



# EDLAB

2020-2025

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## Historical perspective (2010-today)

In the period 2010-2013 the 'Leading in Learning' programme ran. This programme had the ambition to create an engaging community for educational innovation. To achieve this, a grass-roots approach was adopted through providing seeding money for large and small innovative projects. This approach allowed for bottom-up creative ideas to flourish and for people to experiment with innovation of education. The downside was that the programme ended in 2013 without successful upscaling of small-scale innovations to a broader university level. In response to this, in 2013-2014 plans were developed to bring more coherence to and collaboration between the different UM educational research communities. The ambition was to create a thriving research community on learning and development under the umbrella of an Institute for Learning & Performance. This institute was never realized because of the too narrow focus of the proposal on research. In 2015, the then Executive Board and Management Team decided to set up EDLAB, a center for educational innovation within UM. EDLAB was founded in a time in which the university had to deal with several issues relating to the quality of education. EDLAB was founded in a time in which the university needed extra focus on the quality assurance of education and EDLAB took part in finding good manners to address the issues at the time.

### EDLAB - The Maastricht University Institute of Education Innovation

*The below text comes from 'EDLAB's mission, vision and strategic goals 2018-2020'*

#### **Mission**

EDLAB is the Maastricht University institute for education innovation and promotes an optimal learning experience for students of Maastricht University, by advancing the field of teaching and learning for both students and staff. Because of its central position, EDLAB can serve the UM community of learners and educators by fostering a culture of exchange and collaboration between educators, students, faculties and other stakeholders. To this end we initiate and coordinate UM-wide events and projects on educational development. EDLAB furthermore offers the UM community a physical meeting place and facilitates co-creation and collaboration in education innovation. Through the UM-wide implementation of innovations and teacher-training services, EDLAB strives to make education innovation everybody's business, thereby increasing engagement of both students and staff with the education process. EDLAB has a strong focus on sustainable implementation of successful education innovations in order to improve and support the students' learning experience, employability and broad personal development.

#### **Vision**

We define innovation as the process of creating new ideas and practices to address educational needs – to do different things, and doing things differently. Innovation is not necessarily radical or disruptive, but also exists in improving what is there and repairing what is broken. Innovation can be about educational methods and processes, about technology, or about spaces. It requires critical review of issues and potential solutions; it is an incremental process and a means to an end.

EDLAB is well-connected to the faculties and other internal and external stakeholders in the educational process. As such, it is uniquely positioned to recognise trends and needs as they may emerge in one part of the university community, and relate and relay them to other stakeholders. It offers a conduit for ideas and connects individuals who are seeking inspiration from colleagues they may otherwise not encounter. Through its events and projects EDLAB accumulates a body of

knowledge and experience that allows it to be proactive and take initiative, taking into account the needs and ambitions of UM's community of learners and teaching staff, UM's strategic programme 'Collaborative Open Research Education' (CORE), and global trends. EDLAB plays a vital role in ensuring momentum in education innovation for UM. Great ideas may come up in isolation, but they grow and prosper through collaboration, and they generate impact through sustainable implementation.

**EDLAB's principles:**

UM-wide approach: EDLAB projects are defined on a basis of UM-wide consensus and require the participation of a majority of UM faculties.

Sustainable innovation: The sustainability of EDLAB innovations is key to the quality of education innovation at UM. UM-wide commitment for EDLAB initiatives allows for continued support and implementation efforts on institutional and faculty level.

Spill-over effect: EDLAB is an inter-faculty platform for exchange and reciprocity. This empowers spill-over of successful educational practices from one faculty to others.

Scholarly approach: EDLAB initiatives are grounded in theory, critical reflection and based on evidence. All EDLAB output is primarily designed for direct application and implementation in the teaching and learning environment.

Independence: EDLAB is positioned directly under the UM Executive Board. Its mandate is to initiate and support both bottom-up ideas and top-down activities for education innovation or support existing innovation and collaboration efforts.

## EDLAB 2020-2025

When looking at the ambitions of our university, the input from peers in the audits of 2018 and 2019, and the phase of development in which our organisation finds itself, the time appears right for further focus on innovation of education and a continuation of EDLAB with expanded room for innovation and impact. The above described mission and vision of EDLAB should remain as it is with an addition to create more room for unthinkable and pioneer ideas.

### Vision on education innovation

According to EDLAB's vision 2020-2025, "innovation is a process of creating new ideas and practices to address educational needs – to do different things, and doing things differently". In addition, revolutionary ideas can find an inspirational base at EDLAB, but also ideas to strengthen the current practice of education are warmly embraced. A quote by Marva Collins depicts the idea for this growth in a simple way: "The essence of teaching is to make learning contagious, to have one idea spark another". The idea is that *this* is what happens within EDLAB, that it provides space to chase the unthinkable and pioneer ideas, while also holding true to its original course of a collaborative, evidence-based, research-informed approach to innovation. Perhaps to be considered a daring combination, but one that does justice best to UM as a university. There is to be room for pioneering (it's how UM started), and there must be room for implementation of innovative ideas that are evidence-based and sustainable. Through its events and projects EDLAB accumulates a body of knowledge and experience that allows also it to be proactive, take initiative and play a consultative role within UM, taking into account the needs and ambitions of UM's community of learners and teaching staff, UM's strategic programme and global trends. The core of EDLAB thus does not change, but there will be more space to 'chase the unthinkable'. The excellence programmes have a stable home at EDLAB and will remain so, because they are both early adaptors of innovation as well as a breeding place for innovation.

