The journalistic aim in Ghana
– A qualitative study of Ghanaian journalists’ desire to be the voice of the voiceless and how media owners affect the journalistic work

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The journalistic aim in Ghana

Abstract
The bachelor thesis ‘The journalistic aim in Ghana” is a study of what aims Ghanaian journalists have with their work. Furthermore it explores if the professional identity of journalists differ depending on if they work for state or privately owned newspapers. The bachelor thesis also looks at how Ghanaian journalists use ethics in their work and how media laws have affected journalism in Ghana. In total 20 interviews have been made of which 10 are presented.

The result of the bachelor thesis shows that the journalists interviewed all expressed an urge to help develop the country of Ghana and to speak for the people who are marginalized in the country. This study shows that the aims of the journalists are the same, no matter whom they work for and that the workplace is chosen for other reasons such as job security. The journalist say media laws did not affect them, but they were careful in their reporting.

The study also reveals that the state media sometimes becomes the mouthpiece of the government and that journalists working for privately owned newspapers have greater liberties to choose what to write about.

Keywords: Journalism, Ghana, development, profession, ethics, state owned, privately owned.
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Introduction

Ghana is a country with 23.9 million habitants. The country became independent in 1959 and afterwards there have been both military and democratic rule. During different governments there have been changing laws for the media and it’s owners. Today the press is free and there are both state- and privately owned newspapers. But what is the media landscape like in a country where private press has been forbidden? How is it today? How have the journalists experienced the laws controlling them? What are the aims for journalists? Does it matter whom you work for? This intrigued me and led to me writing this bachelor thesis.

After research, I did not find the answers to my questions. So I wanted to investigate in what the journalistic aim was for journalists working in Ghana. I believe it is important to get knowledge about different countries media landscape, to get a better understanding of other countries.

With this bachelor thesis I hope to shed some light on how a few journalists working in Accra experience their work and their role in Ghanaian society. It must be said that the results of this bachelor thesis cannot be used to draw any general conclusions about the overall journalistic aims in Ghana.

Western media write about countries which are bigger, richer and whom they trade with. Processes and developing countries are rarely mentioned. It is too complicated. Journalists do not have time to explain and it does not interest the audience1. I have always been interested in Africa as a continent. The continent has been exposed to famine, colonization, slavery and corruption among other things. Africa consists of 55 nations. The news we hear is from North-, South- or East Africa, but almost never from West Africa. It is as though no news occur in West Africa.

Therefore I wanted to focus my research on West Africa. But I could not study the whole of West Africa. So I narrowed down the countries by focusing on the countries that had both privately- and state owned newspapers. These countries were Nigeria, Liberia, Gambia and Ghana. In Nigeria the “situation is difficult”2 and Liberia was not safe when the field study was conducted. Gambia’s press is not free. Therefore I chose to go to Ghana and investigate in how the Ghanaian journalists see their journalistic mission.

1 Dennis McQuail, Mass communication theory, SAGE publications Ltd, 2005, page 263

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Aim and purpose
In Ghana there are both state- and private owned newspapers. The objective of this essay is to evaluate the way in which journalists from Ghana perceive their role in this profession. Furthermore the aim of this bachelor thesis is to see if the journalists’ views differ depending on whom they work for.

Research questions:
• What are the Ghanaian journalists aims with their work?
• Does the journalists view on their professional identity differ depending on if they work for a private or government owned newspaper?
• What are the ethics of the profession and how do Ghanaian journalists use them in their work?

The purpose of this essay is to see how journalists in a developing country see their own role. Journalist are often said to be the forth estate. In most western democracies freedom of both speech and the press are constitutionally guaranteed. Therefore most media outlets believe their job is to report on matters of the state. But in a country that is developing and the press just recently have started to blossom. Why do people become journalists?
My goal is to see how Ghanaian journalists view their professional role. With that I mean why they became journalists, why they believe their job is important and what they hope to achieve.
I also want to study if the journalists have different views on their roles in Ghanaian society, depending on whom they work for.

Background
The spread of newspapers is higher in Ghana than in other countries in Africa. There are two daily newspapers that are higher in circulation than others: state owned Daily Graphic and the Ghanaian Times. There are also many private owned newspapers.

Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) was founded in 1935. It broadcasts radio in two national stations and TV in one (since 1965). In 1995 both radio and TV-stations were allowed to be privatized. In Ghana there are 710 radio- and 118 TV-receivers per
In Ghana there are several private universities where you can study journalism. Typically students study both journalism and communication. The only public owned journalism institution in Ghana is the Ghana institute of journalism. They offer both a diploma and a degree in communication studies. The students can specialize in public relations or journalism. Each year there are 250 students who are in attendance. Of these attending students only one third choose to specialize in journalism. The reason that two thirds of attending students choose to specialize in communications is due to more and better paying jobs.

In Ghana there is the National Media Commission, which has guidelines for how journalism in Ghana should be produced and especially concerning how political journalism should be conducted. For example the National Media Commission’s guidelines states:

"Peace is the bedrock of progress and development. Political journalism must therefore aim at promoting peace. This demands active and purposive search for ideas that promote peace and national cohesion."

So, as a Ghanaian journalist one must be a part of the news flow, but there is also a demand to unite the nation. These rules might lead to self-censorship. Can one write about a political scandal, or is that contra productive for national cohesion?

The National Media Commission’s mission is to “promote free, independent and responsible media so as to sustain democracy and national development”. The National Media Commission also ensures that the state-owned media is independent of governmental control.

Ghana also maintains the organization Ghana Journalists Association (GJA).

"The GJA seeks to influence positively the growth of the media by expanding the frontiers of press freedom and enhancing the integrity of professional journalism in Ghana."

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4 Information from Ghana institute of journalism
6 Leaflet, National media commissions profile, 2001
7 Ghana anti-corruption coalition, http://www.ghana-anticorruption.org/gja, 2010 May 10, 11:30
800 journalists in Ghana are members of the Ghana journalist association. That is 90 percent of the journalists working in Ghana.

Ghana has been ranked first in Africa 2009 and 27th in the world, as a country where press freedom is upheld, by the organization Reporters without boarders. According to Reporters without boarders Ghana is a model democracy in Africa.

**Media landscape in Ghana**

Most Ghanaian people listen to the radio, not everyone can afford the newspapers, which cost around one Ghana Cedi (about 6 Swedish crowns). Ghana has 200 regularly published newspapers.

There are two state-owned newspapers: The Ghanaian Times and The Daily Graphic. The Ghanaian Times slogan is “Ghana’s most authoritative newspaper”. The Daily Graphic is Ghana’s biggest selling newspaper since 1950 and is published six times a week.

One of the bigger private-owned newspapers is The Chronicle, published six times a week by General Portfolio ltd. The slogan of the newspaper is “The true independent”. Public Agenda is also a private-owned newspaper, published three times per week. Its publisher is PA Publications and its aim is to “promote democratic participation, articulate social justice principles and defend the poor”.

**Previous research**

Development journalism is not only media theory, but also a way of producing news. According to Xu Xiaoge there are five key components to focus on when producing development journalism.

- To report the difference between what has been planned to do and what is actually being done.
- To focus on the long-term developing processes rather than day-to-day news.
- To be independent from government and to provide constructive criticism of government.
- To shift “journalistic focus to news of economic and social development” while “working constructively with the government”.

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- To empower the ordinary people to improve their own lives and communities.

In the 1980’s when development journalism was increasing, the independent media was asked to tone down its watchdog role against the privileged. In the 1990’s the press became free in large parts, and the viewpoint that critical journalists should be contained lessened\textsuperscript{10}.

After independence of many African countries, most journalists recycled news information produced by the government. According to Nyamnjoh journalists were obliged to promote positive images of the government and its ideas, rather than writing the truth or matters of interest to the public\textsuperscript{11}.

There was no room for criticism, and the journalists were unable to question the information given to them. Governments did not approve of news that was unconfirmed. Unconfirmed news included all information that was not given by the government. The concept of development journalism was used to build the image of a good government, rather than to actually help develop the country\textsuperscript{12}.

When privatized press increased in West Africa, it was often blamed to be “light, frivolous, and full of shortcomings, and of using invective to gain cheap publicity”\textsuperscript{13}.

The governments then branded critical media as opposition, rather than addressing the issues that were raised.

