During the late 60s and early 70s, the career ladder concept was embedded in a model for school reform known as differentiated staffing. Although the model at first captured the intense interest and enthusiasm of many educators, its widespread use was discontinued by the mid-70s. If continuity is the measure of a new idea's success, then this innovation registered more failure than progress. The "battered" vehicle of differentiated staffing of the 60s has been replaced by the new master teacher programs of the 80s. By examining the old vehicle, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and relating them to today's proposed plans, we may be able to improve the chances for success of current plans.

A Glimpse Into the Past

Nearly 400 articles and reports from 1964 until the present (most from the early 1970s) have discussed the career ladder issue and master teacher programs (Ratsoy and others, 1978, Boutwell, 1972; Kapfer and Kapfer, 1972; Adler, 1977; Edelfelt, 1972; Cooper, 1972; Keefe, 1971; Bernabei, 1973; Starr, 1976; and Connors, 1969). According to Bernabei's review of the literature of the time (1973, p. 266), three basic assumptions were present in differentiated staffing: (1) Teachers have opportunities to move on a career ladder, (2) good teachers can remain in the classroom; (3) more students will benefit due to more specialization for individualizing instruction. According to Edelfelt (1972), differentiated staffing:

- Built in a training ladder recognizing the necessity for continuous professional development spanning preservice training and running through career-long development.
- Provided a new access to the reform of teacher education.
- Provided for teachers more choice of the roles they might play.
- Established career patterns in teaching, making promotion in teaching possible.

Developers of today's master teacher plans can profit from examining the strengths and weaknesses of earlier attempts.

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- Made individualizing programs for students more feasible.
- Broke the lockstep salary schedule and provided new ways to encourage able people to remain in teaching.
- Acknowledged that teachers are not omniscient; that no individual can perform all the roles now assumed by the teacher.
- Made clear that changes in staffing also require modifications in curriculum, in the use of time and resources, and in psychological climate.

The Temple City, California, career ladder model is the most cited program in the literature of the 70s (Starr, 1976, p. 316). In 1969, a master teacher in Temple City could earn up to $25,000 a year (Connors, 1969). In
In 1984 dollars, that's nearly $60,000 a year. The intent was to have the master teacher earn more than Superintendent Jack Rand who, with Dwight Allen (Allen and Bush, 1964), was the impetus behind the program. The Temple City model had four career stages (see Figure 1).

1. **Associate teacher.** Beginning teachers were at the bottom of the career ladder. The position offered high expectations for advancement as skills and abilities were improved over a four-year period. Associate teachers were not to move up to the next level until they had demonstrated mastery of the prerequisite skills. Associate teachers were in the classroom full time.

2. **Staff teacher.** Staff teachers were fully trained, experienced teachers capable of handling multigrupped students, knowledgeable of the trends within their field, new materials, and practices, and capable of preparing materials, guides, and objectives for classroom implementation of the total curriculum. Staff teachers were in the classroom full time.

3. **Senior teacher.** Senior teachers had demonstrated superior teaching abilities and possessed leadership capabilities. They taught about 60 percent of the time and devoted the remainder to leadership activities. Their leadership functions included the following: conducting inservice programs, micro-teaching demonstrations, developing exemplary materials, coordinating experiments, guiding the implementation of innovations in curriculum areas and teaching strategies, and generally facilitating change. Senior teachers were required to be familiar with research findings that related to their functioning, to know and be able to translate to others generic ideas and practices in education (for example, continuous progress, nongraded approaches, individualized instruction). They assisted in identifying districtwide objectives, developing curriculum, and general problem solving.

4. **Master teacher.** At the top of the career ladder were master teachers, who combined all of the skills, talents, and knowledge of superior teachers with the intellectual abilities of researchers, along with the leadership abilities needed for effective instrumental leadership. Master teachers were directly responsible for training senior teachers. They had districwide responsibilities in defined curriculum areas and were required to be well informed about significant trends and practices. They were to know the basic research and be able to relate its findings to ongoing planning, training, and curriculum activities. Master teachers were to have been fully knowledgeable about experimental design, sophisticated evaluation, and innovation strategies. They taught on a regular basis and used the classroom to develop exemplary teaching styles and lessons for later use in inservice programs (Connors, 1969). The hierarchy of three or four levels was a constant throughout most of the other master teacher programs in the 60s although team leader, instructional leader, or career teacher titles were used at the different levels.

Within the differentiated staffing model, the master teacher concept was more than a way of rewarding teachers with higher pay: entire in-
structional and school decision-making processes were altered. A team of teachers and paraprofessionals merged to form instruction units (see Figures 2 and 3). Paraprofessionals freed teachers to spend more time in instructional activities.

Leaders of the differentiated staffing movement realized that salary alone would not keep quality teachers in the schools. At Temple City a new decision-making organizational structure evolved. Jack Rand was quoted as saying (Connors, 1969, p. 2):

That teachers don't like the "old autocratic system" has long been evidenced by the fact that 60 percent of them leave teaching within five years after entering it. In recent years, this exodus has given way to a more aggressive protest. All over the country teachers are saying to shocked and recalcitrant school boards, 'Give us a voice in decision making. Let teaching at last become a profession.'

