

**REBRANDING THE GHANA CIVIL SERVICE FOR SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN POLITICAL APPOINTEES AND
BUREAUCRATS IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

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Abstract

The effectiveness of the Ghana Civil Service (GCS) as the institutional backbone of governance has long been undermined by persistent challenges of politicization, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and weak accountability mechanisms. Despite decades of reforms, most notably, New Public Management (NPM)-driven initiatives such as the Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme, GCS continues to struggle with issues of role ambiguity, mistrust, and capacity deficits. This study examines the dynamics between political appointees and career bureaucrats in Ghana with the objective of identifying strategies for fostering effective collaboration as a pathway toward rebranding GCS for sustainable governance. Drawing on Collaborative Governance Theory and NPM principles, the research adopts a qualitative case study design using semi-structured interviews with purposively selected political appointees and bureaucrats across ministries and agencies. Thematic analysis of the data reveals that while initial tensions often define political-bureaucratic interactions, trust-building, clarity of roles, and professional capacity development can foster synergy and improved policy implementation. Key barriers identified include excessive political interference, the creation of parallel advisory structures, inadequate resources, and

bureaucratic inertia. The study proposes a hybrid reform model that combines NPM's emphasis on efficiency and accountability with Collaborative Governance's participatory and trust-based mechanisms. This hybrid approach offers a framework for institutionalizing collaboration, enhancing meritocratic recruitment, strengthening leadership capacity, and improving public perceptions of GCS. The findings have important implications for governance reform in Ghana, contributing to policy, practice, and theory by highlighting how collaboration between political and bureaucratic actors can be harnessed to strengthen state capacity and ensure sustainable governance outcomes.

Key words: Parallel Civil Service, New Public Management, Rebranding, Accountability, Leadership, Career Bureaucrats, Loyalty, trust,

1.1 Background to the Study

The effectiveness of civil service in translating political agendas into tangible policies is a critical determinant of a nation's progress and stability. Across the globe, governments are grappling with the challenge of optimizing their administrative machinery to meet the evolving demands of their citizens and the complexities of the modern world (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Reform initiatives, often inspired by New Public Management (NPM) principles, have been widely adopted to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability within these vital institutions (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2015). However, the wholesale application of NPM principles has not always yielded the desired outcomes, particularly in developing countries where unique contextual factors can impede the successful implementation of such reforms (Agbevade & Koduah, 2020).

In the specific context of Africa, civil service play a pivotal role in driving development and ensuring effective governance. Yet, many African nations continue to face challenges such as alleged bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and a lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs (Nzamba & Oğuz, 2025). These challenges often stem from a complex interplay of factors, including capacity constraints, inadequate resources, and the politicization of civil service appointments. The relationship between political appointees and career bureaucrats is particularly critical, as it can either foster collaboration and synergy or breed conflict and instability within the administrative machinery (Nyarko, Antwi, & Antwi-Boasiako, 2019).

Ghana, since its independence, has recognized the Ghana Civil Service (GCS) as the cornerstone of its administrative structure. GCS is entrusted with the crucial responsibility of converting

political mandates into actionable policies and delivering essential services to the populace (Fobih, 2020). Over the past two decades, Ghana has embarked on a series of reform initiatives, most notably the Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP), aimed at embedding NPM principles within GCS. These principles include decentralization of authority, performance contracting to enhance accountability, and a stronger focus on citizen satisfaction through customer orientation (Agbevade & Koduah, 2020; Fobih, 2020).

While these reform efforts have yielded some improvements in specific service-delivery areas, persistent challenges continue to undermine GCS's overall effectiveness. These challenges include ongoing inefficiencies, accountability gaps, and inconsistent implementation of policies across various ministries (Agbevade & Koduah, 2020). A significant factor

contributing to these challenges is the often-strained relationship between political appointees and career bureaucrats. Changes in elected governments frequently lead to widespread turnover in senior civil-service positions, with appointments often based on political affiliations rather than merit or expertise (Nyarko et al., 2019). Such politicization disrupts institutional memory, weakens the capacity of career civil servants to implement long-term policy reforms, and creates an environment of uncertainty and mistrust (Nzamba & Oguz, 2025; Nyarko et al., 2019). In the light of these challenges, the Collaborative Governance Theory offers a promising framework for reimagining the interactions between political appointees and career bureaucrats within GCS. Collaborative Governance emphasizes the importance of bringing together diverse stakeholders, including political leaders, bureaucrats, civil societies, and the private sector, into structured, consensus-oriented decision-making processes (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2015). This approach

can enhance the legitimacy of policies, facilitate resource sharing, and improve implementation capacity by leveraging the expertise and perspectives of all relevant actors. While Collaborative Governance has been successfully applied in other developing-countries context, its deliberate and systematic adoption within the Ghanaian civil service environment remains limited (Bryson et al., 2015).