Until the 1990’s state owned media was often used as promoters of the governments. There was no or little room for criticism. It was more important to build the country and project a positive image of the state\textsuperscript{14}. Private press have in bigger scale been dragged to court, they have shown tendencies to be more critical towards government and officials.

In Ghana, there are still laws regulating the media. But one of the harsher laws, the criminal libel law, was taken away in 2001. According to this law you could be imprisoned for defamation.

For example the editors of the Ghanaian Chronicle were convicted to $18,000 for publishing an article about the Minister of roads. The article was considered to be

\textsuperscript{10} Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, \textit{Africa’s media, Democracy and the Politics of Belonging}, Zed books ltd., 2005, Page 43
\textsuperscript{11} Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 48
\textsuperscript{12} Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 49
\textsuperscript{13} Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 58
\textsuperscript{14} Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 48
offensive and they were convicted for defamation. The former president of Ghana, John Kufuor removed this law when he started his presidency in 2001.

Today Ghana is ranked as the first country in Africa to have a free press. But there are still laws to prevent the press from being too critical in their reporting. One law is the law of defamation. If convicted, you have to pay a fine, but you cannot be imprisoned.

In Ghana there are today many private-owned newspapers with different owners. But the owners of the paper have other publications in other countries around the world. Francis B Nyamnjoh refers to Murdoch, who argues that this leads to an ‘emerge of a small number of monopoly concerns which command a disproportionate share’ of the global market. This leads to different cultural values that might be lost. The development journalism that has grown strong in Africa must compete and negotiate with the economic goals from the owners.15

In the 1990’s the most common criticism against the private press was that it published news, after hearing only one side of the story.16 The government system in most African countries makes it difficult for both those who operate within the government and for the private press to give and retrieve information. “The government proclaims democracy and freedom of information but does not hesitate to sanction even a cabinet minister who makes an uncleared statement on a burning issue.”17 It is hard for the private press to retrieve information and they must therefore sometimes rely rather on commentary that on actual news. The journalists in government owned media institutions think of themselves as more part of the central administration, rather than as a separate institution. They are paid by the state and therefore expected to “pay allegiance to the government by respecting the canons of the civil service rather than those of journalism.”18 This means the government can impose certain restrictions in the job of the state-working journalists, which makes the practice of the job harder, due to administrative and political barriers. According to Francis B Nyamnjoh most legal frameworks in Africa reveal that most lawmakers see journalists as potential troublemakers who must be controlled.19 So called “bad” journalism is blamed on the lack of proper education or training for most

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15 Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 50
16 Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 60
17 Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 66
18 Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 69
19 Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 70
According to Francis B Nyamnjoh journalists in the private press usually have little or no journalistic training. In the government owned press the journalists have more education.

Francis B Nyamnjoh stresses the fact that the journalism training must focus on media ethics and train journalists to be the conscience of the nation in order for development journalism to serve its function.

“Development journalism, which most African states have endorsed, ‘needs strong, courageous, socially engaged people willing to make sacrifices and able to stand conflicts, because development journalism is irreconcilable with servile government-say-so journalism’ (Kunczik 1988: 233)”

The Ghanaian newspapers are expected to help develop the country, and not shed light on things, which might have the opposite effect. People in Ghana discuss the fragileness of the democracy, saying it might burst. And therefore the media might not use the agenda setting the same way they would if it was more stable. Since it is less than 20 years since Ghana started with regular elections maybe the agenda setting and watchdog roles will become more regular once the democracy feels more stable.

**Theory**

The theory I have chosen to use is the theory of development journalism. Both the National Media Commission and the Ghana journalist association have in their guidelines that the prime goal for journalism in Ghana is to help develop the country. The Ghanaian tradition is to develop the country with help from the media. By using this theory, one can see if the journalistic aims have been influenced by the media traditions.

Economic, social, cultural and political environments have influenced the practice of development journalism. The theory of development journalism is being used foremost in developing and poor nations. Usually in developing countries, the governments argue about the importance of development journalism. Some of the approaches within development journalism help governments maintain their power.

Ghana is one example where the government used journalists to maintain control. Other examples are Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaire and Kenya.

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20 Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 94
21 Nyamnjoh, B. Francis, 2005, Page 98
22 Xiaoge, Xu, 2008, page 359
Development journalism was inspired by modernization and communication development theories, as well as, dependency theory. Development journalism tends to focus on the ordinary people within a society, rather than the elite. The term ordinary people refer to children, women, elderly, less fortunate and farmers. When the concept of development journalism was introduced in the late 1970’s, there were discussions on what the definition should involve. The focus from the beginning was that journalists should write so they could help societies to better understand development processes, cover political and socio-economic processes so that people could be a part of and influence such processes\textsuperscript{23}.

In developing countries the governments instead believed the concept of development journalism should focus on the prevailing political cultures in the country\textsuperscript{24}.

Angela Romano has summarized the theory of development journalism into five categories:

- **Journalists as nation builders**
  This approach started at the end of World War 2. The scholars of this approach believed one could help economic growth by making societies modern\textsuperscript{25}. Media would help doing this, by writing in a way so that people could vision themselves in other settings and fulfill their own potential\textsuperscript{26}. Media was at this time also used to create unity and national cohesion in developing countries. Problems with this approach is that the assumption is that the citizens of developing countries are poorly educated and need help to learn or find alternatives to their existing socio-economic systems.

- **Journalists as government partners**
  This approach to development journalism is similar to the approach ‘journalists as nation builders’. The difference is, that the approach ‘journalists as government partners’ believe that the press freedom should be restricted to help develop the nation. Basically, the press had press freedom with

\textsuperscript{23} Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael *Journalism and democracy in Asia*, Routledge, UK, 2005, Page 1
\textsuperscript{24} Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 2
\textsuperscript{25} Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 2
\textsuperscript{26} Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 3
responsibility. If media abused its rights, the government stepped in. This could also lead to restrictions in freedom of speech to keep harmony in society. Journalists could find flaws in government, as long as the overall goal was supportive of the government. If the government was questioned this could lead to chaos. This approach to development journalism has been criticized. Critics claim that this model restricts journalists from being democratic in their work. Furthermore, critics stated that journalists would be viewed as propaganda tools for government if running the governments errands too much.

- **Journalists as agents of empowerment.**
  
  This approach involves the people of the nation to organize action to change the inequities in society. This is done with help of the media, who helps build self-reliance amongst the people within society.

  This approach also has a top-down way of writing, but involves the people much more. And gives room for people to address issues and give information to the elite or “top”. The theory of ‘journalism as agents of empowerment’ focuses on giving people information about fellow citizens, their needs, interests and activities. Furthermore, it includes everyone to participate in problem solving, rather than just reading development news.

  This approach has been compared to peace journalism because it focuses on the development of the collective rather than the individual.

- **Journalists as watchdogs**
  
  In this approach, journalists have the role of warning early on if the government does something wrong. They also have the role of raising concerns that the society has with the government.

  This approach support investigative journalism, and believe the way for correct measures being taken if the government does something wrong, is if the media first draws attention to it.

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27 Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 5
28 Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 5
29 Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 5
30 Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 7
31 Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 7
32 Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 8
• **Journalists as the guardians of transparency.**

This approach is very similar to the approach ‘journalists as watchdogs’. It is up to the journalists to bring out what is going on in the government, especially problems and flaws in the system. This so that governments could act responsibly. This approach needs for governments to openly communicate with society. According to this approach restrictions in freedom of speech and press freedom undermine the development of economy\(^3\)

This model differs from the watchdog theory because this approach needs for society to speak up and be a part of the decisions being made, and they do so through media. Media become the voice of the voiceless and works as a channel between government and society.

**Method and material**

All the interviews were conducted in Accra, Ghana between April 27 and May 10, 2010. I was in Accra between April 22 and May 11, 2010. I had never been to Ghana before, so I used the first days to get accustomed to the country and the culture.

To be able to do this bachelor thesis I was dependent on the journalists’ willingness to be a part of this study. From Sweden I contacted the largest state owned and privately owned newspapers. I spoke to the editors. Both of them gave me formal access\(^34\) to their newspapers. When in Ghana I had to rely on that the journalists gave me informal access by allowing me to interview them.

