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**CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD: THE
NIGERIAN EXAMPLE**

BY

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ABSTRACT

It is an acceptable fact that the traditional method of administration and its reform adjunct has failed to stimulate efficient social service delivery in third world countries. This is largely due to the fact that the public service structure inherited from the colonial overlord was structurally and fundamentals defective. Gross Inefficiency resulting from poor remuneration, work negative attitude to work and poor training as well as poor organizational structure predominates. The colonial and post-colonial government embarked on the reform of the civil service to improve the productivity level of civil servants that are assumed to have a lackadaisical attitude to work. These reforms could not produce sustainable results. Therefore, the need to embark on neo-liberal reform of the civil service to make it systematically relevant in line with global best practices became obvious. Using the system theory of political analysis and organizational theory to operationalize the administrative phenomenon, the paper relies on secondary materials to enrich the value of this article and recommends that attitudinal change by civil officers, improved funding of the reform process, and the development of positive political disposition towards the reform process among others as facilitative of the neo-liberal reform policy.

Introduction

Globally, the classical concept of administration is gradually being jettisoned for the neo-liberal concept of administration due to its limitations. With it are its reform adjunct which emphasizes pay roll reform and the regarding system.

Nigeria inherited a structurally and characteristically defective civil service from the colonial overlord. These defects which were reflective in lack of capacity generation and utilization, poor remuneration and general condition of service affected the operational efficiency of the public service in Nigeria. Remedial

measures in the guise of civil service reforms were introduced by the colonial and postcolonial governments in order to correct these defects but with little results. This necessitated the introduction of the neo-liberal reform measures by the Obasanjo administration when he assumed office on May 29, 1999 in order to bring service delivery in the Nigerian civil service in line with global best practices. The global trend therefore is for the civil service to imbibe the culture of efficiency, effectiveness and ethical re-orientation in order to ensure good governance, sustainable development and democracy.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian civil service is characterized by gross inefficiency in social service delivery. The poor remunerations of the civil servants, lack of progressive upward mobility of labour in terms of regular promotions and poor capacity building and utilization generated a social phenomenon limits the disposition of civil servant to perform maximally at work. The result is the loss of productive man hour due to the drive of civil servants to source for contracts elsewhere to make ends meet. In this direction, agitations for better condition of service by civil servants became the order of the day and the performance of official responsibility suffers a set back. It is against this background that the Obasanjo Administration embarked on the reform of the civil service to make the ministries, department and agencies (MDAs) more efficient in their service delivery. This may be possible if there is attitudinal change by the civil servants especially towards service delivery.

Objectives of the Paper

The goal of this paper is to find out if the civil service reform has led to attitudinal change on civil servants especially with the broad opportunity for career development it offered. The objective of the paper is to find out if the reform of the civil service has enhanced the service delivery effort of civil servants. Are the MDAs more functional now than ever? These are some of the issues the paper seeks to unravel.

Theoretical Framework

The system theory was derived from the general system developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, a biologist, in the 1940s. Scholars like David Easton, Gabriel Almond, and John Pfiffner, Frank Sherwood, Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn (Schuman and Oluffs 1988:101) applied it in the study of the political and administrative system respectively. According to Bertalanffy, the real system is open to and interacts with its environment and thereby acquires qualitatively new properties through an evolutionary process. Based on the input - output analysis of the political system, Easton sees the political system as that *system of interactions in which binding and authoritative decisions are made* (Agene, 2003: 121). Almond argued that the political system.

is that system of interaction to be found in all independent societies which perform the function of integration and adaptation both internally vis a vis other societies by means of the employment or threat of employment of more or less legitimate compulsion.

In their contribution to organisational theory in the 1960s, Pfiffner and Sherwood (Schuman, et al: 101) see administrative system as a collection of parts with prescribed interactions with specific goals or general purposes. They noted that a closed system is mechanical while an open system is dynamic and complex in nature. Indeed, Katz and Kahn (1960:23) referred to the mode of interaction within the system as the exchange of energy which results in the production of goods and services by the system. They noted that the energy exchange provides the basis for assessing the effort expended in the production of goods and services, the cost of maintaining the organization as well as the efficient production of intended output.

