

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.

Recognizing this demand, UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok), has the mandate to facilitate a regional platform for networking and information exchange on monitoring learning to raise the quality of education in Member States. This regional platform, the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP), was established on 28 March 2013, in Bangkok, Thailand.

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.

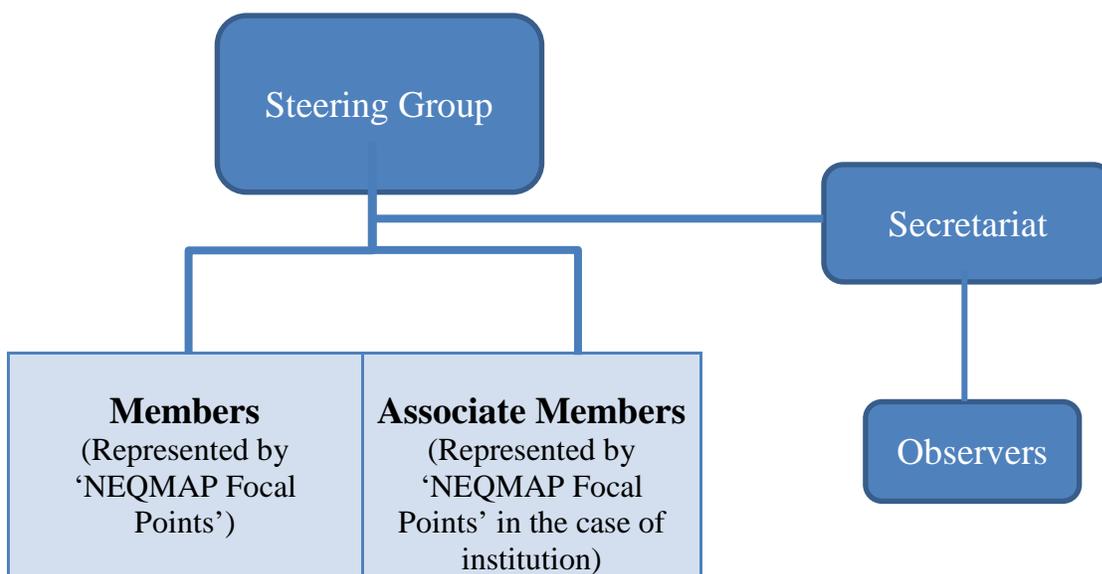
While the network will primarily focus on issues relating to assessment to ensure alignment with curriculum and pedagogy, other closely related topics, including teaching will also be addressed.

3. Activities of the Network

Activities of the network focus on research, knowledge sharing and capacity building among all stakeholders of the network and beyond.

4. Organizational Structure of the Network

The following diagram shows the organizational structure of the network:



4.1 Steering Group

The Steering Group will consist of approximately five or seven (5 or 7) members representing 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 leading international/regional/national assessment programmes.

The Steering Group will meet annually to provide consultation for planning of the network. The potential Steering Group member will be nominated by the NEQMAP Secretariat and endorsed by network members at the annual meeting for a term of up to two years, or up to the next network meeting if earlier, on a renewable basis. A rotational system can be applied in order to allow for new members to join the Steering Group and for others to “retire” after a certain period of time.

4.2 Secretariat

The UNESCO Bangkok Office will act as Secretariat of the network and its primary function is to facilitate and help coordinate the work of the network and managing its membership base in consultation with the Steering Group. In addition, the Secretariat will also assist in circulating related information/documents through the setting up of a network website, maintain regular contact with all network members and serve as Secretariat to the Steering Group itself.

By default, the Team Leader of the Quality of Education Team at the Section for Inclusive Quality Education (IQE), UNESCO Bangkok would serve as the head of the Secretariat.

4.3 Membership

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

4.3.1 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

4.3.2 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.

To join NEQMAP, applicant should submit the following documents:

- Institutional applicants for “Member or Associate Member” category may 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 to the Secretariat. Institutions are also expected to nominate a ‘NEQMAP Focal Point’ – this person would be the liaison between the institution/organization and the network and may also represent the institution/organization in meetings.

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.

- Individual applicants for “Associate Member” category may submit the application form, CV/Resume and a letter of interest to the Secretariat.

Membership application is considered successful with approval of a simple majority of the NEQMAP Steering Group. A letter of notification would be issued to successful applicants.

4.3.3 Observers

In addition to the Members and Associate Members, all other institutions, organizations, associations and individuals can participate as observers in all activities and meetings of the network but would not be entitled to vote.

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 Meeting

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

- Update by the Secretariat on the network activities and institutional matters
- Update by the Members

- Sharing and networking opportunities among members of the network
- Election of next Steering Group
- Finalization of network activities and selection of respective activity coordinators.

5.2 Sustainability

Though UNESCO Bangkok will endeavour to garner support for network meetings and activities, network members would be expected to fund their own participation.

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.

5.3 Decision Making

Major decisions for the network would be taken during annual meetings. Outside of annual meetings, the Secretariat will consult the Steering Group for the making of decisions 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 activities, the Secretariat will consult both the Steering Group and the member/partner 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.