monitor the activities of government by means of interviews with various personalities mainly from outside the government. Table 5.7 shows the context in which stories were sourced.

Table 5.7 **Context of Study**

	Frequency	Percentage
Interview	83	24.7
Official meeting	127	37.8
Press		12.5
Conference	42	
Press Release	28	8.3
Actual Event	53	15.8
Speech	2	.6
Total	336	100.0

Whereas the newspaper publishes criticism of government by other sources, findings indicate a general trend in which the newspaper's own journalists do not monitor centres of power through commentaries or personal opinions but largely by proxy. This means that in news stories, journalists get the interviewees to make the critical comment on government, which the newspaper then reports as a matter of fact rather than its own point of view. The purpose is to minimize the risk of attack from government officials if journalists employed in a government newspaper directly made the comments. This is one way government ownership has shaped the manner in which the newspaper staff structures their own criticism of the government. The

journalists would ordinarily not go directly to senior government officials for an interview on a matter of concern. The fact that fewer interviews were conducted with persons who wield power and authority than with those outside the power structure serves to illustrate this point. During the period under study, the country's President was interviewed once (1.6%) and the interview focused on corruption.

The two interviews (3.2%) done with ministers dwelt on the economy and on the presidency. Five interviews (8%) were with MPs during which reporters questioned aspect of government policy, the process of democratization and security issues. The analysis shows that there was a higher direct monitoring of civic leaders, who control district and other areas of local government. This is reflected in 12% interview stories where officials were questioned on corruption, governance and security. The sector on which the government was most monitored was the security forces. Reports questioned security officials on violations of human rights, corruption in the armed forces and the 17– year old civil war in Northern Uganda. There were no interviews with people in the business class on the main news pages. This mirrors the journalists' perception of the newspaper's social roles, where half of the journalists interviewed said they did not expect *The New Vision* to monitor excesses in private business. Because of government ownership of the newspaper, therefore, journalists use the interviews as a means of prompting criticism of senior government officials. Felix Osike, a senior reporter said in an interview:

Most senior government officials take our comments rather too personally. They think we are using the newspaper to undermine them. So we prompt some other personalities, say an MP or an opposition politician whom we know will make vital comment on an issue, and we then report it as that person's views rather than our own. The important thing is that the criticism is made and published. (Osike 2003).

5.2.2 Monitoring through editorials

The editorial expresses the official position of the newspaper. It is here that the newspaper can criticize, oppose, commend or even call for support for government policy or any key issues in society (Tumusiime 2003 interview). By voicing its opinion, the newspaper contributes to the public sphere. The newspaper also uses editorials to expose mistakes in government and other centres of power. There were

18 editorials, corresponding to the 18 newspaper copies analysed. Of these only one focused on the President. This editorial criticised the President for allowing the use of presidential jet to transport his pregnant daughter from Uganda to the United Kingdom to give birth. The newspaper said this was a waste of the taxpayers' money since the jet was reserved for presidential functions and not private journeys for his children. Two editorials defended government ministers against criticism over policy implementation; two criticised MPs but supported their action to investigate corruption in the Ministry of Defence and the civil war in the north of the country. The rest were critical of civic, opposition and religious leaders and members of civil society. Civic leaders in charge of district administration were criticised for not properly accounting for government grants disbursed to their respective areas; opposition politicians were blamed for always attacking the government while they did not offer practical alternative programmes. Two editorials criticised religious leaders over their strong opposition to homosexuals while they failed to act on immorality within the clergy. No editorials were written about security personnel or about people in the business class. Mayanja, former Minister of Information commented that *The New Vision's* editorials are not robust but that they are balanced (Mayanja 2003).

The findings indicate that *The New Vision* editorials did not necessarily follow the most recurrent themes in the news pages. Stories about the president constituted 8.5% of all articles examined and the majority of them (86%) were critical of him over various issues. However, there was only one editorial on the president. Whereas stories on the business community totalled 6% of the sample and 80% of them were critical of various aspects of the business community, *The New Vision* did not have any editorial on the business class. Stories that targeted security officials made up 9% of the sample, just over half of them criticised the security personnel over human rights issues, corruption and failure to provide adequate security to civilians in conflict zones of northern Uganda. But there was no editorial on this. On the other hand, whereas 11% of the all stories were focused on the opposition, *The New Vision* allocated 16% of its editorials during that period to criticizing the opposition. In real terms, the newspaper monitored the opposition more than it watched over government

and private business. The editorials did not question the government's continued refusal to open up political space to competitive multiparty politics, or the plans by the ruling party to amend the Constitution to remove presidential term limits to allow the incumbent president run for another term even after the expiry of the two five year terms. By the time of this study, the President had been in power for 18 years, the last seven of which he had served as an elected president. These were legitimate issues that were in the public domain which *The New Vision* editorials ignored. Similarly, in business, the newspaper editorials did not comment on wrongdoings by big business including tax evasion, illegal reclamation of Lake Victoria wetlands to set up flower farms, or mistreatment of workers.²

It is my submission, therefore, that editorials in *The New Vision* usually make mild criticism and they avoid the most poignant political and business issues. As such the editorials do not set an agenda for change. The newspaper, being a big business itself, would rather keep silent over wrongdoings in the business world rather than antagonize its big advertisers. The editorials, therefore, are not a very useful mechanism to advocate for political reform.

5.2.3 Investigative Stories

There were only two investigative stories in the sample representing .9%. Investigative stories take long to research and as such they are not published regularly and they are expensive.³ I probed editors about the frequency and nature of investigative stories. The editors indicated that the newspaper published at least one investigative story a month and the main subjects of investigation were environment degradation, abuse of public office, fraud and unfair tendering procedures and there was one case of insider trading in the banking industry. Osike, a senior investigations reporter, however, observed that there was a marked absence of political investigations into the management of government, human rights and shortcomings in

² The content analysis details show that *The New Vision* published stories about these wrongdoings in the news pages either as news or investigation stories.

³ According to the news editor, the weekly investigations desk imprest in 200,000 Ug Shillings (\$100.) An investigation story on average costs 40,000 Ug. Shillings while a news story costs 3000 Ug. Shillings.

the democratization process. This directly relates to the fact that the government owns the newspaper, which cannot be antagonistic by exposing government's political shortcomings. This last aspect echoes the views of many journalists that while they expect *The New Vision* to monitor abuses in government and its agencies, the newspaper should not criticise the government on sensitive topics like human rights or the management of political power. The editor-in-chief, William Pike, said this of investigative journalism:

Investigative stories in themselves do not sell the newspaper because they are normally detailed and deal with difficult subjects that may be boring, but are nevertheless important to the country. But these stories give credibility to the newspaper. They portray the newspaper as courageous to go beyond the ordinary story and expose wrongdoing. (Pike 2003).

Osike, an investigations reporter, explained that the investigations are made possible by the existence of an established investigations desk, which has a separate budget from the normal news budget. The investigations group meets regularly once a week with the senior editors to follow up the progress of stories and generate new ideas for investigation. According to Osike, one of the factors that facilitate investigations is the existence of the Inspectorate of Government, an ombudsman's office for government, which investigates complaints against officials in public offices. The Inspector General of Government (IGG) normally shares information with the investigative reporter about wrongdoing in public offices. This is in line with the submission by Curran's (1991) view that the public service media should work towards equity; should enable different groups to situate their interests in relation to others and should expose wrongdoing in both public and corporate life (1991: 61). However, while the use of the IGG records, which are privileged, is the safest way for the newspaper to expose wrongdoing in public office, it also reveals the lack of courage by the newspaper to undertake its own independent investigations into excesses of government and big business.

