

Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP)

Strategy 2020-2024



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Preface

The Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) was established in 2013 to strengthen education quality throughout the region. This document serves to update the network’s goals and programmatic focus, building off the contributions and work of members over the past 7 years. This strategy document follows the critical review and evaluation the Network undertook in 2019, and will be used as basis for seeking collaboration and partnership, and to guide our work in the coming years.

I. Programme Rationale

Despite the considerable progress on education access and participation over the past years, 262 million children and youth aged 6 to 17 were still out of school in 2017, and more than 617 million children and adolescents worldwide were estimated to not be achieving the minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. Many countries stray far from equipping all learners with the necessary minimum competencies. Recent projections show that if the current trends continue, one in six children aged 6-17 will remain excluded from schooling and only six in ten young people will be completing secondary education by 2030 while equity, quality and relevance remain major concerns.¹

These figures remind us that effective and relevant learning outcomes can only be achieved through the provision of quality inputs and inclusive teaching and learning processes that enable all learners to acquire relevant knowledge, skills and competencies. In order to ensure proper provision of education, education systems must be able to measure learning, which means gathering reliable data on learning outcomes at different levels of the education system (from individual learner, classroom, school, sub-national and national level) to provide evidence to support decision-making in education. Further, this information can be used to develop and introduce better strategies to authentically support schools and teachers to improve student learning; and to ultimately to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the system.

While more and more countries in Asia-Pacific are conducting large-scale learning assessments, many countries face challenges to analyze and utilize learning assessment results. In some countries, these assessments are conducted on an irregular basis due to limited resources and the need for external technical assistance. Moreover, as Asia-Pacific is a large and diverse region, there is a challenge in developing broad and general regional frameworks and guidelines on student learning outcomes, although there are two sub-regional assessment programmes, the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) and the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) that could offer guidance. Additional data sourced from national or cross-national assessments, school-based, classroom and other formative assessments, citizen-led assessments, household surveys and census data could enable policymakers to identify systemic inefficiencies, address gaps in the delivery of quality education and set policies and targets to ensure that no one is left behind. The development of targeted policies, on the use of these data and to support schools and teachers to improve learning, are urgently needed to accelerate results.

Despite international commitments, such as the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda, challenges still remain to ensure that all people in the region have access to quality primary and secondary education, and achieve relevant learning outcomes. The Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific can play a significant role in addressing these challenges and issues.

¹ All data from UIS 2019, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>.

II. NEQMAP Vision and Mission

Strong education systems in Asia-Pacific where collaborative efforts continue to improve the quality of education.

As its overarching, long-term goal, the network serves to **strengthen education systems to improve the quality of education in Asia-Pacific through collaborative efforts**. This includes strengthening and establishing effective monitoring systems that provide evidence to improve system-level quality, as well as individual-level learning outcomes. The monitoring of quality of education is often used as a synonym for learning assessment – even in the name of this very network. While aiming to strengthen education systems and the quality of education, NEQMAP utilizes learning assessments as the gateway to these broader objectives. Therefore, the network focuses on issues relating to assessment to ensure alignment with curriculum and pedagogy, as well as other closely related topics, including skills, competencies, teaching and instruction.

Since 2013, NEQMAP has established itself as a solid platform and reference group for improving education quality in the Asia-Pacific. The Network’s membership has grown significantly since its establishment, now consisting of 57 members² (49 members and 8 associate members) from 31 countries, with the majority from the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to functioning as a network, NEQMAP operates as a programme under UNESCO’s Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau of Education (UNESCO Bangkok).

Collaboration is a key feature of the network. It provides a forum for exchanging expertise, experiences and lessons to improve the quality of learning in education systems of countries in Asia-Pacific, with the eventual aim of influencing policy reforms. NEQMAP supports countries and member institutes in strengthening education quality through its three pillars of activities: *capacity development, research and knowledge sharing*.

What do we mean by education quality?

Education quality must focus on competencies and participation of all learners, facilitating reflective or critical learning, knowledge and skills acquisition, and the development of agency to address complex sustainability issues.³ Quality education fosters creativity and knowledge, and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem-solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED).⁴

From an education systems’ perspective, for education to be of quality, it also should be *equitable* (in terms of access and participation); *efficient* (no corruption or wastage); *relevant* (contributing to the

² See Appendix B for a list of members. Members are both institutes and individuals.

³ See [Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016](#).

⁴ See UNESCO, 2015. [The Framework for Action: Incheon Declaration](#).

progress of society); *effective* (in terms of both providing access as well as learning outcomes) and, finally, *pertinent*, that is to say, responding to the needs of all learners (e.g., inclusion and learner well-being).

Since 2015, the overarching Education 2030 Agenda, or Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), commits to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels. It is comprehensive, with an emphasis on expanded access to all levels of education, and places a priority on learning outcomes, skills and competencies. NEQMAP's work and strategy aligns to SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda to promote quality education and to improve learning outcomes, which requires strengthening inputs, processes and evaluation of outcomes and mechanisms to measure progress.

