

## Management Matters: What is Leadership?

Ellen Kagen: Hello. I'm Ellen Kagen, Director of the Georgetown University Leadership Academy and its Leadership Development Program for Professionals and Civic Leaders. On behalf of the National Center for Program Management and Fiscal Operations, I'd like to welcome you to this Management Matters presentation on what leadership is and how it is distinct from other work you do for Head Start. I'm looking forward to being your guide through this Management Matters as you reflect on what you do running your programs and assuring and delivering high quality early education to young children. Many of you may be saying, "I've led to this program successfully for years as a director, governing body or policy council member. Why do I need to spend time learning about leadership?" Or you may be thinking, "I'm not a leader. I'm only a program manager or a teacher. This is not for me." But let's take a look at why everyone, seasoned professionals and newcomers alike, need to continue learning about leadership.

You are engaged in an increasingly complex community with diverse cultures, languages, values, and beliefs. You are working in a time of unprecedented change, challenges, and turbulence. Technology is creating paradigm shifts every day. Multiple generations with different work styles are working in the same space, requiring changes in our systems, in our funding, and even the very definition of work itself. For example, the baby boom generation defines work as a place to go. Millennials who are tech savvy see work as an activity that can be done anywhere. There is always change. And changes in the 21st century will be coming at an accelerated pace.

Agencies and organizations are being asked to do new and perhaps very different tasks to support new ways of serving young children and their families. For example, transitioning from an indefinite to a five-year grant cycle is requiring you to become more intentional and purposeful, than perhaps ever before in your planning processes. Perhaps, you are even feeling your own resistance to these changes. The changes and challenges you face on behalf of young children and their families do not have simple solutions and cannot be addressed by one individual or even a small group of executives. They require the talents, creativity, and leadership of everyone. Each of you has an important role to play. Each of you can have a significant impact on the future. Each of you can lead, because leadership, to successfully address the emerging challenges, can come from any chair.

This Management Matters presentation and the reflection questions that accompany it are designed to help you consider how to lead from your chair, whether you are a director, governing body or policy council member, or a staff member. Specifically, you will be challenged to consider ways that the function of leadership is different from other work you do, and identify opportunities to lead, regardless of the position you hold in your organization. As you build your awareness about the different types of functions that are needed to lead and how they differ from other work you do, you will simultaneously build your commitment and belief that you can develop the skills, habits, and behaviors required to effectively mobilize others to build a better future for young children and their families.

For organizations to meet the ongoing challenges, they need to be flexible, adaptable, and can adjust and learn and grow. In order to create the kind of organization you have, you have to be the kind of

individual who mirrors or models what you want, and be flexible, adaptable, and one who can adjust and learn and grow at any stage of your life. Leadership is about your action. It is not about your position in the organization. Your leadership is defined by how you behave. In this context, leadership can be thought of as a verb not a noun. It is what you do and not the role you are in. Typically, when you think of leadership, where do you look for people to lead? If you are like many people, you look up. This is true for all types of organizations and sectors. Even as citizens, we look to Congress or the president to provide the leadership needed to tackle our most difficult challenges.

Throughout my career, I've worked with many sectors at all levels, and often I'm asked to facilitate inter-agency meetings at the local level. The group will be discussing an important set of changes that need to be made, and inevitably, at some point, someone will say, "if only this state. If only the state sent resources to us in a more effective manner. If only there were not so many rules and regulations. If we had more flexibility." Well, I have also had the pleasure of working at the state level with all the agencies that serve young children and families sitting around the table. And there, too, inevitably someone will say, "if only the feds. If only the feds sent the resources to us in more unified ways. If only. If only. And at the national level, I've worked with professionals from a variety of federal agencies. Their conversations are lively, committed, and engaging, all hoping for change. And then inevitably, in the midst of the discussion, someone will look up and say, "Uh, if only God..." Well, okay, maybe the last part never really happened. But it is my way of sharing with you that when leadership is needed, we instinctively look up to the boss, the supervisor, the chairperson, the person who is in a higher position than our own.

