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## Civil Service in Ghana: Issues and Perspectives

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### Abstract

The civil service in Ghana, like many other countries, plays a critical role in the governance and administration of the nation. As it is essential for promoting good governance, enhancing service delivery, and fostering socio-economic development in the country, the country's civil service system encounters a series of impediments and shortcomings that have been inhibiting a successful achievement despite the significant and commendable measures taken to thwart them. These issues then impact its effectiveness and efficiency. We want to investigate the causes of these limitations, and examine why the measures implemented are not performant enough. After exploring the core of the Ghanaian civil service system by highlighting its patterns and particularities, we focus on the key perspectives of the government administration in terms of reforms and new improvements to be carried out. This study advocates for courageous reforms to increase transparency and accountability that could be a gateway to make the Ghanaian civil service both efficient and sustainable.

**Keywords:** *Civil service, Development, Efficiency, Bureaucracy, Accountability*

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### 1. Introduction

The Ghanaian public administration is the backbone of the country's administrative machinery, responsible for implementing government policies and delivering public services. It's structured hierarchically, with various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) overseeing different sectors and functions of governance. Key features include a merit-based recruitment process, though heavy political patronage can sometimes influence appointments. The civil service operates under the framework of the Civil Service Act and other relevant regulations. The Ghanaian public service has always struggled with issues including politics, corruption, and ineffective bureaucracy. There have been continuous attempts to modernize and reform the service with the goal of improving accountability, openness, and professionalism. We conducted a documental and historical analysis by scrutinizing historical and more recent documents focusing on Ghanaian civil service. We used informative reports, media and secondhand data source and then we employed content analysis to analyze both the significance and issues of public administration in Ghana as well as its perspectives. We collected qualitative data through Afro barometer, reports, surveys and relevant national institutions' publications which constituted our methodology to comprehend to the core the stakes of the country's civil service system. We structured our work into three major parts. First, the conceptualization of civil service which describes the theorizing of the notion at larger scale including its importance for countries 'development. In second part, on one hand we lay out the historical background of Ghana civil service and the other hand we analyzed in depth its administrative

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system by emphasizing the architecture and the playing actors. Finally, we review the most critical issues alongside with the perspectives to be taken account to make the system more effective and productive.

### 1.1. Objectives

1. To investigate the causes of the inefficiency of the political and administrative measures implemented in Ghanaian civil service system.
2. To examine how political dynamics and governmental reforms affect the civil service system in Ghana.

### 1.2. Research questions

1. What are the key causes that make inefficient the political and administrative measures towards Ghanaian civil service system?
2. How do political dynamics and governmental reforms impact the civil service system in Ghana?

## 2. Conceptual Framework

Like many other former African colonies, classical theory based on administrative theory was mostly employed in Ghana. Henri Fayol, Max Weber or Frederick Taylor are among the key figures of the classical theory that advocated for efficiency, managerial concepts, and organisational structure. They underlined the importance of the concepts such as hierarchy, bureaucracy, division of labour, and distinct lines of authority. Theoretically, the term “civil service” describes the group of government workers who carry out and oversee public policies and activities in non-elected roles. These people work for local, regional, or national government organizations and are usually responsible for a range of administrative, regulatory, and service-oriented tasks on behalf of the government and its constituents. In contrast to political allegiance or favoritism, the civil service concept highlights the professional, unbiased, and merit-based structure of government employment, with credentials, competency, and performance serving as the primary criteria for hiring, promotion, and retention. Civil workers are essential to the smooth running of government agencies, the effective provision of public services, and the defense of democratic values and the rule of law. Indeed, a number of key thinkers have contributed to the development and conceptualization of civil service as a professional and merit-based system for governing and administering public affairs. Among them, there are Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson, Confucius, or Niccolò Machiavelli. Weber in his book ‘ ‘Economy and Society’’, he discussed the fundamentals of bureaucracy, such as the notion of a professional civil service with codified norms and processes division of work, hierarchical organization, and impersonal interactions (Weber, 1978). Similarly, Wilson, the 28th President of the United States in his essay. “The Study of Administration”, clearly advocated for hiring qualified, impartial specialists to staff a merit-based civil service system (Wilson, 1887). Likewise, Machiavelli explored the value of a professional bureaucracy in upholding stability and order in the state through his book "The Prince." He underlined the necessity of having a loyal and competent civil service to carry out the ruler's policies (Machiavelli, 1532). Furthermore, Paul Battaglio’s book “Public Human Resource Management” covers various aspects of managing human resources within the public sector as a civil service (Battaglio, 2015). He underlines the importance of effective Human Resource Management practices in achieving public sector goals by giving rise to civil service laws, equal employment opportunity laws, labor relations regulations, and other pertinent legal considerations. He describes how recruitment and training must be settled and organized for civil servants. He also advocates for maintaining accountability and productivity in the public sector by holding high standards of ethics and integrity. Additionally, both Edward Kellough and Lloyd Nigro posited that civil service must be regulated through practical strategies and regulations in order to help practitioners navigate the complexities (political influences, budget constraints, compensation, etc.) of public personnel management effectively (Nigro *et al.*, 2012). Having said that, the following section focuses on how these concepts and practices have been embodied in Ghanaian civil service system.

## 3. Historical Background of Ghana Civil Service System

The Ghana Civil Service has been called both a lifeless administrative apparatus and the greatest, most pertinent, and performance-oriented organization in Africa. These divergent ideas demonstrate that the civil service has gone through both prosperous and difficult eras, and that it is a mirror of the Ghanaian economy at various points in time (Nti, 1978). The prosperous times certainly cover the period right before independence in 1957 when public officials, around whom the government's apparatus primarily revolves, seem to have received proper training, compensation, and resources. Simultaneously, the scale of the service was controlled, tenure security was ensured, and civil officials' impartiality and anonymity were secured. All of these elements worked together to create a friendly atmosphere that encouraged the best levels of performance and productivity from the majority of government servants. The difficult times presumably started a few years after the independence (Rothchild, 1991). This period is defined as one of economic decline and stagnation.