My findings do not reflect much monitoring by *The New Vision* of corporate life. Curran (2000: 122-123) explains that this is one way the watchdog argument is timeworn in that it takes government to be the sole object of press vigilance. In fact he

calls for the critical examination of the exercise of economic power and authority by big business. Again the mandate of *The New Vision* is pertinent when we seek an explanation as to why it has not exposed excesses in private business. The law set up *The New Vision* as a newspaper and as a business to operate on a commercial basis with a statutory requirement to make profit. With its balance sheet value of \$6 million, the newspaper is a substantial business itself (Pike 2003). Ofwono, the director of information at the secretariat of the ruling National Resistance Movement, commented that:

To a great extent it does check and monitor government. But this check is often biased against certain officials whom reporters and newspaper does not agree with. I think *The New Vision* is playing a lot to the interests of big businesses who are big advertisers especially those businesses that are associated with powerful individuals in the government that owns the newspaper. In my view *The New Vision* has left the corporate world as well small business interests to its reporters who may get easily compromised. In fact I dare say that because newspapers cannot survive on circulation alone business interests now constitutes the biggest threat to their independence, objectivity, and the watchdog role. (Ofwono 2003).

This comment by Ofwono echoes the observation by Berger (2000) that the watchdog is sometimes biased in its biting.

A newspaper generates revenue from circulation but principally from advertising. Big businesses are big advertisers. In order to remain competitively profitable as a business, *The New Vision* has to balance its business interests with its other obligations. In this case its business interests overshadow its democratic responsibilities.

In conclusion, the analyses given above show that *The New Vision* plays the watchdog role in three main ways. First, within news stories, the editors will not let the reporters make direct interviews with senior government officials, but will let them prompt an opposition politician in an interview to comment on a sensitive issue of concern. When the comment is made, the source then becomes the primary definer of the news. The journalist turns the comment into a news story attributed to that source. This

method of using proxies to expose wrongdoing, according to the news editor, Kakande, cushions the newspaper against possible attacks especially from government if the critical story has dwelt on what are considered sensitive areas like national security. This explains why most criticism and attacks on the President, Ministers and security personnel, appears in news stories and hardly in the editorials. Nevertheless, *The New Vision* uses editorials from time to time to monitor other centres of power like local governments and public corporations. However, the findings from the sample analysis show that the newspaper subjected the President and his family to editorial criticism only once, and it did not use the editorial space to criticise the security officials or the business community. The majority of the editorials sampled targeted people outside the political and economic power structure. Thirdly, the newspaper plays the watchdog role through investigative stories. The investigations into wrongdoing in public offices were, however, anchored in privileged reports of the ombudsman. Others were in non-politically sensitive areas like the environment, and there were no investigations into the exercise and management of political power, human rights issues or private business.

5.3 *The New Vision's* contribution to the public sphere

At the third level of analysis, this study also examined the extent to which *The New Vision* enable the public sphere to function. Curran (2000:127-129) criticises the free market model's ideal on four grounds that are discussed in 2.2.2 (Page 12). Findings of the content analysis on how government officials, MPs, opposition, civic and religious leaders and civil society groups speak to one another yielded the following results. There were few reports of interaction between the president and other groups. In the few stories where the president was talking about other groups, he was just criticising them. However, there were many reports of interactions between different groups including ministers and MPs, civil society, the opposition and the general. Ministers were often supportive of government policy or they were merely explaining a government position. They were, however, often critical of MPs.

Opposition politicians were mainly critical of the president and security personnel. Stories about religious leaders in most cases portrayed them as supportive of fellow

clergy on political issues but critical of some clergymen over the issue of homosexuality in the church. Religious leaders were also often critical of the president because of his refusal to open up political space. Civil society organisations were a major contributor to the public sphere, balancing support for ministers with criticism of them and almost all other sectors of society represented in the survey. Security officers were mainly critical of MPs and opposition politicians, but nearly half of the stories sourced from them were supportive of their professional colleagues.

In Summary various actors in the public sphere talk to one another through *The New Vision* stories. The issue of main concern to all sections of society include the following: security (18%), corruption and other practices (17%), governance (15.5%), government policy and human rights (10%). This interaction, however, predominantly takes place within the news as genre as shown in Table 5.3.

I asked the editor-in-chief, William Pike, about the assumption that *The New Vision* consistently gives more positive coverage and more prominence to the government than to the opposition and pressure groups. Pike said that as regards the amount of coverage and preferential positive coverage for government, it was simply a question of perception.

It is a question of whether the glass is half empty or half-full. Our competitors have historically given a lot of coverage to opposition viewpoints and we have given less prominence to them. But that does not mean there are no opposition views in the newspaper. We always cover their press conferences and if the news merits front page, we put it there, if it doesn't then we stick somewhere inside. One reason why people think we do not cover oppositional views so much is that we try to keep facts and opinions separate. So our news pages give factual stories, we do not give disguised opinion stories.

I also asked Pike why the newspaper had very few opinion and commentary pieces through which the public could exchange ideas, and whether that limited the newspaper's role in the promotion of the public sphere. He explained that the average newspaper reader wants a limited amount of political analysis, like one column a day.

A newspaper is a package. If you are to sell a lot of newspapers you must not be serious all is lively, vigorous and entertaining. The average reader wants a mix: a little analysis, good the time. Opinion columns and commentaries are serious stuff. You must present a package that features, good human-interest stories, lots of news, interesting sports and cartoons. Those who carry more political columns sell fewer newspapers than we do. We give readers what they want but we should not impose our prejudices on the readers. (Pike 2003).

Pike also said that the newspaper was objective in the news pages but pro-government in the opinion and commentary pages (2003). He said this was because the government owns the newspaper and opinion and editorial material should reflect support for the government. The findings of the content analysis confirm this view. Although the majority of the opinions were critical, very few of them were focused on government and in any case they were within the boundaries of what the state would call acceptable. Pike confessed that the only time when columns were deemed extreme was in December 2000 ahead of national elections. The Minister of Information ordered the board of directors to suspend four political columns deemed to be repeatedly supportive of the opposition presidential candidate. The journalists who were banned from writing were Joachim Buwembo, editor of the *Sunday Vision*, John Kakande, news editor, Robert Kabushenga and Francis Gureme. Buwembo explains “we had pushed the boundaries to the breaking point”. Charles Onyango Obbo, Editor of *The Monitor* newspaper commented that for the journalists in the government newspaper the boundaries of accepted behaviour change with the political climate. When the climate is stormy, more frequent coverage of oppositional views can be interpreted as the newspaper becoming an institutional opposition, which is against the law (Buwembo 2001; Onyango Obbo 2000).

Pike also admitted that the provision in *The New Vision Statute of 1987* that cautions the newspaper against becoming an institutional opposition had a limiting effect in that it was vague and that government officials could interpret it in various ways. A 2001 incident illustrates this point further. At the height of the war of nerves between Uganda and Rwanda, *The New Vision* published propaganda material from the governments of both countries. Pike explains that this was done for two reasons: the first was to balance the story and the second was for purely commercial reasons

since the newspaper also sells in Rwanda as the main daily (Pike 2003). However, the Minister of Information, Basoga Nsabhu summoned the directors and senior editors to a meeting with the Director of Information at the secretariat of the ruling National Resistance Movement, Ofwono Opondo. During the meeting the editors were warned against publishing pro-Rwanda propaganda. Ofwono Opondo expressed the government's displeasure with the newspaper, and he invoked the clause in *The New Vision Statute* that prohibits the newspaper from becoming an institutional opposition. I asked Ofwono Opondo why he asked the Minister to call this meeting. He explained:

My concern as political operative was that *The New Vision*, a government agency, was failing to see the obvious and unjustified hostile (military and propaganda) posture Rwanda had taken, not merely against leaders of our country, but the country itself, bearing in mind our own contribution to that country

It appeared to us that *The New Vision* failed to recognise that Rwanda was at war in every sense of the word with Uganda for no justified reason, taking into account that they were the ones provoking Uganda because they knew they had international sympathy over the genocide trauma. Yet the government of Uganda had put these facts to *The New Vision* leadership.

