

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GHANA GOVERNMENT'S REFORMS

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Introduction

Public sector reform continues to preoccupy governments worldwide, compelled by the need to 'get the state right' through better policy development and implementation (Ampofo, 2021). Developing countries, for example, Ghana, are encouraged to seize the opportunity of the unfortunate situation as a path to developmental advancement. Either, we succumb to the ravages of the disease ad infinitum! Or we embrace the outcome and find means to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic (Ampofo, 2021). This study explores the impact of Covid-19 on Reforms by the Ghana Government.

The Government of Ghana Public-sector Reforms has also suffered from the impact of the COVID-19. This was officially announced in March 2020 by the President of Ghana of the 'unwelcome' appearance of the deadly disease on the shores of Ghana; and has since taken over the country with identified cases in every region of Ghana. Within the month of December 2020, around 54,000 Ghanaians were found to have tested positive for COVID-19, of which 323 individuals had subsequently died. The fifth biggest number of COVID-19 instances, after South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria, occurred in December in Ghana, with a total of 54,771 cumulative cases, of which 842 were currently active (Fernandes, 2020; UNICEF, 2021).

Keyword: Impact, Covid-19, Ghana, Government, Reforms.

Reform Strategies of the Ghanaian Government

Reform Strategies of the Ghanaian Government involves activities seeking to improve the public administration, its roles and functions, and the effectiveness and efficiency of its core

public service institutions systemically and sustainably. The emphasis on systemic and sustainability emphasizes the desired reforms that bring about long-term changes in the behaviour of public sector players, which will benefit citizens and result in a better outcome (Adeniran & Sidiq, 2018j; Atkeson, 2020). The overall objective of the Ghanaian Government's Reform Strategies is to promote good governance. Good governance (efficient, effective, responsive, corruption-free and citizen-friendly) is central to the current administration for ensuring people's trust in Government and promoting social harmony, political stability, economic growth and economic development. The goal of the Ghanaian Government's reform strategies is to increase the responsiveness of public sector institutions by mandating and promoting a greater emphasis on performance or results.

The Agenda of the Government of Ghana is to develop Ghana Beyond Aid into a vision based on five broad goals: A Wealthy, Inclusive, Sustainable, Empowered, and Resilient Ghana. Ghana Beyond Aid envisions transforming our economy, which is now based mostly on the production and sale of raw commodities, into one based on manufacturing and high-value services that provide opportunities, jobs, and prosperity to all Ghanaians.

As a nation, we are blessed with a smart, youthful, and enterprising population. Our country is also well endowed with many natural resources such as gold, bauxite, iron ore, diamonds, oil, natural gas, timber, cocoa, water, fertile land etc. The truth, however, is that the state of our nation does not bear out that we have these natural endowments (Altig et al, 2020). Poverty continues to be our lot. It is proven that mismanagement, corruption and high fiscal deficits have become the bane and albatross that hangs on the economy's neck. The Government cannot help but borrow to finance deficit budgets and sometimes rely on foreign aid.

Against this background, Ghana's development efforts and direction are being implemented within the framework of the Ghana Beyond Aid. Major development programming approaches to achieving the goals of the Ghana Beyond Aid by the current Government of Ghana are based on the following reforms strategies:

1. National public sector reform strategy of digitizing public sector services and systems as well as the economy.
2. Establish a high-level institution such as a delivery unit at the presidency that will stay across political transitions to help reforms (job creation and food production).
3. Introduction of export promotions and import substitution.
4. Building technological capabilities.
5. Ensuring a greater efficiency in using public resources and a more professional and transparent approach to public investment.
6. Provide a more private sector environment for domestic businesses and foreign direct

investment, more aggressive promotion effort and support.

7. Introduction of a 400 million Ghana cedis for banks capitalization.
8. Free Maternal Health Care through National Health Insurance Scheme.
9. A new pre-tertiary level new curriculum.
10. The introduction of the National Teacher License.
11. Conversion of Training Colleges to University Colleges of Education.
12. Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE).
13. Free Senior High School.

The Significant Impact of COVID-19 on Ghanaian Government Reforms

Ghana has been identified as one of Africa's fastest rising economies in the year 2020. However, just as Ghana's economy emerged from the crisis and consolidated recent gains for growth and jobs, the country was hit by a Coronavirus outbreak, resulting in tight movement restrictions. The hotel and hospitality business, foreign direct investment, trade and industry, agriculture, health, transportation, manufacturing, real estate, finance, and education are all heavily impacted.