### Goals for 2020-2025

1. To create optimal circumstances for sustainable and visionary innovation of education;
2. To connect and coordinate the various existing education innovation efforts within UM, such as EDview, Global Citizenship Education, a new vision on assessment, digitization of education, etcetera. EDLAB is to be a coordinating base for these innovative initiatives in order to best serve the faculties;
3. To support the ideas of the Task force Learning & Innovation;
4. To put energy and effort into sparking pride within the UM community for innovation of education (and thus recognize and reward teaching and innovation efforts better);
5. To create a thriving educational community of practice for teachers, students and support staff;
6. To develop a model of upscaling innovative ideas to ensure sustainable implementation;
7. To further develop and coordinate teaching development via CPD and continue the collaboration with the team of the University Teaching Qualification (BKO in Dutch);
8. To stimulate and improve the third-party funding for UM in programmes of education research and innovation;
9. To widen the circle of people involved in education innovation at UM with new talents;
10. To foster internal and external exposure

## Project organisation at EDLAB

Staff and students can present their ideas for research and innovation of education. If these ideas are translated into projects, compensation of (part of) the hours and other resources can be taken care of. Everybody with an active role in R&I of education will be encouraged to join the teaching and innovation community at EDLAB. EDLAB introduces two levels of R&I projects, within the four leading themes:

1. Small projects to start exploring an innovative idea with colleagues from different faculties (and service centers), sponsored via a small budget (seeding money).
2. Ideation projects where innovators and researchers from different faculties and disciplines will be facilitated to develop new research and innovations or to work on a proposal for a grant.

The leads of these two types of projects form a community around Research and Innovation to exchange innovations, lessons learned, research outcomes.

## Position of excellence programmes

Excellence education (or honours education) is small-scale education that allows involved students and staff to experiment with new techniques or educational innovations. The spillover effect between the excellence pillar and the innovation pillar is a unique aspect to the current setup of EDLAB, and will therefore remain an integral part of EDLAB in the future.

Feedback Cubes can serve as a successful example of this spillover effect, where the project results of the PREMIUM team resulted in the adoption of the feedback and evaluation tool for the wider adoption by the UM staff. On a yearly basis, more than 75 academic and support staff are part of the excellence programmes, and attend the specially designed trainings and intervision session. This way excellence also contributes to CPD. The excellence programmes provide a stable community of teachers, support staff and students (more than 300 per year) that feed back into the programmes and EDLAB. Furthermore, the honours programmes are the perfect example at UM where team science and interdisciplinary research are put into practice. Students in all programmes work together on research and design projects and issues, under supervision of academic staff, the majority of them are new young researchers that are motivated and eager to connect with bright young students and senior staff, and both parties inspire one another.

## Communication strategy

The proposed EDLAB builds on the existing EDLAB, by keeping its strengths and allowing EDLAB to grow. The evidence-based core of EDLAB will not change, but in addition the aim is to create more room for pioneering efforts. In the communication strategy for EDLAB this pioneering aspect can be emphasized since it is different and will appeal to a new group of people.

## Why would people want to join the new EDLAB?

Crucial to the success of this proposal is the willingness of researchers and teachers with a passion for innovation to join EDLAB. It is therefore important to mention explicitly what the incentives are for them to be a part of this initiative. Colleagues joining EDLAB will:

1. Have the chance to network and meet colleagues who share a passion for education who work in similar or different fields;

2. Expand their internal (across faculties) and external (regional/international) network (and exposure);
3. Receive free/extra support in funding advising;
4. Receive free/extra help in profiling their research or project and giving it media attention;
5. Have a larger chance to acquire seed money, idea generation money, or funding for their project because of the network of researchers and teachers that are connected to EDLAB;
6. Connect with students who can aide in their research or project (create focus groups in an easy way for instance);
7. Receive peer-to-peer support, being part of a group/team;
8. Receive support in digitalisation of experiments;
9. Receive help from experienced project leaders in the implementation phase of their innovation/research (programme managers).

### Why will this benefit UM?

In summary, this vision for the future of EDLAB will be beneficial to the UM, because it

- Builds on EDLAB's current success;
- Connects and engages minds with a passion for education;
- Creates a stimulating environment for innovators of education;
- Improves internal and external visibility of the best UM has to offer in education research and innovation;
- Ensures UM gives recognition to and expresses pride for innovative educational researchers and teachers;
- Increases the impact of UM's mark from the individual student's experience to UM's image as an international educator in the world.