

# Edge Dynamics



Innovations in Mind, Behaviour, and Culture

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# Edge Dynamics

Mental, Behavioral, and Cultural Innovation Program  
of the Chair of Complexities ∞ Humanities Chair

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## The Chair of Complexities ∞ Humanities

The Chair of Complexities ∞ Humanities (CCH) at the Africa Business School (ABS, UM6P) aims to create a stronger connection between complexity sciences and human and managerial sciences by providing teachings, organizing scientific and cultural events, publishing, facilitating workshops, as well as conducting case studies and fieldwork.

As part of its activities, the Chair aims to deepen the specifically human and social dimensions of complexity through emulation and implementation of multidisciplinary approaches, transversality, and critical thinking. Our ambition is to support the various stakeholders of UM6P in the context of ongoing transformation and learning processes. The acquisition of "transdisciplinarity" tools will reinforce their autonomy and equip them with a humanistic and civic culture. As part of this endeavor, our university is developing programs to raise awareness of cultural, mental, and behavioral dynamics.

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## *Edge Dynamics: a multidisciplinary program*

In its commitment to excellence and to training the future elites of Morocco and Africa, UM6P acknowledges and nurtures all creative faculties and dimensions of individuals throughout their learning and research process. Through the proposed program, students will be encouraged to harness their full physical, psychological (cognitive, emotional), and relational potential in collaboration with administrators, educators, and researchers working on cross-disciplinary projects related to various domains, including intercultural, interreligious, attention economy, and student life. The educational purpose is to stimulate not only the "head" and "hands" but also the "heart".<sup>1</sup>

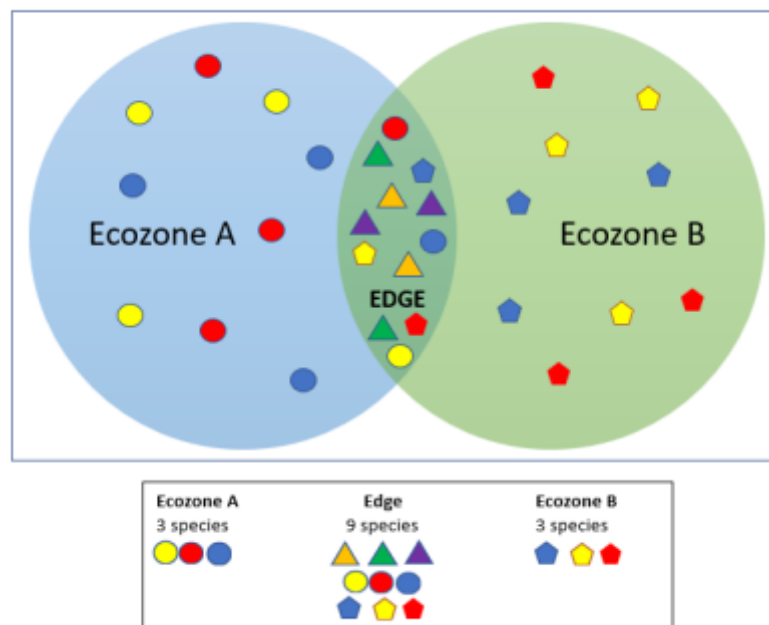
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<sup>1</sup> The "Head, Heart, Hands" model was originally introduced by Professor of Education and environmentalist David Orr (1992). Orr devised this holistic framework with the intention of fostering transformative learning and enlightening others about the concept of ecoliteracy. See also Sipos *et al.* (2008).

By means of this initiative, the Chair aims to **a)** contribute to existing initiatives and services within the University in cultural and linguistic management, cognitive ecology, and attention economy, and **b)** develop new activities within the multidisciplinary Edge Dynamics program that emphasize a specific emerging phenomenon, the *edge effect*, occurring in various interstitial spaces.

## Edge effect

*Edge effect*<sup>2</sup> is a concept of ecology that illustrates how change and dynamics occur in spaces of transition, borders, thresholds, between different habitats, environments, etc. The edge effect accounts for the multiplicity and richness of living beings in these transitional zones. Studies have shown that the plurality prevalent in certain conjoined ecosystems generates dynamism and creativity not found in these same environments viewed separately. This ecological phenomenon has also been demonstrated in sociocultural environments<sup>3</sup>. The edge effect can also have disruptive consequences in fragmented spaces.



<sup>2</sup> Sometimes translated, for the most complex cases at the edge, by the concept of "ecotone."

<sup>3</sup>For example, see this study co-led by Adam Galinsky, a professor at Columbia Business School: Lu, J. G., et al. (2017). Adam Galinsky addresses a similar situation in another study conducted in the fashion industry: Godart, F. C., et al. (2015).