Furthermore, while NPM paradigm has driven much of Ghana's civil service reform agenda, its potential has been hampered by capacity constraints, inadequate training, and cultural resistance within GCS (Fobih, 2020; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). These limitations suggest that a hybrid reform model, one that combines the results-oriented focus of NPM with the inclusive, network-based approach of Collaborative Governance, may offer a novel pathway for rebranding GCS toward sustainable, high-performance governance. Such a hybrid approach could

foster a more collaborative and synergistic relationship between political appointees and career bureaucrats, leveraging the strengths of both groups to achieve shared goals and improve service delivery for the benefit of all Ghanaians.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Ghana Civil Service (GCS) has undergone numerous reform initiatives designed to enhance efficiency, accountability, and service delivery, including the Civil Service Performance Improvement Programmeme and various New Public Management (NPM)-inspired measures. Despite these efforts, significant challenges continue to impede its effectiveness (Agbevade & Koduah, 2020; Fobih, 2020). Empirical evidence indicates that excessive partisanship, narrow political commitment, and a lack of sustained reform momentum significantly hinder the development of a results-oriented public sector in Ghana (Nyarko, Antwi, & Antwi-Boasiako, 2019).

One underexplored factor contributing to these challenges is the strained relationship between political appointees and career bureaucrats. The frequent turnover of political leadership and the consequent appointment of bureaucrats based on loyalty rather than merit disrupts continuity and undermines institutional memory (Nyarko et al., 2019; Nzamba & Oğuz, 2025). This practice not only reduces the morale of long-serving civil servants but also impedes the implementation of long-term policies and reforms. The morale and productivity of civil servants are compromised when merit and experience are overlooked in favour of political allegiance (Nzamba & Oğuz, 2025).

The increasing tendency of ministers to hire personal advisors and consultants further exacerbates these challenges. This creates a “parallel” civil service operating outside established bureaucratic frameworks, undermining the authority and

effectiveness of the formal civil service (Fobih, 2020; Nzamba & Oğuz, 2025). As these advisors are not always subject to the same performance management systems, this parallelism raises concerns about accountability and transparency. This duality creates confusion and inefficiencies, as lines of authority become blurred and established protocols are bypassed.

In theory, Collaborative Governance emphasizes the importance of cross-sector collaboration in achieving public goals; however, its application within Ghana civil service remains limited (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2015). Similarly, although New Public Management (NPM) principles, advocating for clear performance metrics, customer orientation, and decentralized decision-making, have informed Ghana’s reforms, their full realization has been impeded by capacity constraints and resistance to change (Fobih, 2020; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

These theoretical frameworks offer potential solutions but require careful adaptation to the Ghanaian context.

Current literature often treats political appointees and bureaucrats as separate entities, neglecting the complex interplay between these actors and their impact on governance outcomes. The existing body of knowledge lacks empirical studies that specifically examine how effective collaboration between political appointees and career civil servants can drive the rebranding of GCS toward sustainable governance. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring these relational dynamics and proposing collaboration-based strategies grounded in Collaborative Governance and NPM frameworks. Thus, providing a more in-depth understanding of these dynamics, this research seeks to offer practical strategies for fostering a more collaborative and effective civil service in Ghana.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Goal of the Study

This study aims to investigate the dynamics between political appointees and career bureaucrats within the Ghana Civil Service (GCS) to identify strategies for fostering effective collaboration that can drive the rebranding of GCS towards sustainable governance.

1.3.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the current state of collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats within GCS.
2. To identify the key barriers hindering effective collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats in GCS.

3. To ascertain the strategies for rebranding GCS through enhanced collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats, aimed at achieving sustainable governance.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the current level of collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats within the Ghana Civil Service?
2. What are the primary obstacles impeding effective collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats in GCS?
3. What specific strategies can be implemented to rebrand the Ghana Civil Service through improved collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats, ultimately promoting sustainable governance?

1.5 Significance and Contribution of the Study

The study holds immense significance and contributes to the fields of policy, practice, and research in several ways. The study addresses a critical gap in understanding the collaborative dynamics between political appointees and bureaucrats in Ghana. In exploring the nuances of this relationship, the study sheds light on the complexities and challenges that arise in the process of rebranding GCS. This understanding is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners who are invested in improving governance outcomes in Ghana.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the field of policy by providing insights into the importance of effective collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats. The findings highlight the need for policies that foster a collaborative environment where political appointees and bureaucrats can work together towards common goals. This is particularly

important in the context of rebranding GCS, where a shared vision and collaborative efforts are essential for success. Also, the study contributes to the field of practice by offering practical strategies for enhancing collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats. The findings provide actionable insights that can be implemented by leaders and managers in GCS to improve collaboration and governance outcomes. For instance, the study highlights the importance of building trust, fostering open communication, and promoting mutual respect between political appointees and bureaucrats.

Moreover, the study contributes to the field of research by integrating theoretical insights with empirical analysis. In this regard, drawing on relevant theories and frameworks, the study provides a nuanced perspective on rebranding GCS. This approach not only enhances the rigour and validity of the study

but also contributes to the broader body of knowledge on collaboration, leadership, and management in the public sector.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study delves into the intricacies of the Ghana Civil Service (GCS), specifically examining the dynamic interplay between political appointees and bureaucrats. The research is deliberately focused on selected ministries and agencies within GCS to allow for a more in-depth investigation. Concentrating on these specific areas, the study aimed to gain a nuanced understanding of the collaborative dynamics that shape governance outcomes. Furthermore, the research adopts a qualitative approach, prioritizing rich, descriptive data that unveils the underlying factors influencing the collaborative relationships between political appointees and career bureaucrats. This methodology allows for a comprehensive exploration of the challenges, opportunities, and implications of these interactions for