Thirdly, we knew that *The New Vision* was being deliberate in siding with Rwanda propaganda because the editors knew these facts. Many of those articles were written by Rwandese state officials using pseudo names sic to hide their identities. *The New Vision* knew this but it preferred to play innocent. (Ofwono 2003).

In conclusion, the comments by Ofwono Opondo illustrate the way political and legal limitations impact on *The New Vision* when it consistently gives a platform to critical and opposition viewpoints. Given the strength opinion pieces lend to a newspaper, the role of *The New Vision* as a platform for debate is greatly undermined by the attitude of the editor, who believes that the public does not need a lot of opinion and as such the newspaper should not impose its views on the audience. It is also undermined by pressure from government officials who exploit *The New Vision Statute* to stifle opposition views. The newspaper subsequently provides only two pages a day for opinions, with the majority of them favourable to government. Findings also showed that in the majority of cases an opinion that criticises the government is juxtaposed

with another that supports the government viewpoint on the same subject. The government ownership, therefore, greatly limits the newspaper from being a truly public service medium, which should ideally contribute to the public sphere. The various autocratic interventions by government officials to stifle debate are in contradiction with the newspapers legal mandate to voice public criticism of government policies. It is my view that the practice makes the democratic mandate of *The New Vision Statute* merely idealistic.

5.4 *The New Vision* and the development role

The last assumption of this study was that the government ownership of *The New Vision* would make the newspaper perform more of the development role than the democratic roles of monitoring government and enabling the public sphere. The normative development media theory assumes that the media have to pay sustained attention to covering policies and programmes that concern the improvement of people's quality of life (McQuail 1989:121) and that national government take the central role in reshaping their country's media system to promote national development (McQuail 2000). In this context, *The New Vision* would be expected to play a development role in support of government programmes.

5.4.1 Coverage of development stories

According to the findings from the content analysis of the stories of the news, opinions and investigations genres, the stories related to development dwelt on various aspects of government policies (13.7%) particularly on health, education, agriculture and environment, while and others (8.9%) dwelt on national economy (Table 5.8). According to news editor, Kakande, the main education campaign focused on the provision of universal primary education. In health, government focused on eradicating preventable killer diseases and the provision of anti-retroviral drugs for people living with Aids (Kakande 2003).

Table 5.8 Coverage by Theme

	Frequency	Percentage
Govt Policy	46	13.7
Presidency	15	4.5
Democratisation	39	11.6
Human Rights	34	10.1
Economy	30	8.9
Governance	52	15.5
Malpractices (Corruption etc)	58	17.3
Security	62	18.5
Total	336	100.0

The main economic policies concerned investment, the development of tourism, hydroelectric power, and the diversification of exports to sell to the lucrative American market under the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA). The main thrust in agriculture was on the Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), which aims to reduce poverty in rural areas by providing loans to peasants to invest in incoming generating activities related to agriculture. The stories analysed from the features sections have been categorised under this theme because *The New Vision* editors consider them development-related (Pike 2003). These stories are published once a week, on different days.

Table 5.9 showing the schedule of development-related sections

Education Vision Pull-out	Monday	4 pages	30 stories
Health Page		1 page	15 stories
Women’s Vision Pull-out	Tuesday	4 pages	30 stories
Science Page		1 page	15 stories
Farming	Wednesday	2 pages	30 stories
Environment		1 page	10 stories
Children’s Vision	Saturday	4 pages	24 stories

Source: Features Desk

The content analysis of the development related stories in the features section, established a clear pattern and regularity of occurrence. Table 5.9 shows the organisation of these sections and the total number of stories examined within the features section.

Findings show that 42% of the stories analysed in the features section were just informational 12% carried criticism of government policies, 13% raised specific problems that need attention and 33% contained messages that reinforced particular government policies. In terms of sourcing, 56% of the stories quoted expert sources as prime definers of information, 11.7% were sourced from politicians and opinion leaders, 15.4% were from ordinary non-expert users of information, and 16.9% from the newspaper's own journalists. The main focus of the messages was the general public, although 14% called for government intervention, and 9% were on professional groups like the Uganda Farmers Association or the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).

5.4.2 Views of the journalists

Patrick Luganda, a feature writer specialising in farming and climate issues, said that story ideas for all these sections are generated in a weekly features meeting, which brings together about 15 writers and various editors. Luganda explains:

We do not necessarily have to promote government policy, but it is important for journalists to be abreast of what policies are in place and what campaigns government is running at the time. The stories must have a relevance to the people at that point in time (Luganda 2003).

Wendo, the science editor, echoed that point when he explained that writers in these sections had an unwritten code that demanded that they just always ask what benefit the story will give to the end user. "We do not necessarily get ideas from the government, rather from what the readers want," said Wendo (2003). These comments by Luganda and Wendo locate the development journalism the newspaper practices in the social responsibility view of the media (see Ogan 1982:10 and Agarwalla 1979:181) Wendo noted that *The New Vision* management had shown a commitment to promote development-related journalism through the creation of the following desks: the science desk that combines farming, environment and health sections, the *Education Vision* desk, and the *Children Vision's* desk as well creating regular space in the newspaper for this genre of journalism.

5.4.3 Limitations to development journalism

Wendo and Tenywa contended that despite the commitment by management to development journalism, there were attendant problems that constrained its growth at *The New Vision*. First, the term of reporters in these sections was very small and primarily unspecialised. Writers joined these sections not because they were academically or professionally qualified, but out of interest. Wendo explained that this limitation impacted on the quality of writing for the more complicated fields like science (Wendo 2003; Tenywa 2003). Another complication arising from the above scenario is that writers could not easily cultivate scientific experts as sources because the latter feared they would be misrepresented. Wendo suggested that the newspaper should consider recruiting people with university degree knowledge in various areas for its specialised sections. Secondly, Tenywa pointed out the lack of proper links between the newspaper and government departments that should guide the news people on how government policies could be explained to their audience. Tenywa explained:

Officials in government and its agencies do not usually open up to the editors and when they try to do so the editors are too busy, they send reporters even to meetings meant for senior editors. Editors never seem to have the time. Because of this, editors appreciation of the intricacies of the development beat is low, something which impacts on the general organisation and growth of these sections of the newspaper.

Thirdly, most of the writers in the development-related sections are freelance reporters. Development related stories, particularly science stories take longer to research and to write than an ordinarily breaking news stories, and the space allocated to each section is available only once a week. Consequently, many freelance journalists either give up, or spend more time doing straight news stories at the news desk where their stories could be used more quickly. Both Tenywa and Wendo recommended that *The New Vision* should pay more for development stories than ordinary news stories as a way of attracting more journalists to these sections (Wendo 2003; Tenywa 2003). Lastly, both journalists said that there was no written policy on development journalism. A clear policy would ensure that the newspaper undertakes co-ordinated, systematic and proactive programme that would reflect on

government policies and give the reading public the big picture. Such a policy would also guide management during staff recruitment and development.