The general consensus among the system theorists is that the system has environment, boundary, input, output, process, state, hierarchy, is goal-directed and information. The input refers to the demands made on government by the workers. These demands range from increase in salary, fringe benefits to better condition of service in general. These demands are processed by government (political system) into outputs.

The outputs come out as government policies relating to increase in workers' salary and improvement in the general condition of service for civil servants as well as increase in prices of social goods like petrol, taxes and other rates. Through a feedback mechanism the responses of the civil servants get back to government. If the feedback has favourable outcome the government will get workers' support and the policy is efficiently implemented. If the feedback is not favourable agitations and strikes become the order of the day as has been the case in the past. When this happens the political system is destabilized thereby causing disruption in social service delivery. The overall results will be negative attitude to work. Therefore, the reform of the civil service is therefore a response by government to tame the tide of agitations by civil servants, civil society organizations and of course multilateral agencies to the need to redirect the civil service towards increased productivity.

In another dimension, the Nigerian civil service seen as an administrative system gets inputs (government policies) from the environment, transform (implement) them into output and this comes out as social service delivery. Through a feedback mechanism the output (social services) is measured to see if the social services rendered is effective and efficient. From this the civil service is praised or blamed by the public who are at the receiving end of government policies. It is this public reaction that has called for the reform of the Nigerian civil service to make it functionally productive in tune with global best practices. As the engine room and

factory house of government policies the success of any government depends on her. Therefore, its importance in the national and global **economy** cannot be over emphasized.

Evolution of the Nigerian Public Service

One of the relics of imperialism and the expansion of global capitalism to third world countries is the civil service. The Nigerian public service is a colonial heritage designed to facilitate traditional administration in the area of law and order maintenance, the exploitation of available resources and the provision of limited services to the public. The top echelon of the civil service was dominated by Europeans who were mandated to exercise executive, judicial and legislative powers for the rapid transformation of the colonial state. The drive to achieve this goal was enhanced by the many reform measures introduced by the colonial authority. By 1954 when Nigeria adopted federalism as a convenient political framework, four (4) civil service structures emerged -the federal civil service, Western, Eastern and the Northern civil services.

With these four prong structure the Nigerian civil service emerged at independence in 1960 as a national institution that will implement the policies and programmes of government. Today, it comprises the federal public service and the civil service of the 36 States of the federation and the federal capital territory as well as the civil service of the 774 local government councils in Nigeria. It refers to those organizations that exist as part of government machinery that implement policy decisions and deliver services that are of value to citizens [FRN:nd 1]. It consist of the civil service and the public bureaucracy with the services of the state, local and national assemblies, the judiciary, the armed forces, the police, security agencies, paramilitary services, customs, immigration, prisons, civil Defence and parastatals and agencies [Constitution, 1999; 122-124]. Adu in Akpama and Akpama [2004: 122] define the civil service as:

all servants of the state, other than those holding political or judicial appointment who are employed in civil capacity and whose remuneration is paid wholly and directly out of money voted by parliament.

Therefore, the Nigerian public service is a large public institutions saddled with the responsibility for transforming the nation for meaningful development. All these institutions are oriented towards the provision of the necessary social goods to citizens.

The Political, Economic and Social Context of Civil Service Reform

Ideally, reform connotes a deliberate and planned change. Civil Service reform is a systematic intervention aimed at improving the structure, operations, systems and procedures of the public service with a view to transforming it into a

veritage agent of change and sustainable development. This intervention is fundamental due to the structural defects within the system such as over centralization, organizational conflicts, poor performance, inappropriate staff development and placement policies, authoritarianism, corruption and indolence. At the macro level, there are infrastructural delay, economic downturn, poor economic management, high unemployment, low investment, massive poverty and excruciating debt burden. These factors weakened the capacity of the state to respond to development challenges. The emphasis of government therefore was on efficient and effective management of public resources. Reactively, international development partners, and civil society organizations began to mount pressure on government to abandon its traditional role of governance for the neo-liberal ideals of creating an enabling environment for job and wealth creation [FRN: n.d: 10] in partnership with the private sector.