What NEQMAP means for Asia and the Pacific

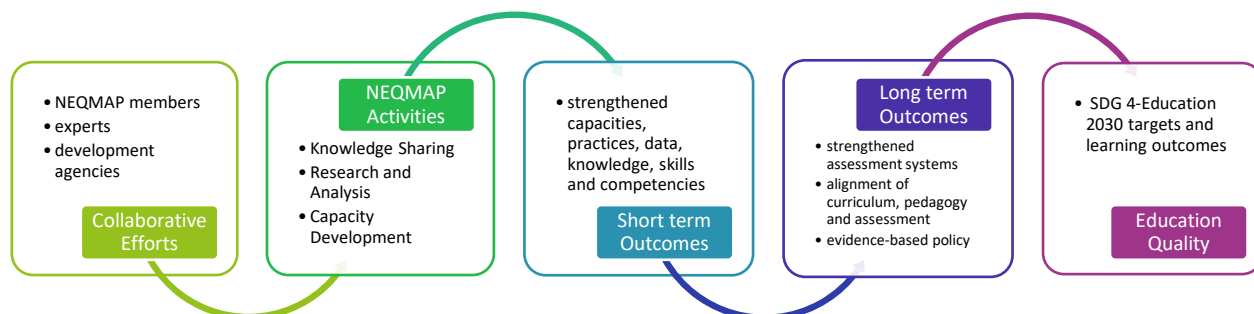
NEQMAP's approach of utilizing learning assessments as the entry point to monitoring education quality and aligning education systems provides a unique opportunity. Through its work on capacity building, research and knowledge sharing to build evidence-based policy and improvements in learning processes and learning outcomes, the Network will be invaluable for providing best practices, evidence and shaping the direction of education quality in the region. It aims to position itself as an umbrella for various initiatives across the region, collaborating and supporting both national level organizations, as well as other regional or international organizations working in learning assessments and education quality.

The network is aware of the increasing visibility of international learning assessment programmes, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD-PISA), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA's) Trends International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Reading and Literacy Skills (PIRLS). Other initiatives, such as the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA), the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM), and the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network have significant presence in the region. The increasing demand within the region for participation in international and regional learning assessment programmes provides an opportunity for NEQMAP as a regional platform to coordinate and assist countries in utilizing these initiatives to strengthen education quality within the region. This collaboration and support allows members to not only leverage existing expertise, but to develop and build expertise themselves. This will allow the network and its work to not only be a leader within the region, but globally as well.

Theory of Change

The overarching goal of NEQMAP is to ensure quality education, through strengthening education systems' capacities to build effective and sustainable learning assessment systems and aligning these with curriculum and instruction. NEQMAP works through collaborative efforts with education stakeholders in the region and beyond, to build capacity and generate and share knowledge leading to strengthened monitoring mechanisms that promote better learning outcomes, relevant skills and competencies, as well as evidence-based policy.

Figure 1: NEQMAP's Theory of Change



III. Programme Areas

Based on the inputs from member institutions and through critical reflection, NEQMAP will focus on: **strengthening evidence-based education policy in:** 1) competency-based learning and outcomes, reemphasizing education quality in terms of skills and competencies needed to achieve education quality, and 2) strengthening learning assessment systems by aligning curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

The Network will continue to look closely at student learning assessments to ensure quality learning outcomes. Good quality data that is valid and reliable can be used for evidence-based policy-making. Enhanced capacities in all stages of the assessment cycle, from data generation to reporting, dissemination and data use are essential to support evidence-based decision-making in education policy and practice.