Whereas the law that set up *The New Vision* spelt out the democratic roles of the newspaper, it remained silent on the development function. It only requires the newspaper “to voice public opinion and criticism of a given government policy justly and objectively, without becoming an institutional opposition to government or its interest (The New Vision Statute 1987).” The absence of an explicit clause on the developmental role creates a lacuna, which allows for various interpretations of how *The New Vision* should perform and how its performance in this respect ought to be measured. Abubaker Mayanja, who was Information Minister when The New Vision Statute 1987 was enacted, explained that the main preoccupation at the time was reconstruction and not development:

We had just come out of war. The economy had collapsed over the years. We were talking about reconstruction and rehabilitation. We could not even start talking about development. Because of this environment at the time, even us the architects of the law did not think the development issue was relevant enough at the time to explicitly spell it out in the Statute. (Mayanja 2003).

The editor-in-chief, William Pike, however, argued that the democratic role and the developmental role of the newspaper are closely related. He said that *The New Vision* provides information that people need both for a participatory democracy and for development and, although *The New Vision Statute* does not explicitly impose on the newspaper’s mission statement, which is ‘*to inform, educate and entertain accurately and openly for a better world.*’ Pike explain that *The New Vision* exercises the developmental role in two ways. Firstly, through straight development related stories that educate the public on such topics as farming, education, environmental, health, women and gender issues and science. This is in line with the observation by Agarwalla (1979) that the job of the journalist on the development beat is to examine, evaluate and report the relevance of a developmental project to national and local needs. Secondly, Pike said that the newspaper had democratic responsibilities that are somewhat developmental and that this is where the fundamental role of the newspaper lies. “Wrongdoing in government and in other sectors of society impacts on the

development process. That is why we keep government and its officials on their toes” (Pike 2003).

5.4.4 Discussion of the Development Role

The Development Media Theory that McQuail (1987) discusses rose out of the NWICO debate in the 1960s. This debate was a critique of the traditional democratic media theory, which stressed free market practices and as such it was deemed inappropriate for the media systems in developing countries because of those countries had peculiar economic and political conditions. The Development Media Theory advocates a media system that gives the state the right to intervene, control, and restrict the media in the interests of national development (McQuail 1987). The theory charges the media to give priority to national development programmes and national culture and McQuail (1987) argues that the public service media are best suited to do that.

The New Vision does not directly draw any explicit developmental responsibilities from *The New Vision Statute 1987*. As discussed earlier, this enabled the editors to conceptualise the role as they saw fit. The newspaper and the *Statute* were created against the backdrop of war, not long after the National Resistance Movement captured power. Abubaker Mayanja, former Minister of Information, explains that the country had just emerged from decades of civil strife, economic and moral decay, which left many national institutions weak.

We wanted a newspaper that would enjoy editorial independence to help; us criticise government, highlight abuses to complement the weak police and judicial systems. We did not want a restrictive media system because the country had suffered from lack of freedom for a long time. (Mayanja 2003).

As the findings from in-depth interviews with editors and writers indicate in 5.1.1 (Page 62-66), the journalists believed the newspaper should play a role in national development, but there are differences in the conceptions of what that role should involve. Pike argued that there was no clear demarcation between the democratic and the development roles. Indeed Pike’s view is that for *The New Vision*, as a public service medium, these roles are complimentary. Wendo said that development stories

should focus on the benefit to the reader by providing the ‘big picture’ of the national implications of events and happenings (Wendo 2003).

The interviews with the journalists and editors indicate that despite the lack of a clear definition, *The New Vision* publishes specialised sections where stories related to development issues are packaged in themes on different days of the week. The story ideas in these sections are developed within the newspaper and they do not necessarily have to reflect government policy as long as they are beneficial to the reading market.

Pike echoed this belief in the power of the audience and the market when he said that *The New Vision* newspaper sells more copies than its competitors because it gives the right mix of what the readers want. In the same vein, former sales manager David Waweru noted that when he was at *The New Vision* he insisted that these special sections should not be development-oriented only, but that they should drive circulation as well. This means that the choice of topics and writing styles should relate more to the audience needs and not necessarily, as the development media theory (See McQuail 1989:121) suggests, to the national priorities as viewed by the government. The law and the conditions in which the newspaper started restrict the applicability of normative development media theory in two ways. First there is no explicit provision in the law compelling *The New Vision* to play the development role within the normative development media theoretical framework. Secondly, the general mood in the country, which had just emerged from decades of political oppression and abuse of fundamental rights, was against imposing restrictions on the media. As such the development journalism the newspaper practices is not a communication support system designed only to serve the development goals of the government. From discussions with writers and editors at *The New Vision*, it is evident that the concept of development journalism that is practised at the newspaper is closer to Agarwalla’s (1979) than Ogan’s (1982) (see 2.4.2 Page 19). Whereas 12% of the development stories examined criticised government policy, there is no evidence that the development journalists were systematically adversarial. In any case the law does not allow *The New Vision* to become an institutional opposition.

Although the staff feel the newspaper has a developmental responsibility, its role and expectations are not clearly conceptualised, and are not founded in any specific legal provision or policy framework. This gap limits the government's utilisation of the newspaper to mobilise the people for development. Nonetheless, in relation to concerns by Musa (1997:17) about the need to distinguish between a development and developmental journalist, my research shows that Kunczik's (1988:83) definition of a development journalist (see Page 22) applies to *The New Vision* journalists on the development beat.

5.4.5 Limitations of the development media theory

An examination of how *The New Vision* fulfils its democratic and developmental responsibilities points to some limitations of development media theory in the changing socio-political and economic conditions in developing countries, particularly in Africa. The post-NWICO conditions have changed considerably with the waves of globalisation, privatisation, democratisation, deregulation and the restructuring of international capital engulfing the world. Firstly, democratisation that swept across Africa after the Cold War in Europe and the end of apartheid in South Africa energised the quest for freedoms, including press freedoms in such a way that it is difficult to envisage an all-powerful government that will control the media the way that the normative development media theory proposes. Secondly, globalisation has not only opened up local markets to multinational corporations, but it has also created an international civil society that can easily mobilise against regimes that restrict freedoms in a developing country. Speaking of late modern democracy, Dahlgren (2001) says that one of its characteristics is the decentralised networking of social movements whereby large numbers of non-governmental organisation can mobilise and absorb citizens' engagement, even across national borders (2001:68).

Thirdly, a new development agenda that is driven by multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund has replaced the agenda driven by the United Nations system at the time. The UNESCO debates of the 1970s on the new international information order and the recommendations of the McBride

Report of 1980 had encouraged African governments to believe that control over broadcasting was necessary for national mobilisation and as instrument of power and sovereignty (Keane 1991:145). However, the World Bank in 1999 proposed a new approach that would make the media mainstream the development agenda for the 21st Century (World Bank/WAN Report 1999). This new approach, discussed in 2.6 (Page 26), links democratic accountability to development and makes the free media an integral part of the development process. It also standardises development priorities and elevates them from local to international level under the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework that identifies 13 facets of development in nations states (see Page 26,27). Fourthly, the processes of privatisation and liberalisation have reduced the role of government in many ways. In Uganda, liberalisation of broadcasting irreversibly revolutionised the media landscape, as is discussed on (Page 39). This was to the advantage of the private sector and to the disadvantage of public broadcasting (Jjuuko 2002). In many countries even the government's own public media systems are being restructured to compete with the private media. This competition means less funding by government and play by the rules of the free market in order to win audience.