The new decision-making structure at Temple City included a district level instructional council composed of a master teacher from each curriculum area, three support administrators, and the superintendent as an ex-officio member. The Academic Senate, composed primarily of senior teachers, coordinated activities at the building level. The democratization and professionalization of the school began to become a reality. The classroom (Lortie, 1975) would be abandoned for a team approach to teaching. Teachers would have direct input into decisions that affected them, and paperwork and nonprofessional duties would be completed by paraprofessionals.

Why the Early Programs Failed

Why, within a few short years, was the Temple City master teacher plan abandoned and other innovative components phased out? The following elements (based on direct observation and the literature) seem to have facilitated the demise of that and other master teacher programs:

- Many teachers were not prepared for the dramatic changes in the work environment. Becoming a team member in a hierarchy takes time, effort, and preparation (Connors, 1969; Edel-felt, 1972).
- Parents were concerned that the best teachers (master and senior teachers) were being removed from direct contact with their children (Starr, 1976).
- The roles for each level when operationalized were difficult to dis-

![Figure 2. A Comparison of "Normal" Staffing and Differentiated Staffing Using a Nongraded Primary and Nongraded Intermediate Departmentalized Organization.](image-url)
“Within the differentiated staffing model, the master teacher concept was more than a way of rewarding teachers with higher pay; entire instructional and school decision-making processes were altered.”

![Figure 3. A Comparison of Man-Hours per Day Available for Each Subject Area and Grade in “Normal” Staffing and Differentiated Staffing Organizations.](image)

- The total absence of research on the impact of differentiated staffing programs on teaching effectiveness, improved learning, and the achievement of school and district goals left little new knowledge upon which others could build and improve (Starr, 1976).
- Federal and private funding through the Kettering Foundation (and other private foundations) and the Education Professions Development Act helped initiate a few programs but did not provide the funds to sustain the programs or to research and evaluate their effects.
- The two leading national teacher organizations (AFT and NEA) opposed both the merit elements and hierarchy of master teacher plans (English, 1972).
- Inservice programs for both teachers and administrators suffered both from a lack of funding and from inadequate planning for such a major educational change.
- Although the Temple City plan was developed with direct input from teachers and administrators, other districts mandated their differentiated staffing plans with limited input and support from the teaching professionals (English, 1972).
- Members of the traditional district supervisory staff were at times in direct competition with master teachers.
- There is no empirical evidence that master teacher programs reduced the number of outstanding teachers leaving or entering the profession.
- After four or five years the system became locked in place. New teachers entering the system realized that all the positions above them were filled.

Avoiding Past Mistakes
Current literature (Moore, 1984; Stedman, 1983) implies that the develop-
"By concentrating only on moving a small percentage of teachers to the top, we delude the public into thinking that the entire teaching profession is improving."

ers of master teacher programs of the 80s are doomed to make the same mistakes that their counterparts did in the 60s and 70s. Many of the proposed or implemented programs have been legislated, top-down plans with little input from the teaching professionals. Few districts or state legislatures have weighed the costs versus benefits and the long-term financial implications of their proposed programs. Programs continue to be recommended without adequate resources for research or evaluation of their effects. The hierarchical nature of proposed master teacher programs focuses on individual advancement rather than improving the quality of the learning environment throughout the school. Master teacher programs are a poor substitute for providing adequate pay for the two million teachers in the United States. By removing teachers from the classroom, some of the programs may defeat their goal of improving the quality of student learning. The best teachers should be in direct contact with students 100 percent of the time rather than be moved out of the classroom to fill inservice or supervisory positions.

A master teacher program by its nature is selective and as such could be effective as one small element of a total school improvement package. What are some possible alternatives?

- Create a horizontal program in which the greater majority of teachers could experience different leadership roles. The Trump Model Schools Project, which began in the 60s and incorporates a horizontal leadership model, is still used by several schools today (Ratsoy and others, 1978).
- Focus on school improvement through grade-level or content-specific teams of teachers working toward common curricular or institutional goals.
- Provide a salary structure that is closely competitive with the business community for all teachers who meet the district's demonstrated criteria of teaching competence.
- Employ paraprofessionals for the classroom to reduce paperwork and provide a more professional work environment and positive organizational climate.
- Develop inservice themes that transfer to the classroom and focus on school, teacher, and learner objectives.
- Allow several career ladder and incentive models to operate in a school district and provide resources.
to evaluate and research the impact on common goals and objectives.

- Provide sabbaticals for teachers to study with content and pedagogical specialists.
- Develop programs for teacher self-evaluation with an emphasis on professional development rather than on external supervisory assessment.
- Provide instructional and research grants for improved instruction. The teaching profession will be as strong as its weakest member by concentrating on moving a small percentage of teachers to the top, we delude the public into thinking that the entire teaching profession is improving. The lessons of the 60s and 70s will be lost and along with them valuable resources—the support of the teaching professionals and the taxpaying public.

"I had the opportunity in 1970-71 to visit several schools utilizing master teacher differentiated staffing programs including the projects at Temple City, Cherry Creek, Colorado, and Laguna Beach, California.

References