I chose to do qualitative interviews with the journalists. A qualitative interview has many advantages, and it suited this bachelor thesis the best. With qualitative interviews there is room for the unknown and unexpected. I was interested in different journalists’ views and opinions. And with a standardized question guide, there was room for different answers\(^35\). The questions were formulated to give open answers. When using this method it is also easier to compare the different interviews with each

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\(^3\) Romano, Angela, edited by Romano, Angela and Bromley, Michael, 2005, Page 13


\(^35\) Ola Håkansson, translation Lars G Larsson, 2004, Page 103
other. I would have been able to do participant observations in a newsroom. However, then I would not have been able to compare many different newspapers.  

I used semi-structured interviews when conducting the interviews. It is structured so that all themes are decided in advance, as well as the main questions; however it leaves room to follow up. Both to show that I, the interviewer understand but also to clarify answers when necessary. When it comes to the interviews I have had a questionnaire, different for editors and journalists. All have been asked the same questions and where clarification or follow-up questions have been needed it has been used. The follow-ups and clarifications have differed from each interview. Each interview has been recorded and all parts with interest to this essay have been transcripted.

I chose to work with mostly open questions. I did not want to decide on the interviews direction with my questions. Rather I wanted the interviewee to feel free and elaborate in the direction he or she wanted, within the answer of each question. With open questions I gave a larger space for the interviewees to answer. There can be a problem with open questions when there is reason to believe that the interviewees do not want to answer questions. In this case, the journalists did not have such reason and open questions were not a problem.

All journalists interviewed work in newspapers that are written in English, and all interviews are conducted in English. This essay is written in English so that all quotes are in its original form.

The journalists that have been interviewed were not chosen statistically. The journalists interviewed where the ones which had time when I was at the newspapers offices. I have performed a total of 20 interviews and had a spread between genders and newspapers to try to make up for the problems arising with not choosing the interviewees myself. Another problem is that the interviews were conducted in the newspaper offices. Some of the interviews were conducted in environments where

37 Ola Håkansson, translation Lars G Larsson, 2004, Page 103
there were other people around. This may have resulted in that the journalists interviewed did not open up fully and tell me everything. To be able to get more in-depth results I would have had to stay at each newspaper for a longer period of time to gain the journalists trust, even though one then may have the problem of “going native”\textsuperscript{40}. Furthermore, since the editors of the newspapers gave me formal access and they knew which journalists I interviewed, this could also have led to journalists holding back information from me in the interviews.

I am aware of the fact that this method may not give the same validity as interviews with randomly picked journalists. I have tried to give the interviews a higher validity by instead spreading the newspapers the journalists work on, and thereby it is only the journalists from the same paper who know each other.

To get a higher validity of my results, it would have been preferable to not only interview the journalists, but also to study them in their work\textsuperscript{41}. Due to a lack of time this was not possible. If I had also studied them, the risk of getting “official answers” would be smaller.

The interviewees’ names are written in this bachelor thesis. This has both pros and cons. It gives a higher validity to write their names and it also increases the credibility. But on the other hand, by naming the journalists they might hold back on their answers. However, I believe the pros outweigh the negative that might have rose since the interviews were conducted in environments where the colleagues could hear answers. If the interviewees chose to hold back some information, they would have done so even if being anonymous in this bachelor thesis. All the interviewees have agreed to being named in this bachelor thesis and to being recorded.

For this bachelor thesis I have chosen to only use 10 of my interviews. The largest reason was that I wanted the same amount of journalists from state and private press. There are more private owned media and therefore I have chosen to remove some of the interviews I did with journalists working on private owned newspapers. I decided to remove interviews with journalists from the same newspapers. Three of the interviewees had only been in the profession for between one to three months and I

\textsuperscript{41} Ola Håkansson, translation Lars G Larsson, 2004, Page 123
felt that their answers were more of “text-book answers”, rather than what they actually believed or felt. One interviewee I had reason to believe he did not want to answer my questions, but did so rather because his editor told him to. I also chose to only present the interviews with the editors from the largest state- and privately owned newspapers.

The results in this bachelor thesis cannot represent the views of Ghanaian journalist as a whole, but rather shed light on how some journalists may perceive their role in Ghanaian society.

I have chosen to divide my results into two main categories: Editors and Journalists. The editors were asked more overall questions about the newspapers aim, ethics and mission. I therefore present those results first for the reader to better comprehend the answers from the journalists. I have chosen to divide my interviews with the journalists into four different themes: background, ethics, journalistic mission and thoughts about media owners. See attachment one for the question sheet.

**Interviews**

**Editors**

*State owned newspaper*

**Emmanuel Amoako** is the deputy editor in charge of production at the Daily Graphic. He has been a journalist for 38 years. He has a diploma in journalism from the Ghana institute of journalism and is a member of the Ghana journalist association.

**Ethics**

Emmanuel says the Daily Graphic follows the Ghana Journalist association’s guidelines, but believe they are the same or similar to the National Media Commission’s guidelines. However, sometimes there are stories he would like to publish that the National Media Commission is against. Emmanuel gives the example of road accidents. The paper would want to write about it to inform people to be careful when driving.

“But the media commissions don’t like that. They are firm on it. They don’t want us to put dead bodies on our front page and blablabla. And all that. But any time we do
that people buy the paper. So we always fight amongst ourselves when it comes to that. Because the media commission says no, and we want make a little money.“

Furthermore the newspaper has its own set of guidelines. For example journalists working for the Daily Graphic are not allowed to be on radio or write for other newspapers. Emmanuel does not think that they limit their journalists but just want them to use the Daily Graphic as their arena of expressing their views.

Emmanuel says the Criminal libel law affected the work of journalists a lot, even though no journalists from the Daily Graphic were charged under the law.

“When it was in the books, it was big headed. For anything, anything could be charged under that law. You didn’t have the freedom at all to write anything that you wanted.”

Today he says journalists on the other hand abuse the fact that they will not go to prison.

“All you do is apologize and the end of matter. And where as you go to the media commission and the matter is settled. So there is a good side and a bad side. But I think that on the scale, I think it is better that it is off than on.”

Emmanuel says journalists must always be careful not to defame someone. He says a journalist must have a balanced story, check and cross check facts. Otherwise you risk getting into trouble. He always makes sure the articles in the Daily Graphic are balanced.

Privately owned newspaper

Emmanuel Akli is the acting editor of the Chronicle. Before becoming acting editor he was a regional correspondent in the western region in Ghana. He has worked as a journalist for 15 years. He studied journalism at the Institute of business, management and journalism in Kumasi.

Ethics

Emmanuel thinks it is good that the criminal libel law has been repelled since it criminalized speech. But he says the law did not affect the Chronicle, even though some of the journalists were arrested and went to trial.

“Even though we were careful. But did not detel us. We went ahead with whatever that wanted to do or we wanted to write.”
Emmanuel says that the Criminal libel law mostly affected the privately media and that no journalists working in the state media were charged under the criminal libel law. He believes the law was removed thanks to journalists fighting against it. But he thinks the law of defamation is good.

“But if somebody decides to take the civil aspect of it by dragging you to court, or filing defamation suit against you in court that he believes, he or she believes is not the truth. I think the person is entitled to do that and I personally don’t have anything wrong with that.”

Emmanuel says the journalists representing the Chronicle always must double check stories and speak to both sides.

“If you contact and they are denying it and we don’t have the evidence you have to throw the story away. But if you contact the person and he denies it, but you still think that we have the evidence we go ahead. Because if they file suit against us we can defend it.”

Emmanuel says the Chronicle try to follow the National Media Commissions’ guidelines, but that they have had to write rejoinders because people have felt dissatisfied with publications.

“We are all following the guidelines, but we are all human beings and make mistakes. But we do our best. You know, to follow what the media commission are saying.”

**Mission**

*State owned newspaper*

The aim of the Daily Graphic is to inform, educate and entertain the public.

Emmanuel Amoako believes it is important that journalists are professional and thorough. He thinks it is wrong that the news reporting in the country is too political and believes too many newspapers and reporters align themselves with a political party.

“I think the journalist role is to tell the public what is happening, the politicians who tell as a pack of lies. The journalist has to analyze the politician’s speech and tell the public what is the truth.”

He believes journalists must check on politicians and get the news to the reader, without refining the story.
“Anytime I put pen on paper, I ask myself, is it the truth? And that is my greatest concern, to get out the truth, and not facts, my own views or something. That is my prime concern as a person.”

The Daily Graphic is a state owned newspaper.

“We are still fully owned by the government. /--/ That’s where we are fixed. The owner of the paper, of the company tells you: hey, do this. You are sometimes obliged to listen. You can’t say no. Because he owns the content.”