sustainable governance within the Ghanaian context. The insights gleaned from this focused-qualitative inquiry are intended to contribute valuable knowledge towards understanding and potentially improving the effectiveness of GCS in achieving its mandate.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Collaborative Governance Theory offers a framework for understanding how effective public problem-solving can be achieved through structured, consensus-oriented processes. Integration is key, as this theory emphasizes the need to bring together government actors, along with civil society organizations, and the private sector (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2015). Within this model, leadership is redefined as a networked activity, moving away from traditional hierarchical structures. The success of

collaborative governance rests on cultivating trust, fostering a shared understanding of goals and challenges, and establishing mutual accountability among the diverse stakeholders involved (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012). Applying this theory to the Ghana Civil Service (GCS) suggests that political appointees and career bureaucrats can work together to develop effective policy solutions. This collaboration can be facilitated through the creation of joint decision-making platforms, the development of shared performance metrics that all parties agree upon, and the strategic leveraging of each other's expertise. These efforts can help to break down traditional organizational "siloes" that often impede effective governance (Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012).

Given the strengths and weaknesses of both Collaborative Governance and NPM, this study proposes a hybrid model that integrates the best aspects of each approach. To combine the

rigorous accountability mechanisms characteristic of NPM with the inclusive, participatory decision-making processes central to Collaborative Governance, the research aims to identify a framework that fosters both efficiency and effective governance within GCS. The hybrid model seeks to overcome the limitations of relying solely on one approach or the other, proposing a more nuanced and robust approach to public sector administration in Ghana. This balanced approach recognizes that while accountability and efficiency are important goals, they should not come at the expense of citizen engagement, stakeholder collaboration, and a commitment to broader public values. To carefully integrate elements of both Collaborative Governance and NPM, the hybrid model seeks to create a more responsive, effective, and accountable civil service that can better serve the needs of the Ghanaian people. This model acknowledges that effective governance requires a delicate balance between top-down accountability and bottom-up participation, and that

neither approach alone is sufficient to address the complex challenges facing the public sector in Ghana.

2.2 Empirical Review

Existing research on the Ghanaian Civil Service (GCS) offers valuable insights into the challenges of politicization, bureaucratic dysfunction, and reform implementation. However, several gaps remain in empirical literature, hindering a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play and limiting the development of effective interventions. These gaps include an isolated focus on either politicization or bureaucratic dysfunction, a neglect of collaborative mechanisms, limited application of hybrid theoretical models, a scarcity of qualitative process-oriented studies, and an underexplored role of grassroots engagement in civil service rebranding. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing both academic knowledge and practical improvements in governance.

A significant portion of the literature tends to examine either the impact of political interference or the internal workings of the civil service in isolation. For instance, Fobih (2020) and Agbevade and Koduah (2020) document the consequences of leadership turnover and narrow political commitment on policy continuity within GCS. Their analyses highlight how frequent changes in political leadership and a lack of sustained political will, can disrupt long-term policy objectives and undermine institutional memory. However, these studies often stop short of exploring how these external political pressures interact with the internal processes and structures of the civil service.

Similarly, Nyarko, Antwi, and Antwi-Boasiako (2019) shed light on the demoralizing effects of partisan staffing on civil servants. Their research indicates that when appointments are perceived as politically motivated rather than based on merit, it can lead to decreased morale, reduced productivity, and a

decline in the overall quality of public service. Nevertheless, this line of inquiry often fails to investigate how bureaucrats themselves may actively mitigate or exacerbate the effects of politicization. The reciprocal dynamics between political appointees and career civil servants, particularly in situations of political pressure, remain largely unexplored. This oversight is crucial because the responses of civil servants can significantly shape the outcomes of political interventions and determine the resilience of the civil service.

Another notable gap in the literature is the limited attention given to collaborative mechanisms as potential solutions to the challenges facing GCS. Fuenzalida and Riccucci (2019) as well as Nzamba and Oğuz (2025) effectively demonstrate how politicization and the creation of parallel advisory structures can weaken formal accountability systems. These studies highlight that when political actors bypass established bureaucratic

procedures and create alternative channels of advice and decision-making, it undermines the authority and effectiveness of the civil service. However, the issue is often framed as a problem of bypassed procedures rather than as an opportunity for designing and implementing collaborative governance mechanisms.

Empirical evidence is notably lacking on specific institutional arrangements that could foster collaboration between political appointees and career civil servants. For example, inter-group liaison committees, which bring together representatives from both political and bureaucratic spheres to facilitate communication and co-ordination, could potentially bridge the gap between political directives and bureaucratic implementation. Similarly, joint performance-monitoring teams, comprising members from both groups, could ensure that performance metrics are aligned with both political priorities

and bureaucratic capabilities. These types of mechanisms could harness the expertise of both political and bureaucratic actors, leading to more effective and sustainable policy outcomes.

While New Public Management (NPM) principles have significantly influenced Ghana's reform agenda (Fobih, 2020; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017), Collaborative Governance Theory has been applied in other African contexts (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2015), indicating that there is a dearth of empirical research evaluating a combined NPM–collaborative approach within GCS. NPM emphasizes market-oriented performance metrics, efficiency, and accountability, while Collaborative Governance Theory focuses on cross-sector consensus-building and stakeholder engagement. Understanding how these two approaches can be integrated to address the specific challenges of GCS remains largely unexplored.