We think that leadership happens when others lead. We have been acculturated in a hierarchical, bureaucratic, Western way of thinking. However, leadership is a set of actions that anyone can provide. The ability to start a conversation, the ability to think creatively, the ability to learn from others, and the ability to be flexible. Leadership can come from any chair. When you believe that, once you choose to lead, there are leadership attitudes, habits, and behaviors that you can develop even if you are not the head of an organization and even if you are. Unfortunately, I have too often seen senior level council members, board members, or heads of organizations running the business, but forgetting they have a role to play in providing leadership. And equally as unfortunate, I have seen talented professionals at all levels of an organization abdicate an opportunity to lead simply because they did not feel it was their job to do so.

So the next time you begin to look up for others to take the first step, to fix things, to provide the answers, look at yourself first and ask, what am I doing to take a step towards leadership? The fact that you chose to participate in this Management Matters is, in fact, an act of leadership. So let's begin to define this thing that we call leadership. I'd like to start with the idea that leadership is actually a process. A process that starts with a deeply held belief by you that change is needed and it is possible. The process is launched by envisioning what the future would look like if these changes were in place, and taking steps to initiate those changes by mobilizing others to alter the status quo or the current condition.

For example, changing the way your program conducts its self-assessment or changing the way your organization identifies and sets goals. The process is often in response to an urgent challenge or an

exciting opportunity. For example, modifying your organization's longstanding self-assessment process can be an exciting opportunity for some programs and may be an urgent challenge for others. Since leadership requires the mobilization of others, it is a relationship-based experience. In other words, leadership is a behavior that embraces relationships. If we are talking about systems or organizational change and you don't like people, especially other adults who are stakeholders in the change, leadership might not be for you. Remember that leadership is a behavior that has change as its essential goal. If the changes you seek are not happening, you might consider whether the function of effective leadership might be missing or simply not strong enough.

Without effective leadership, the status quo will be maintained. And let's be clear, the status quo is the most powerful force you will have to overcome in your work as a leader. Leadership is a process. It is a behavior. And it is also an awareness. An awareness that in every interaction, you have a choice about how you will be with others. You can strengthen a relationship, bring clarity, ask a good question, or without even thinking, you can shut someone down, show frustration and therefore cause frustration, blame others, or decide not to show up. As leaders, the status quo is your biggest challenge. But your biggest internal challenge will be to open up enough, to be flexible enough, to model the behavior you want from others. You have to ask yourself, are the steps towards change I am taking effective? And if not, will I make the choice to shift my own behavior so a new reality can emerge? Am I willing to make a change within myself before I look to others?

Leadership requires you to be aware of every aspect of your being: your mind, body, emotions, and spirit. It will involve, for example, how you carry yourself, how your body is in any moment. Being aware that you are sending signals all the time about how present you are or how distracted you may be. It requires you to be vulnerable-- to put yourself out there when you are not even sure what the next step is. Even as you strive for excellence, it is allowing yourself to not be perfect, allowing yourself to fail and learn. At every junction, leadership is a personal learning journey. Informed by your own life experiences, it will be unique for each one of you. What I have to change about myself to be the most effective leader will be different from what you have to change about yourself. In this sense, leadership is very personal. And leadership is a 24/7 experience, and a practice that you choose to do or not every day. So if this is what leadership is, what is it not? Leadership is not management. Leadership is not about having authority. Leadership is not advocacy.

As I mentioned earlier, in change, multiple functions will be required as you move constantly from stability to change and back again. You need to offer the right kind of function for each situation and circumstance. For example, sometimes you'll need to provide leadership. At other times management. The leadership goal however, is to be highly attuned to the differences in these functions. Let's delve a little deeper to see how these roles and functions are distinguished from one another. Management blossomed during the Industrial Revolution. Large numbers of people started going to work in big companies rather than small guilds or farms. This change in the environment required a way to organize the work and the workers.

Management, as a field, helped humans organize themselves for this new world of work. The field of management brought us organizational charts, plans, goals, and objectives, time cards, and accountability systems. We created policies and procedures and lines of supervision. We created ways

to requisition supplies and processes to onboard employees. Thank goodness for management. Leadership, as a research-based discipline, emerged much later. It wasn't until the 1980s that the first serious studies of leadership behavior began with such research by management professors Barry Posner and Jim Kouzes who asked the question, how do ordinary people create extraordinary results in organizations, and thus outlined in their 1987 book, "The Leadership Challenge." The leadership behaviors necessary to do so. Formal reviews of the leadership development literature point to rapid growth in the base of scholarly research on leadership development in the past 20 years, and numerous special issues in management and psychology journals have been dedicated to the topic since 2007. The first leadership degree programs emerged as recently as the 1990s. While leadership has been talked about for centuries, primarily through religious texts or cultural mythology, it is only recently that leadership has come to be known as a field unto itself, understood as a necessary behavioral function for dealing with complex organizations and systems and for creating change.

