Mindfulness and Leadership in Educational Relationships

Why do we need a new understanding of authority?

Traditional concepts of authority – based on control, obedience, and the exercise of power – are increasingly ineffective in modern educational contexts. Children and young people often respond to pressure, punishment, and one-sided hierarchies with withdrawal, resistance, or a breakdown in relationships. Psychologist Haim Omer therefore developed the model of "New Authority," which is characterized by presence, relationship-building, and non-violent steadfastness.

Foundations of New Authority (according to Haim Omer)

The concept of New Authority is based on the following principles:

Presence instead of control

- The professional is visible, approachable, and emotionally present.
- They do not "disappear" internally or organizationally during crises.
- Presence signals: "*I am here, even when things get difficult.*"

Relationship instead of punishment

- Focus on relationship continuity instead of escalation.
- No devaluation, but clear communication at eye level.
- Building trust as the foundation of education.

Steadfastness & self-control

- Consequence ≠ harshness: actions are deliberate, calm, and sustainable.
- The professional exercises self-control and consciously refrains from reactivity.
- The aim is not an immediate solution, but long-term presence.

Network & transparency

- Involving colleagues, parents, peers (so-called anchor persons).
- Openness in decisions creates social support and relief.
- Conflicts are not handled in isolation but viewed systemically.

"Authority does not arise through threat, but through attitude and relationship." – Haim Omer

Impact & Relevance in Practice

Educators report that applying New Authority:

- Reduces the frequency of escalations,
- Increases their sense of security in action,

- Makes young people more willing to take responsibility,
- Keeps the relationship stable – even in crises.

Example techniques from the concept

- **Non-escalation ("Not entering the fight")**
  Educators deliberately avoid engaging in power struggles.
  Instead of responding with counter-aggression, they remain calm, present, and address the behavior later in a calm setting.
  Goal: De-escalation through self-control and the signal: *"I'm here – but I'm not getting drawn in."*

- **Announcement rituals**
  Educational actions are announced – e.g., through letters, conversations, or notices in class council.
  This takes the pressure out of the situation and creates transparency.
  Example: *"From now on, I will regularly give feedback if the tone of interaction becomes hurtful."*

- **Watchful care**
  The professional signals: *"I see that you're not doing well, and I'll stay involved."*
  Without control, but with continuous observation and contact.
  This approach replaces sanctions with relationship and care.

- **Non-violent resistance**
  The professional remains consistent in their stance without using means of power.
  Example: showing repeated presence, standing up, staying in the room, enduring silently – without threat, without withdrawal.
  The important point: the "No" is visible – but not expressed as punishment.

Conclusion:

- Social and emotional skills strengthen authority through relationship, empathy, and dialogue.
- Good learning environments need leaders who act clearly, empathetically, and in a connected way.
- Relationship is the foundation of any form of authority.
- Equality replaces obedience as an educational principle.

CC: Omer, H.: Neue Autorität 2020; Juul, J.: Leitgedanken zur gleichwürdigen Beziehung.; OECD: Creating Better Learning Environments for Youth 2021.; CASEL Social Emotional Learning Framework 2020.; Aichhorn, B. / Six, U.: Wertschätzende Autorität im Unterricht 2018.