Another factor that limits development journalism is the restructuring of international capital that had led the restructuring of the traditional media. The traditional press system encouraged the balance of profit incentive with a sense of public purpose and responsibility. Various media scholars have criticised the trend over the past few decades where commercial imperatives by big media conglomerates have hardened and eventually tipped the balance between public responsibility and private profit in favour of the latter (Underwood, 1995; Golding and Murdock, 1996; McChesney, 1999). Commercialisation and concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few multinationals have placed journalism and the functions of information distribution in the hands of business people away from editors and journalists (Baldwin et al 1996). 'The culture of journalism with its critical watchdog function and protection of the freedom of expression is not the culture of these institutions (1996:397). These developments threaten journalism's privileged status as an institution whose purpose is to serve the public good.

These developments have profound significance for the media in Uganda, where the programming of private broadcasting stations is entertainment-based (Jjuuko 2002) and the private press is dominated by the multinational Nation Media Group, which is profit driven. This means that there is even a greater need for the state owned media to accommodate development journalism even as it strives to compete with the private media. This scenario also calls for a new media policy which seeks to reduce government control of its own media to allow it to compete effectively, but at the same time imposes the responsibility on both government and private media to use the freedom of the press to advance the development process, since the flow of information has an economic and social impact.

Various scholars (Musa 1982; Linden 1998; Domatob and Hall 1983) have appreciated aspects of the development theory, but have criticised the oppressive powers it gives to national governments and its abuse by regimes, especially in Africa. Given the changed setting in developing countries, the normative Development Media Theory is now timeworn. In the same vein, as governments and the World Bank call on the mainstream media in developing countries particularly Africa to factor in a development agenda in their programmes, there is need to re-examine how the normative liberal pluralism theory, which advocates a free media market can still apply to these developing countries. Some recommendations related to review the development media theory in changed settings are contained in Chapter Six.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on four issues. First it examines how *The New Vision* covers government and other interest groups with a view to establishing whether, and to what extent, it enables the public sphere. Secondly, it examines how state-ownership of the newspaper impacts on the journalists' practice. Thirdly, I analysed the views of journalists, editors and other people directly linked to the newspaper. Fourthly, the study probes how the newspaper fulfils its development obligations.

The chapter shows the following: first, that *The New Vision* gives more coverage to government and its agencies than to other sections of society. Whereas the majority of stories even those about the government were critical, government sources were given more space to explain and support policies and activities than was allowed to other sources. The impact of government ownership is subtle, but with far reaching consequences. It also leads to journalists being socialised into the understanding that they must always consider the government interest during their work. This impact is evident in the nature of coverage that is biased toward government.

Secondly, although The New Vision Statute of 1987 gives the newspaper editorial independence and the obligation to carry criticism of government, a clause within that law warning the paper against becoming an institutional opposition restricts from fully exercising the editorial freedom the very law grants. The space the newspaper provides in opinions pages for exchange of ideas is much less than that provided for news. Whereas criticism of government is ideally allowed, there were incidences of harsh government reaction leading to levels of censorship within the editorial structure to minimise critical opinions.

Thirdly, because The New Vision Statute 1987 is silent on the paper's development role, there is no written policy on development journalism. However, the editors package stories that relate to development subjects thematically and publish them on particular days. Despite the lack of policy, there is no evidence that the government uses the newspaper as a communication process for the sole purpose of serving its own development goals.

Fourthly, *The New Vision* performs the democratic function of monitoring government. It criticises government and also has investigative stories exposing wrongdoing in government agencies. However, much of the criticism occurs in news stories and is toned down during the editorial gate-keeping process. During the period under study, there was only one incident where the country's president was criticised in the newspaper's editorial. The investigations dealt mainly with non-sensitive topics like the environment. The newspaper did not venture into political investigations or

into exposing wrongdoing in private business. The culture into which journalists are socialised, prohibitive clauses in The New Vision Statute as well as business interests, weaken the watchdog role of the newspaper.

The New Vision thus tries to balance the interests of government, without losing editorial focus on opposition groups; it monitors abuses in government and criticises it, while guarding against becoming an institutional opposition to it; it operates commercially and profitably, while guarding against antagonising advertisers; and it has cultivated its home-grown mechanism of promoting development programs.

The next chapter provides concluding reflections and offers suggestions on how the newspaper's roles can be re-conceptualised.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 *The New Vision's* delicate balance

The study disproved the hypothesis that *The New Vision's* ownership by the state, it gives more prominent and positive coverage to government business than it does to the opposition and other interest groups in society. On the contrary, the findings of the study, particularly the analysis of stories, show that whereas in the whole government business gets a lot of coverage, that reporting is based on newsworthiness and it is predominantly critical of government. This is sometimes to the charging of government officials and its organs, as illustrated from the comment by Ofwono (2004) below:

Obviously a sitting government should be given more and prominent coverage as long as it is factual and objective because as an elected government, it has more duty and obligation to be heard and to explain to the people than the opposition. Even government propaganda should be given coverage to let the people know what its worth is.

The study has shown that *The New Vision* draws its mandate from *The New Vision Statute 1987*, which allows it to publish independently and to voice public criticism of government and its agencies. The newspaper is mandated to do this because it is state-owned and not government-owned. However, as noted in the findings, in terms of the perceptions of the public and people in government, there is a thin line between these types of ownership. What the law means is the government owns *The New Vision* in trust of the citizenry, and not that it is a party organ or government mouthpiece. However, this perception has two effects: the first is that government functionaries can interpret it to their advantage in order to extract cooperation from the newspaper; the second is that it directly influences or more subtly influences the journalists' practice towards more self-regulation and moderation. The study has confirmed the assumption that *The New Vision* plays the role of promoting development. The role, which is not explicitly spelt out in the mandating law, is built within the context of the development media theory of Mc-Quail (1987), who wanted governments in developing countries to take control of the media, by all means possible, to suit national development priorities. The genesis of the newspaper and

the dramatic changes in international morality since 1990s, make McQuail's development media theoretical framework inadequate to locate *The New Vision's* development role. As discussed in 5.4.3 (pages 86-87), the concept of development journalism as practised at *The New Vision* can be located in the social responsibility theory (Ogan 1982:10). It is also noted that the government makes little input in the newspaper's development material.

The study has established that there is consideration interaction in *The New Vision* by various actors in the public sphere especially within the news genre. It has, however, been observed that this interacting within this genre has the disadvantage of subjecting the messages to the mediation of the editing process. The gate-keeping process at the news desk plays a big in shaping the interaction within the public sphere. Editors, using various news values, choose how to position the various voices in the public sphere.

The study has also established that *The New Vision* monitors the government and its agencies and that the newspaper exposes wrongdoing through investigative stories labelled as 'spotlight'. It is noted, however, that the watchdog assumption is largely limited to these institutions and rarely extends to include monitoring of corporate power and excesses. Curan (2000) gives three possible explanations for this: either its due to the outdated view that government, as the seat of power, should be the sole object of press vigilance; or that the media are compromised by their links to big business; or that the media themselves have become big business (2000:122-123). The processes of privatisation and liberalisation, mentioned in 1.2 (Page 4) and 3.4.1 (Page 38), are rolling back the state steadily. With the process of privatisation and liberalisation, corporate power is on the increase. The newspaper has nevertheless made many bold investigations into corruption, abuse of office, environment abuse, embezzlement and others. Although, by their nature, these investigations are not regular, they do boost the watchdog function.

6.2 Suggested Reforms

The study recommends several reforms that can improve the current intricate balance of roles for *The New Vision*. So of the suggested reforms can be implemented

internally, while others have policy and legal implications. In the first place, its recommended that *The New Vision Statute 1987* be amended to either remove the clause that warns against the newspaper becoming an institutional opposition, or to define what ‘becoming an institutional opposition’ entails to avoid its abuse by government agents for political expediency. Secondly, the government needs to support the media by devising a communication policy and an effective media relations department that translates policy objectives into material packaged for ready media consumption. In the competitive environment where *The New Vision* and other public media now operate (See Jjuuko 2002 for the Radio Uganda station), government development programmes will be swept aside for easy copy from other sources of information.

