RPM wheel based on the pedagogy of discomfort

concept version within the framework of the Comenius Leadership Project on Relational Peer Mediation and the pedagogy of discomfort

Since 2025, the Multi-Level Regulation (MLR) and Inclusive Education (IE) research groups have been carrying out the Comenius Leadership Project on Relational Peer Mediation (RPM). The aim of this project is to stimulate and improve relationality, colleactivity, and intellectual and emotional flexibility of students and teachers. This is set against a backdrop of geopolitical and polarising developments that can cause considerable discomfort both within and outside our university of applied sciences. If this discomfort is not addressed, it leads to even greater tensions and conflicts. At the same time, teachers and students lack the skills to manage conflict and work with discomfort productively. This is where our project comes in.

The project aims to turn discomfort into an opportunity for relational learning based on diversity of perspectives by providing students and teachers with new pedagogical tools. These tools can be used both as a new pedagogical method (for day-to-day teaching and learning practice) and as conflict management tools (when interventions are needed for individuals or groups). We are developing these tools, drawing inspiration from the Pedagogy of Discomfort (Boler 1999, Zembylas 2015) and peer mediation (Winter et al. 2021), and adapting them into various teaching and learning practices such as Story Sharing, Critical Dialogues, Conflict Competence Training and the RPM Clinic. The attached illustration visualises the project's approach.

More specifically, those practices are based on the core RPM principles in which key elements converge, such as Positionality, Neutrality, Working with Emotions including the Multiple Perspectives and Interdisciplinarity, Conflict Competence, the Role of Dominant Narratives, Trust building and Alternative Ways of Relating. These can be used by lecturers in classroom settings, by students during project work, and by students and lecturers in the RPM Clinic, which is due to be launched at THUAS in April 2027.

The project is closely aligned with the work of the university's Social Safety Team and the university's ambitions to create an inclusive and safe learning environment. Furthermore, there appears to be a significant need amongst lecturers and students to better address discomfort and turn it into a productive, relational learning experience. The goal is simple: we all live and work *in relation* to others and we want to make these relational interactions easier for students and teachers.


LEARNING OUTCOMES: FOSTERING RELATIONALITY, COLLECTIVITY,
EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS
AND INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL FLEXIBILITY OF STUDENTS & TEACHERS
1 STORY SHARING
2 CRITICAL DIALOGUES
3 CONFLICT COMPETENCE TRAININGS
4 RPM CLINIC
1. Response-ability and relational autonomy
2. Positionality vis-à-vis neutrality
3. Conflict competence
4. Emotions at the three levels
5. Questioning dominant stories and structures
6. Trust building and alternative ways of relating
Working with DISCOMFORT within and outside the classroom