Covid-19's socioeconomic impact on Ghana's government reforms might be both direct and indirect. The Coronavirus has a direct impact on Ghana's production, commerce, and investment activities and those between Ghana and the rest of the globe (specifically China, Europe, India, and the United States).

The following items were/are affected.

- a. World commodity prices, e.g., crude oil prices and gold prices, were affected.
- b. The tourism sector reduced in percentage terms from 70 % to 30%.
- c. On fiscal stance, the debt stock of developing economies increased.

Covid-19 study outcomes on Ghana's economy included the following;

a. Covid-19 Impact on the Hospitality Industry

Hospitality Industry includes the following:

- i. Civil Aviation. Flights were cancelled, and the pandemic tended to restrict the movement of persons.
- ii. Border posts both inland and airports were closed.
- iii. Cinemas, pleasure sites were banned from their operations.
- iv. Hotels and Rest Houses were asked to close. The hotel's occupancy rate is down from 70 per cent to under 30%, and staff has been laid off (source?).
- v. Before the lockdown, restaurants were experiencing an average decrease in the patronage of 60 per cent.
- vi. In the case of the cancellations of the international conferences and events in Ghana, this meant that there were over 2,000 participants who could not make it to the G24 or the 4th

African Union STC meeting on finance, monetary affairs, economic planning, and integration, and because of this, hotels had to give up some of their beds.

b. Covid-19 Impact on Investments

In 2020, worldwide flows of FDI will decrease because of the uncertainty over the effects of Covid-19. Foreign direct investment has fallen dramatically due to the Coronavirus epidemic. The closing of most borders of nations, including Ghana's, causes foreign investors to be unable to travel to Ghana to transact or do feasibility studies.

c. Covid-19 Budget Impact

There has been an income gap as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic in Ghana. Due to the Coronavirus, Ghana's 2020 budget has exploded. The Ministry of Finance (MoF) said that the fiscal effect analysis of the Covid-19 found in the following areas: a reduction in taxes on petroleum, a shortfall in other tax collections, a rise in health-related expenses, and a tight fiscal situation.

The national preparedness and response strategy, which was developed by the Ministry of Health and the World Bank, is paid for by the Ghanaian Government to facilitate early diagnosis and rapid reaction during a Coronavirus outbreak.

d. Covid-19 impact on Education

Academic schedules have changed significantly because of the coronavirus outbreak. Because of the disruption caused by the Covid-19's lockdown, other schools across the globe were shut down. Millions of students, teachers, and parents all throughout the world have benefited from the coronavirus pandemic. The President of Ghana signed an order instructing the closure of all educational institutions, including kindergartens, primary and junior high schools, and secondary and tertiary schools, impacting 9.2 million primary school pupils and 0.5 million university education students. In order to maintain possibilities for ongoing learning even while schools are closed, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) came up with temporary methods.

The announcement of the closure of education facilities was followed by developing distant and online learning platforms and classes for senior high school students on Ghana Learning Television (GL-TV). Kindergarten through Junior High School students will soon have access to digital content developed especially for those grades, which will go live in the third term. Although the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service have tried to support these students, many have faced severe obstacles. Television, radio, and the internet are not provided to all the pupils in Ghana, as the standard of life for many individuals is nothing to write home about. According to UNICEF (2021), the pandemic's impact on children's education is most severe when schools close without adequate alternative education programmes available to all students nationwide. These policies are likely to increase current educational

disparities and access hurdles. The pandemic hit children aged 5-11, 12-14, and 15-17 who were either not in school, two years behind in school, or had not completed the required level of education for their grade. Children in rural areas, as well as in the Northern and Upper West, fare significantly worse than in urban areas (UNICEF, 2021).

Conclusion

The effects of Covid-19 are felt in various ways and governments around the world are taking action to boost their crippling economies and bring some relief to citizens and businesses more affected by the pandemic. While the primary impact of the Covid-19 epidemic in Ghana is focused on human health and public health systems, the country is also experiencing indirect effects on all sectors of the economy (UNICEF, 2021). From the foregoing therefore it is evidently clear that the public sector reforms have suffered a setback in almost all sectors.

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