No study to date, has rigorously tested whether integrating market-oriented performance metrics with cross-sector consensus processes can effectively overcome entrenched inefficiencies and politicization within GCS. Such research is critical for determining whether a hybrid approach can lead to more effective and sustainable reforms, particularly in a context where both efficiency and inclusivity are essential for good governance.

Much of the existing empirical literature relies on broad surveys or secondary analyses (Agbevade & Koduah, 2020; Nyarko et al., 2019). While these methods provide valuable insights into general trends and patterns, they often lack the depth and nuance necessary to understand the complex dynamics within GCS. Few studies employ in-depth qualitative methods, such as participant observation in ministerial meetings or longitudinal case studies of specific ministries, to unpack how daily

interactions between political appointees and bureaucrats shape reform trajectories.

This gap in process-level understanding is significant because it limits the ability to identify the specific mechanisms through which collaborative practices (or the lack thereof) evolve. Qualitative research can provide rich contextual data that can illuminate the subtle ways in which political pressures, bureaucratic norms, and interpersonal relationships influence the implementation of policies and reforms.

Finally, the potential for grassroots engagement to reinforce collaborative governance within central ministries remains underexplored. Lessons from Nigeria's local government reforms (Shiyanbade et al., 2024) underscore the power of participatory budgeting and oversight committees in enhancing accountability and responsiveness. However, there is little empirical work examining how similar grassroots or citizen-

informed mechanisms might rebrand the national civil service and foster a greater sense of public trust and legitimacy.

The potential for community engagement to inform and shape the priorities of central ministries, as well as to provide feedback on the effectiveness of government programmes, could significantly enhance the collaborative capacity of GCS. By involving citizens in the policymaking process, the civil service can become more responsive to the needs of the public and more accountable for its actions.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study adopts an interpretivist philosophy, which posits that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the perspectives and meanings attributed by individuals (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Interpretivism is particularly appropriate

for investigating the collaborative dynamics between political appointees and bureaucrats, as these interactions are shaped by perceptions, beliefs, and subjective experiences. Unlike positivism, which assumes an objective, measurable reality, interpretivism allows for a nuanced exploration of how actors within GCS interpret their roles and negotiate collaboration. Using multiple realities, this philosophy enables the study to capture the complexities, contestations, and meanings embedded in political–bureaucratic interactions.

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative case study design was employed to generate an in-depth understanding of collaboration within GCS. Case studies are particularly useful for examining contemporary social phenomena in their real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are blurred (Yin, 2018). This design was selected because it allows for rich,

contextualized exploration of how collaboration unfolds across ministries and agencies. Multiple cases were purposively chosen to enable cross-case comparisons and to identify patterns, divergences, and contextual variations in collaborative practices. The case study approach also provided space to capture narratives and insights that might not emerge through quantitative approaches.

3.3 Research Approach

The study followed an inductive approach, moving from specific participant accounts to broader patterns and conceptual insights. Induction is particularly suited to exploratory research where the aim is to generate, rather than test, theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this study, the researcher began with participants' lived experiences and iteratively analyzed them to identify recurring themes that could inform an understanding of collaboration in GCS. This approach ensured that the findings were grounded in

empirical realities rather than imposed by preconceived hypotheses.

3.4 Population and Sampling

The population for the study comprised political appointees and career bureaucrats working within selected ministries and agencies in Ghana. Political appointees are individuals appointed to leadership positions with a mandate to advance the government's policy agenda, while bureaucrats are career civil servants who bring institutional memory and technical expertise. Stratified purposive sampling was used to ensure representation across various ministries, levels of seniority, and functional domains. This strategy allowed the study to capture diverse perspectives while ensuring relevance to the objectives. Participants were selected based on their professional roles, experience, and direct engagement in political–bureaucratic collaboration.

3.5 Research Instrument and Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection instrument. This choice was made because interviews enable participants to express their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in their own words while giving the researcher flexibility to probe further for clarification and depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elucidate reflections on the state of collaboration, barriers encountered, and possible strategies for enhancing synergy. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or via virtual platforms, depending on participant availability. All sessions were audio-recorded with consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify and interpret patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process included familiarization with transcripts, coding of relevant segments, and clustering of codes into themes that addressed the study objectives. NVivo software was used to support coding, organization, and retrieval of data. Themes were iteratively refined to ensure coherence, representativeness, and analytical depth. The inductive approach ensured that findings emerged from the data rather than being forced into pre-existing categories.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Participants were provided with clear information on the purpose of the study, their rights, and assurances of confidentiality. Written informed consent was secured before

interviews commenced. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned during transcription, and sensitive details were removed. Data was securely stored and accessible only to the research team. The study adhered to principles of transparency, voluntary participation, and respect for participants' perspectives (Emerald Publishing, 2023).

4.0 Results and Discussion

The Ghana Civil Service (GCS) plays a pivotal role in the machinery of governance, functioning as the institutional backbone that ensures continuity, policy implementation, and administrative efficiency. However, the dynamic between political appointees and career bureaucrats within GCS has historically been complex, shaped by political transitions, institutional reforms, and the broader governance culture of Ghana. The present study sought to explore these dynamics in order to rebrand the civil service for sustainable governance,

with a particular focus on collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats.

The objectives of this study were threefold: (1) to assess the current state of collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats within GCS; (2) to identify the barriers hindering effective collaboration; and (3) to ascertain strategies for rebranding GCS through enhanced collaboration for sustainable governance.