Thirdly, *The New Vision*, which had the initiative of starting its own development-related section, should develop those sections by recruiting into its staff ranks interested journalists who have the basic professional knowledge in development-related fields. The newspaper should sponsor those who do not have the journalistic training to acquire the journalistic skills.

Fourthly, *The New Vision* should review the terms of employment for professionals in development-related areas because of their special peculiarities. Similar consideration should be given to the rate at which the newspaper pays freelance journalists for stories published in these sections. This will encourage talent and improve on the quality of stories. Fifthly, editors need to interact more with key players in development-related fields to appreciate and keep abreast of current issues in the national development agenda.

The other suggestions are that *The New Vision* should increase its monitoring of the private sector to expose possible wrongdoing, while at the same time balancing its commercial interests; and that the newspaper management should guide its staff to understand the mandate of the newspaper and how they should relate to government and other interest groups. The findings indicate a divergence of views about this, which points to a lack of shared values.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

This study was limited to an examination of whether the state-ownership of *The New Vision* promotes or constrains the newspaper's democratic functions and the developmental function. The findings and the discussion of those findings have, however raised issues that could be the subject of further research which I summarise below.

- *Editor power and gate keeping at The New Vision.* Most of the respondents to the questionnaires, including section editor said they experience some form of intervention by a senior editor. Reporters in particular said that some editors reject whole stories or certain story angles that they fear would antagonise the government.
- *The impact of The New Vision's investigative stories in causing change in government policy and practice.*
- If and when *The New Vision* is finally partially privatized, research should be done into how a semi-private newspaper can play a developmental role.

6.4 Conclusion

This study has explored whether state-ownership *The New Vision* promotes or constrains the newspaper democratic role of the media and the developmental role. The study has established that the newspaper's democratic mandate allows its considerable freedom to monitor and criticise government, to inform the citizenry and to enable actors in the public sphere talk to each other. One provision in the law however, although not frequently invoked, remains a strong deterrent to *The New Vision* against acts that be deemed hostile to the government.

The study has also noted that the state-ownership has not helped *The New Vision* much to play its public service role of promoting development programs because newspaper's legal mandate is silent on that role, and also government officials do not often utilise *The New Vision* to explain and interpret government development programs. Nevertheless, despite this and the competitive environment in the market, the newspaper has developed its own initiatives where it performs this role. This

differs from the observation by Blumler (1992) that market pressures force the public service media to do more of the watchdog role than the developmental role.

APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRES

1. What does the government ownership of *The New Vision* mean to you? (TICK ONE)
- (i) That I must support government all the time
 - (ii) That I support government sometimes
 - (iii) Has no relation to my work

2. Which of the following responsibilities does *The New Vision* have as a state owned newspaper? (TICK)

- (i) Propagation of government policies
- (ii) Criticism of government policies
- (iii) Promoting national development
- (iv) Watching over abuse in government and its agents
- (v) Watching over abuse and excesses by private business
- (vi) Providing information
- (vii) Providing a forum for debate to all shades of opinion
- (viii) Providing a voice to the people to talk to their government

3. How does *The New Vision* those perform roles you have selected?

Poorly Average Well Very Well Excellent

- (i)
- (ii)
- (iii).....
- (iv).....
- (v)
- (vi).....
- (vii)
- (viii)

4. Rate *The New Vision*'s coverage of the following interest groups?

Little Regular A lot Excessive

- (i) Government.....
- (ii) Political Parties.....
- (iii) Pressure Groups.....
- (iv) Women causes.....

- (v) PWDs.....
- (vi) Trade Unions.....
- (vii) Student causes.....
- (viii) Religious Groups.....

5. Describe how the newspaper covers the above groups?

Generally Negative Generally Positively Objectively

- (i)
- (ii)
- (iii)
- (iv)
- (v)
- (vi)
- (vii)
- (viii)

6. How much coverage do you find in *The New Vision* of the following?

Little Enough A lot Excessive

- (i) News.....
- (ii) Analysis.....
- (iii) Commentary.....
- (iv) Entertainment.....
- (v) Development stories.....
- (vi) Advocacy
Stories.....

7. How does government ownership of *The New Vision* affect your work?

- (i) Self-censorship.....
- (ii) Editor censorship.....
- (iii) Criticism by government official.....
- (iv) Punitive action.....
- (v) Story angling.....

8. Working for state-owned *The New Vision*:

Never Rarely Sometimes Always

- (vi) Helps in getting news tips.....

- (vii) Helps in getting comments
 - From govt officials.....
- (viii) Helps access information.....
- (x) Shielding or minimising from govt.....
- (v) Scares off sources.....

9. Comment on *The New Vision*'s coverage of the following development-related areas.

Little Enough A lot Excessive

- (i) Education.....
- (ii) Environment.....
- (iii) Farming.....
- (iv) Women Issues.....
- (v) Science.....
- (vi) Business/Investment.....
- (vii) Health.....

10. Government ownership of *The New Vision*:

Answer with YES, NO, I DON'T KNOW

- (i) Restrains growth of the media industry in Uganda
- (ii) Enables the growth of the media industry
- (iii) Gives it unfair advantage over other media

11. On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is NOT AT ALL and 10 is EXTREMELY indicate how each of the following influences you writing:

- (i) Government interest.....
- (ii) News value.....
- (iii) Editor interest.....
- (iv) National interest.....
- (v) Personal interest.....
- (vi) Social responsibility.....
- (vii) Interest of the sources.....

12. Have you read *The New Vision* Printing and Publishing Corporation Statute, 1987?

(i) YES

(ii) NO

13. How long have you worked with *The New Vision*?

.....years.

14. Age Bracket

20-25.....25-30.....30-35.....35 and above

15. Sex: MALE..... FEMALE.....

THANK YOU

APPENDIX II

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SCHEDULE

NEWSPAPER: *THE NEW VISION*

1. DATE

--	--	--	--	--	--

2. DAY OF THE WEEK:

1. Monday 2. Tuesday 3. Wed. Thurs. 5. Fri. 6. Sat

3. HEADLINE.....

4. PAGE.....

5. GENRE:

1. News 2. Editorial 3. Opinion 4. Investigation 5. Letter

6. STORY PROMINENCE: 1. Lead 2. Other full story 3. Brief

7. CATEGORY OF SOURCE

1. President 2. Minister. 3. MP 4. Civic 5. Opposition 6. Religious
7. Private Individual 8. Business 9. Civil Society 10. Security

8. CONTEXT:

1. Interview 2. Official meeting 3. Press Conference
4. Press Release 5. Actual event 6. Speech

9. THEME:

1. Govt Policy 2. Presidency 3. Democratisation 4. Human Rights
5. Economy 6. Governance 7. Malpractices (corruption etc)

10. TARGET OF MESSAGE

1. President 2. Minister. 3. MP 4. Civic 5. Opposition 6. Religious
7. Private Individual 8. Business 9. Civil Society 10. Security

11. **TYPE OF MESSAGE**

1. Supportive 2. Critical 3. Explanatory

APPENDIX III

Annex 1

Statute 8 *New Vision Printing and Publishing Corporation Statute 1987* *Miscellaneous*

18. In the carrying out of its functions and in particular the function of publishing the Government Newspapers, the Board shall have as its editorial policy,
- a) to establish an effective machinery for wide coverage of events all over the world and Uganda in particular;
 - b) to voice public opinion and criticisms of a given Government policy in a fair and objective manner without becoming an institutional opponent to the Government policy in a fair and objective manner without becoming an institutional opponent to the Government or its interests;
 - c) to uphold the integrity of the Republic of Uganda and promote harmonious relationships among its people, its neighbours and the world at large;
 - d) to propagate news and comment truthfully, honestly and fairly without jeopardising peace and harmony in the country;
 - e) to respect and uphold the sovereignty and unity of Uganda and to come out firmly on its side on matters affecting such sovereignty and unity without affecting the truth which must at all times be the guiding line and governing principle of the papers.
19. Any notice or document required to be served on the Corporation may be served by leaving it at the office of, or by sending it by registered post to the Managing Director.
20. The Board shall within three months after the end of each calendar year, send to the Minister a report on the activities of the Corporation or that year and the Minister shall lay the report before Cabinet.
21. The Minister may, by statutory instrument, make Regulations generally for the better carrying out of the provisions of this statute.