Some of the earliest leadership studies considered leaders to be people who had been born with certain leadership characteristics, such as intelligence, birth order, socioeconomic status, and child rearing practices. Later, researchers tried to identify situations, rather than traits, which might cause someone to either be a leader or a follower. As cited earlier, differences in behaviors have been another focus of leadership research. Some of the more recent literature has focused on the differences between leadership and management. People often get the functions of management and leadership confused, or they fail to recognize the difference. Assumptions about management and leadership can cloud the ability to see the two as distinct, and you must be mindful not to fall into that trap. For example, a common assumption is that a person who is a good manager is also a good leader. However, those two roles require two very different skill sets.

One of the first to write about the differences was Warren Bennis, who Forbes Magazine called "The Dean of Leadership Gurus." In his book on becoming a leader, Bennis noted that managers work to create stability. Managing will help you stay organized, and you will most likely be seen as a good employee. Leaders work to create change. Leading is messy and will help you change the status quo. Other differences suggested by Bennis include that managers rely on control, while leaders inspire trust, and that the manager has his or her eye on the bottom line, while the leader's eye is on the horizon. The important idea to keep in mind here is that management and leadership are different functions and must be recognized as such. They require different attitudes, are driven by different values, demand different behaviors, and most importantly, create different results. Another common assumption about leadership is that leaders are born. The truth is that leadership skills can be learned and developed just like management skills.

Many of you come to the work of leadership by moving up through the ranks, perhaps gaining experience as teachers or teacher aides or office workers. Those roles require an important set of specific knowledge and skills. As you continue to grow in your role and within your organization, new skills related to management or administration may be required to become effective managers or supervisors. Those skills are necessary, yet not sufficient for the role of leadership in creating today's integrated service delivery system models.

Let's take a look at how the functions of management and leadership create different types of experiences and feelings for the people in your organization. When management is doing its job: tracking budgets, setting objectives, monitoring progress, writing reports, your organizations are stable. And in stability you feel safe, consistent, calm, there is order, and the status quo is maintained. However, leadership is different. It is the function that is required when you seek change, when you are trying to unseat the status quo. When leadership is doing its job, your organization lacks stability. It is hard and uncomfortable. Since the future cannot be known, it creates anxiety. It can feel chaotic. In fact, when you are leading you will actually be creating a bit of chaos. If there is no chaos, nothing is changing. Crazy, isn't it? You are actually creating the chaos you are feeling. You are also creating resistance and push back.

The very thing that is the most frustrating for leaders is something they create. In fact, resistance is a loving partner in the work. And all of your management skills will not be very effective in working through the resistance. It will require the skills of leadership. Leading change takes time. And over the long haul, you will often have to move back and forth between managing and leading, hence the infinity loop on the slide. Management is a critical function, but leadership gives you the adaptability and flexibility you need to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities in front of you. Without it, change is unlikely. You risk stagnating and being left in the dust.

I encourage you to continue to build management skills and be ready to lead when there is a need to change the status quo. This handout from George Bellman in his 2001 book "Getting Things Done When You are Not in Charge" reflects his observations on the difference between leading and managing and allows you to see even more clearly the work of each is unique and distinct from the other. So leadership and management serve as partners and coexist in each of you. Understanding the difference between them enables you to reflect and examine your daily activities and making judgments as to when you are leading and when you are managing.

Let's take one last look at the differentiation. Now the question is, in whatever position you hold, where do you spend most of your time? To help you uncover the answer to the question, I'd like to offer the following opportunity. In their 1998 book "Fusion Leadership," Richard Daft and Robert Lengel suggested additional ways to review the variety of roles leaders perform within an organization or system. Looking at the chart, you will see that vision is a component of all good organizations. However, it can be approached from two different perspectives. Take a look at all the items and you will notice that the left-hand column focuses on a strong management perspective, while the right-hand column focuses on the leadership perspective.