In *Edge Dynamics*, we address a fundamental issue of the current generation of students. Characterized as digital natives, which differentiates them from previous generations (notably Gen X), they are better equipped to work in engineering and technology, can communicate with ease, and master a range of software tools. Yet their limitations are also derived from the digital world.

With this multidisciplinary program, we aim to work with UM6P students in order to optimize their educational and research paths, but also ensure that they can thrive on the edge and beyond the digital transformation in social and cultural spheres, as responsible citizens. Students are encouraged to become tolerant, open-minded, and curious individuals capable of effective communication, solving problems and conflicts of various kinds, and developing a comprehensive and nuanced view of the world.

It is worth noting that the program could contribute to a variety of sessions within the two editions of UM6P's Science Week. In the week scheduled in October, where the majority of participants are students, there is an opportunity to begin the academic year with a focus on cognitive and behavioral ecology, as well as cultural pluralism. A session on *Edge Dynamics* would be relevant for the February edition, which will focus on the themes of Evolution, Transitions, and Disruptions. Finally, it should be added that the program could engage in research collaborations with UM6P's Institute for Advanced Studies, whose central theme is "Physical and Human Ecosystems in Transition."

Ultimately, the *Edge Dynamics* program will seek to promote and support all initiatives connected to academic learning, as well as adjacent activities related to student life that contribute to personal growth and the creative potential of one's personality. Accordingly, the program aims to support students in exploring and articulating three dimensions of their life within and outside of UM6P: their relationship **1) with the world** (intercultural), **2) with others** (interpersonal), and **3) with themselves** (intrapersonal). Intertwined between these three dimensions are various, and more or less obvious, links and connections that need to be generated, strengthened, and nurtured.

## I. The Intercultural and the Relationship to the World

In a globalized world or international corporations, staff movements within organizations create increasingly complex teams made up of different national cultures. Local businesses often need teams with diverse cultural backgrounds to work with foreign partners, clients, or suppliers. This creates challenges for organizations and employees. Indeed, cultural references have an impact on the way each individual perceives their identity and that of others, as well as the different ways of thinking, acting, and reacting. They also have an influence on how relationships between groups are conceived. The discovery of this “otherness”, meaning that which is perceived as different, allows one to learn from others (interpersonal) and, in return, to better know oneself (intrapersonal).

By favoring intercultural relationships, whether they be physical or virtual, it is possible to go beyond cultural barriers and live together more harmoniously in increasingly diverse societies. For decades now, the importance of intercultural issues is taken into account in International relations. Yet the difficulty resides in the implementation of cultural plurality and the way of addressing it. Businesses, and more broadly international organizations, have a hard time embodying the diversity they aspire to, and the concrete examples of success are not as numerous and demonstrative as one would think.

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### Objectives and acquired skills

In the intercultural perspective of the multidisciplinary *Edge Dynamics* program, the objective is to encourage students to develop specific skills and put forth *meeting points, zones of exchange and creativity* between groups. This cultural dimension is to be considered through a variety of prisms and scales (national, institutional, familial, generational, etc.)

#### Skills

Intercultural skills include a wide array of attitudes and knowledge aiming at:

- *understanding and respecting cultural differences*
- *communicating efficiently with people of different cultures*
- *working in a team with people of different cultures*

- *adapting one's behavior according to the cultural norms of the others*
- *being aware of one's own prejudices and questioning them*
- *learning from other cultures and being open to new cultural experiences.*

The goal will be to work on and put into action:

- *attitudes*: appreciation of diversity and plurality; respect for cultural differences; openness to others; the ability to listen and empathize with others; etc.;
- *knowledge and discernment*: awareness of diversity; awareness of one's own preconceived ideas, biases, etc.; awareness of the central role of language; awareness of the internal heterogeneity of cultures; etc.;
- *skills and abilities*: expanding perspectives and approaches; knowledge of other cultural references; empathy; cognitive flexibility; adaptability; multilingualism; mediation skills.

### **Means and practical implementations suggested:**

The proposed means are avenues to explore. Some already exist in various forms within the university. The *Edge Dynamics* program could support them by acting as a catalyst to make them more visible, adapt, and disseminate them across various departments and schools.

- *Promoting a culture of multilingualism*: encouraging the acquisition of foreign languages (not just English), providing access to various means and resources (access to academic literature and the press, language centers, educational materials), organizing events ("language cafés," language weeks, etc.);
- *Integrating courses on cultural diversity* into the curriculum for all students: offering specific courses on cultural diversity, the history, and traditions of different countries. These courses can be taught by specialized instructors in the field or by external speakers;
- *Promoting intercultural exchanges*: organizing events such as festivals, conferences, workshops, debates, and discussion groups on topics related to culture;
- *Encouraging international mobility*: student exchange programs provide students with an immersive experience and offer a unique opportunity to discover new

cultures and enhance intercultural understanding;

- *Teacher training*: provide training to teachers on how to address cultural diversity issues in their teaching and promote intercultural understanding.
- *Raising awareness in the wider university community*: organize events to raise awareness within the university community about cultural diversity and the benefits of intercultural understanding. These events can include conferences, workshops, and cultural exhibitions.