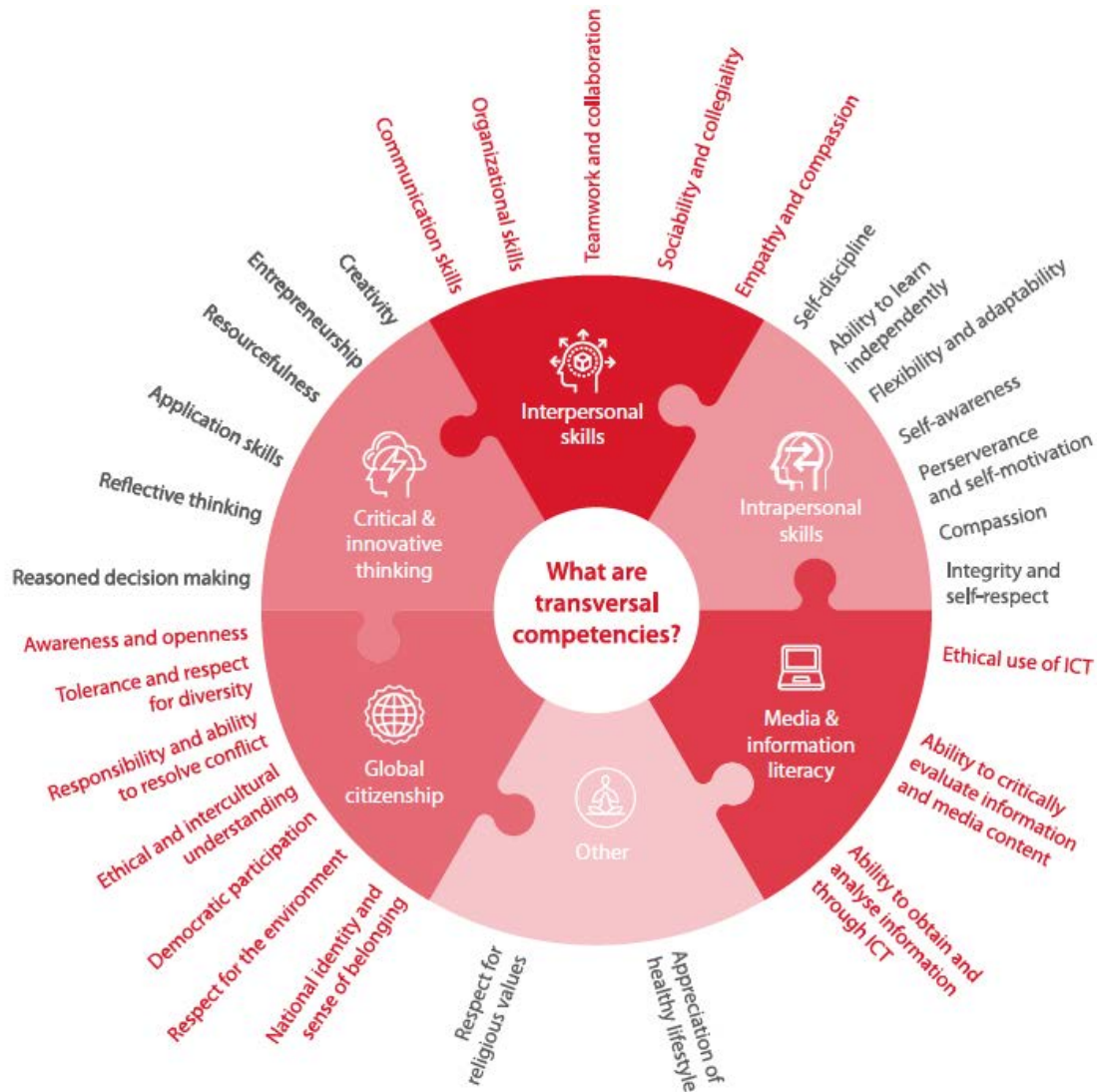
Competency-based Learning Outcomes

Concerns have been raised regarding over-testing, especially in the countries of this region, to the point where this overtakes efforts aimed at improving the quality of education. There has been an increasing awareness that education, in general, might have over-focused on the cognitive domain.⁵ In response to this, several initiatives have been set up to examine non-cognitive assessment, for example, the assessment for 21st century skills initiative, and within UNESCO Bangkok and NEQMAP's work in transversal competencies.⁶

⁵ See UNESCO, 2018. [The Culture of Testing](#).

⁶ See UNESCO, 2016. [Assessment of Transversal Competencies](#).

Figure 2: Transversal Competencies



There are various frameworks on the broader 21st century skills that have been referenced by assessment programmes across the world. In particular, the OECD definitions of Transformative Competencies⁷ and the Partnership for 21st Century Learning⁸ definitions of 21st century student outcomes are frameworks that broadly share commonalities with the UNESCO Bangkok transversal competency framework. In these frameworks, the individual skills may differ in operational definitions slightly, but there is general consensus on the theoretical definitions of the constructs that are more established in the literature (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving). These competency frameworks consistently emphasize the mobilization of knowledge, attitude, skills and values through a process of reflection, anticipation and

⁷ See OECD, 2019. [Transformative Competencies for 2030](#).

⁸ See P21, 2009. [P21 framework definitions](#).

action, in order to develop the interrelated competencies needed to engage with the world. Differences arise in the groupings of the skills into structural categories such as cognitive, interpersonal, intrapersonal and global citizenship depending on the missions of the institutions that develop each framework and their goals for the use of the framework.

In none of these areas, definitive methodologies have been developed to capture these skills and competencies in learning assessments. With its important line of research work in this area, and leveraging its capacity development and training, NEQMAP aims to contribute to furthering the development of competency-based assessment frameworks and effective implementation through curricula and pedagogy. Not all of these competencies listed above may be covered at once, and specific activities under NEQMAP may look at specific or limited number of skills and competencies.

While NEQMAP will look to advance understanding on competency-based learning, particularly in the non-cognitive areas as mentioned above, it recognizes the need for countries to continue to improve and strengthen work on assessing cognitive learning outcomes.

System Alignment

System alignment, across curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, is important so that teachers have the resources and skills needed to provide accommodations, interventions, and other support to ensure all students are learning. Effective alignment allows for the monitoring and implementation of agreed-upon curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The network will work to ensure consistency between policy and practice, strengthening assessment systems and frameworks that are consistent with curricula, teacher training, development of educational resources, and pedagogical approaches. Authentic assessment is aligned with curriculum and instruction, assessing what we teach and what we value. An aligned system results in more efficient and effective daily teaching and makes it easier for teachers to create meaningful integrated (or “problem-based”) learning. As a result, students are more likely to learn because instruction is focused and because they are assessed on what they are taught. Because assessment involves real learning, teachers can integrate assessment into daily instruction and classroom activities.

NEQMAP will support countries and member institutes with the creation or review of assessment plans for education systems and curriculum departments that identify formative and summative assessments associated with standards-based (competency-based) learning targets. This would include a focus on the acquisition of both foundational and transversal skills as well as the relevance of learning outcomes. An emphasis will be put on promoting the full and holistic development of the child rather than focusing only on learning outcomes (i.e. reading, writing, arithmetic).

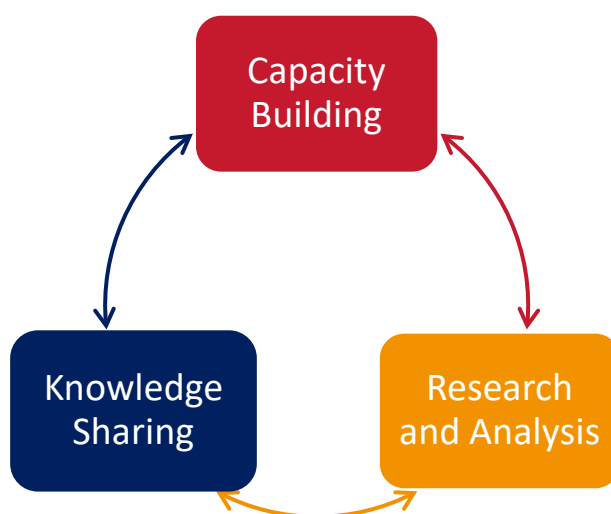
IV. Implementation Strategy

Activities of the network comprise *capacity development*, *research* and *knowledge sharing* among network members and other relevant stakeholders. Specific activities under each pillar will be carried out to further the programme and thematic areas listed previously. The NEQMAP Secretariat at UNESCO Bangkok is the main coordination arm, however activities will leverage individual and institutional members, UNESCO field offices, and other development partner agencies and education stakeholders.