The Ghanaian economy was in decline because it was unable to take the initiative and get beyond the limitations on choice due to a mix of structural and policy-based issues. Notwithstanding the growing prices on the global market, the symptoms of decay were declining agricultural productivity, as seen by the collapse of cocoa exports, and declining industrial productivity, as demonstrated by the poor exports of gold and other mineral resources. The nation's economic woes in the 1970s and 1980s was largely caused by this circumstance (Krummah, 1992). Given this impasse in the public administration, two commissions have been held in the early 1980s in order to identify the weakening factors that were affecting the Ghanaian civil service. As a result, the assessment conducted by the commissions revealed a series of debilitating issues. Among those, the large scale overstaffing, particularly at the junior levels; poor workforce planning; a high degree of pay compression combined with the determination of actual salaries and wages; low morale and issues with motivation and incentives; main civil service institutions' incapacity to offer direction, oversight, and policy guidance; the concentration and over-centralization of power structures at the national level; Severe shortcomings in educational establishments; unregulated hiring and security, concerns about neutrality and anonymity (Aye, 1994b). The Establishment Secretariat, the Management Services Division (formerly the Office of Government Machinery), and the Establishment Unit of the Office of the President were the three organizations that were combined to form the Office Head of the Civil Service (OHCS) in 1979, as per a key recommendation of the Commissions (Aye, 2001). In the same vein, the rising at power of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) led by Rawlings in December 1981 resulted in an impulse that contributed to launch the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) with the help of the International Fund Monetary and World Bank. This also led to create and implement the Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) in 1987 which became the heart of the civil service in Ghana (Thompson, 2020). This reform program suggested the reform of pay and grading; and the reduction of the Civil Service by redeploying and assisting in the retention and relocation of surplus staff. Nonetheless, the action of this reform was limited in its scope though it brought some effective solutions. Therefore, in order to expand the goals of the previous reform program to encompass concerns of increased engagement, openness, and accountability, the Civil Service Performance Improvement Program (CSPIP) was developed (Aye, 2001). Despite the combination of good results produced by both reforms (CSRP and CSPIP) such as the criteria and goals of the program, the availability of funding and personnel, and the implementation mechanisms, it has been observed that common point of failure was necessarily connected to the differing degrees of political and bureaucratic influence on the design and implementation procedures of the CSRP and CSPIP (Thompson, 2020). Similarly, in Africa, it has been argued by certain scholars that Civil Service Reforms (CSRs) failed because they focused only on the technical issues of decreasing the scope and expense of African civil services, ignoring the more difficult task of establishing and maintaining the institutional capacities of African civil services in the context of regional political, cultural, economic, and fiscal transformations (Olowu, 1999). Hence, the following lines briefly outlines the main takes of the Ghanaian civil service before independence.

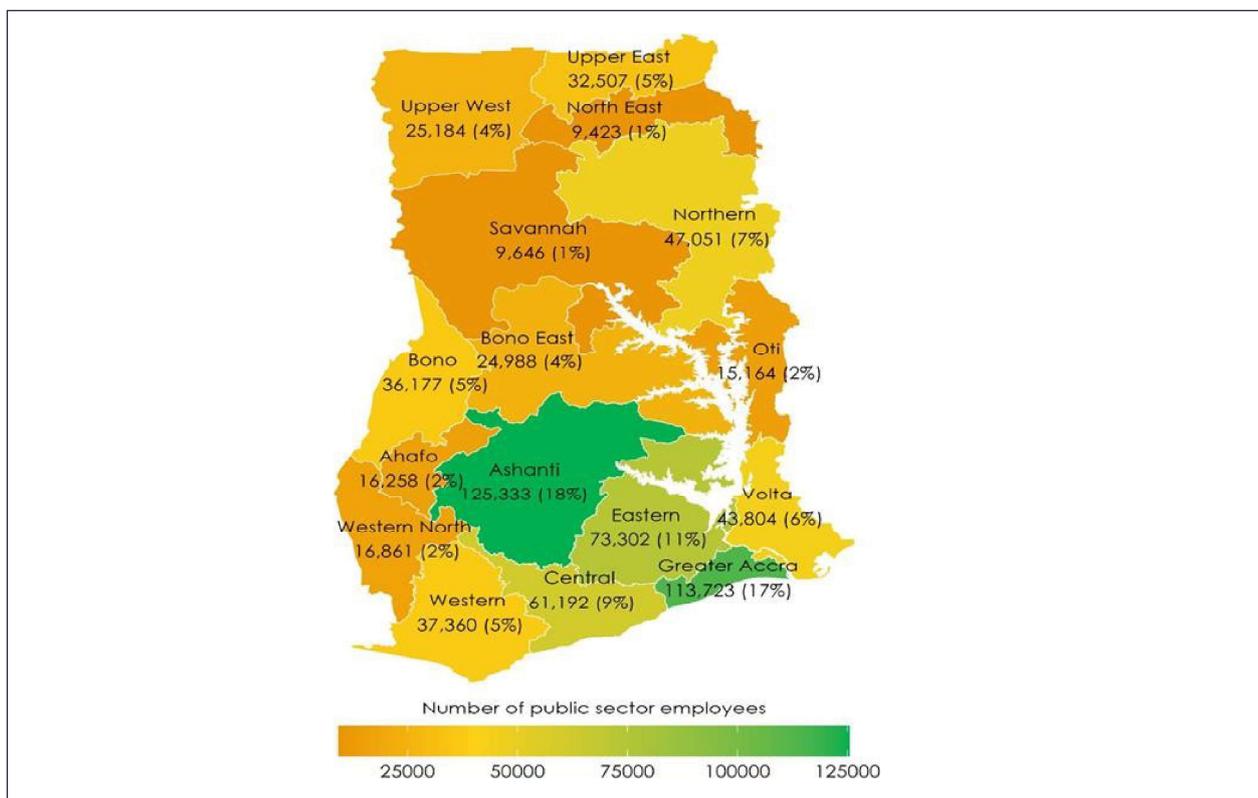
### **3.1. Civil Service in Post-Independence**