The interview findings, drawn from the perspectives of both career civil servants and political appointees, illuminate the complexities of these relationships. The dataset revealed recurring themes, such as trust, role clarity, political interference, bureaucratic inertia, and capacity building, which featured prominently in both qualitative narratives and frequency analysis of key terms. For instance, the most frequently occurring words across the dataset were “*political*”

(45), “civil” (44), “appointees” (33), “servants” (25), and “trust” (15), all of which point to the centrality of the political–bureaucratic interface in shaping governance outcomes.

This section addresses the first objective of the study: to assess the current state of collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats within GCS. The analysis proceeds by examining the nature of interactions between these actors, drawing on empirical evidence from interviewees, and situating the findings within the broader discourse of governance and public administration.

4.1 Assessing the Current State of Collaboration

The State of Collaboration

The collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats in Ghana can best be described as uneven and evolving. Interviews reveal a spectrum ranging from strained

relationships characterized by mistrust to constructive partnerships marked by mutual recognition of expertise.

On the one hand, there is evidence of initial tension when new political appointees assume office. Career bureaucrats often perceive appointees as outsiders who may attempt to impose partisan agendas, while appointees sometimes view bureaucrats as resistant to change or as aligned with previous political regimes. This tension tends to create an atmosphere of caution, suspicion, and even rivalry.

On the other hand, the interviews also show that over time, working relationships can improve. As appointees familiarize themselves with bureaucratic processes and bureaucrats recognize the ideas and energy that appointees bring, collaboration tends to become more productive. The narratives suggest that mutual adaptation is key: bureaucrats adapt to the leadership styles of appointees, while appointees begin to rely

on the institutional memory and technical expertise of bureaucrats.

Evidence from Civil Servants

Civil servants consistently acknowledged both the tensions and the eventual opportunities for collaboration. Civil Servant 1, for example, noted:

“There is supposed to be good rapport, but recently politicians tend to bring their own political party members as special assistants, which sometimes sidelines civil servants and causes tension.”

This quote illustrates the dual nature of collaboration. While the expectation is for smooth rapport, the practice of appointing partisan aides undermines trust and creates friction.

Similarly, Civil Servant 2 highlighted the evolution of relationships:

“Initially, there were tension and lack of trust on both sides, with political appointees not trusting the bureaucrats and vice versa. Over time, bureaucrats realized that some political appointees were professionals bringing good ideas, and appointees recognized the expertise of civil servants, leading to better collaboration”.

This suggests that while collaboration begins on a shaky foundation, time and demonstrated competence can shift the relationship toward greater synergy.

Positive experiences were also shared. Civil Servant 3 recounted:

“A political appointee from the private sector transformed HR by introducing new initiatives, and another appointee from PWC revamped internal audit with new policies and templates.”

Here, collaboration was not only possible but beneficial, leading to organizational improvements in human resources and internal audit practices.

Evidence from Political Appointees

The perspectives of political appointees further enrich the understanding of the collaborative landscape. Many appointees emphasized their reliance on civil servants for institutional knowledge and continuity, even as they sought to introduce reforms.

One political appointee stated:

“Civil servants understand the system better than anyone else. Even when we come with new ideas, without their support and institutional memory, implementation would be impossible.”

This underscores the indispensable role of bureaucrats in governance, particularly in ensuring that reforms align with existing administrative frameworks. However, political appointees also expressed frustrations. Another noted:

“Sometimes, bureaucrats slow down processes, either intentionally or because of the bureaucratic culture. It feels like we are pushing change uphill” (Civil Servant 5).

This perspective highlights the perception of bureaucratic inertia, where career staff are seen as resistant to rapid policy shifts, often due to their commitment to procedure and continuity.

4.2 Identifying Barriers to Effective Collaboration

Understanding the Barriers

While collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats within the Ghana Civil Service (GCS) can evolve positively, the interviews clearly highlight several barriers that repeatedly undermine this relationship. These barriers are not only structural but also cultural and interpersonal, rooted in the institutional history of the civil service, the political environment, and the differing incentives that drive each group.

The analysis reveals five prominent categories of barriers which have direct implications for the efficiency, morale, and

effectiveness of collaboration, as well as for the broader project of rebranding GCS for sustainable governance.

Lack of Trust

The single most recurring barrier in the interviews is lack of trust. Both civil servants and political appointees expressed concerns about suspicion and second-guessing.

Civil Servant 1 observed:

“Politicians often do not trust civil servants and bring their own people as special assistants. Some civil servants are also politically affiliated, which complicates trust.”

This highlights a dual challenge. On the one hand, political appointees suspect bureaucrats of being loyal to rival political parties. On the other, civil servants view appointees’ reliance on

partisan assistants as undermining their professional role. The result is a trust deficit that hinders open communication and teamwork.

Civil Servant 2 reinforced this theme:

“Trust issues cause suspicion and friction, such as appointees perceiving mistakes as sabotage, and it takes time and transparency to build trust.”

Trust is not only absent at the beginning of relationships but also fragile throughout. Simple administrative errors may be misconstrued as intentional sabotage, eroding the collaborative environment.

Political Interference and Partisanship

Political interference emerged as another major barrier. Appointees often arrive with political loyalists, disrupting

established administrative processes. This undermines the neutrality and professionalism that are hallmarks of the civil service.