## II. Otherness and interpersonal relationships

*Interpersonal skills*, also known as *soft skills*, are essential personal and relational qualities for thriving in both academic and professional environments. They emphasize one's *demeanor and behavior* rather than diplomas or technical knowledge, aiming to enable students to *establish positive relationships with others through psychosocial skills such as active listening, effective communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution*. Interpersonal skills help us to communicate effectively with others and cultivate positive relationships with them.

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### Objectives and acquired skills

Interpersonal skills enable to:

- *Communicate effectively* using clear and concise language.
- *Adapt one's communication* based on the context and the audience.
- *Build trust and credibility with others* by demonstrating integrity and respecting confidentiality.
- *Express opinions and ideas constructively* while remaining open to criticism and feedback.
- *Demonstrate empathy and compassion* towards others by recognizing their emotions and considering their needs.
- *Manage differences in opinions and perspectives* while preserving relationships.
- *Make group decisions* using a collaborative approach and considering various



ideas and perspectives.

- *Resolve problems and conflicts* using a constructive approach and seek solutions that are agreeable to all stakeholders.
- *Handle difficult situations and strong emotions* while remaining calm and self-controlled.

### Skills

- *Verbal/Non-verbal communication*: Knowing how to express oneself clearly and actively listen to others.
- *Emotional intelligence/empathy*: Understanding one's own emotions and those of others and using this knowledge to better interact with others.
- *Collaboration and teamwork*: Knowing how to work with other people, share responsibilities and tasks, and together achieve a common goal.
- *Conflict management*: Knowing how to resolve conflicts constructively, seeking mutually beneficial solutions, and avoiding negative reactions.
- *Leadership*: Knowing how to inspire, motivate, and guide others toward a common goal.
- *Adaptability*: Being able to adapt to different situations and work with individuals with diverse perspectives.
- *Empathy*: Understanding the feelings and perspectives of others and being able to put oneself in their shoes.
- *Negotiation*: Being able to find compromise solutions and negotiate mutually beneficial agreements.

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### **Means and practical implementations suggested:**

- *Communication courses/public speaking workshops and competitions*: Communication courses can help students develop their ability to communicate effectively with others.
- *Leadership training*: Leadership training can help students develop their ability to inspire and motivate others, as well as encourage collaboration and team problem-solving.
- *Conflict resolution training* (e.g., Nonviolent Communication, Transactional Analysis Workshops): Acquire the tools to improve communication and resolve interpersonal conflicts.

- *Support groups*: A support group allows for the full and open expression of each participant without judgment or advice. The goal is simply to provide a respectful and attentive listening environment.
- *Role-playing scenarios*: Role-playing allows students to practice different social situations and learn how to communicate effectively with others.
- *Group projects*: Group projects enable students to work together towards a common goal, fostering collaboration, communication, and team problem-solving.
- *Volunteer activities*: Volunteer activities provide students with the opportunity to work with people from different backgrounds and cultures, which can help develop their empathy and sensitivity towards others.

### **Language management, a strategic focus of the program.**

The intercultural dimension aims to provide students with the tools to be citizens of a globalized and multipolar world, characterized by the complexity of diverse societies and the multitude of their histories and perspectives. This intercultural dimension, which is intended to be brought to life within the University, also implies *agility in relation to the languages* in use, along with *a fluency in transitioning between them*. English is the primary language of instruction (the *lingua franca* of 21st-century sciences) with French as the second language, and Arabic being also present as both an international language and a national and African language (without forgetting that it was previously a scientific and academic *lingua franca* for nearly eight centuries).

These three primary languages are therefore used within the ecosystem to ensure the international influence of UM6P. The Edge Dynamics program can contribute to facilitating multilingualism processes, exploring creative ways to deploy them, both in terms of their expressions and their coexistence in the university's teaching, publishing, communication, and public information. This management of languages,, emphasizing agility and fluency, must also contribute to an overall effort to maximize the impact and influence of UM6P, particularly in the English-speaking cultural zone and within the national, regional, and continental context of Arab-Muslim culture.