In the face of these challenges, president Obasanjo decided to redirect the nation to the path of growth and development by re-orienting the civil service into an effective, merit based, well remunerated and high performance public institutions imbued with a culture of probity, accountability and transparency as the bureaucratic ideals. In line with this, many seminars were held at NIPSS, Kuru Jos and ASCON. Badagry between 1999 and 2001 for 1,902 participants comprising permanent secretaries, and directorate officers, special advisers and ministers in order to design a new orientation scheme for the public service. Therein, it was discovered that there has been a:

- a. *Massive expansion in the size of the service by 350% between 1960 and 1999 against a 160% population increase over the same period;*
- b. *Decline in institutional capacity, efficiency, effectiveness and commitment to service;*
- c. *Renewed focus on ethical and moral issues and the view of the civil service as corrupt;*
- d. *Placing more emphasis on training and retraining of officers with emphasis on increased budgetary allocation for such need;*
- e. *Review of civil service rules and regulations with its emphasis on uniform application in the public services generally;*
- f. *Restructuring and streamlining the public service;*
- g. *Establishing a public service capacity assessment and administrative reform council to champion the course of injecting freshness and dynamism into the civil service [FRN. N.d: 13J.*

Additionally, a study conducted by management services office, under the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation during the leadership of Mahmud Yayale Ahmed revealed that the Nigerian civil service was characterized by:

- a. *An aging workforce, with 60% of serving officers of about 40 years and above;*
- b. *The preponderance of unskilled staff with 70% of the entire workforce on grad-*

- levels 01- 06 when only 1.7% of the workforce are officers of directorate cadre [GL15-17];
- c. A prevalence of ghost workers reflective of poor personnel record and pay-roll control systems;
 - d. About 60% of federal government expenditure was on servicing the federal bureaucracy;
 - e. Pervading low morale, especially at the higher levels due to non professional human resource management practice;
 - f. A highly centralized, hierarchical and rule-driven system which limit individual initiative and corporate accountability;
 - g. Lack of mission and vision by ministries, departments and agencies [MDAs] as well as clear corporate and individual schedules of duties;
 - h. Under-resourcing of public institutions leading to inability to adapt its capacity to modern technologies;
 - i. Grossly inadequate working tools required for efficient and effective service delivery in line with modern management practice;
 - j. Erosion of professionalism and esprit de corps among public servants;
 - k. Degeneration of policy making from a structured initiative involving painstaking analysis, consultation and monitored control to a routine response to address urgent problems;
 - l. Capacity gaps at all levels due to gross absence of systematic training, need identification and serious commitment towards updating skills; and
 - m. Prevalence of a flawed procurement system that lacked transparency [Abdullahi: 2007:35-52].

These shortcomings succinctly confirmed the structural and fundamental defects inherent in the Nigerian public service. The Nigerian civil service was therefore seen as lethargic and slow, insensitive and unreliable, wasteful and not easily adaptable to change; corrupt, over-bloated and unresponsive and discourteous to the public as well as parochial and ethnically or religiously inclined in terms of staff recruitment, performance assessment, promotion and contracts award. Given this state of anomalies in the Nigerian public service the need for reform was therefore inevitable.

Global Trend in Civil Service Reform

Human society is seen to be dynamic and so is human perception of his environment. This is accompanied with changes in the value systems and the ideological perception that characterized the exchange relations between individual and governments, and employers and employees. The dynamics of these social and civil exchange relations dictate the trend of civil service reforms embarked upon by successive regimes most especially when the exchange value is unequal. In this trend, there often arose poor correlation between the social responsibility of employers and the social/civil responsibility of employees culminating in defective incentive system provision on the one hand and inefficient service delivery on the other. Such situation had generated poor industrial relations between management and labour in many parts of the world. Historic as this phenomenon is, government

is now concerned with promoting good industrial relations as well as create a production friendly environment that is socially value laden in the private and public sectors of the economy. Essentially, civil service reforms the world over has been influenced by the classical and neo-classical tradition of public administration.

The Classical View of Civil Reform

Classical theorists of administration had a mechanical view of man. They assumed that man could be motivated to work when paid adequate incentives. The views of Frederick Winslow Taylor [1856-1917], Henry Fayol [1841-1925 and Max Weber [1864-1920] [Ezeani, 2006:100-127) is explicit The emphasis of management was to enhance the welfare packages in line with workers agitations. The civil service reforms of 1945-1995 were tailored toward this administrative tradition. A chronology of these public service reforms are presented below.