All things considered, Ghana's pre-independence public service system was a reflection of the larger colonial government framework, which was marked by bureaucratic administration, British control, and little indigenous involvement in positions of decision-making. However, Ghana's civil service has been essential to the administration and government of the nation since its independence. Ghana formed its civil service to oversee governmental matters following its 1957 independence from British colonial authority. The organization was designed after the British colonial government, with ministries, departments, and agencies handling different aspects of government. At first, the Ghanaian civil service adopted many British customs, such as the value placed on impartiality, professionalism, and meritocracy. Political affiliation was rarely a factor in hiring or advancement decisions; instead, performance evaluations and educational credentials were frequently used (Adu, 1969). But political meddling in the civil service become increasingly problematic over time. Subsequent administrations attempted to sway nominations and promotions in order to elevate loyalists to important roles, eroding the meritocratic values that had founded the service. The civil service has been reformed in an attempt to improve professionalism, efficacy, and efficiency, as was previously said (Thompson, 2020). Reforms aimed at addressing corruption, streamlining bureaucracy, and enhancing service delivery have all been implemented. But problems like corruption, inefficiency, and bureaucratic red tape still exist. The civil service continues to play a crucial role in advancing Ghana's development goals in spite of obstacles (Mbah and Ayuk, 2017). It is essential to the execution of public policy, the provision of public services, and the management of resources (Appiah, 1999). Since decision-makers understood how important having a trained and competent workforce is, efforts have been made to fund training and capacity building for government servants. In a similar vein, Ghana's civil service has collaborated and formed partnerships internationally in order to acquire best practices from other nations and institutions (Aye, 2013b). Furthermore, Ghana previously experienced a decline in production, which was partially caused by ineffective policies and poor bureaucratic administration. Indeed, the fall in the production of minerals and cash crops was caused by a

number of factors related to overstuffed and inefficient state enterprises, budgetary imbalances (Ayee, 2001). By 1981, the crippling attributes had not only limited the civil service's ability to carry out government development policies and its accountability for managing public and economic resources, but they had also negatively impacted morale and performance, leading to low productivity. Essentially, the Ghanaian civil service prior to the implementation of the PNDC's Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) was in a poor state and appeared ill-equipped to handle the implementation of the 1980s-formulated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) (Nkrumah, 1992). The Ghanaian government prioritized civil service reforms (CSRs) both during and after the country was emancipated from colonial domination. For practical as well as symbolic reasons, every post-independence succeeding administration, military or civilian, has to implement some type of change in Ghana's public service structure since administrative reform is now seen as a development accelerator (Nti, 1975). Following the respective declarations of independence and republicanism in 1957 and 1960, a number of Ministries and Government Departments were established, reorganized, or realigned to better meet the prevailing conditions. In this frame, the 1960 Civil Service Act (CA.5) was approved by the Constituent Assembly. It included a number of tasks, encompassing the establishment of Ministries and Departments, the appointment and retirement of civil servants, the terms of service, disciplinary actions, and other civil service related issues.

#### 4. Size and Distribution of Civil Service System

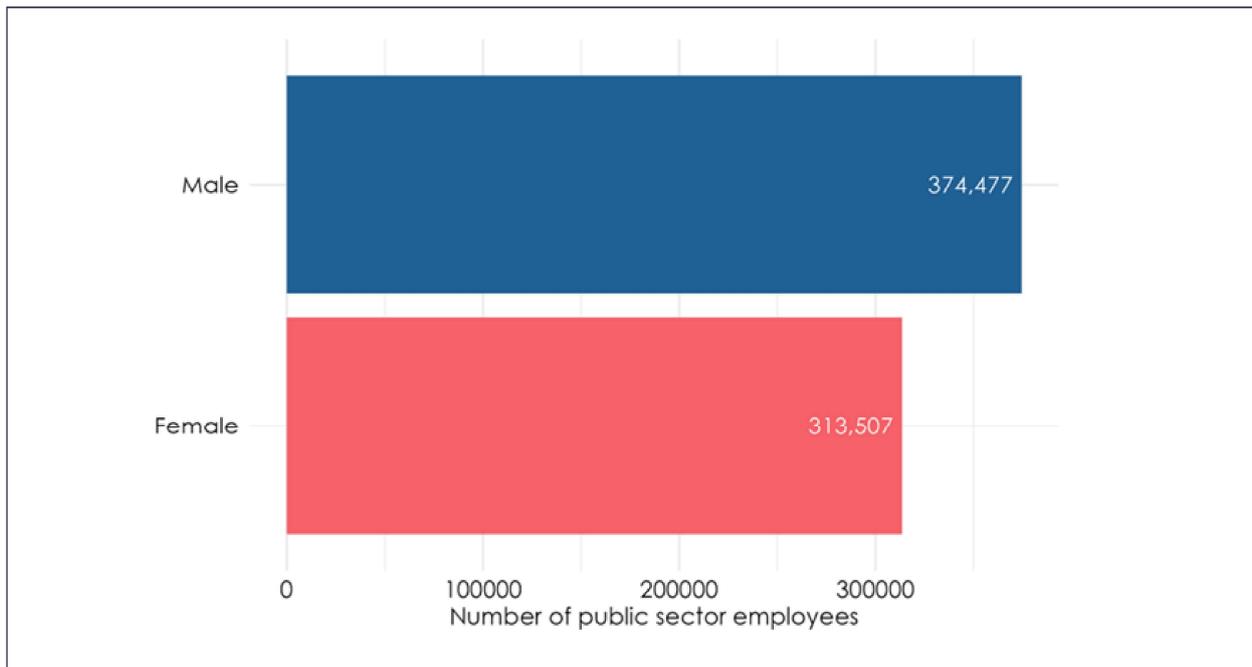
Dealing with size and distribution of Ghanaian civil service, the national organization is characterized by ten administrative regions, each led by a regional minister chosen by the president. At the upper echelons of local governance, there are three different kinds of assemblies: district, municipal, and metropolitan. As for size matter, the Government of Ghana employs about 688,000 persons, with over one-third (34.8%) of the employees in the Ashanti (18.2%) and Greater Accra (16.5%) regions. The North East (1.4%) and Savannah regions (1.4%) hold only 2.8% of the total number of public sector employees (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Number of Public Sector Employees by Region**