Emmanuel says it does not happen often, but that it does happen that the government wants something to be highlighted or put on the front page.

“But, sometimes they will subtly want certain things done to portray what they are doing. You know, a minister, a government of president will say, will call, not me, the deputy editor, they will say to him: please give us a bit of highlight on this story. It may not sell our paper, we’ll be angry, but it can’t do anything about it.“

Emmanuel says that the government does not pay for the newspaper. The Daily Graphic directs its own money through sales and advertising. That is also one reason that makes it difficult when the government wants something. Since usually news about the government doesn’t sell as well as an accident.

Privately owned newspaper

Emmanuel Akli says the Chronicle’s mission is to educate, entertain and inform people, and also to enrich the democracy of Ghana. He says Ghana’s democracy is rated very high. And he believes the media has contributed to that and he is very proud of it.

He says the Chronicle is not against the government, but they want to shed light on what is wrong.

“We just want, just society. You see, we are trying to bring them, count the mistakes the government is committing. Trying to draw attention to it and for them to do something about it. That does not mean we are against you.“

The Chronicle expects their journalists to go beyond the traditional news wheel. So that if the journalist goes to a government program, they should not just read the leaflet but also investigate on what, for example, a new policy will have for effect and why.

Emmanuel says the Chronicle is fair to all political parties.
“The stories that you are carrying have been properly investigated and you have listened to both sides and that you come out with a fair report, for the public to make their own judgment. That’s what we do.”

Emmanuel says that since there has been a shift in government and privately owned media also can be a part of the society, things have changed.

“But now, people, almost everybody in Ghana they all know their rights. If the government does wrong, they know it. Because they are reading it in newspapers, they listen to the radio stations. So more or less we have contributed to the current state of Ghana and we are proud of that.”

Emmanuel says he or the newspaper has never had a problem practicing journalism in Ghana, even though they are a privately owned newspaper.

Emmanuel says there has been a large change in the media of Ghana. He says that now people have access to all kinds of media, they are able to be a part of the media and everyone is able to make contributions, both by listening to radio but also to give commentary to the journalists. He believes this is contributing to developing Ghana.

Before, when there was only state media people could not do this. One only had to accept the information the state media gave.

“So if Ghana has right were we are now, the media has contributed to that because we have given the path for people to speak and make contributions and make suggestions for the development of the country.”

**Journalists**

**Background**

**Government owned newspapers**

**Francis Tuffor** is a journalist at the Ghanaian Times. He has worked as a journalist for 12 years, and 6 of those in the Ghanaian Times. He has previously worked for the privately owned newspapers Catalyst and Public Agenda. He has also worked on TV3. He has a diploma from Ghana institute of journalism and a communication degree in journalism. He is a member of the Ghana journalist association.

“I remember, when I was young I told my parents that I wanted to become a journalist. And a lawyer. And gradually that has become a dream. And then I am happy that dream has been achieved.”

Francis main job is to report about crime. But he also writes about finance, economics, the environment and general news.
Francis became a journalist because he loved the profession. And he feels that activities that do not promote development must be reported.

“I believe strongly that journalism are the voice of the voiceless, and to speak for the masses. I believe strongly that issues that concern society needs to told and you need somebody who, need to tell the masses as it is.”

Samuel Amoako is a senior reporter and specializes in political reporting at the Ghanaian Times. He has worked there since he left school ten years ago. He has a diploma in journalism from the Ghana institute of journalism and he is a member of the Ghana journalist association.

“I remember when I was a kid, whenever I saw people on TV, broadcasting news and all that I kept on asking myself, how can I also become one of these people?” Samuel was always active in his youth in writers clubs and debates. He felt he was good and wanted more people to hear what he had to say. Initially, Samuel was driven to become famous, to hear his name on the radio.

“But when I got closer to the thing, I realized it is not just about becoming famous. But to champion the course of the ordinary people. In fact, that became the, the immediate motivating factor for entering into it. To champion the course to be able to articulate the views of the masses, to let the voice of the voiceless be heard in high places.”

Daniel Nkrumah is the parliamentary correspondent at Daily Graphic. He has a master in communication studies from the university of Ghana. He is a member of the Ghana journalist association. He has worked as a journalist for 10 years. 6 of those have been spent at Daily Graphic, and before that he worked at two privately owned newspapers.

“I think I became a journalist out of the passion for the job, or out of passion for, for writing.”

Daniel started to write for newspapers before he started university.

“I was doing the rudiments of journalism, stringing for newspapers, small newspapers. /--/And I decided to follow the passion naturally. After university I found my way to do the masters program in communication studies. So I think it is purely out of passion. I think I was always fascinated, passionate about writing and investigating issues.”
Samuel Doe Ablordeppey is a senior reporter who specializes in financial and economic reporting. He writes for both Daily graphic and Graphic business. He has been a journalist for ten years, of which seven have been at Daily Graphic. He worked for the Legacy magazine and Ghana Broadcasting channel before. He has a diploma in journalism from Ghana institute of journalism and is a member of the Ghana journalist association.

Before he became a journalist he was an accountant. He wrote a lot in his job, and felt he had a passion for it that he wanted to pursue. He became a journalist because he wanted to be the voice of the voiceless.

“I come from a very rural area, and sometimes you look at things that have been on the developmental wise, you don’t get a good share of the national kit and all that.”

He wanted to show through his writing what he has seen growing up.

Privately owned newspapers

Ivy Benson works as a senior journalist and chief court reporter at the Chronicle. She has been a journalist for 10 years. She has studied journalism at a private journalist institution. She is not a member of the Ghana journalist association and does not intend to register.

“First of all I became a journalist to be the mouthpiece of those who cannot come out. We have certain people in the society who don’t, who don’t have the capacity to speak up. So I came in to represent those type of people. To bring the issues up. And then secondly as an employment opportunity. To get paid. To make a living. “

Daniel Nonor used to be a teacher, but came into journalism four years ago. He is part of the editorial team and head of the business section at the Chronicle. He has a diploma in journalism from Moneyford institute. He is not a member of the Ghana journalist association, but has recently thought about joining. He became a journalist because he loved to write. Even as a teacher he wrote articles for the Mirror.

“I felt that, you know, if I have that interest, why don’t I pursue that interest? ”

Frederick Asiamah is a staff writer at Public Agenda. He has a diploma from Ghana institute of journalism. He has worked as a journalist for five years. He is not a member of the Ghana journalist association.
“I became a journalist because at the time I thought that it is I could contribute better to the nations development through my practice as a journalist. So it was basically to contribute to the development to this country.“

“I have a low class background and what I went through is such that I wouldn’t want any other person to go through. “

Frederick wanted to become a journalist to contribute and draw attention to some of the issues and problems that he felt needed attention in Ghana. And to ensure that collectively Ghanaians improve the standards for everybody. “Because, growing up I realized the gap between the rich and the poor was wide and you need someone who has had experiences of this growing up to be part of the process of developing the country.”

Ama Achiaa Amankwah is a staff writer at Public Agenda. She has a diploma from the Ghana institute of journalism. She has worked with government owned Ghana broadcasting corporation radio and Metro TV. She has been working at Public agenda since 2005. She is a member of the Ghana journalist association. She writes mostly about women, gender and children. But she also writes pieces about environment, health and business. Her aim is always to help the marginalized.

“I think the interest was there. I think I had a flavor for writing. /--/ I was interested in helping the poor, the marginalized in society. Not the poor specifically, the vulnerable. I felt that if I should become a journalist, through my writing their voices might be heard.“

Ethics
Some of the journalists were not active in the journalistic profession when the criminal libel law was still in use. They can therefore not express how the law influenced their work.

Government owned newspapers
Francis Tuffor thinks the National Media Commission’s guidelines are very useful: “I make sure I don’t step on somebody’s toe.”

He is not afraid of being accused of defamation. He always only reports with facts and documents that he has. He thinks it is important to always be guided by the
constitution and uses the code of ethics. He always double-checks his facts and checks the other side of stories.

“I am there to inform the public and to educate the public. I don’t think I would do something that will go contrary to what the guidelines or the law or the court states.”

The criminal libel law affected Francis job, in the way that he was always careful in his reporting. But he is still careful.

“Yes it did. /--/ It doesn’t mean that once the, it has been repelled we can do anything, no. There are limitations so I’m always guided. The fact that, even though the Koufo administration has repelled the criminal libel law should give journalists the way to you know, in court misbehave. So I am always careful.”