APPENDIX IV

The Constitution of Uganda 1995

Right of Access to Information

41. (1) Every citizen has a right of access to information in the possession of the State or any other organ or agency of the State except where the release of the information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the state or interfere with the right to the privacy of any other person.

(2) Parliament shall make laws prescribing the classes of information referred to in clause (1) of this article and the procedure for obtaining access to that information.

42. Any person appearing before any administrative official or body has a right to be treated justly and fairly and shall have a right to apply to a court of law in respect of any administrative decision taken against him or her.

.....

**APPENDIX V
SCHEDULE**

FIRST SCHEDULE

PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS

1. No journalist shall disseminate information or allegations without establishing its correctness or truth
2. No journalist shall disclose the source of his information and shall only divulge them in the event of an overriding consideration of public interest and within the framework of the law of Uganda.
3. No journalist shall solicit or accept bribes in an attempt to publish or suppress the publication of a story.

APPENDIX VI

THE NEW VISION POLICY ON COLUMNS

Revised 20/12/2000

- 1) Regular columns should preferably be written NIJU members, or those of a registrable profession or persons with particular expertise or interest.
- 2) All columnists should make every effort to thoroughly research their articles. Proper research typically consists of discussing and cross checking information with recognised experts in a particular field. Points should be well illustrated and expounded.
- 3) *The New Vision* staff should be encouraged to write columns in *The New Vision* and its sister papers.
- 4) All columns should be balanced. A columnist must state correctly someone's views or actions before criticising them.
- 5) All columns in *The New Vision* should remain in line with the statutory editorial policy and *The New Vision* Editorial Code of practice.
- 6) Occasional columns can be published on all subjects from different view points
- 7) Staff should be allowed to contribute to other non-competing media outlets so long as their work for *The New Vision* is not affected; so long as their contribution is in harmony with *The New Vision*'s stated editorial policy; and so long as their job title at *The New Vision* is clearly stated with their by-line or introduction.

APPENDIX VII

THE NEW VISION'S ELECTION SELECTION CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES

1. Accuracy

Reporters will strive to accurate, objective and fair in their reporting. Detailed notes must be taken at every event. Where possible, presidential candidates should be tape-recorded.

2. Message

The subject's essential message must be reported adequately. In case there are other developments, they can be either reported in a separate story or incorporated in the main story, but not at the expense of the essential message.

3. Numbers

Avoid mentioning the number of people at a rally, because numbers are difficult to estimate and are often contentious. But a description of the extent of the crowd can be made, e.g., "a large, excited crowd", or "the rally held a fully packed football field," or "the meeting in a half-filled classroom".

4. Speakers

Speakers other than the main candidate should be reported, even if only in brief.

5. False information

The News Desk will stop using the services of any journalist who falsifies stories.

6. Non-attendance

Reporters should make it clear if they did not attend an event when they are writing story. They should indicate that they are quoting persons who were present.

7. Talk shows

Radio and television talk shows should be recorded and the tape filed with the News Desk.

8. Political commentary

If a writer intends to criticise in a opinion column what an individual has said or stands for, that individual's words or position must first be stated clearly before the criticism or discussion commences.

APPENDIX VIII

Category of Source

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	President	14	4.2
	Minister	60	17.9
	MP or MPs	45	13.4
	Civil Leader(s)	17	5.1
	Opposition Politician	11	3.3
	Religious Leader	18	5.4
	Private Individual(s)	56	16.7
	Business Person	6	1.8
	Civil Society Member	50	14.9
	Security Official	32	9.5
	Other Govt Officer	12	3.6
	Newspaper's Own Staff	14	4.2
	Total	335	99.7
	Missing	System	1
Total		336	100.0

APPENDIX IX

Focus of Message

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	President	29	8.6
	Minister	46	13.7
	MP(s)	35	10.4
	Civic Leadership	14	4.2
	Opposition Politician	39	11.6
	Religious Leader	14	4.2
	Private Individuals	27	8.0
	Business Person or Group	20	6.0
	Civil Society Member	32	9.5
	Security Personnel	30	8.9
	General Public	50	14.9
	Total	336	100.0

APPENDIX X

Category of Source*Prominence of Story on Page Crosstabulation

	Prominence of Story on Page			Total
	Lead	Other full story	Brief	
President	35.7%	64.3%	10.0%	100.0%
Minister	35.0%	55.0%	24.4%	100.0%
MP or MPs	26.7%	48.9%	23.5%	100.0%
Civil Leader(s)	29.4%	47.1%	18.2%	100.0%
Opposition Politician	27.3%	54.5%	16.7%	100.0%
Religious Leader	44.4%	38.9%	5.4%	100.0%
Private Individual(s)	53.6%	41.1%		100.0%
Business Person	33.3%	66.7%	14.0%	100.0%
Civil Society Member	28.0%	58.0%	9.4%	100.0%
Security Official	21.9%	68.8%		100.0%
Other Govt Officer	16.7%	83.3%		100.0%
Newspaper's Own Staff	14.3%	85.7%		100.0%
Total	33.1%	55.2%	11.6%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX XI

Focus of Message*Prominence of Story on Page Crosstabulation

	Prominence of Story on Page			Total
	Lead	Other full story	Brief	
President	44.8%	48.3%	6.9%	100.0%
Minister	34.8%	47.8%	17.4%	100.0%
MP(s)	28.6%	65.7%	5.7%	100.0%
Civic Leadership	28.6%	50.0%	21.4%	100.0%
Opposition Politician	35.9%	46.2%	17.9%	100.0%
Religious Leader	57.1%	42.9%		100.0%
Private Individuals	37.0%	51.9%	11.1%	100.0%
Business Person or	25.0%	65.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Civil Society Member	28.1%	62.5%	9.4%	100.0%
Security Personnel	33.3%	46.7%	20.0%	100.0%
General Public	24.0%	70.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Total	33.0%	55.4%	11.6%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX XII

Genre of story*Tone of Message Crosstabulation

			Type of Message			Total
			Supportive	Critical	Explanatory	
Type of story	News	Count	56	169		
		% within Type of Story	20.9%	63.1%		
		% within Type of Message	82.4%	78.2%		
		% of Total	17.7%	50.3%		
Editorial	Count	Count	6	11		
		% within Type of Story	33.3%	61.1%		
		% within Type of Message	8.8%	5.1%		
		% of Total	1.8%	3.3%		
Opinion	Count	Count	2	15		
		% within Type of Story	9.5%	71.4%		
		% within Type of Message	2.9%	6.9%		
		% of Total	.6%	4.5%		
Investigation	Count	Count		2		
		% within Type of Story		66.7%		
		% within Type of Message		.9%		
		% of Total		.6%		
Letter	Count	Count	4	19		
		% within Type of Story	15.4%	73.1%		
		% within Type of Message	5.9%	8.8%		
		% of Total	1.2%	5.7%		
Total	Count	Count	68	216		
		% within Type of Story	20.2%	64.3%		
		% within Type of Message	100.0%	100.0%		
		% of Total	20.2%	64.3%		