This requires strengthening NEQMAP's coordinated support for better production and use of information, in particular learning assessment results, to build evidence on what works to achieve greater coherence of education policies and practices that support education quality. NEQMAP aims to work closely with national assessment bodies, as well as sub-regional initiatives such as South-East Asian Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) and the PAL network on Citizen-led Assessments.

To the extent possible, NEQMAP's activities under each core pillar will aim to complement each other and lead to strengthening our key programme areas. In this manner, our capacity building initiatives will look to complement and benefit from our research work, as well as our knowledge sharing.

Figure 3: NEQMAP's Core Pillars



Capacity Development

The aim of NEQMAP in terms of capacity development is on *institutional* and not individual capacity development. As in the past, a focus will be placed on building effective learning assessment systems, promoting effective and efficient system capabilities in order to identify and address gaps in learning outcomes. Topics will cover all stages of the assessment cycle (conceptualisation; preparation; implementation; analysis, reporting and evaluation). A focus on addressing the alignment of learning assessment and assessment for learning with curriculum and pedagogy, is a priority programmatic area.

Capacity development will also focus on our other key programmatic area, improving skills and competencies in learning outcomes. This means assisting countries to apply a competency-based approach to learning assessments, curriculum and pedagogy. NEQMAP's work on transversal competencies will be incorporated into the design of capacity development workshops in a multitude of ways, for both summative and formative assessments.

NEQMAP aims to carry out its capacity development initiatives in a more systemic fashion, ensuring long-term capacity development. The Network proposes to organize trainings in series (i.e. 2-4

workshops/seminars under one major topic) with each event building upon the previous over the course of a specific period (i.e. over several months). As such, participants will be expected to be consistent across the various trainings under each series topic. In this manner, NEQMAP aims to ensure long-term institutional capacity, leading to the intended outcomes, for both participating institutions and at the country level. In addition, NEQMAP will look at alternative modalities to in-person trainings as much as possible (i.e. online, web-based trainings and seminars). Suggested capacity development topics may include:

Capacity development on learning assessment systems, frameworks and alignment:

- System efficacy and alignment (e.g. ANLAS in cooperation with ACER/GPE)
- Incorporating assessment data into education planning, e.g. through EMIS
- Aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment with competency-based learning approaches and outcomes

Capacity development in Large-scale learning assessments:

- Large-scale assessment development, design and administration
- Large-scale assessment data analysis and utilization
- Reporting and dissemination

Capacity development in class-based/formative assessments:

- Classroom-based/formative assessment design and development
- Classroom-based/formative assessment implementation, targeted interventions for pedagogy and instruction

Research and Analysis

A research and evaluation culture is necessary at the national and international levels to learn lessons from the implementation of strategies and policies and feed them back into actions. At the national level, countries should evaluate the effect of their education policies on achieving the SDG4-Education 2030 targets. They must build on monitoring results and research findings to ensure effective evidence-based decisions and results-oriented programmes.⁹

Research and analytical work under the NEQMAP programme consists of documenting, comparing and analysing national education policies, strategies and practices, and (re)producing data and empirical evidence. This work will identify current and emerging trends and critical challenges faced by most education systems and contribute to devising policy options and solutions in the pursuit of SDG4-

⁹ See UNESCO, 2015. [The Framework for Action: Incheon Declaration](#).

Education 2030. This will involve collaborative research, working in partnerships and through the network institutes.

NEQMAP will aim to carry out various research under the identified programme areas: Competency-based learning and System Alignment. For example, many competencies as defined earlier in this strategy, are still under research and countries are unclear of what competencies to address. How to teach and assess these competencies are still quite controversial.

The types of research on education quality that the Network will proceed with include:

- Annual thematic reviews on education quality, learning assessments and learning outcomes
- Case studies on utilizing learning assessments for evidence-based policy (e.g. continued partnership with ACER)
- Larger regional research initiatives that involve NEQMAP members (subject to available funds and topics, and linked with capacity building efforts as much as possible for an ‘action research’ approach)

Proposed flagship research – Survey on Education Quality in Asia-Pacific

This survey will highlight trends, progress and gaps in delivering education quality throughout the region. It will focus on learning outcomes, building off NEQMAP and UNESCO Bangkok’s previous surveys in mapping learning assessment systems in the region, but also collecting and highlighting efforts to improve proficiency levels (including data from national, regional and international assessments). Efforts will be made to showcase various sub-categories of gender, socio-economic status, disabilities, languages, etc.

In addition, the survey will include aspects on curricula and teachers – bringing the alignment issue to the forefront. Information will be gathered and analysed on different curriculum reviews/revisions/policies, actual vs implemented curriculum, and how competencies and skills are addressed in curriculum and classrooms with respect to the assessment systems. The survey will also reflect the importance of formative assessments and school-based assessment, not only large-scale assessments and standardized examinations. Teacher training, professional development, resources, and recognition frameworks are also key components to review the education quality of each system.