**Samuel Amoako** believes it is up to the individual to go by the National Media Commissions’ guidelines.

“If you happen to work for a state owned media like New Times corporation, you can hardly go off from the ethics of the profession, because it is a state institution and you must do what is expected of you. You have the epitome of highly journalistic standard. People look up to you and all that. So we here make sure we go by the ethics of the profession.”

He thinks it is important for the National Media Commission to get more power, so that they are able to exercise its oversight responsibility and issue sanctions for journalists.

Samuel believes the Criminal libel law affected journalists work in Ghana since it criminalized speech. He was never taken to court but still felt there was always a risk.

“But I think that as a journalist, there was the possibility that I may also fall victim to the law. Because you may be writing without the slightest intention of trying to criminalize somebody or defame somebody. But a single word can just change the whole meaning of the statement and somebody on the bases on that can send you to court on charges of criminal libel. So in performance of the duties of a journalist, I think the criminal libel law was a hindrance.”

He is a little scared of being accused of defamation, but feels relief that if it would happen, he could never be sent to prison.
Daniel Nkrumah always has the National Media Commission’s guidelines in the back of his head when he writes a story. He thinks they are blueprint and every journalist should keep them in mind whilst reporting. Daniels work was not affected by the criminal libel law, and does not think he has made any significant changes in his work since the law was abolished. But at the same time he agonishes that journalists now have greater liberties to do their work and commit to their responsibilities.

Daniel has twisted feelings about defamation. He believes he reports correctly and therefore is not at risk of defaming someone. If he would be accused of defamation he would be worried about not doing his job correctly rather than the worry about going to court.

“I think the media landscape in Ghana is civilized enough and is quite responsible enough to look at the gray areas and the area that can be treaded. We don’t have any issues with people wrongly being accused of defamation. It’s rare.”

Samuel Doe Ablordeppeny thinks the National Media Commissions’ guidelines are very good and should be followed rigorously. He says the guidelines have become a part of him and he always double checks, especially the ethics of the story.

“In fact, for us here in Graphic, people see us as a beacon of good journalism. So if we falter than the whole of Ghanaian journalism is down the line. /--/ We focus on developmental journalism rather than sensationalism. So it has been part of us, we have been trained with it since day one.”

He says the Criminal libel law did not affect him, because he was always very careful and never did anything libelous. Even though he could see how it affected other professionals.

“Those days I was more careful about the information at hand. But these days it is a civil suit so sometimes can go to town with it.”

Today he is still careful, since he thinks being charged for defamation could be devastating. Even though he himself would not have to pay, he would feel he would have made a mistake. So he is careful.

Privately owned newspapers

Ivy Benson thinks that the National Media Commission’s guidelines are good, but does not always follow them. She thinks the guidelines are there to guide journalists to
do the right thing and be correct in their reporting. But she believes the story goes before the guidelines.

“They are good. But it’s just that we sometimes don’t follow. Because we go outside the guidelines and commit certain bounders.”

Ivy is not afraid of being accused of defamation.

“This is some of the hazards that comes with the job. You only have to write. If you think you have written the correct thing, defamation suit should not put you off, because you can always defend yourself. If it comes to critical.”

Ivy believes that by abolishing the criminal libel law, it has helped the profession by making it easier to do a good job. But she thinks that there are still laws in use which put restraints on journalists.

“In a way it has helped. But not towards, because there are still laws, like the defamation law. Can still be used against the media. So we are not totally free.”

Ivy thinks the only difference between the defamation law and the criminal libel law is that the defamation law cannot imprison you, but if convicted you much pay a very large sum of money.

Daniel Nonor believes that the National Media Commission’s guidelines are good, but the National Media Commission lack the power to prosecute if there are any wrongdoings in the profession.

“I wish they had more power. Because if those laws are there and not enforced it is useless for them to be there.”

Daniel still makes sure that in every article he writes, he is fair and checks both sides of a story.

If Daniel does not have all the facts for a story, he is afraid of being accused of defamation. He is afraid to end up in court. He therefore has his own guidelines and always checks the other side of the story. If Daniel will reveal something about a person and has documents ad facts backing up his story, he will take the effort to call for a comment to make sure he has both sides to the story.

“That is why, personally for me, I wouldn’t go to publish if I have not concluded my, my work on a story. Because for the fear I might fall short on the law somewhere. So personally, I wouldn’t publish a half-baked story.”
**Frederick Asiamah** says that the National Media Commission very rarely contacts Public Agenda with complains about articles.

“As a journalist I have always done my best to stick to the basic tenants of journalism.”

He is not afraid that he will defame anyone in his articles. He is always very well balanced. His biggest fear is that if someone would accuse him of defamation, it would have an impact on his career. He therefore makes sure to never get to that point, although it has never stopped him from publishing a story.

“I have never killed a story, unless I find that there is no substance in a story and. Otherwise if there is substance and I have facts and I have documentary evidence to back those facts I’d go ahead”

**Ama Achiaa Amankwah** follows the National Media Commission’s guidelines strictly. However, she believes there are several privately owned newspapers that do not. Ama gives the example of pictures on women and children. She always makes sure the faces are covered, so that they cannot be identified whereas other newspapers will out the pictures on the front page.

“I think the NMC is not able to bite. The guidelines are there, they are stated but people don’t go by it. /--/ Some are unprofessional.”

“There are some stories I see, and we don’t need it now, for our development, as a country.”

Ama has never killed a story out of fear for being accused of defamation. She believes in well-presented stories, which are balanced, and gives both sides. She believes that it gets dangerous if you have personal interests or relations in the story. Something she never has. And she believes this works well, because she has never been taken to court.

“You cannot always please everybody. But whatever story or whatever write-up I do, I don’t do one-sided stories. I make sure I get the other side, no matter how long it takes. I make sure I get the other side, I present my facts and it is up to my readers to decide for themselves.”
The journalistic mission

**Government owned newspapers**

**Francis Tuffor** thinks a journalist should be open minded, fair and firm. His goal is to inform, educate and entertain the public. With every story he writes he makes sure he follows it up, maybe changes the angle or compare the story with other issues in the society. He is very careful in his reporting and would never present a “half baked story”. On the question of the journalist role in Ghana Francis says:

“*We are role models. We are watchmen.*”

Francis believes his role, as a journalist has been useful for society. He does not want to work as a journalist for the rest of his life. He wants to move on and become a lawyer and then an ambassador.

**Samuel Amoako** believes it is important for journalists to specialize in one subject, but still be knowledgeable in all areas. Furthermore a journalist should be inquisitive and always trying to learn more. He thinks his job as a journalist is risky but enjoyable. He works as a journalist to champion the course of the masses.

“I wanted to let the voice of the voiceless, the masses, to be heard. I wanted them to seek the interest of mankind. And I thought that there was no way I could have done that better, than to be a journalist where I can expose all this bad news.”

When Samuel writes an article or a feature, he always looks at the impact the article will have on society. He takes into consideration if the article is in the interest of the people, will cause hatred or confusion.

“And once your aim as a journalist is to work to promote the interest of mankind you do not write anything that will sight violence, that will sight hatred and bring up divisions and all that. All you should do, aim at is that, at the end of the day readers who read your article will come to appreciate the need for unity, and development for a nation.”

Samuel believes going into political reporting was the best way to reach his goal. By writing about politics he thinks he can best articulate the views of the voiceless. Especially since it is hard do delink politics from journalism. Samuel believes the parliament is a good way to make sure the government does things correctly, since parliament is chosen by the people and have representatives from all over the country. However, he still speaks his mind and tries to affect policy changes.
“All I can do as a journalist is to raise my voice challenge it, put out my observations, commendations and all my suggestions and all that. But I cannot force it on the people of Ghana. All I can do is to raise the issues. If they decide, if the members of parliament, whom all of us have elected, go and make the rules for us. If they, in their view, in their wisdom, then that’s that is the best. And I as an individual cannot make it better.”

His aim is to one day be the head of The Ghanaian Times.

According to Daniel Nkrumah a journalist should be: independent minded, fair, objective and curious.

“I think my professional role as a journalist is to inform and educate. As we .. I don’t see, well, entertainment in a way. But I think the critical issues are information and education. /-/ The critical issues of the time. So that they can make informed decisions.”

Daniel thinks it is most important to inform about government issues, policies, government activities, it’s spending and to interrogate the issues of governors.