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### **III. Self-awareness and intrapersonal relationship**

The *intrapersonal* capacity of a person is characterized by *the creation of an effective self-model*, encompassing the desires, fears, and abilities of the individual, which can be used to lead one's life effectively. In simpler terms, this form of intelligence refers to a person's ability to understand their own feelings, to know themselves, to determine their desires and limitations, and to accept their strengths and weaknesses. With enough practice, this intelligence can be developed over time. Additionally, intrapersonal intelligence has a significant impact on an individual's motivation, learning style, strengths, and growth opportunities. It is an essential element of *well-being*.

## Objectives and acquired skills

- Helping students understand and appreciate their *emotions, needs, and personal values*.
- Enabling students to develop a *deep understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses*, as well as their learning style.
- Encouraging students to practice *self-reflection*, determine their personal goals, and develop a plan to achieve them.
- Teaching students *emotional regulation* and problem-solving skills to cope with the challenges of university life.
- Promoting *self-awareness* and *compassion* for oneself and others.
- More broadly, *enhancing the physical and mental well-being* of students through information, activities, and access to various resources.

## Skills

- *Self-awareness*: Students will be able to recognize and understand their emotions, needs, and values, as well as identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- *Self-determination*: Students will be capable of setting their own personal goals, developing an action plan to achieve them, and maintaining their motivation.
- *Emotional regulation*: Students will be able to effectively regulate their emotions and cope with stressful situations adaptively.
- *Problem-solving*: Students will have the ability to creatively and effectively solve problems, using critical thinking and decision-making skills.
- *Empathy*: Students will be able to understand and take into account the emotions and perspectives of others, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively and work in teams.
- *Self-confidence*: Students will be able to recognize their own abilities and trust themselves to achieve their personal goals.
- *Adaptability*: Students will be capable of adapting to new or unforeseen situations, using their skills in emotional self-regulation and problem-solving.

## Means and practical implementations suggested:

- Offering *personality tests* (such as MBTI, Big Five, etc.) to help students better understand themselves, identify their primary character traits, and describe their relationships with others.
- Facilitating *self-exploration workshops* to assist students in understanding their own emotions, values, and needs.
- Organizing *conferences* on problem-solving and emotional regulation to help students cope with the challenges of university life.
- Providing *individual coaching sessions* to help students identify their personal goals and develop an action plan to achieve them.
- Leading *mindfulness meditation workshops* (such as MBSR or Koru) to help students develop self-awareness and compassion for themselves and others.
- Arranging *feedback and assessment sessions* to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and understand their learning style.
- Conducting *ethical development workshops* to help students explore moral and ethical issues and find meaning in their lives.<sup>4</sup>
- Offering *physical and symbolic spaces* for dialogue, listening, and *introspection* for all religious/spiritual sensitivities<sup>5</sup>.
- *Promoting volunteering* by encouraging students to get involved in community service projects. Interning with an organization can help them engage with the world and others, thereby aiding in self-discovery.

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## References

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<sup>4</sup> This can be especially important for students studying subjects not explicitly focused on moral or ethical issues (such as sciences and technology).

<sup>5</sup> International students or those away from home for the first time and needing to regain a sense of community may find this particularly significant .

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## **University programs around Mindfulness / Well-being / Spiritual Life / Interpersonal / Intercultural**

### **Europe**

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne - [Espace de méditation - EPFL](#)

HEC Paris - [Le jardin pédagogique, nouvel éco lieu de maraîchage et de bien-être sur le Campus HEC](#)

Imperial College London - [Meditation | Staff | Imperial College London](#)

KU Leuven - [Lunchtime Meditation - KU Leuven Lifestance Network](#)

University of Cambridge - [Mental health and wellbeing | Student Support](#)

University of Leeds - [Mindfulness | Wellbeing, Safety and Health](#)

University of Oxford - [Wellbeing Research Centre](#)

## **Etats-Unis**

CalTech - [Mindfully Resilient - Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy Group](#)

Harvard - [Retreats and Quiet Places | Harvard Divinity School \(HDS\)](#)

Georgetown University - [Meditation - The John Main Center, Georgetown University](#)

Johns Hopkins - [Johns Hopkins University Student Well-Being](#)

MIT - [Office of Student Wellbeing | Division of Student Life](#)

Stanford - [Interpersonal Dynamics | Stanford Graduate School of Business](#)

UCLA - [UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center \(MARC\)](#)

University of Massachusetts - [UMass Memorial Health Center for Mindfulness](#)

University of Pennsylvania - [Positive Psychology Center](#)

University of Wisconsin - Madison - [Center for Healthy Minds](#)

Yale - [Interpersonal & Group Dynamics](#)

## **Moyen-Orient**

NYU Abu Dhabi - [Spiritual Life, Intercultural Education, and Conflict Transformation - NYU Abu Dhabi](#)

UAEU - [Emirates Center for Happiness Research](#)

Georgetown Qatar campus - [Oasis Room - Georgetown University in Qatar](#)