As Civil Servant 1 explained:

“There is supposed to be good rapport, but recently politicians tend to bring their own political party members as special assistants, which sometimes sideline civil servants and causes tension.”

This practice contributes to parallel structures of authority, where partisan aides wield significant influence without being formally accountable within the civil service hierarchy.

Political appointees themselves recognized this problem. One admitted:

“We sometimes bring people we trust politically, but this creates friction with the civil servants who feel excluded. It is not always the best approach, but it is a reality of politics.”

This confession demonstrates how political logic often overrides administrative efficiency. Thus, prioritizing loyalty over competence, political interference reduces the effectiveness of bureaucrats and weakens institutional cohesion.

Role Ambiguity and Overlapping Responsibilities

Another barrier identified is the lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. Civil Servant 1 stressed:

“Lack of clarity on the roles given to political appointees by ministers causes confusion. Also, civil servants should

ideally be more knowledgeable than political assistants in administrative matters.”

This ambiguity generates turf wars, where civil servants and appointees clash over who has authority in specific areas. Such conflicts waste time, create tension, and impede progress on policy implementation.

A political appointee echoed this frustration:

“Sometimes we do not know where our role ends and where the civil servant’s begins. This overlap delays decision-making and creates unnecessary competition.”

The issue of role ambiguity is not merely interpersonal, it reflects the absence of clear institutional guidelines and orientation programmes that would delineate the boundaries of authority between appointees and bureaucrats.

Bureaucratic Inertia and Resistance to Change

A common complaint from political appointees was the slowness of bureaucratic processes. They perceived the civil service culture as one that prioritizes procedure over results.

As one appointee put it:

“Sometimes, bureaucrats slow down processes, either intentionally or because of the bureaucratic culture. It feels like we are pushing change uphill.”

Civil servants, however, defended this cautious approach, arguing that it ensures continuity and prevents hasty decisions. Yet, the perception of resistance to change often frustrates

appointees who are under political pressure to deliver results within a limited term.

This tension reflects a clash of organizational logic: politicians operate on short-term electoral cycles, while bureaucrats prioritize long-term stability and adherence to procedure. Without alignment, this divergence undermines collaboration.

Weak Capacity and Inadequate Resources

Another barrier relates to the limited capacity of GCS in terms of human resources, training, and compensation. Civil Servant 1 pointed to this directly:

“Improving salary, conditions of service, and capacity building are key to making the civil service more attractive and effective.”

Similarly, Civil Servant 2 noted:

“Recruitment often ignores technical qualifications, with people placed in roles unrelated to their expertise, which should be corrected.”

Poor recruitment practices and inadequate compensation reduce morale and weaken the professionalism of the civil service. For political appointees, this translates into frustration when bureaucrats lack technical skills or motivation to implement policies effectively.

Strategies for Rebranding the Ghana Civil Service

The Case for Rebranding

The Ghana Civil Service (GCS), as the institutional anchor of governance, face significant challenges that undermine its credibility, efficiency, and attractiveness. As identified in earlier objectives, mistrust, political interference, role ambiguity, bureaucratic inertia, and weak capacity hinder effective

collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats. Rebranding GCS is therefore not simply a matter of public perception but a structural necessity for restoring professionalism, enhancing collaboration, and ensuring sustainable governance.

The interview findings reveal that strategies for rebranding fall into three interconnected categories:

1. Building trust and institutionalizing collaboration
2. Strengthening capacity and professionalizing the service
3. Leadership, training, and systemic reforms

These strategies, when implemented together, can transform GCS into a more credible, professional, and resilient institution capable of supporting long-term national development goals.

Building Trust and Institutionalizing Collaboration

Trust emerged repeatedly in the interviews as both a challenge and a solution. Several respondents argued that political appointees should be oriented to understand the civil service system and its traditions, while civil servants should be empowered to advise and support appointees effectively.

Civil Servant 1 emphasized this directly:

“Politicians should receive orientation before appointment to understand how to work effectively with civil servants.”

This highlights the importance of pre-appointment training or orientation programmes that align political appointees with the norms of bureaucratic governance. Such programmes would ensure that appointees appreciate the professional role of civil servants and avoid unnecessary friction.

Another strategy for building trust is the appointment of political assistants from within the civil service, ensuring they are professionally trained and accountable. Civil Servant 1 suggested:

“One strategy is to appoint special assistants who are career bureaucrats, as practiced in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ensuring they are part of the civil service.”

This approach reduces the perception of partisanship while simultaneously leveraging the expertise of bureaucrats who already understand the institutional environment.

Institutionalizing collaboration also requires clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of appointees and bureaucrats. Civil Servant 2 pointed out:

“Strategies include transparency about new initiatives, involving bureaucrats in discussions to get their buy-in, and establishing clear guidelines for collaboration.”

Such measures would help prevent role conflicts and turf wars, providing a stable framework for effective partnership.

Strengthening Capacity and Professionalizing the Service

Another recurring theme in the interviews was the need to strengthen the professional and technical capacity of GCS. Respondents highlighted weaknesses in recruitment, training, compensation, and career progression. Without addressing these, rebranding efforts would be superficial.

Civil Servant 2 captured the essence of the recruitment challenge:

“Recruitment often ignores technical qualifications, with people placed in roles unrelated to their expertise, which should be corrected.”