“Especially, as a developing country there is always perceived issues of corruption and that and that so I think. The critical issue is the right to information.”

Samuel Doe Ablordeppey thinks a journalist should be able too arouse policy changes, and command a lot of attention in public. He says that at the Daily Graphic they focus on developmental journalism. His definition of it is to write about good things that are happening in the community. And if they write about bad things it is to bring up a policy change or a change in behavior. He says that bad news will only be written if they affect the country. For example if someone fire gutters a ministry they will write about it. But on the other hand, if a minister is involved in a sex scandal they will only write about it if it has affected the country in some way.

Samuel thinks the work of journalists is very important.

“I often say that it is not for nothing people call it the forth estate of the realm. Because really if we are going to do our work very well, check everything, we want to cross everything, we are going to do all the country a lot of good deal. We will help the country a lot, a good deal. Yes, so we need to. It is a very important role that we have to play and we need to take it up and play it very well.”
When he writes he tries to answer the question: so what? He also wants people to learn something new with every article. He also wants everybody to understand.

“In my reportage, if I am writing on inflation. I don’t start saying inflation rate is this. I say the value of goods, or the rate at which prices change in the economy is this.”

He thinks journalists in Ghana have a mission to speak the truth and to be objective.

“We need to, we really need to see ourselves as missionaries and that we accomplish that. We need to inform people. We need to let, if there is anything bad, we are known to bring it out and make sure that it is stopped.”

Samuel’s aim with his work is to help small and medium enterprises (SMI). He wants to help them build up their capacity.

“A lot of the time I have come across some SMI’s which are in some corner but are doing very brilliantly and I have reported on them and all of a sudden they have grown to become medium and they are much more.”

Samuel does not see his articles as commercial. Even though he admits that some of his stories do not get published because the editors think they are PR-stories.

Privately owned newspapers

“The journalist, if I would say in general, the mission of journalists it is to be the voice of the people. Where nobody can go, the journalist should be able to go there and fetch whatever people needed. /--/ You have so many poor people around, who cannot do anything. We have people, illiterates, I mean they cannot go and get those things, and you have to go there and do it on their behalf.” (Ivy Benson)

Ivy Benson thinks journalists should influence society in all aspects of their lives. She says that she change peoples lives for the better in a small way, by informing society on what is going on in the country. She believes that by entertaining through her work, disadvantaged feel as a part of the society and she hopes she can be the voice for the voiceless.

“… he becomes satisfied because he or she knew that there is someone out there playing the role that he cannot do. For him, on his behalf, his or her behalf.”

Ivy’s goal with journalism is to get people in society happy. She wants people to feel as if she speaks for them and raise their issues to be heard.

“I think my goal, my aim has been achieved. Yes I feel that. “
Daniel Nonor believes a journalist’s mission is to inform, educate, finding facts and presenting it to the public. If a journalist does not have information, he or she should not be in the profession.

“The public looks up to us, and then, we interpret, bring out government policies, interpret them, keep people informed about what is happening. I think that democracy; it has to grow. I think that it’s based on the information and the things that we tell to our people.”

He thinks the journalists represent society, and writes for them. Not for himself, the editor or an owner.

With his writing he wants to affect policies in the country and bring out the bad in society “to raise a discussion about the issues and for correct measures to be taken. “

“I think that basically it is just to transform society. Yes, through the report. No we don’t report in the vacuum, we report to have an effect. And just to transform society towards good governance, better life for the citizens of the country. “

Frederick Asiamah says that basically he writes to educate, to inform and to entertain. But beyond that he is looking at influencing policymaking in Ghana.

“Society thinks we are supposed to be a accountability institution, holding people accountable. And that is precisely what we must do. That’s how any basic journalist should operate like. “

Frederick believes a journalist should try to be a role model. And he also sees the media as the fourth estate. He thinks it is the medias role to show the readers what is happening in the country.

“So for us we are serving as a mirror to society through us they see what the politicians are doing. Through us they see how the judiciary are enforcing rules and regulations. Through us they also see how the legislator is molding various laws for the country. So we should just see ourselves the way society wants to see us. “

Frederick’s aim with his work is to improve the life of Ghanaians. He believes that by doing his job he can improve the transparency in public administration. Frederick is convinced that doing that will help developing the country and is sure that is where his focus should be.

“…ensure that resources are fairly and equally distributed and efficiently used to put into place, infrastructure and institutional frameworks. That will facilitate the
development of every part of this country. And for that matter improve the livelihoods of people. Especially the vulnerable and marginalized people.”

For Ama Achiaa Amankwah, the essence of journalism is to develop the country. She wants to make an impact on peoples lives through her writing. Furthermore she hopes to affect policy changes and directions, and she believes that should be the aim for all journalists. Ama says journalists should act to check on politicians and policies being made.

“Sometimes we act as a check on government, that’s our watchdog role. That’s the major role we should be playing, but things are changing. But the few are trying harder.”

Ama thinks journalists in Ghana abuse the press freedom for economic and commercial reasons. She says that society believes everything the media writes, and that makes it even more important to be cautious about the information you give.

“If the facts we are putting down are not embellishing or trying to spice the stories to suit our own interests. We should put the interest of our nation Ghana first. We should promote peace. We should help promote development. We should address concerns of the vulnerable, the marginalized in society. Those are the things we should be taking about.”

Ama thinks there is too much politics in the news in Ghana and that it will not help develop the country. She believes the media should instead teach people about the environment, social issues and human rights.

“It doesn’t govern for us. It won’t help us. We should talk more about development issues. We should be teaching people to keep the environment clean, to protect themselves from diseases. We should be promoting the rights of people with disabilities. Those are the things we should be doing.”

Thoughts about media owners
Some of the journalists have not worked at both state- and privately owned newspapers and did not want to speculate in the subject.

State owned newspapers
Francis Tuffor thinks there is a clear difference in reporting depending on whom you work for. He thinks privately owned media write sensational news. He says that
headlines are written to attract people’s attention, but then it might not be correct in
the actual paper.
“...state is being controlled a bit. As compared to private where they can just write
anything that they want. “
Are you controlled by the state?
“No, no, no. Not really. We are not controlled by the state. The Ghanaian Times, the
editorial, which is the opinion of the institution, we don’t have message no, no, no.
Because, you see, if you are a journalist and you are controlled by the state, you are
not practicing your profession.”

Samuel Amoako has only worked with state owned press. He says that one advantage
is the job security that you cannot get fired. State media have more resources, has a
higher circulation and higher credibility. He believes news in state media have a larger
impact on society.
“If you take the Times and the Graphic, they are the two leading state press in Ghana.
And any article that is published in the Times or any state media is said to be more
credible than articles that are published in the private newspapers.”

Daniel Nkrumah has worked for both privately and state owned media. He thinks it is
excellent to work at a state owned newspaper. It has higher pay, better offices, and
more prestige. Although there are some disadvantages.
“Sometimes you want to do things that may seem out of the ordinary or out of the way,
you want a bit more leverage you want a bit more freedom to go places that you can
do stuff that may not be prescribed, so it depends. But I think by the large its better
here. It’s far, far better here. It’s far better here. But definitely you gonna have ... a
few cases where you want to say that working somewhere else brings you some, some,
advantages but, by a lot I think far better here.”

Samuel Doe Ablordepepey believes working for a state owned newspaper has its pros
and cons.
“But for now, if I put everything together. It is more preferable to work with state
owned media because of remuneration, your pay, your salary. It is better here than
anywhere else. But if you want to get impact, certain types of impact then the private
media.”
He believes to be able to do investigative journalism and write about things that are negative he would have to work with a privately owned newspaper.

**Privately owned newspapers**

**Frederick Asiamah** has not worked at a state owned media. He did his internship at Public Agenda and realized that his views coincided with the papers. Even though he has not worked for a state owned media he has some thoughts about its disadvantages.

“the public media they always try to please the ruling government. Because I mean it’s more like a mouthpiece of government. But government cannot take a private media and use for its PR and other things. So you might bring something and the editor of the day might not be pleased with it.”

**Ama Achiaa Amankwah** says that because Public Agenda is privately owned and the papers mission, she has the possibility to write stories about human rights, social justice, policies and their effects on marginalized people. However, she does not think that is the case with state owned media.