Table 1: Civil Reforms in Nigeria

S/No	Civil Reforms	Reform Agenda
1.	W.Tuder-Davies commission, 1945 October	Reviewed wages and general conditions of service
2.	SirWalter Harragin commission, November 1945	Reviewed wages and general conditions of service; divided the civil service into 2 broad cadres-senior and junior.
3.	A.E. Miller committee, 1947	Divided the country into geographical area and place them into 6 [later 12]groups; recommended special rates for general and special labour, general labour, special and unskilled labour and skilled artisans.
4.	L.H. Gorsuch commission, 1955	Reviewed remuneration and structure of the civil service; identity absence of middle class; created five main grades.
5.	A.F.F.P, Newn commission 1959	Proposed integration of ministries and departments; defined the roles and functions of permanent secretaries.
6.	L.N. Nbanefo salaries and wages commission, 1959	Reviewed salaries and wages of workers.
7.	Adeyinka Morgan commission, 1963	Reviewed salaries/wages of junior staff of federal government and private establishment; introduced minimum wage on a geographical basis.
8.	T. Elwood grading team, 1966	Examined anomalies in grading of posts to proposed uniform salaries for officers performing identical duties.

9.	Chief Simeon Adebo salaries/wages commission, 1970-1971	Proposed the establishment of a public service review commission to examine: the role of the public service commission: structure of the civil service: conditions of service and training arrangements.
10.	J. O. Udoji commission 1972	Introduced open reporting system for performance evaluation; unified grading and salary structure: a unified senior management group for administrative and professional cadre for central management of
11.	Williams public service review panel, 1975	Review defect in Udoji commission report; recommend the ranking of ministries according to size/importance; a unified salary structure for the public service; effective grading for permanent secretary should be GL 15; recommend abolition of SM prefix as a salary code, senior management concept to guide the training and development of senior managers etc.
12.	S. D. Adebisi tribunal on the activities of trade unions, 1976.	Recommends banning of some trade union leaders from unionism; prohibit receipt of foreign aids by trade union continuously; compulsory remittance of check-off system by unions to central labour unions etc.
13.	Cookey commission on university staff, 1981	Recommends the introduction of the University system scale; introduce post of 2 deputy vice chancellors; university autonomy etc
14.	Gamaliel Onosode president commission on parastatals, 1982	Recommends the harmonisation of the civil service; distinction of unified grading system and unified salary system be created; autonomy for parastatals and its classification according to function, status, funding, and degree of autonomy etc.
15	Michael O. Ogunkoya Report on the Nigeria Labour Congress, 1988	Recommend the employment of a graduate accountant to manage financial department, introduce double entity system and a budgetary system; disenfranchisement of chairmen and secretaries of state council etc.

16.	Dotun Phillips, 1988	Abolish the office of the Head of the civil service; ministers became chief executive and accounting officer of ministries; abolish post of permanent secretary, introduced post of Director General (appointive], restructuring of
17.	Ayida Review Panel, 1995	Recommends the abrogation of the civil service re-organization degree No 33 of 1988; return to status quo.
18	H, M. Foot commission, 1946	Recommend training of Nigerians into senior civil service post
19	Chief Olu S. Falae commission, 1976	Looked into complaints and extent of implementation of accepted recommendations
20	Vice Admiral Patrick Koshoni, 1985	Worked out guidelines for implementation of the civil service reform as embodied in Udoji's and Philip's reports
21	Chief Allison Ayida, 1994	Review the 1988 civil service reform as recommended, reversal of novelties that turned out as failures

Source: Nigeria Labour Handbook; FMIC.

The classical approach to public service reform laid emphasis on reforming the pay roll, grading system and the dynamics of labour management relations. This however could not promote public service efficiency in service delivery. It was however lacking in providing the systemic ingredients that could holistically transform the individual employee and the organization in line with the global challenges of the 21st century. It attempts to realign the structural configuration of the civil service where gross inefficiency predominates with little emphasis on overall systemic reform. This formed the basis of the neo- liberal reform measures introduced by President Olusegun Obasanjo beginning from 1999.