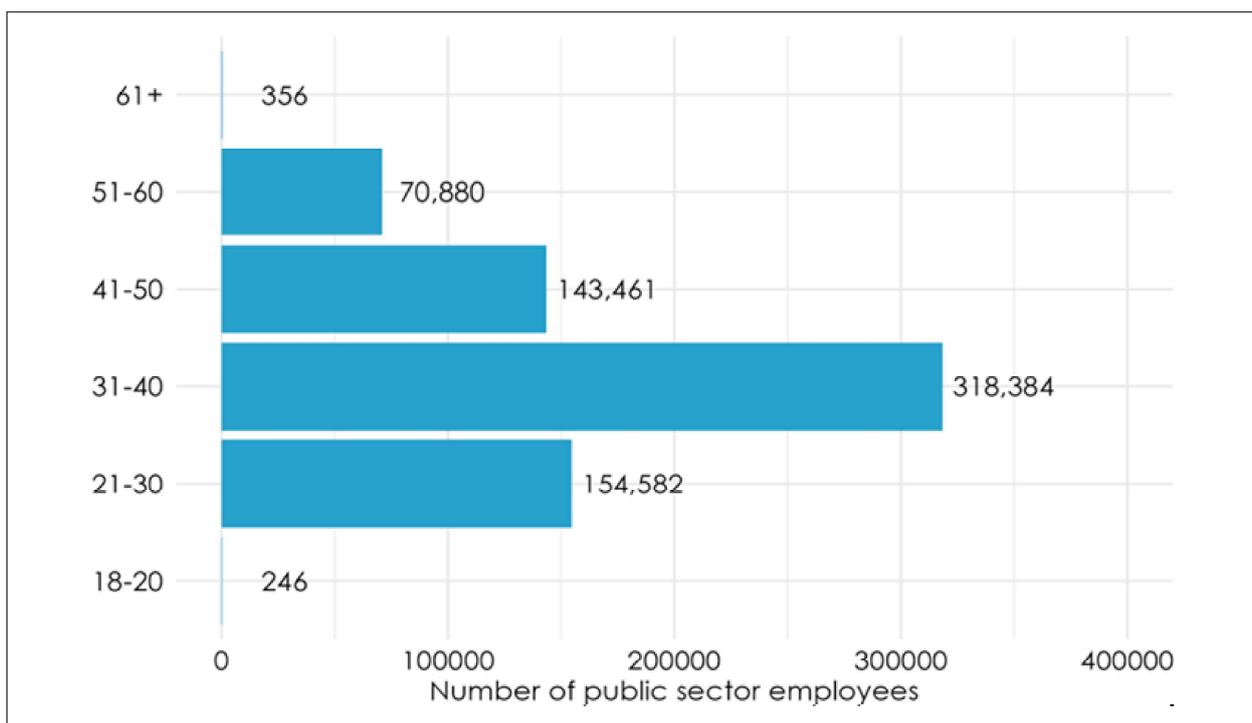
There are 687,984 active employees on the payroll for December 2022. On the other hand, this number decreases somewhat (<0.02%) for certain factors. For example, the age and work region records for 75 and 11 employees, respectively, were unavailable.

The Figures 2 and 3 shows the number of public servants by sectors, gender and age. Males in the public sector constitute 54.4% of the total number of employee.



**Figure 2: Number of Public Sector Employees by Gender**

*Source: Ghana 2022 Earnings Inequality In the Public Sector. Ghana Statistical Service.*