I'd like for you to try an activity. Think about the past two weeks: What you have done? How you have interacted with your colleagues? Collaborative partners, direct reports. Think also of where you have focused internally. What have you been worried about? How have you expressed yourself to others? Got it? Now pretend you have four stars. Those stars represent the four items in which you have spent the most time, not what you wish you had done or planned to do, but never got to, what you have really done. Now take a moment and identify where you have spent the most time. Place the four stars on the four items that have taken the vast majority of your weeks. Be honest. What did you find? More on the management side? With so much pressure for outcomes and accountability, we are often driven to

utilize management skills because they allow us to be more in control, and it is an area in which we have competence. More on the leadership side? With so much enthusiasm and focus on the future, we are often driven to utilize leadership skills because we find it easier to think big and avoid the details. Two and two? Looks like you are utilizing both. What is most important is the self-awareness as to where you landed.

In order to develop your observation skills, I recommend that you keep a daily log for two weeks at a time. Every day is full of action. Stopping at the end of each day to reflect and categorize the day's activities supports your ability to see how your precious time is being spent. Though the balance sheet does not have to be equal, such a log is likely to include surprises. Leadership is different from management. It is also different from authority. Remember the definition of leadership? It's a behavior of embracing relationships and a process of mobilizing others to change the status quo. You can do that in two ways.

If you've been given formal authority, you are a formal leader. You gain formal authority by being appointed, hired, or promoted into a position. If you have not been given formal authority, you are an informal leader. You all have authority to do some things. When doing things you have been given official authority to do, you are in your manager role. Most likely your authority is written into your job description. It contains the activities that you must do to keep your job, like supervising others, developing budgets, attending meetings. But it doesn't give you the authority to change people. Changing people requires leadership, and leadership can come from any chair. The key thing to remember is that even if you haven't been given formal authority, you can be a leader. You can work to change the status quo.

Many of you come from the world of advocacy where you were advocates for young children and their families. If that is true for you, you need to think hard about how the advocacy role is different than the leadership role and how to make the appropriate shifts. Just like management, one is not better than the other. It's just important to know the difference between those two functions when promoting change. In your advocacy role you put hard issues on the table and keep people focused on them. Use messaging and telling. Are you in favor of something? Your goal is to persuade others to see things your way. Leaders also put difficult issues on the table and keep people focused. But at the same time they have the capacity to bring people together in order to mobilize resources that bring about change. Instead of persuasion and debate as the key skills, leaders use questions and reflection to make sure that every action they take is geared towards reducing the resistance and bringing about the desired change. Even though the opportunity to confront is tempting, it is the shift from advocacy for one, as in my child or for me, to a focus on leadership for all.

It is your job to use both sets of skills. It's knowing when to use which for lasting change. Lastly, leadership work requires strong facilitation skills, but leadership and facilitation are different activities and functions. The hallmark of good facilitation is neutrality. Facilitators only focus on process and help organize content. When you are leading, however, you are not neutral. You are an integral part of the work and the culture. Professional facilitators stand outside the work and culture and do not have an opinion or stake in any one solution. Your perspective about your organization's work and culture can shift as you learn the perspectives of others, but you will always have a particular perspective, and you

will continue to be immersed in the change efforts. For that reason, more and more, I am recommending that leaders use neutral, outside professionals to facilitate important meetings and retreats, so that all leaders in the organization, formal and informal leaders alike, are free to contribute equally to the important work of change.

I'd like to conclude with this quote. "Solutions to adaptive challenges reside not in the executive suite, but in the collective intelligence of employees at all levels." I hope this brief presentation, along with downloadable reflection questions on the website, provide opportunities for you to see that leadership is not related to position or status. It is not management, advocacy, facilitation, or about having authority. Leadership is a choice, an awareness, a process, and a set of behaviors. Leaders, whether they have been given formal authority or not, are those who recognize challenges and opportunities, remain flexible, ask questions, build relationships, and mobilize others to change the status quo. Leadership can come from any chair. So think about your chair, your role in your organization and community. What are the urgent challenges or compelling opportunities that you would like to address? Take the opportunity to strengthen your leadership behavior and lead. The future depends on it.