The Neo-Classical Approach to Civil Service Reforms

Away from the traditional or classical mode of reform, the neo-classical school stresses the reform of the human side of enterprise with emphasis on the systemic overhaul of the civil service. Its emphasis is on restructuring the entire civil service to make it more functionally efficient in its public service delivery. The goal is to make the civil service production friendly, effective and efficient in order to facilitate the development processes and ensure good governance.

This is line with the changing role of government, which is increasingly becoming strategic and responsive, she is to mobilize scarce resources and invest them in productively competitive ventures to make government more responsive to the needs of her citizens. This neo-classical philosophy of public sector management has changed the traditional role of government, which is promoting public-private

partnership in economic management in a global world dominated by information technology. Against the logic of tapping the gains of the world economy, short-term planning is given way to long term planning, centralisation to decentralization and hierarchy to networks, quantity to quality of products/services. It is assumed that these corporate values will broaden the scope of participatory democracy and good governance and the strategic and functional role of the public institutions as agents of change and development in Nigeria and the world over.

The goal of the neo-classic is to transform the ailing civil service to a professional and accountable public institution capable of providing diligent and effective services in a timely manner. Competent, dedicated and efficient public institutions are instrumental to the provision of good governance values in Nigeria. Essentially, the reform goals are to create:

- A. *A competent, professional, development oriented, publicly spirited and customerfriendly public service;*
- B. *A politically neutral, impartial, loyal public service with integrity and a transparent, professional, accountable disposition;*
- C. *A public service that is guided by equity;*
- D. *Protection and job security for public servants; and*
- E. *A competitive, well remunerate, innovative public service.*

Against this background, the reform was centre on:

1. Budget and financial management which emphasizes the review of the procurement system, institutionalism of fiscal responsibility, and accounting and audit reform.
2. Accountability with emphasis on due process, transparency and accountability in government business, establishment of service charters to guarantee quality service delivery and institutionalization of compliance enforcement.

Human resources management relating to personnel record and payroll cleaning, staff cadre reviews, remodeling of recruitment and promotion procedures, introduction of performance management scheme, massive capacity development and training, pay reform and injection of competent personnel.

1. Operation and systems reform with emphasis on organizational restructuring and right-sizing, work process redesign and information systems/technology applications.
2. Value-re-orientation and ethics.

These are in line with the goals of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy [NEEDS]. The ultimate goals of NEEDS is to right-size and eliminate ghost workers; restore professionalism, rationalize, restructure and strengthen institutions; privatize and liberalise the sector; tackle corruption and

improve transparency, reduce waste and inefficiency as well as enhance economic co-ordination in the public service [NEEDS; 2004:88-117]. It is aimed at creating a more efficient and responsive civil service structures in line with the goals of NEPAD and the Charter for Public Service in Africa which is directed at combating the crisis of underdevelopment, acute income disparity and sustainable development.

Unlike the classical reform processes, institutional mechanisms were put in place to manage the reform exercise. These are the National Council on reforms, the steering committee, Bureau of public service reforms, Servicom and the reform cells. The degree of success recorded by this reform measures lies with the effectiveness of the various cells which lies with the various Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs). This reform is a holistic approach to revamping public sector institutions and the reorientation of the human size of enterprise to cope with the challenges of globalization. The integration of national economy with the global economy has called for the need for the reform of public institutions to make it function optimally in line with global best practices.

Informed by this philosophy and in continuation of the Obasanjo reform agenda, the Yar' Adua administration introduced a new dimension of reform. Indeed, Directors and Permanent Secretaries who have served for eight years in the same position were retired beginning from January 2010. This is to facilitate upward mobility of labour and career progression in the civil service. This is against the practice in the past where Directors sit in same position for years and effect the premature retirement of their subordinates ostensibly done to secure their privileged position. This has generated tension between Directors and their deputies who are likely victims of such irrational administrative decision. Indeed, the electoral reforms, adherence to constitutionalism and the rule of law were all directed at strengthening administrative decision making mechanism and facilitate service delivery. The e-payment system was aimed at strengthening the accounting system in the civil service and the public service in general, which indeed strengthen the due process mechanism in financial administration in Nigeria FRN, 2005:

Achievements

In this direction, the following achievements have been recorded.