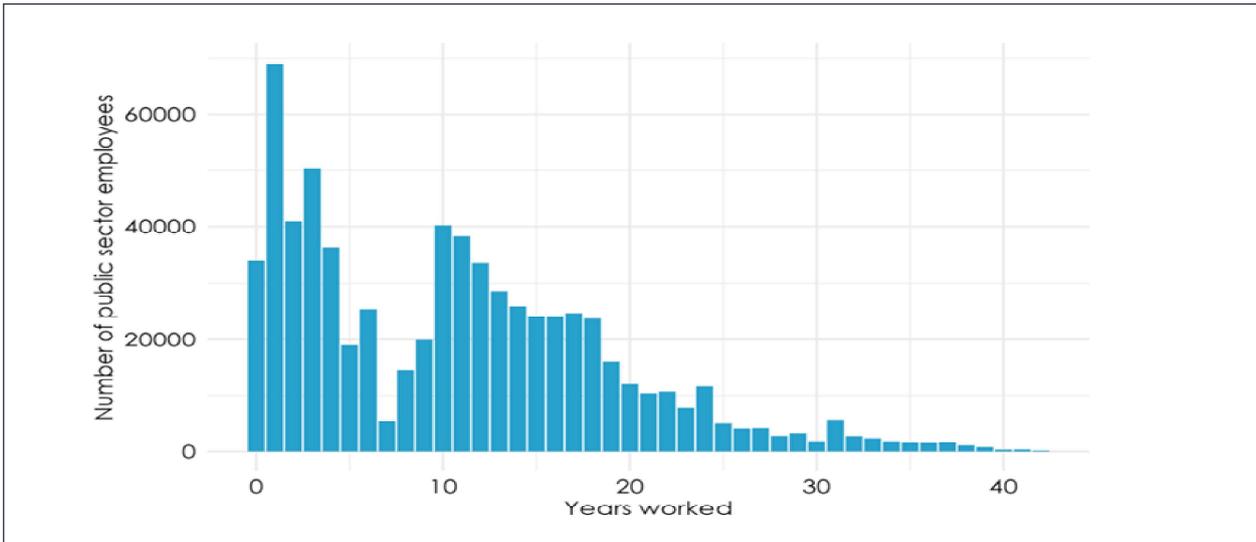


**Figure 3: Number of Public Sector Employees by Age Group**

*Source: Ghana 2022 Earnings Inequality In the Public Sector. Ghana Statistical Service.*

Almost half (46.3%) of public sector employees are between 31 and 40 years old.

Although there hasn't been a noticeable pattern in the number of public sector hires over the years, the government has typically hired more people in the last ten years or so (Figure 4).

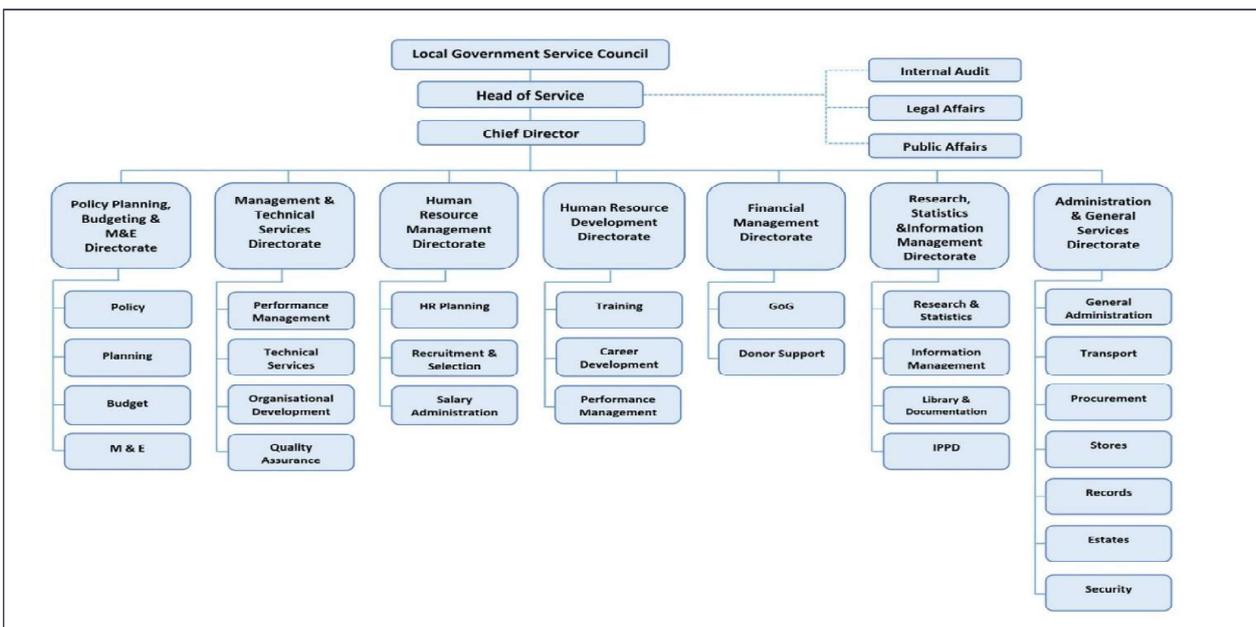


**Figure 4: Number of Public Sector Employees by Years Worked**

*Source: Ghana 2022 Earnings Inequality In the Public Sector. Ghana Statistical Service.*

In order to determine the number of years that current workers have been employed at their job, the number of employees per year worked is based on all current employees and their hiring date. As regards the distribution Ghana's civil service is divided over many government departments and tiers. It consists of ministries in charge of, among other things, infrastructure, agriculture, health, education, and finance. Furthermore, decentralized entities exist at the regional and district levels to guarantee efficient service provision throughout the nation. In order to guarantee that government services are provided to every region of the nation, there is a decentralized structure in addition to a centralized civil service system with ministries and agencies housed in Accra, the nation's capital. Local government and administration are handled by district offices and regional (Regional Ministries) and these offices as part of this decentralization (Friedrich-EbertStiftung, 1992).

As case example, in order to capture deeper the structure of local government or local civil service in Ghana, here below, it shows the organizational chart of the local public service.



**Figure 5: Organogram of Office of the Head of Local Government Service (OHLGS)**

*Source: [https://lgs.gov.gh/our\\_structure](https://lgs.gov.gh/our_structure)*

The following charts (Figures 6 and 7) illustrate the Ghanaian State structure and public sector.