APPENDIX XII (B)

Focus of Message*Tone of Message Crosstabulation

	Tone of Message			Total
	Supportive	Critical	Explanatory	
President	6.9%	86.2%	6.9%	100.0%
Minister	19.6%	80.4%		100.0%
MP(s)	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	100.0%
Civic Leadership	7.1%	78.6%	14.3%	100.0%
Opposition Politician	10.3%	79.5%	10.3%	100.0%
Religious Leader	21.4%	64.3%	14.3%	100.0%
Private Individuals	14.8%	74.1%	11.1%	100.0%
Business Person or	20.0%	80.0%		100.0%
Civil Society Member	28.1%	46.9%	25.0%	100.0%
Security Personnel	36.7%	56.7%	6.7%	100.0%
General Public	32.0%	30.0%	38.0%	100.0%
Total	20.2%	64.3%	15.5%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX XIII

Category of Source*Focus of Message Crosstabulation

	Focus of Message								
	President	Minister	MP(s)	Civic Leadership	Opposition Politician	Religious Leader	Business Person or Group	Civil Society Member	Security Personnel
President	14.3%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	14.3%		7.1%	14.3%	7.1%
Minister	1.7%	3.3%	13.3%	1.7%	13.3%	3.3%	5.0%	20.0%	5.0%
MP or MP(s)	20.0%	33.3%	13.3%	2.2	6.7%		6.7%	6.7%	2.2%
Civil leader(s)	5.9%	11.8%	11.8%	5.9%	11.8%		23.5%	5.9%	
Opposition politician	36.4%	9.1%	9.1%						27.3%
Religious leader	11.1%	5.6%			16.7%	38.9%		5.6%	5.6%
Private Individual(s)	8.9%	23.2%	10.7%	1.8%	10.7%	5.4%	3.6%	1.8%	8.9%
Business Person			16.7%	16.7%			33.3%		
Civil Society member	6.0%	14.0%	2.0%	10.0%	8.0%	2.0%	6.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Security official	3.1%		9.4%		25.0%		6.3%	3.1%	34.4%
Other government officer		16.7%	25.0%		16.7%	8.3%		16.7%	
Newspaper's own staff	7.1%	14.3%	21.4%	14.3%	7.1%			28.6%	
Total	8.7%	13.7%	10.4%	3.9%	11.6%	4.2%	6.0%	9.6%	9.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX XIV

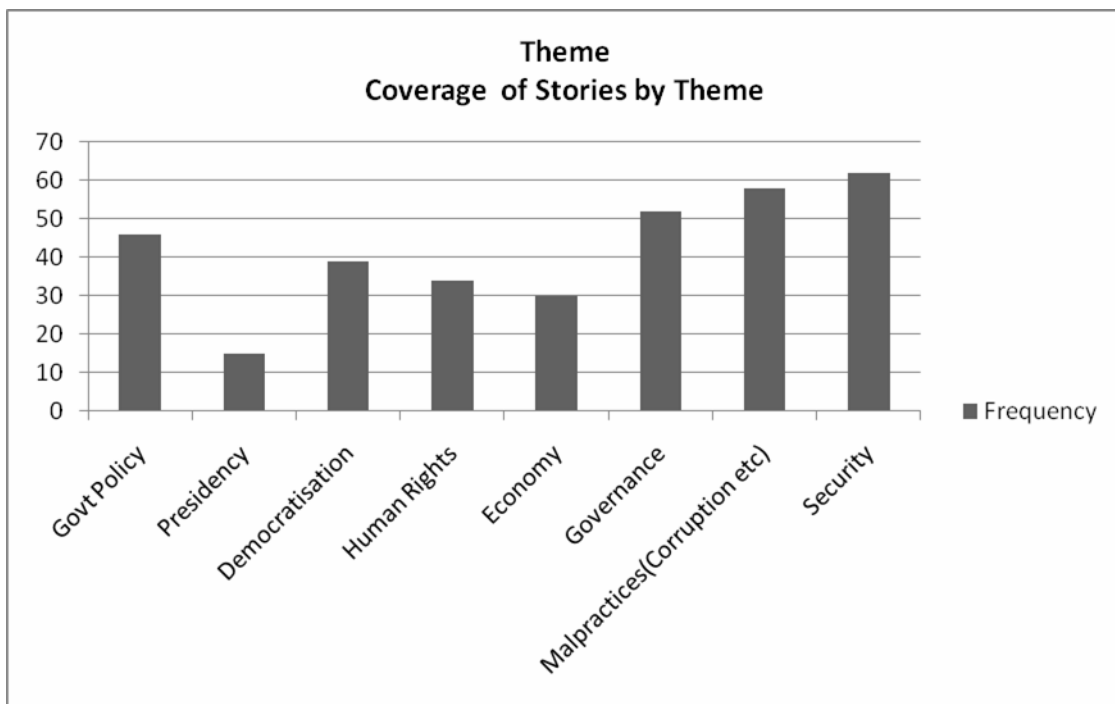
Category of Source*Theme Crosstabulation

	Theme								
	Govt Policy	Presidency	Democratisation	Human Rights	Economy	Governance	Malpractices (Corruption etc)	Security	Total
President	7.1%		7.1%	7.1%	14.3%	35.7%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
Minister	30.0%	5.0%	10.0%	11.7%	8.3%	11.7%	3.3%	20.0%	100.0%
MP or MPs	17.8%	8.9%	20.0%	4.4%	6.7%	17.8%	11.1%	13.3%	100.0%
Civil Leader(s)	23.5%			5.9%	11.8%	23.5%	23.5%	11.8%	100.0%
Opposition Politician	9.1%	9.1%	54.5%			18.2%		9.1%	100.0%
Religious Leader			11.1%	5.6%		5.6%	50.0%	27.8%	100.0%
Private Individual(s)	19.6%	3.6%	3.6%	16.1%	8.9%	19.6%	17.9%	10.7%	100.0%
Business Person					66.7%	16.7%	16.7%		100.0%
Civil Society Member	4.0%	6.0%	16.0%	14.0%	8.0%	14.0%	26.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Security Official			3.1%	12.5%		3.1%	18.8%	62.5%	100.0%
Other Govt Officer		8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	8.3%	25.0%	25.0%		100.0%
Newspaper's Own Staff	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	26.6%	7.1%	21.4%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	13.7%	4.5%	11.6%	10.1%	9.0%	15.2%	17.3%	18.5%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX XV

Theme

	Frequency	Percent
Govt Policy	46	13.7
Presidency	15	4.5
Democratisation	39	11.6
Human Rights	34	10.1
Economy	30	8.9
Governance	52	15.5
Malpractices(Corruption etc)	58	17.3
Security	62	18.5
Total	336	100.0



APPENDIX XVI

The percentage of journalists who consider the following as *The New Vision's* social roles.

Role	Count of 38	Percentage
Propagation of Government Policies	29	76.3
Promoting National Development	30	78.9
Watching over government and its agencies	27	71.1
Watching over excesses and abuse by private business	19	50
Providing information	29	76.3
Providing a forum for debate to all shades of opinion	28	73.7
Enabling people to talk to their government	20	52.6
Criticism of government policies and actions	15	39.5

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