1. : Ministries, departments and agencies [MDAs] have been restructured with emphasis on its mission, vision statements, mandate, personnel and payroll audit, process review, structure realignment, information system applications, retooling as well as retraining. The organizational and manpower disposition were structurally repositioned and key agencies were merged.
2. Parastatals reform involving privatization and commercialization, scrapping, merger, mandate and corporate legal status review; enlargement of functions, orientation towards profit making and cost

effectiveness, right sizing, reprofessionalization. as well as strengthening the evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.

3. Integrated personnel and pay roll information system [IPPIS] which establishes a reliable and comprehensive data base for the public service, facilitate manpower planning and decision making processes, eliminate record and payroll fraud through the e-payment system, enhanced information management [accessibility] as well as facilitate pension processes and staff incentive payment were significant achievements.
4. Reform of human resource management systems through a strategic human resource management practices and its decentralization to MD As.
5. The eradication of the succession crisis of aging in the public service which are reflections of systems functional disequilibrium. To this end, permanent secretaries and directors who have served for eight years in same positions are to retire beginning from January 1,2010.
6. The civil service rules and financial regulation have been reviewed;
7. Capacity building programmes are organized on a regular basis sometimes in conjunction with development partners such as the Common Wealth Secretariat as well as the repositioning of ASCON. As well the Civil Service College has been built in Abuja although it is yet to function fully.
8. A public sector ethics/integrity resources project has been developed and this is followed by the introduction of public expenditure management reform- fiscal responsibility measures.

Others are the introduction of service delivery initiative, monetisation of fringe benefits, pension reforms and anti-corruption measures through the instrumentality of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission and statistical system reforms and staff severance. However, many aspects of this reform processes like monetisation, capacity building and down sizing etc have been corruptly managed by bureaucratic leaders.

Conclusion

Reform is inevitable in any society or administrative system when there are expressed or noticeable lapses. Correcting these lapses must be given urgent priority by actors within the nation state if the goal of development and good governance must be achieved. The right leadership must be put in place to drive home the goal of the reform. This requires the functional collaboration of the leadership and followership within outside the civil service with a view to set aright the vision, mission of the reform. Reform therefore should be a continuous process irrespective of regime type. There is need for attitudinal change on the part of the leadership and followership (general public) if Nigeria must occupy her rightful place among the reformatory nations pursuing the path of development. On this basis

Gomwalk (2006:11] echoing Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that *our collective attitude as a nation ultimately determines our place among nations*. This attitudinal change determines the place Nigeria occupies among the comity of nations. Many reforms have failed due to the poor attitude of stakeholders toward fulfilling their reform obligations.

The severance or downsizing of the public servants may not have been necessary if top public officers were determined to eliminate ghost workers from the pay roll system. A developing economy like Nigeria with little technological advantage in information technology needs the services of officers at grade levels 01 - 03 severed from the public service. Indeed, sheer self-aggrandizement has generated the ghost workers syndrome that benefited the bureaucratic leaders at the expense of the nation. This has engendered corruption and limits the ability of government to enhance the welfare packages of public service that is erroneously seen to be over bloated. Right sizing may have been the best reform option.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are necessary as a guide to the successful implementation of the public service reform in Nigeria.

The reform of the public service has macro economic benefits to Nigerians. Every Nigerian within and outside the public sector must lend his support to it.

The leadership (bureaucratic and political) must be proactive enough to pilot the reform ship to its logical destination. It is a continuous process that should not be abandoned by succeeding administration.

Nigerians in general must develop and cultivate positive attitude towards public enterprise management. The benefit will be effective and efficient service delivery that will generate the sector capacity to recruit, train and retrain its workforce. Any reform no matter how good intentioned depends on the political will to succeed. Policy success does not require the muddling through approach as this limit the success rate.

The reforms especially the pay roll system should be implemented with all manner of sincerity so that the average public servant would reap the gains of the reform process. Otherwise, corrupt officials will be the major beneficiaries. Beside, adequate funding should be provided to finance the reform process especially where it involves severance, monetisation and pension reforms.

The politicization of aspects of the reform such as right sizing and down sizing has appeared to be counter- productive. This should be approach with caution so those productive workers are not affected.

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