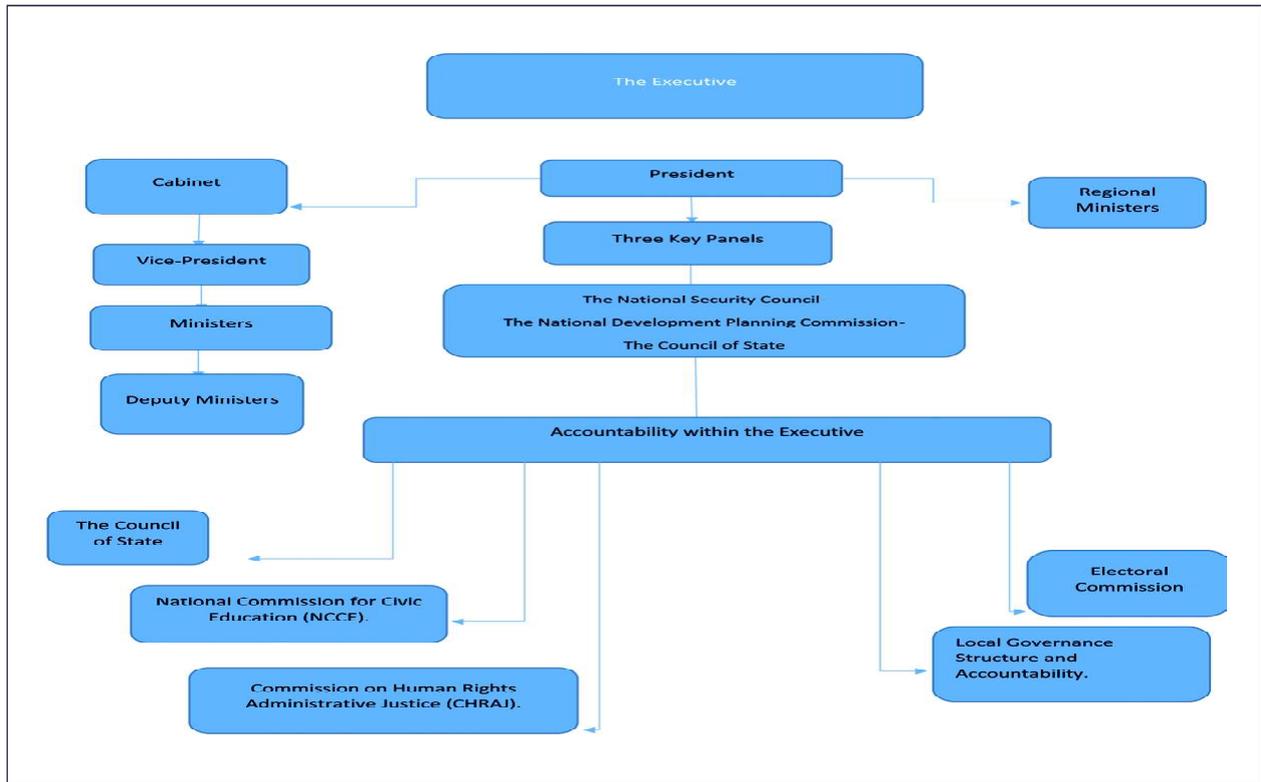


Figure 6: The Ghanaian Executive Power

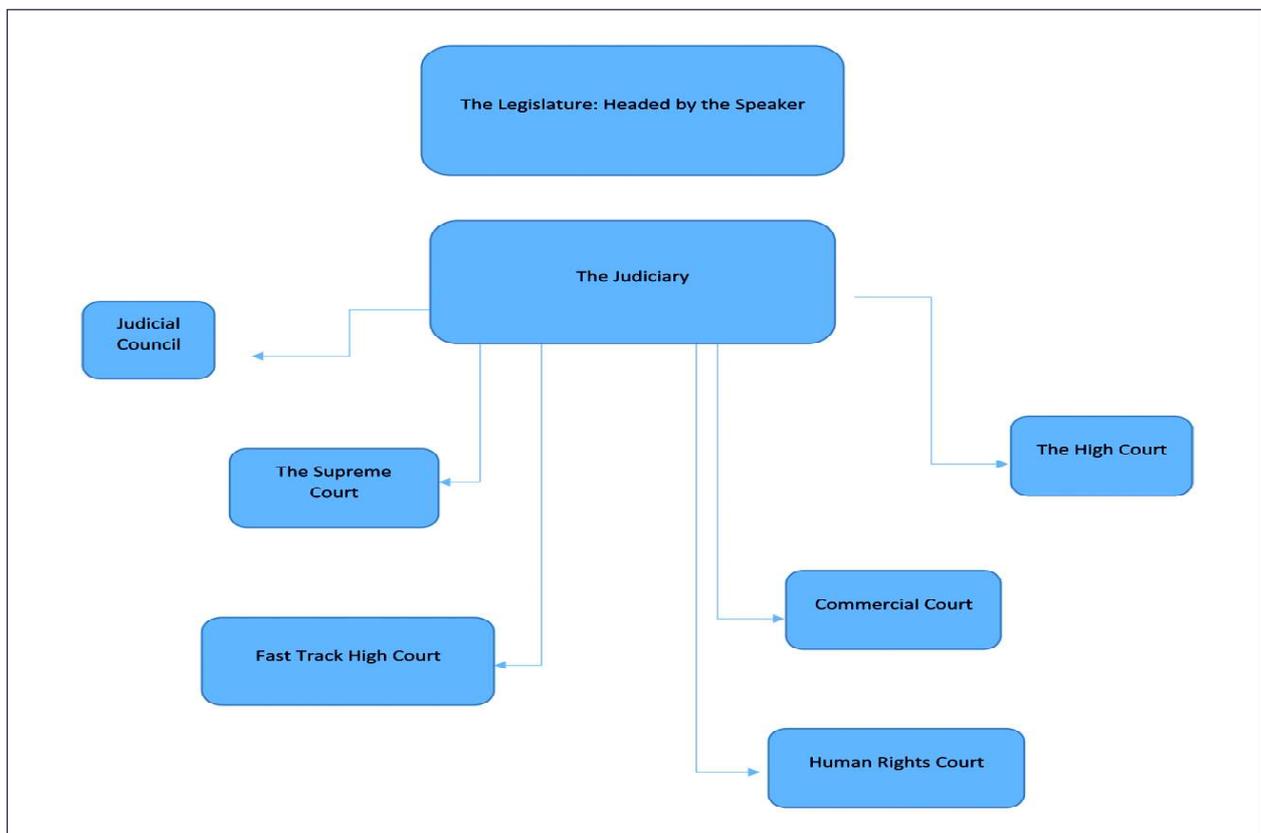


Figure 7: The Ghanaian Judiciary Power

## 5. Main Actors of the Civil Service in Ghana

The largest employer in Ghana is the Ghana Civil Service. The 1992 Ghanaian constitution states that the civil service is organized into hierarchical tiers, with several ministries and levels of administration. The President of Ghana, who is in charge of the whole civil service, is at the top of the hierarchy. Ministers, heads of departments, and heads of agencies are among the important public servants whose appointments are made by the President. The highest ranking civil worker is the secretary cabinet. According to the 1992 constitution, the president appoints the head of the Ghana Civil Service after consulting the Public Services Commission. In addition, the President appoints Ministers to lead the many departments that comprise Ghana's government. Ministries are in charge of creating policies, carrying out government initiatives, and managing a number of sectors, including agriculture, banking, health, and education. Similarly, ministries are further subdivided into agencies and departments, each of which specializes in particular facets of government. The Ghana Health Service is one example of such agency, while the Ministry of Health may include divisions in charge of pharmaceuticals, medical services, and public health. Additionally, as already said, Ghana is split up into districts and regions, each of which has its own administrative framework. District Chief Executives (DCEs) are in charge of managing the districts, while Regional Ministers are in charge of their particular regions (PNDCL, 2017). To put policies into effect locally, these administrators collaborate closely with ministries of the central government. The core of the civil service is made up of career civil officials, who are placed below political appointments. It is anticipated that these people would be hired on the basis of merit after a demanding test and interview procedure. Moreover, training institutes are the other essential component of the architecture of the public service. Their focus is on educating and developing public servants. These include the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) and the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC), which offer civil officials at all levels of government education, training, and capacity building. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is the final major player in the entire civil service system. Ensuring the integrity of the civil service system is the responsibility of its members, who are all nominated by the President of the Republic.

The commission is in charge of hiring, promoting, disciplining, and making sure civil service rules are followed. To uphold the impartiality and professionalism of the civil service, the PSC runs on its own. Furthermore, it appears crucial to emphasize that the PSC oversees the public service, even though Ghana's civil service is still primarily structured by British colonial legacy (Asibuo, 1991). To be more specific, it may be appropriate to elaborate a little bit more in order to include the other components of the Ghanaian civil service system as follows:

- Public Service: Civil Service; Judicial service; Audit Service; Education Service; Prison Service; Parliamentary Service; Health Service; Statistical Service; National Fire Service; Customs, Excise and Preventive Service; Internal Revenue Service; Police Service; Immigration Service and Legal Service;
- Public corporations other than those set up as commercial ventures.