Merit-based recruitment is a cornerstone of civil service professionalism. Rebranding efforts must therefore revamp recruitment and promotion systems to prioritize competence, technical expertise, and merit rather than political affiliation or favoritism.

Compensation and conditions of service also require urgent attention. Civil Servant 1 observed:

“Improving salary, conditions of service, and capacity building are key to making the civil service more attractive and effective.”

Low salaries and poor conditions weaken morale, foster corruption, and reduce the appeal of civil service careers.

Rebranding must therefore include competitive compensation packages and incentives for high performance, positioning GCS as an employer of choice.

Capacity building also extends to continuous training and professional development. Civil servants need opportunities to acquire new skills in policy analysis, project management, digital governance, and international best practices. As Civil Servant 1 recommended:

“There should be holistic support and budgeting for capacity building, such as funding for senior officers to obtain advanced degrees, to improve the civil service.”

This emphasis on professional growth ensures that GCS remains agile, innovative, and capable of supporting the evolving governance needs of Ghana.

Leadership, Training, and Systemic Reforms

Leadership was widely recognized as a critical driver of change. Effective leadership at both political and bureaucratic levels is necessary to build trust, set the tone for collaboration, and enforce accountability.

Civil Servant 2 argued:

“Leadership should strengthen supervision, build capacity, enforce rules, and lead by example to improve staff behavior and collaboration.”

This suggests that leadership rebranding should focus on integrity, accountability, and visionary guidance. Leaders must model collaboration, inspire confidence, and provide clear direction to both bureaucrats and appointees.

Systemic reforms were also emphasized. For example, Civil Servant 2 proposed:

“Implementing clear guidelines for appointees and bureaucrats, setting limits on the number of political appointees, improving recruitment and compensation, and ensuring leadership capacity building.”

These reforms are structural, addressing both the rules of engagement between political and bureaucratic actors and the institutional mechanisms that sustain professionalism.

At a broader level, rebranding requires public communication strategies to improve the image of GCS. Civil servants suggested that achievements of the service should be publicized, countering the negative perception of inefficiency. As Civil Servant 2 put it:

“By overhauling recruitment to ensure merit-based hiring aligned with competencies, publicizing achievements, improving compensation, and professionalizing the service.”

In this way, rebranding goes beyond internal reforms to include strategic storytelling that highlights the relevance and contributions of GCS to national development.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined collaboration between political appointees and career bureaucrats in the Ghana Civil Service (GCS), focusing on three objectives: assessing the current state of collaboration, identifying key barriers hindering collaboration, and exploring strategies for rebranding GCS through enhanced collaboration. The findings provide important insights into how governance can be strengthened in Ghana, while also

contributing to broader debates on public administration reform in Africa.

Current State of Collaboration

The study found that collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats in GCS is fragile, characterized by mistrust, competing priorities, and occasional breakdowns in communication. Interviewees emphasized that while collaboration does occur in policy formulation and implementation, it is often undermined by political interference, unclear role boundaries, and weak accountability mechanisms. These findings echo recent studies on African bureaucracies, which notes that political-administrative relations are often adversarial due to partisan pressures and patronage systems (Ayee, 2019; Grindle, 2020).

Moreover, the textual analysis highlighted frequently used terms such as “*policy*,” “*management*,” “*collaboration*,” and “*trust*,” which further underscores the centrality of institutional relationships in shaping governance outcomes. Scholars such as Peters (2018) and Lodge & Wegrich (2022) argue that sustainable governance depends on building trust between political and bureaucratic actors, a condition that is yet to be fully achieved in Ghana.

Key Barriers to Effective Collaboration

The second objective revealed multiple barriers hindering effective collaboration. These include political patronage, lack of role clarity, inadequate technical capacity, weak compensation structures, and poor communication mechanisms. The prevalence of words like “*bureaucrats*,” “*lack*,” “*procurement*,” and “*timelines*” in the dataset indicates frustrations around efficiency and accountability.

These findings are consistent with Christensen and Laegreid's (2020) observation that bureaucratic systems in developing democracies are often strained by conflicting logics of politics and professionalism. In Ghana, the political cycle exerts strong influence over bureaucratic processes, making it difficult to sustain impartiality and efficiency (Appiah-Agyekum & Asante, 2021). Furthermore, the weaknesses in capacity and merit-based recruitment mirror challenges faced by other African public services, where patronage-based appointments often undermine technical expertise (Adamolekun, 2022).

Strategies for Rebranding GCS

The third objective focused on strategies for rebranding GCS. The findings suggest a multidimensional approach, emphasizing trust-building, merit-based recruitment, professional development, competitive compensation, leadership reforms, and public communication strategies. Interviewees

recommended orientation programmes for appointees, strengthening supervision, institutionalizing collaboration guidelines, and highlighting the achievements of GCS to improve its image.

This aligns with recent calls for “adaptive governance reforms” that combine capacity-building with cultural change in public service institutions (Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2019; Andrews et al., 2021). Similarly, evidence from other African countries suggests that successful reforms integrate meritocracy, training, and participatory governance practices (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2021).

Collaborative Governance and NPM

Given the strengths and weaknesses of both Collaborative Governance theory and New Public Management (NPM), this study proposes a hybrid model for GCS. Collaborative

Governance emphasizes participation, trust-building, and inclusiveness (Ansell & Gash, 2018; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2020), while NPM prioritizes efficiency, accountability, and results-oriented management (Hood & Dixon, 2017; Pollitt, 2019).