This survey will be carried out in 2-year cycles (1 year data collection, 1 year analysis and publication). NEQMAP members will be crucial in helping to collect national level data and information – as they have been in previous mapping studies conducted by NEQMAP and UNESCO Bangkok. The aim is that this process will provide: i) new knowledge and best practices that we can share with members, 2) capacity building opportunities throughout the process – as part of action research, and 3) provide an overall monitoring and evaluation framework for the network and its activities.

NEQMAP will partner with international and regional agencies and entities (e.g. UNICEF, UIS, IIEP, ADB, GPE, WB, other development partners, etc.) to fully realize this goal. This will allow NEQMAP to realize its mission and act as an umbrella to all education quality initiatives in the region, collaborating with multiple stakeholders, including national, sub-national, regional and international.

Knowledge Sharing

As stated in NEQMAP's objectives, the network serves as a platform for exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise on the monitoring of educational quality in the Asia-Pacific region. First, through the [NEQMAP Knowledge Portal](#), the network shares relevant information, publications, reports and documentation on education quality, learning assessments, and education policy in order to support member institutes and education stakeholders in the region. Network members contribute by writing articles on their work, as well as sharing relevant materials and resources. In addition, the network will engage members from time to time to share country-specific stories and best practices, as well as look to coordinate and exchange campaigns (i.e. through media/social media) that focus on education quality.

Second, the network organizes regional meetings, seminars and webinars on specific topics or themes, usually in accordance with corresponding capacity development or research activities. In addition, UNESCO Bangkok and the NEQMAP Secretariat organize an annual meeting for network members, where members are able to provide updates on their work and exchange knowledge. All of the network's activities and relevant data will be uploaded to the [NEQMAP Knowledge Portal](#) for reference.

The network will continue with the above-mentioned activities for sharing knowledge among member institutes, and will look to further develop modalities that will facilitate the exchange of ideas, such as, short presentations of NEQMAP member institutes' work, series of interviews with different member institutes/partners, series of blog posts/articles.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

NEQMAP as a programme will be regularly monitored and reviewed, and inputs from member institutes will allow NEQMAP to respond to evolving global, regional and country needs and challenges. To correspond to the 5-year Strategy, a systematic monitoring mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of the programme delivery will be established. This evaluation will be based on results-based management frameworks and detailed workplans that NEQMAP utilizes in its implementation, and will ensure network activities, objectives, and outcomes are aligned, relevant and effective.

The NEQMAP Survey on Education Quality can function as a monitoring tool itself, as this activity will gather inputs from member institutes on their progress in education quality, and can highlight efforts that have been undertaken as part of NEQMAP. In addition, as part of follow up to capacity development initiatives, member institutes can present their progress at the NEQMAP's Annual Meeting or featuring their progress/updates via the [NEQMAP Knowledge Portal](#). Yearly reporting tools, such as a NEQMAP Annual report following the annual meeting, will provide regular updates, reviews and feedback from members, which can be collected online or in person at NEQMAP events throughout the year. And a tracking mechanism can be produced on how NEQMAP knowledge products are turning into actions from country and regional perspectives.

VI. Resource Mobilization

This strategy document serves as the foundation for approaching partners and donors, for both technical and financial resources. NEQMAP welcomes the involvement of national, regional and international

organisations in NEQMAP activities and meetings as partners through the provision of substantial technical and/or financial contribution to the Network. Interested parties can contact the Secretariat directly.

Network members are invited to make voluntary contributions to the network, and/or embark on joint fund-raising activities. As a network, collegiality between members by supporting each other is highly encouraged. Voluntary contributions to NEQMAP can include:

- Co-hosting NEQMAP events (workshops, seminars, meetings, etc.)
- Undertaking research studies, thematic reviews, articles, blogs, etc.
- Facilitating workshops, seminars, meetings, etc.
- Translating national tools/documents into English for wider sharing
- Assisting with the dissemination, distribution and collection of NEQMAP surveys on in-country activities

Though UNESCO Bangkok will endeavour to garner support for network meetings and activities, network members are expected to fund their own participation to the extent possible.

Annexes

Annex A: NEQMAP Terms of Reference

I. Preamble

With more children enrolled in school, the issues of quality and equity, together with the subsequent question of whether and how well students are learning have become increasingly pertinent, with several global and regional initiatives focussing on this issue. Countries are looking to improve the way education systems evaluate the performance of students in an effort to closely monitor how well students are learning.

At the same time, policymakers, researchers and practitioners are concerned with the suitability of assessment systems, to ensure that they meet the needs of learners. In some cases, this includes concerns that excessive testing may cause education provision to be skewed towards undesirable side effects including “teaching to the test”.

Monitoring of learning outcomes can facilitate changes to the education system to improve learning, and can also hold educators accountable and enable governments to justify investments in education. Comprehensive monitoring of learning requires effective and contextualised policies, structures, practices and tools in order to produce a valid and reliable evidence base for improving the quality of learning. In considering assessment as the key tool used in monitoring learning, it is also critical to maintain strong linkages with curriculum and pedagogy as the main enablers of learning in the classroom.

Countries/jurisdictions of the Asia-Pacific region, with diverse experiences from a wide range of perspectives, have tremendous potential to learn from each other and synergize efforts in improving the way learning is monitored and evaluated in order to improve learning across the region. Countries have been showing increasing interest in sharing experiences and expertise, and also the desire to learn from others in issues related to assessment, especially in how to use assessment data effectively to improve education policies and learning outcomes.

The Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) was established on 28 March 2013, in Bangkok, Thailand, to provide a regional platform for networking and information exchange on monitoring learning to raise the quality of education in Member States. The network works with all stakeholders in the region and beyond. Since inception, the adoption of SDGs, particularly the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda, has reinforced the vision and mission of the network and UNESCO member states to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

II. Objective of the Network

The network serves to strengthen education systems to improve the quality of education in Asia-Pacific through collaborative efforts. The network will provide a forum for exchanging of expertise, experiences and lessons to improve the quality of learning in education systems of countries in Asia-Pacific, with the eventual aim of influencing policy reforms.

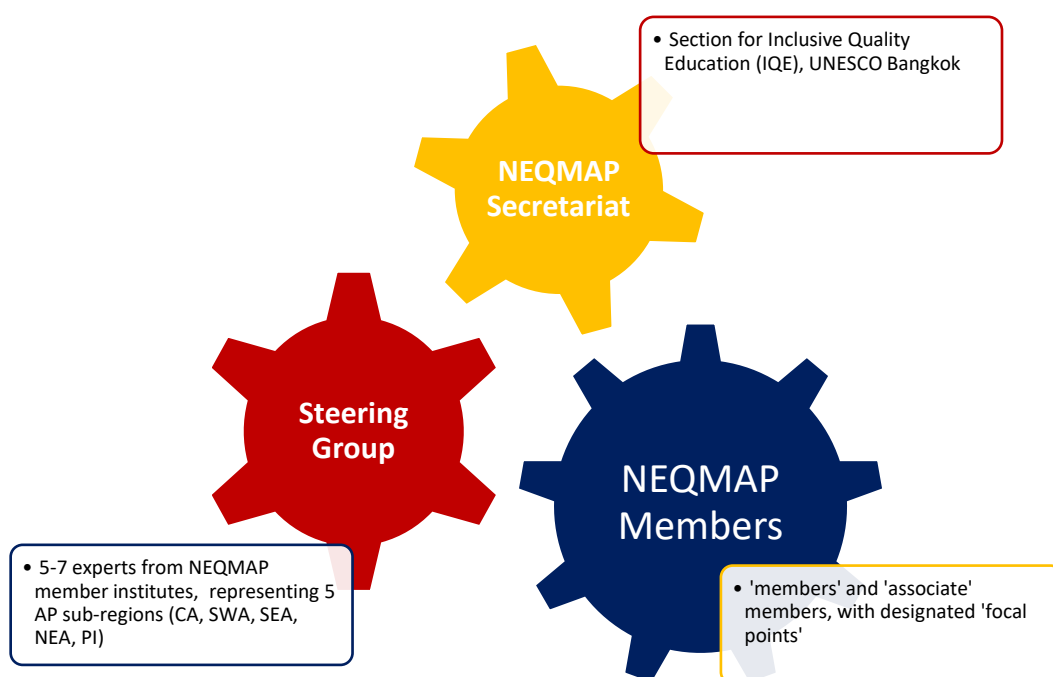
While the network will primarily focus on issues relating to assessment to ensure alignment with curriculum and pedagogy, other closely related topics, including teaching will also be addressed.

III. Activities of the Network

Activities of the network focus on capacity building, research, and knowledge sharing among all stakeholders of the network and beyond. Capacity development focuses on building institutional capacity of our member institutes through training workshops, technical and expert advice and study visits. Research activities concentrate on producing to the overall knowledge of education quality through comparative studies, case studies and policy briefs. And our knowledge sharing activities run through our online knowledge portal, as well as through regular network meetings, seminars and webinars.

IV. Organizational Structure of the Network

The following diagram shows the organizational structure of the network:



Membership

Membership to the network is free and open to all, based on the following criteria:

Member refers to:

- An organization/institution **based in Asia-Pacific region** whose mandate and activities are strongly related to quality of education, specifically policies and practices of learning assessment, curriculum and/or pedagogy.

Associate Member refers to

- An organization/institution **based outside Asia-Pacific region** whose mandate and activities are strongly related to quality of education, specifically policies and practices of learning assessment, curriculum and/or pedagogy and which has undertaken or is undertaking work in the Asia-Pacific region.
- An individual expert **based either in or outside Asia-Pacific region** who has extensive professional experience or expertise in the area of policies and practices of learning assessment, curriculum and/or pedagogy and who has undertaken or is undertaking work in the Asia-Pacific region.

Please note that while for-profit organizations/institutions may join the network, they should NOT in any circumstances plan to use NEQMAP as a platform to promote or sell their activities, services or products, with an intention to earn income.

Roles and responsibilities of Member/Associate Member:

The Members/Associate Members are expected to support and contribute to the planning and implementation of NEQMAP activities under its three main pillars: knowledge sharing, capacity development and research works, as per the below:

- Contribute as much as possible to the NEQMAP Knowledge Portal through relevant resources such as reports or publications produced by the member organization/institution in the respective countries, articles, e-newsletter, event information, relevant web links, etc (<https://neqmap.bangkok.unesco.org/>) and link this to the organization/institution's website;
- Contribute to NEQMAP's ongoing education quality survey in the form of regular updates of information on education quality (i.e. curricula, pedagogy and learning assessments) in their country/jurisdiction;
- Contribute to NEQMAP's research activities by submitting relevant contributions or participating in the actual research work;
- Participate in and support NEQMAP's capacity development activities by enabling participation of member representative(s) that benefit most from this activity at an individual and organisational level;
- Participate in the NEQMAP annual meetings;
- Inform the NEQMAP Secretariat of opportunities to contribute to the organization/institution's activities (e.g. conferences/workshops, newsletters, journals, blogs, etc.); and
- Promote participation in the network and its activities in their area of influence.