## 6. Issues of the Civil Service System

Ghana, like many other African nations, is facing a variety of difficulties in spite of several attempts to promote the implementation of reforms. Political interference is, in fact, one of the major issues the Ghanaian public service faces (Appiah, 1999). Politicians frequently meddle in hiring, promoting, and transferring federal personnel on the basis of their political connections rather than their qualifications. In a similar vein, corruption is another widespread problem in the Ghanaian civil service. Bribery, embezzlement, and favouritism are just a few examples of the corrupt practices that bureaucrats may engage in. These practices not only erode public trust but also obstruct effective service delivery and development initiatives (Ayee, 1999). Low capacity and skills gap is another serious problem. Although the government has made financial efforts to close this gap, the civil service still has a shortage of skilled workers in the fields like technology and Project management (Ayee, 1999). Excessive bureaucratic procedures and red tape impede timely delivery of public services and slow down decision-making processes, as observed in many other African nations (Thompson, 2020). Furthermore, the civil service's capacity to perform its duties efficiently is hampered by the inadequate infrastructure and resources, which include funds, office space, and equipment. It also seems important to emphasize that Ghanaian government officials frequently deal with moral conundrums, particularly when external actors or superiors put pressure on them to commit immoral or unlawful acts (Williams and Yecaló-Teclé, 2020). Additionally, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is tasked with overseeing and controlling recruiting, as well as the entry and promotion exams but the situation is more nuanced. As a result, merit-based systems face significant obstacles that are hard to overcome even with repeated government improvements. In fact, nepotism and corruption are still common in some places, which compromises the integrity of the hiring and advancement procedures. For these reasons, fewer competent people are appointed, undermining the meritocracy principles (Ayee, 1999). Although there are laws supporting merit-based systems, various industries and geographical areas frequently apply them in diverse ways. Dealing with less motivated government servants is frequently the outcome of this inconsistency, which exacerbates inequities and discontent among civil

servants (Williams and Yecaló-Teclé, 2020). In a similar line, research by certain academics has shown that funding limitations and scarce resources might reduce the efficacy of training initiatives and performance reviews. This may have an impact on government officials' general productivity and motivation. Though, nepotism, immunity from punishment, and a lack of adequate checks on enforcement mechanisms are all mentioned in Ghana's civil service code of conduct (Akosa *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, gender discrimination in the civil service, or more specifically, the career impediments that women in Ghana encounter, is another ongoing issue that has to be brought up. This reality is not unique to Ghana, but it is unavoidably associated with certain stereotypes, including sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and patriarchal behaviors (Utkina and Efimova, 2022). Ghana's civil service will become more efficient and sophisticated in the future, despite all of these problems, if there is a strong and deep-seated political desire to address them.

