

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

Terms of Reference

1. 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.

2. 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.

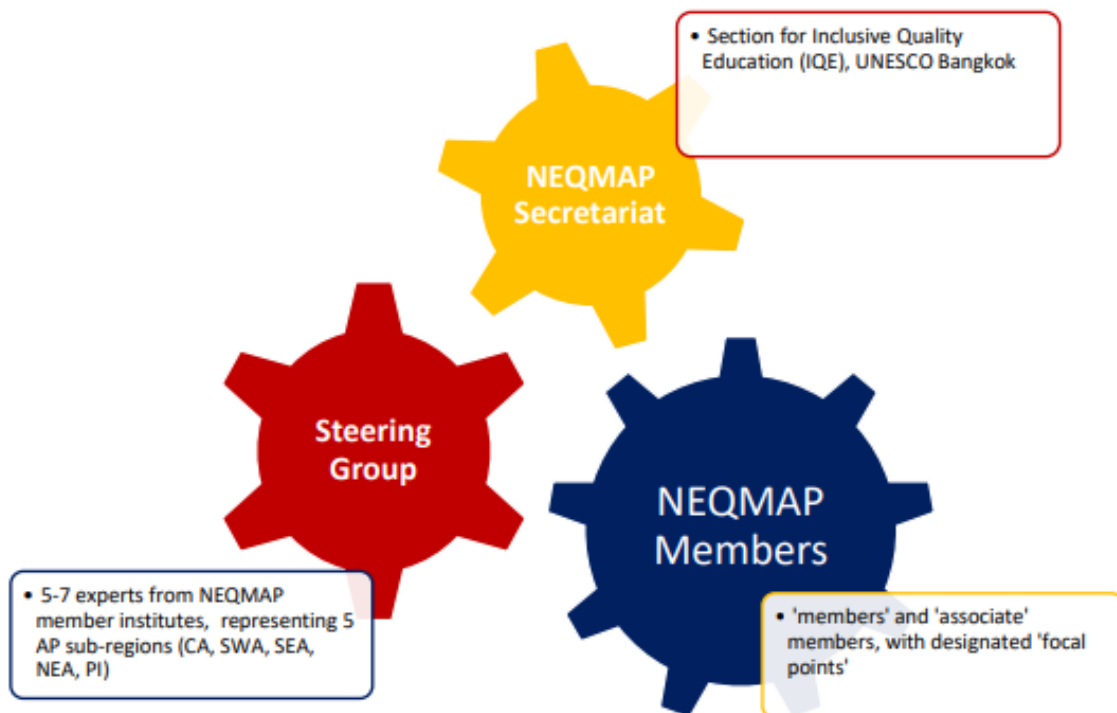
3. Activities of the Network

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.

4. Organizational Structure of the Network

The following diagram shows the organizational structure of the network:



4.1 Membership

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

4.1.1 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

4.1.2 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.

4.1.3 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.

4.1.4 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

4.2 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:

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 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.

5. Operational Model of the Network

The following operational model is suggested:

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 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.