Roles and responsibilities of NEQMAP Focal Point:

Institutional applicants are expected to nominate a 'NEQMAP Focal Point', who will have the following responsibilities:

- Serve as liaison between the Member/Associate Member organization/institution and the NEQMAP Secretariat;
- Share information from the NEQMAP Secretariat with colleagues within their respective organization/institution;

- Update the NEQMAP Secretariat if there is any major structural change in the respective organization/institution or in the focal point or additional contact person (s) specified in the application document;
- Represent the organization/institution in the annual meeting, or nominate a representative;
- Keep the NEQMAP Secretariat informed of any bilateral collaboration between the organization/institution and other NEQMAP members, as well as with partner organizations connected via NEQMAP, for informational purposes.
- At their discretion, NEQMAP Focal Points may choose to convene national teams to coordinate the countries' involvement and participation in NEQMAP activities. NEQMAP Focal Points should keep the Secretariat informed of such arrangements; and
- Promote participation in the network and its activities in their area of influence.

To join NEQMAP, applicants should submit the following documents to the Secretariat:

- Institutional applicants for “Member or Associate Member” category submit the application form and an endorsement letter by the appropriate authority (e.g. Head of Institution/Organization/Association) explaining the motivation for joining the Network.
- Individual applicants for “Associate Member” category submit the application form, CV/Resume and a letter of interest explaining the motivation for joining the Network.

Membership application is considered successful with the endorsement of a simple majority of the NEQMAP Steering Group. An acknowledgement letter will be issued to successful applicants.

For any question or clarification, please contact the NEQMAP Secretariat via: neqmap@unesco.org

Steering Group

The NEQMAP Steering Group shall consist of from five to seven (5-7) individuals, from across the various sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific (including Central Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South and West Asia and the Pacific). The Steering Group should be made up of recognized experts in the area of educational quality, with experience in one or more of the following: i) leading international/regional/national assessment programmes, ii) developing, reviewing and implementing curricula, and iii) teacher training and pedagogy.

Steering Group membership is open to NEQMAP members (associate members are *not* eligible) who meet the abovementioned criteria. The NEQMAP Secretariat will issue calls for applications as necessary. The NEQMAP Secretariat will nominate Steering Group candidates to all network members for endorsement. Approved Steering Group members are expected to serve on a voluntary basis for *a minimum term of two years*. SG members may request to extend their membership following their term. A rotational system will be applied in order to allow for new members to join the Steering Group and for others to “retire” or “rotate off”.

The Steering Group will meet annually to provide support and advice on the relevance, impact, direction and activities of the network. The Steering Group members play a crucial role in the governance of NEQMAP, including:

Reviewing/approving new members

The Steering Group will review the application documents for potential NEQMAP members, as per the criteria specified for the network membership.

Supporting and contributing to NEQMAP activities

The Steering Group will provide guidance, technical advice and support in planning and implementing the network activities/events under each area; namely, capacity development, research and knowledge sharing. In particular, the Steering Group will:

- Provide guidance/support in selecting relevant topics and mobilizing expert(s) for the regional/sub-regional/national capacity development workshops;
- Provide guidance/support in selecting research study topics, mobilizing expert(s) to undertake or supervise the research, identifying peer reviewer (s) and reviewing research framework/tools;
- Encourage members or non-member institutions to submit contributions to the NEQMAP knowledge portal and newsletter;
- Support the organization of the NEQMAP annual meeting by facilitating or moderating relevant sessions;
- Support and contribute to NEQMAP communication and advocacy by sharing NEQMAP information through various platforms including conferences, meetings, workshops, articles, newsletters, blog posts, etc.;
- Guide and advise upon other activities and suggestions by the Secretariat, including, but not limited to, resource mobilization, public relations, partnerships with other networks and initiatives, etc.; and
- Promote NEQMAP membership, participation in the network and its activities in their area of influence in their sub-regions.

Secretariat

The Quality of Education Team at the Section for Inclusive Quality Education (IQE), UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (i.e. UNESCO Bangkok) serves as the Secretariat of the network. Its main functions are to:

- Facilitate and coordinate the work of the network under the three main pillars of activities;
- Ensure alignment of NEQMAP activities to UNESCO's priorities and strategies, as well as the international commitment of SDG 4, in particular the targets 4.1 and 4.7;
- Mobilize available and relevant resources (i.e. technical experts, specialised institutes, partners in the areas of learning assessments, curriculum and pedagogy within and outside the network);
- Manage its membership base in consultation with the NEQMAP Steering Group;
- Assist in circulating and disseminating related information/documents to NEQMAP members,
- Manage the NEQMAP Knowledge Portal, and the NEQMAP social media platform;
- Maintain the NEQMAP contact database;
- Maintain regular contact with all network members; and
- Serve as Secretariat to the Steering Group.

Partners

NEQMAP welcomes the involvement of international and regional organisations in NEQMAP activities and meetings as partners through the provision of substantial technical and/or financial contribution to the Network. Interested parties can contact the Secretariat directly.

V. Operational Model of the Network

The following operational model is suggested:

Annual Meetings

NEQMAP annual meetings are open to all NEQMAP member institutes. The Secretariat will also invite experts in education quality, as well as non-NEQMAP member institutes that may wish to join or learn and collaborate with our members.