## 7. Methodology

Our method is based on case study-approach gathering qualitative data. We conducted a documental and historical analysis by scrutinizing historical documents emphasizing Ghana civil service matters and challenges. Statistical data and reports, media and second-hand literature have been utilized to underpin the political and administrative measures taken since the pre-colonial era up to post-colonial and contemporary period. We employed content analysis to analyze the presence, significance, and connections of critical documents, themes, and concepts. Our methodology helped present a detailed Ghana case history, challenges and perspectives over the problematic of civil service system.

## 8. Summary of Findings

The study on policies and measures of government over civil service in Ghana and its implications for development have generated several findings. Indeed, the country has been using a performance assessment system in recent years to try and increase the productivity of the civil service sector by trying to enhance the performance of its civil officials. According to this perspective, several polls revealed that workers' opinions of the assessment system were unfavourable. Additionally, it was found that employee performance reviews do not accurately reflect their work. Furthermore, particular performance is not encouraged by the current assessment system. Nonetheless, the study discovered that reports from performance appraisals served as the basis for decisions on transfers, promotions, and demotions. But still, the lack of human and technical resources to carry out tasks satisfactorily for an effective performance appraisal system constitute a significant constraint. Overall, a number of African states, including Ghana, have been attempting to implement the New Public Management (NPM) practices in various ways. These include establishing decentralization through the delegation of authority, implementing performance measurement to assess public service, or starting public-private partnerships (PPPs) to promote collaborations between the public and private sectors. However, several obstacles make unsuccessful the adoption of NPM in developing countries. In reality, NPM practices and principles, which might be a sustainable answer for economic growth, struggle to be implemented because of problems including institutional inadequacies, resource limits, political interference, and cultural variables (Bashéka and Tshombe, 2018). We finally found that, the Ghana's civil service future essentially depends on the capacity of decision-makers to insist much more on the ongoing reforms to decentralize and innovate while strengthening the institutions and securing gender equality, transparency and accountability.

## 9. Results and Discussion: Perspective of Ghana Civil Service System

There are two ways to look at the civil service system in Ghana: the opportunities that lie ahead and the improvements that have already been implemented. They include a range of opinions and worries from many parties, such as people, government representatives, public services, and foreign observers. These viewpoints may generally be examined from numerous important angles. The adoption of e-governance and decentralization initiatives are examples of progressive changes that have improved efficiency and service delivery in some areas (Bashéka and Tshombe, 2018). Nonetheless, bureaucratic red tape is often criticized for stifling decision-making and service delivery. The efficient operation of civil services is then frequently hampered by a lack of financing and resources. In terms of anti-corruption activities, it is important to highlight some of the steps taken by the government and civil society to fight corruption, such as the creation of anti-corruption agencies and legislative frameworks. Besides, concerns have also been raised over the absence of accountability systems to deal with inefficiencies and corruption including political meddling in hiring and promotion weakening the merit-based system and results in a workforce that lacks motivation (Sigman *et al.*, 2018). In terms of human resource management, continuous training courses and capacity-building projects are designed to enhance the abilities and expertise of public employees. Furthermore, advancements in service delivery have timidly but favorably affected public opinion in a number of areas, including health and education. But enduring problems with incompetence, corruption, and political meddling have made the people generally mistrust the civil service. In the

meantime, increased access to services and openness have resulted from the public administration's deployment of digital technologies. However, the advantages of digital efforts are not shared equally, since rural regions sometimes lack the infrastructure necessary to successfully access these services (Kwadwo, 2023). Though there is frequently a gap between policy formulation and implementation, which leads to well-designed policies not achieving their intended outcomes, efforts have been made to reach satisfactory results. It is important to emphasize that an excessive reliance on outside assistance can occasionally prevent the country from pursuing long-term internal development projects and becoming self-sufficient. Moreover, as many scholars stressed, a model of a top-down and bottom-up strategy would be more efficient in developing countries like Ghana than the only-based top-down approach even if till now less effectiveness has been recorded in a-like countries. Lastly, some research found that while practices linked to incentives or bureaucrat monitoring are negatively associated with project completion, practices related to autonomy in Ghana's civil service are positively observed in project completion.

## 10. Conclusion

The study's main focus is on the obstacles, achievements, and potential areas for development in Ghana's civil service. It was discovered that a large number of the changes carried out since the country's 1957 independence had little effect and had not accelerated economic growth. According to our data, there are differing opinions of Ghana's public services, despite the country's remarkable successes and ongoing difficulties. Even though there have been great advancements in increasing productivity, decreasing corruption, and incorporating technology, there are still many obstacles to overcome, including political meddling, resource limitations, inadequate cultural integration, and public mistrust. Future improvements to Ghana's civil services and sustainable economic development depend on ongoing reforms pertaining to decentralization, policy innovation, institutional strengthening, compensation and incentive systems, gender equality, cultural inclusion, capacity building, and initiatives to increase transparency and accountability.

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