“Maybe the other state media, they told the line of the ministers of state, you understand? So for people like persons with disabilities and stuff, women and children they are left out. The kind of stories that we will put on the front page, daily graphic will not put such stories there.”

Ama did her attachments with state media. She sees differences between the different organizations.

“But, with state media, most of the time there is bureaucracy. Its not flexible, sometimes it is not flexible. You have to go strictly by certain procedures. But the people at Public agenda, because it’s private, we are not influenced by anybody. /--/
But state media sometimes you are limited.”

Ama felt limited when she was working for state owned radio. Stories that might not be appreciated from the government were not given room to work with.

“There is no encouragement, there is no motivation even to go ahead and work on it.”
**Analysis**

**Editors**

**Ethics**

Both editors say their newspapers follow the National Media Commissions’ guidelines. Although Emmanuel Amoako would like to publish stories which go against the guidelines, in order to sell newspapers. Emmanuel Akli says his paper has written rejoinders on a couple of occasions because “we are all human beings and make mistakes. But we do our best.”

When Emmanuel Amoako says he would like to publish stories to sell newspapers, this goes against the theory of development journalism, since it focuses on money and not on the development of the country.

Both editors believe the Criminal libel law affected the work of journalists a lot, even though no journalists from either newspaper were charged under the law. “For anything, anything could be charged under that law. You didn’t have the freedom at all to write anything that you wanted.” Emmanuel Amoako

Emmanuel Akli says that the Criminal libel law mostly affected the privately owned media and that no journalists working in the state media were charged under the criminal libel law. According to Francis B. Nyamnjoh throughout history it is the privately owned media who has fallen victim to various media laws.

Both believe it is very important that journalists always have a balanced story and have checked facts. Both make sure this happens with the articles being printed in their newspapers.

**Mission**

Both newspapers missions are to inform, to educate and to entertain the people of Ghana. Emmanuel Akli also says the Chronicle’s mission is to enrich the democracy of Ghana.

Emmanuel Amoako believes journalists must check on politicians and get the news to the reader, without refining the story. Emmanuel Akli wants the Chronicle to shed light on what is wrong in the government for the society to see and then for the government to do something against it. So both believe it is the journalists mission to act as ‘watchdogs’ and through their reporting they can bring up things that are wrong in government.
The Daily Graphic is a state owned newspaper and Emmanuel Amoako says that sometimes the government wants something to be highlighted or put on the front page.

“You know, a minister, a government of president will say, will call, not me, the deputy editor, they will say to him: please give us a bit of highlight on this story. It may not sell our paper, we’ll be angry, but it can’t do anything about it.”

Because the Daily Graphic is government owned they are expected to play the role of ‘government partners’. If this was something that society believes happens often, the newspaper might be viewed as a propaganda tool for the government. Emmanuel Amoako also believes it is also important for journalists to act as watchdogs on government.

According to Francis B. Nyamnjoh privately owned press has had problems with government. This is not something Emmanuel Akli recognizes. He says he or the newspaper has never had a problem practicing journalism in Ghana, even though they are a privately owned newspaper. But Emmanuel Akli also says there has been a large change in the media of Ghana. He says that now people have access to all kinds of media, they are able to be a part of the media and everyone is able to make contributions, both by listening to radio but also to give commentary to the journalists. Emmanuel Akli says “So if Ghana has right were we are now, the media has contributed to that because we have given the path for people to speak and make contributions and make suggestions for the development of the country.”

In other words, Emmanuel Akli believes the Ghanaian media successfully have used their role as guardians of transparency. The media has been the voice of the voiceless and worked as a channel between government and society.

**Journalists**

**Background**

This study shows that all the journalists interviewed have an education in journalism. Seven out of ten have a diploma in journalism from the Ghana institute of journalism. Daniel Nonor and Ivy Benson from the Chronicle have diplomas in journalism from other institutions. Daniel Nkrumah has a degree in communication studies from Ghana University. Francis B. Nyamnjoh writes in Africa’s media that journalists in the
privately owned media usually have little or no journalistic training. In this bachelor thesis this is not correct.

Most of the journalists are members of the Ghana journalist association. Those who are not members all work at privately owned newspapers.

Four of the journalists have worked with both state and privately owned media houses. Three of those were working with state media when interviewed. One has only worked at state media and three only with private newspapers.

Two people from state media and one person from privately owned media have changed profession to become journalists.

Most of the journalists in this bachelor thesis say that they came into the profession to be the voice of the voiceless and help the marginalized. This is in accordance with the theory of development journalism, with the approaches journalists as nation builders and agents of empowerment. The journalists want to make it better for the people within the society.

And according to the journalists, they can do it through their work. They believe their articles have an impact on polices and the government.

The study shows that in both privately and state owned media some of the journalists came into the profession because they had a passion for the job or for writing.

**Ethics**

The study shows that nine out of the ten journalists use the National Media Commissions guidelines in their everyday job and make sure to present both sides of a story and double check all facts. Francis B. Nyamnjoh writes in Africa’s media that the most common criticism against privately owned media in the 1990’s was that they only checked one side of the story. According to this study this is no longer true.

Samuel Amoako and Ama Achiaa Amankwah think the National Media Commission should have more power so they can issue sanctions to journalists who do not go by the guidelines. Their views are in accordance with the branch ‘journalist as government partners’ in the theory of development journalism. The government or an oversight organization should step in and control the media when it abuses its rights.
When it comes to the law of defamation the journalists have different views on how to approach it. The approaches are similar and do not differ depending on if they work for a state or a privately owned newspaper. Ivy Benson is not afraid of being accused of defamation. She believes it is a hazard that comes with the job. Francis Tuffor and Daniel Nkrumah are not afraid of being accused of defamation because they are always correct in their reporting. Samuel Doe Ablordeppey, Daniel Nonor, Frederick Asiamah and Ama Achiaa Amankwah are careful in their articles so they do not get accused of defamation.

Samuel Amoako is a little scared of being accused of defamation, but feels relief that if it would happen, he could never be sent to prison. Those who are afraid of being accused of defamation say that it could damage their career, it would mean they did not do their job correctly or that they would feel they had made a mistake.

None of the journalists say the criminal libel law affected their work directly and no one was sent to court. But they all agree on the fact that they were a bit more careful in their reporting, than they are today. As Samuel Doe Ablordeppey says “Those days I was more careful about the information at hand. But these days it is a civil suit so sometimes can go to town with it.”

The journalists say they were not affected by the criminal libel law, but by being more careful in their reporting they were all censoring themselves. A journalist who is censored is not developing the country.

**The journalistic mission**

All the journalists interviewed believe it is the journalistic mission to inform and to educate. Many of the journalists also see it as their job to entertain the public. Ivy Benson believes that by entertaining through her work, disadvantaged feel as a part of the society.

They all believe it is important to affect policy changes. Everyone, with the exception of Samuel Doe Ablordeppey, think it is important for journalists to act as watchdogs on the government. These answers can be analyzed as the approach of ‘journalists as watchdogs’ where journalists must highlight problems in government policies so that it can be corrected. They also have the role of raising concerns that the society has with the government.

Frederick Asiamah says society expects journalists to hold people accountable. This
can be analyzed as being the approach of ‘journalists as the guardians of transparency’, which is similar to the watchdog approach, but it is important that the people of society also raise concern. Furthermore Frederick Asiamah hopes that through his job he can improve the transparency in public administration. Six of the journalists want to be the voice of the voiceless. Francis Tuffor and Frederick Asiamah believe journalists are role models. Ivy Benson wants to influence society, change peoples’ lives for the better by informing society on what is going on in the country. Daniel Nonor wants to transform society towards a better life for the citizens of Ghana: “I think that democracy; it has to grow. I think that it’s based on the information and the things that we tell to our people.” Frederick Asiamah’s aim with his work is to improve the life of Ghanaians. He believes that by doing his job he can improve the transparency in public administration. Frederick is convinced that doing that will help developing the country and is sure that is where his focus should be.

For Ama Achiaa Amankwah, the essence of journalism is to develop the country. “We should put the interest of our nation Ghana first. We should promote peace. We should help promote development.”

All the journalists’ aim of developing the country goes under the approach of ‘Journalists as agents of empowerment’. They write to promote development with the help of the civil society, and for the society to be able to raise their voices. Samuel Amoako says “And once your aim as a journalist is to work to promote the interest of mankind you do not write anything that will sight violence, that will sight hatred and bring up divisions and all that. All you should do, aim at is that, at the end of the day readers who read your article will come to appreciate the need for unity, and development for a nation.”