NEQMAP Annual meetings will be held for the following purpose(s):

- Updates by the Secretariat on the network activities and institutional matters;
- Updates by the Members;
- Sharing and networking opportunities among members of the network;
- Discussion and endorsement of network activities and selection of respective coordinating members;
- Endorsement of Steering Group members;
- AOB, as necessary.

In addition to the above purposes, the NEQMAP Annual Meetings will be based on agreed thematic areas to ensure relevance and effectiveness of the programme.

Sustainability

Though UNESCO Bangkok will endeavour to garner support for network meetings and activities, network members are expected to fund their own participation as much as possible.

At the same time, members are invited to consider making voluntary contributions to the network, or embark on joint fund-raising activities. As a network, collegiality between members by supporting each other is also highly encouraged.

Voluntary contributions to NEQMAP can include:

- Co-hosting NEQMAP events (workshops, seminars, meetings, etc.);
- Undertaking research studies, thematic reviews, articles, blogs, etc.;
- Facilitating workshops, seminars, meetings, etc.;
- Collecting and gathering data and information on education quality in their countries;
- Translating national tools/documents into English for wider sharing;

- Assisting with the dissemination, distribution of NEQMAP resources and activities in-country.

Decision Making

Annual meetings provide an opportunity for members to discuss and provide inputs for major decisions and actions of the network. Outside of annual meetings, the Secretariat will consult the Steering Group on a regular basis for making decisions and implementing activities, and update all members accordingly. If advised by the Steering Group, members may be asked to contribute inputs and suggestions to better inform the decision making process.

For matters related to specific activities, the Secretariat will consult both the Steering Group and the members/partners involved who will serve as a co-coordinator of specific network activity. Decision making through virtual meetings and/or e-discussions would be explored for minor decisions.

Annex B: NEQMAP Membership by type of institution (June 2020)

Ministry of Education	Assessment Authority	Universities and Higher Education Research Institutes	NGO, CSO, foundation, association	Sub-regional/ regional organization	Private sector	Individual
EMIS, Afghanistan	ACARA, Australia	HKCISA, (HK SAR) China	ACER, Australia	EQAP, Fiji	JT Education, Australia	Vyjayanthi, India**
REC*, Bhutan	BCSEA, Bhutan	HKU, (HK SAR) China	IID, Bangladesh	SEAMEO QITEP, Indonesia	Inno-Change, Philippines	Masoud Kabiri, Iran**
EQAD, Cambodia	HKEAA, (HK SAR) China	IIE, India	ACER, India	SEAMEO RECSAM, Malaysia	GRACE, Philippines	Esther Care, Australia, Myanmar, USA**
EQAC, Lao PDR	NCERT, India	U of Tokyo, Japan	ASER Centre, India	EAOKO, Russia		Zhu Xiaohu, (Shanghai) China **
RIES, Lao PDR	KICE, Korea	USM, Malaysia	EQFI, India	SEAMEO Secretariat, Thailand		Kanageswari, Malaysia**
EPRD, Malaysia	EEC, Mongolia	NIE-NTU, Singapore	CCLP, India			
QAD, Maldives	ERO, Nepal	U of Colombo, Sri Lanka	MAES, Mongolia			
MIER* Mongolia	Cito, Netherlands**	VNIES, Vietnam	EDSC, Nepal			
ITPD* Mongolia	NEAS, Pakistan		ITA, Pakistan			
DME, Myanmar	NIETS, Thailand		GL Education, UK**			
CDC, Nepal			IAEA**			
Department of Education, PNG						
BEA, Philippines						
SISQE, Uzbekistan						
CEQE, Vietnam						

* Organisations in charge of curriculum and teacher development and involved in school-based assessments.

** Associate members consist of both individual and institutional members, with strong focus on quality of education related to learning assessments, pedagogy and curriculum, from in and outside of the Asia-Pacific region.

As of June 2020, there is a total of 49 Members and 8 Associate Members within NEQMAP.

Annex C: SWOT Analysis

In 2019, at the NEQMAP Annual Meeting, the Secretariat conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis in order to provide the network with suggestions and recommendations for this strategy document.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unique regional platform in Asia-Pacific region taking lead in monitoring the quality of education • specific focus on enhancing the use of learning assessments for the improvement of learning outcomes • three core pillars: capacity building, research and knowledge sharing are valuable to members • provides technical expertise in the focus areas of large-scale assessments, classroom and school-based assessment, 21st Century/transversal competencies skills • strengthens the alignment of quality education across curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment • platform for networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among members, • links national interests, priorities and partners to the international agendas (i.e. SDG 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measuring long-term impact of NEQMAP activities at national level • Communication and visibility – awareness and recognition of NEQMAP’s work is not broad • Limited resources (human and financial) to carry out in-depth activities • Target goals can be too broad, leads to lack of focus and lack of follow-up
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage policy-makers to influence the changes and impact at national level • Strengthened communication and visibility can increase recognition of NEQMAP’s work at national, regional and international level, and attract donor/partner attention • Raise more awareness of the need for quality education, particularly in learning assessments, learning outcomes and quality of education system alignment (assessment, pedagogy and curriculum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability and continuity in funding and human resources • Donor’s mandate, priorities and interests vs. NEQMAP’s priorities and strategy • Similar regional/sub-regional initiatives may replicate NEQMAP’s work (UNICEF, SEAMEO) • Members or partners perceived lack of value added