

Dean ESSB  
Prof. dr. V.J.J.M. Bekkers

Date  
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Subject  
Letter of advice EMPO

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Dear Prof.dr. Bekkers,

The Faculty Council (FC) of the Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences would like to give a positive advice regarding the Educational Master in Primary Education (EMPO), as was discussed in the meeting on April 22, 2021. We share the Faculty Board's perspective on the capacity of EMPO to contribute to public value in superdiverse cities in the Netherlands. Furthermore, we are enthusiastic about the alliance with NIVOZ in the development of this program.

In addition to the positive advice, the FC would like to point out some important points, outlined below. The FC would like to receive updates of the progress of this program. We understand that the EMPO is in continuous development, and we would like to give our input in any substantial change in the program. Furthermore, we have five points of attention that the Faculty Board should keep into consideration while it continues to draft the curriculum for the EMPO.

Firstly, we would like to stress the need for an extensive analysis and planning on the internships for the students of EMPO. The EMPO internships, also called "learning in practice" seem to take a significant workload for the program. Students partake in these internships two days a week. The concept letter that explains that these internships are different than *classic* internships. Students are "investigating children's lifestyles, developing their pedagogical mission, conducting teacher research", among others while learning in practice. However, the FC does not understand the conceptualization of *classic* internships under the ESSB policy. Two questions arise from this point in the short-term: what are classic internships for ESSB and what do they entail? How are EMPO internships different than classic internships? In the long-term, the FC would like to encourage the creation of a Faculty-wide policy on internships.

Additionally, during our meetings with the program developers, it became unclear whether these internships would be compensated with a financial contribution or not. We understand that teaching students is part of the learning process to prepare future primary school teachers; the practical element is quite important in this regard. However, it is also very important to ensure equal opportunities for students wishing to partake in this program. Unpaid internships in educational programs could prevent low-income students to enrol. Therefore, we believe that the Faculty Board should provide an extensive explanation of why these students would or would not be compensated under this learning in practice scheme. This review should include specifications on the workload expected from students in their different educational lessons in contrast to their internships. Furthermore, we would like to understand how costs related to the internship, such as transportation to the schools, will be managed by the faculty.

Our second point of attention relates to the assessment methods of EMPO. These assessment methods appear to us as very flexible and qualitative. We previously raised a concern regarding the transparency of the assessment method for students. It is essential for the FC to have a step-by-step explanation of how these assessments will be carried out. We believe that grading and assessment tend to be stressful points for students and having a very transparent system is imperative to avoid any misunderstandings or dissatisfaction for EMPO pupils. The Faculty Board has explained to the FC that this assessment method will be transparent and that there will be remediation opportunities for students. However, we lack a clear overview of this process.

Our third point concerns the financing by the NIVOZ. The EMPO is financed externally and not part of the DPECS curriculum. It may therefore be considered a direct competitor of existing DPECS master programmes. Thus, the development of this Master program concerns ancillary activities, for which the involved teachers are financially rewarded by the NIVOZ. Are these ancillary activities officially registered and have they been approved of? Furthermore, we would like to know how these ancillary activities relate to the existing educational planning of the involved sections. That is, are the sections compensated for the time that the involved employees invest in the EMPO? Teaching and support staff have a high workload as it is, particularly given all the adjustments that have been made to teaching in the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and with the planned bachelor curriculum redevelopment in the near future. We feel that the development of this external Master programme may result in an undue burden for the staff. Therefore, we ask the Faculty Board to be cautious about this issue throughout the planning of this Master's programme.

Our fourth point of concern relates to the accreditation of the program and the pilot. The program will start with a pilot in the upcoming academic year. Students are going to be aware that the pilot will start before the EMPO is accredited. However, what will happen to these students, and to the EMPO, if the faculty does not receive an accreditation in due time? We would like to be informed of any "back-up" plan in this undesirable scenario.

Lastly, we would like to receive more information on the expected number of students for the EMPO. It is our understanding that the surveys carried out by the university showed that there is ample interest in the program, and that the EMPO will eventually have 65 students involved. Nevertheless, we would like to see this survey contrasted with data on the labour market expectations to have a more holistic overview of the interest on this program. Additionally, it would be important to also assess the interest of students by considering the developments of similar Master's programs that will start in other Dutch Research Universities.

Best regards,

Faculty Council ESSB



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