This is in line with the approach of ‘journalists as nation builders’, which emphasize that journalists should write positive stories to unite people within a society.

Samuel Doe Ablordeppey says he writes about good things that are happening in the community and if he writes about negative things it is to bring up a policy change or a change in behavior. Samuel’s aim with his work is to help small and medium enterprises. This is also equivalent to the approach ‘journalist as nation builders’ in development
journalism. Samuel feels it is on him to help build up the country through helping national enterprises.

**Thoughts about media owners**

State media do not publish sensational news like privately owned media do. Therefore Francis Tuffor believes the state media is controlled.

Samuel Amoako, Daniel Nkrumah and Samuel Doe Ablordepppey say the advantages of working with state owned media is salary and job security, better resources and a higher credibility or prestige.

Samuel Doe Ablordepppey believes that if you want make certain types of impact, write about things that may be negative for the country or do investigative journalism then one should work with the privately owned media. Ama Achiaa Amankwah says that stories that might not be appreciated from the government is not given room or encouragement to work with in state owned media.

Samuel and Ama are on the same track. What they believe is that with the private media journalists can be ‘guardians of transparency’. Whereas journalists working for state owned media rather acts as ‘government partners’, where press freedom must be restricted to develop the nation. The press is free, but the journalists still feel a sort of censorship not being able to go beyond the borders of traditional journalism.

Daniel Nkrumah agrees and says that if you want a bit more freedom and leverage to write stories out of the ordinary one should work for the private media.

Ama Achiaa Amankwah believes there is more freedom at a privately owned newspaper and that she has the possibility to write stories about human rights, social justice, policies and their effects on marginalized people, something she does not think that is the case with state owned media. Frederick Asiamah believes the state media tries to please the ruling government and acts as its mouthpiece.

**Discussion**

The journalists interviewed are quite similar to each other. They all have journalistic training, follow the guidelines of the profession, write balanced stories and speak to both parties when writing articles. No one was charged under the criminal libel law, but everyone expresses concern over the fact that the law criminalized speech. It is intriguing that all the journalists say the criminal libel law did not affect their work, but at the same time they say they were careful in their reporting, and by that in a way
exercised self-censorship on themselves. If censored, the truth is not being told and the people of Ghana would then have been misinformed. Furthermore, that is quite a large impact on the work.

The journalists interviewed have different backgrounds, and it is not possible to know with absolute certainty why they came into the profession. However, based on their answers in this bachelor thesis all the journalists want to help the marginalized in society. But they have different approaches to the task. Most of the journalists believe it is important to raise the concerns of the people, for changes in the country to be made. Their views on how to achieve their aim, is conformed to ‘journalists as agents of empowerment’ within the theory of development journalism.

The second focus of this bachelor thesis was whether or not the professional identity of a journalist differed depending on the owner of the newspaper. The journalists interviewed in this essay have the same goal with their work, to improve the environment for the people of Ghana. The workplace is instead chosen for other reasons. Although journalists working for both state and privately owned newspapers see that there are greater liberties to question the government at privately owned newspapers. The ‘watchdog role’ gets more space at privately owned publications, whereas the government is given a large space in state owned media. Some of the journalists working on privately owned newspapers seem to be taking a few more risks when getting their stories. Ivy Benson for example thinks the story is more important than the guidelines. Emmanuel Amoako would like to skip the guidelines from time to time, to drive up sales but feels restricted. Both journalists working at state and privately owned newspapers expressed views that one has greater liberties in the work if you work for a privately owned newspaper. The journalists working at state owned newspapers said that government media has a higher credibility and prestige, which I find intriguing. Does it not give a higher prestige to not be influenced by you company and write what you want to write, even if it is to be critical?

The fact that Emmanuel Amoako so openly says the government has expectations on the paper I find very interesting. This must mean that the press is not totally free and how is a journalist supposed to balance that? But on the other hand, if one aims at
developing the country, writing positive articles about the government because they ask you to might not be considered to be subjective.

Journalists like Emmanuel Akli see a change in the media of Ghana and that the media landscape is vibrant today. Many journalists also see how they have contributed to the development of the country. The media plays a large role in a democracy. For the future development of democracy in Ghana I believe the media needs to continue its developmental work, but also to increase the use of ‘journalists as ‘guardians of transparency’. It is important for the media to keep educating the people of Ghana, but also to critically examine new policies the government produce. Furthermore, for the media to be able to act as a check on government, the government needs to be more open and communicate with society. Furthermore I believe it is important for journalists not to be afraid of being critical.

The journalists say they will usually not publish a story if they are not sure they can prove they are right. I believe there is a problem with this. I understand fears one might have, but on the other hand. If someone says your documents are false every time you are on to something, you will never reveal any wrongdoings.

The journalists say they are less cautious now than they were when the criminal libel law was in use. I hope they will feel larger freedom as times go by. Even though, I know that what I am suggesting could also lead to a westernized view on journalism where sensation is the drive rather than development.

In conclusion, the journalists interviewed want to be a part of developing the country and believe they can do so through their work. Their views do differ, but the different views do not show a pattern depending on whom they work for.

I want to make clear that the results in this bachelor thesis cannot generalize for the journalists in Ghana as a whole, but rather give a hint of what the journalistic aims might look like for some journalists in Ghana.

**Future research**

Journalism in Ghana is a very broad research field and there is much research that can be done. Journalists expressed that when working for privately owned newspapers one
had more freedom. A qualitative study could examine the articles being published in Ghana and see if that is the case.

Another field of research could be the political news in Ghana. Some of the journalists in this study raised a concern that politics is given too much space in the news flow. Is it so and has it changed over time? Ghana’s media is vibrant today. It would be interesting to see how the media landscape has changed over the last 20 years. It would be also be interesting to see how the use of development journalism has developed, or maybe disappeared to give room for sensation news.
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Leaflets:
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The GJA Code of Ethics, Ghana journalist association (2008)

The people interviewed were:
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Daniel Nkrumah, journalist, Daily Graphic
Samuel Doe Ablordeppey, journalist Daily Graphic and Graphic Business

Samuel Amoako, journalist, the Ghanian Times
Francis Tuffor, journalist, the Ghanian Times
Journalists working on privately owned newspapers
Daniel Nonor, journalist, the Chronicle
Ivy Benson, journalist, the Chronicle
Ama Amankwah, journalist, Public Agenda
Frederick Asiamah, journalist, Public Agenda
Charles Takyi-Boadu, journalist, the Daily guide
Mark Boye, journalist, the Enquirer
Mohammed Abu, journalist, the Heritage
Amesu Miriam, journalist, the Herald
Dzifa Emma Tetteh, journalist, the Herald
Gifty Arthur, journalist, the Herald

Editors on state owned newspapers
Ransford Tetteh, Editor, Daily Graphic and president of the Ghana journalist association
Emmanuel Amoako, News editor, Daily Graphic
Fred Agyeman, assistant news editor, the Ghanian Times

Editors on privately owned newspapers
Emmanuel Akli, Ag. Editor, the Chronicle
Benjamin Arthur, deputy editor, the Heritage
Ebenezer Hanson, sub. Editor, Public Agenda

Background interviews:
Interview with Ghana institute of journalism
Interview with Ghana journalist association
Interview with the National Media Commission
Seminar at the world press freedom day, Accra
Question guide for journalists

- Name:
- Job position:
- Education:
- Career:
- Are you a member of the Ghana journalist association?
- Why did you become a journalist?
- How do you feel that your job has been influenced after The Criminal Libel Law was taken away? Did the criminal libel law influence your work? How?
- Are you afraid to be accused of defamation? Why?
- What do you think about the National Media Commissions’ guidelines? Do you use them? How? Do they affect your everyday job? In what way?
- Have you been offered bribes? How did you respond to it?
- What do you think a journalist should be like? How do you see your professional role as a journalist?
- How do you define the journalist role in the Ghanaian society?
- What is your goal with your work?
- Why do you work as a journalist?
- What do you think is the journalistic mission?
- What is your intention with your articles?
- How do you see yourself? (are you important for democracy, as an entertainer etc.)
- What do you write about?
- Are there articles that do not get into the newspaper? What subjects are they? Why do they get cut?
- How much power do you have over your articles?
- Who takes the initiative to articles? Do you come with own suggestions? From where do you get your ideas?