However, framework alone does not adequately address GCS's challenges. Collaborative Governance risks inefficiency if not supported by strong accountability mechanisms, while NPM can foster excessive managerialism and weaken trust between stakeholders (Lodge & Gill, 2020). A hybrid approach would therefore combine NPM's accountability mechanisms with Collaborative Governance's participatory decision-making, ensuring that GCS remains both efficient and inclusive.

This resonates with recent public administration scholarships that advocate for "post-NPM hybrids" or "neo-Weberian" reforms integrated models tailored to local governance contexts

(Christensen & Laegreid, 2020; Peters, 2021). For Ghana, this hybrid model could ensure that collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats is institutionalized within a framework that values professionalism, efficiency, and inclusiveness.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that while collaboration between political appointees and bureaucrats in GCS is essential for effective governance, it remains undermined by political interference, mistrust, weak institutional capacity, and inadequate compensation. Nonetheless, there is recognition among both political and bureaucratic actors that enhanced collaboration is possible through trust-building, leadership reforms, meritocratic recruitment, and improved professional conditions.

In proposing a hybrid model that integrates the strengths of Collaborative Governance and NPM, the study offers a framework that is contextually relevant for Ghana. Such a model would not only enhance efficiency and accountability but also promote inclusive, participatory decision-making, thereby rebranding GCS as a credible and professional institution capable of driving sustainable governance.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have significant implications for policy, theory, practice, and development in Ghana's governance landscape. From a policy perspective, the evidence highlights the urgent need for institutional mechanisms that balance political responsiveness with bureaucratic professionalism. Without this balance, political interference risks undermining bureaucratic neutrality and eroding trust between political appointees and career civil servants. The

implication is that reforms should go beyond piecemeal initiatives and instead focus on creating durable structures that promote mutual respect, accountability, and effective collaboration.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the ongoing debates in public administration by demonstrating the usefulness of a hybrid model that integrates the strengths of Collaborative Governance and New Public Management. This synthesis reflects a growing recognition within the literature that no single governance framework is sufficient in complex political-administrative contexts, particularly in developing democracies. The Ghanaian case shows how theoretical innovations can be applied in practice to address local governance challenges while also enriching global discussions on governance reform.

On a practical level, the study underscores the importance of actionable reforms that can immediately improve performance

within GCS. For practitioners, measures such as structured orientation programmes for political appointees, improved supervision mechanisms, and investment in leadership development are not abstract ideas but concrete interventions that can be institutionalized in the short to medium-term. This provides administrators and policymakers with a clear pathway for enhancing collaboration.

Finally, the developmental implication of this study lies in its recognition that a rebranded, credible, and professional Ghana Civil Service has the potential to strengthen state capacity more broadly. By ensuring that bureaucrats and political leaders work in harmony, GCS can improve policy implementation and service delivery, which in turn supports Ghana's broader socio-economic development agenda. In this sense, the study underscores that governance reform is not only a bureaucratic concern but also a developmental imperative.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications, several key recommendations emerge. First, the institutionalization of orientation programmes for political appointees is critical. Such programmes should not merely be ceremonial introductions but carefully designed processes that acquaint appointees with bureaucratic structures, operational norms, and the principles of collaborative engagement. By embedding these sessions into the induction of every appointee, GCS can foster mutual respect and reduce early misunderstandings that often derail collaboration.

Second, the adoption of a hybrid reform model is strongly recommended. This model should strategically combine the efficiency and accountability emphasis of New Public Management with the inclusiveness and participatory decision-making of Collaborative Governance. Such an approach would ensure that reforms do not privilege efficiency at the expense of

legitimacy, nor inclusiveness at the expense of timely results. Implementing this model will require legal and institutional reforms, including the revision of service regulations to enshrine collaborative practices as part of GCS's operating ethos.

A third recommendation is the urgent strengthening of merit-based recruitment and promotion processes. Political patronage continues to undermine bureaucratic professionalism, and unless this issue is addressed, efforts to rebrand GCS will remain superficial. In this regard, prioritizing competence and technical expertise, the service can rebuild credibility and ensure that collaboration with political appointees is based on mutual recognition of professional value rather than partisan loyalty.

In addition, enhancing compensation and motivation for bureaucrats should be pursued as a priority. Low remuneration and poor working conditions are recurring concerns that erode morale and weaken commitment. Competitive salaries,

transparent career progression, and professional development opportunities will not only attract talent but also retain skilled officers who can drive reforms. These changes would send a strong signal to both bureaucrats and the wider public that GCS is serious about professionalism.

Leadership development also emerges as a central recommendation. Training programmes should focus on ethical leadership, supervisory skills, and the capacity to manage political-bureaucratic relationships constructively. This would create a cadre of leaders who can mediate between political demands and administrative norms, thereby institutionalizing a culture of collaboration.

Finally, rebranding GCS requires proactive communication strategies to reshape public perceptions. By highlighting successes in policy implementation, transparency initiatives, and citizen-focused service delivery, GCS can counter negative

stereotypes and project itself as an institution central to Ghana's governance. Public rebranding efforts must, however, be grounded in genuine reforms rather than cosmetic campaigns, ensuring that the image of GCS reflects its evolving reality as a professional, efficient, and collaborative institution.

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