



NEQMAP
Network on Education Quality
Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific

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 is also important for accountability and for 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 in using assessments to improve learning across the region.

Countries have been showing increasing interest in sharing of experiences and expertise, and also the desire to learn from others in issues related to assessment, including the use of assessment data to improve policy and learning.

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), is hereby 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.

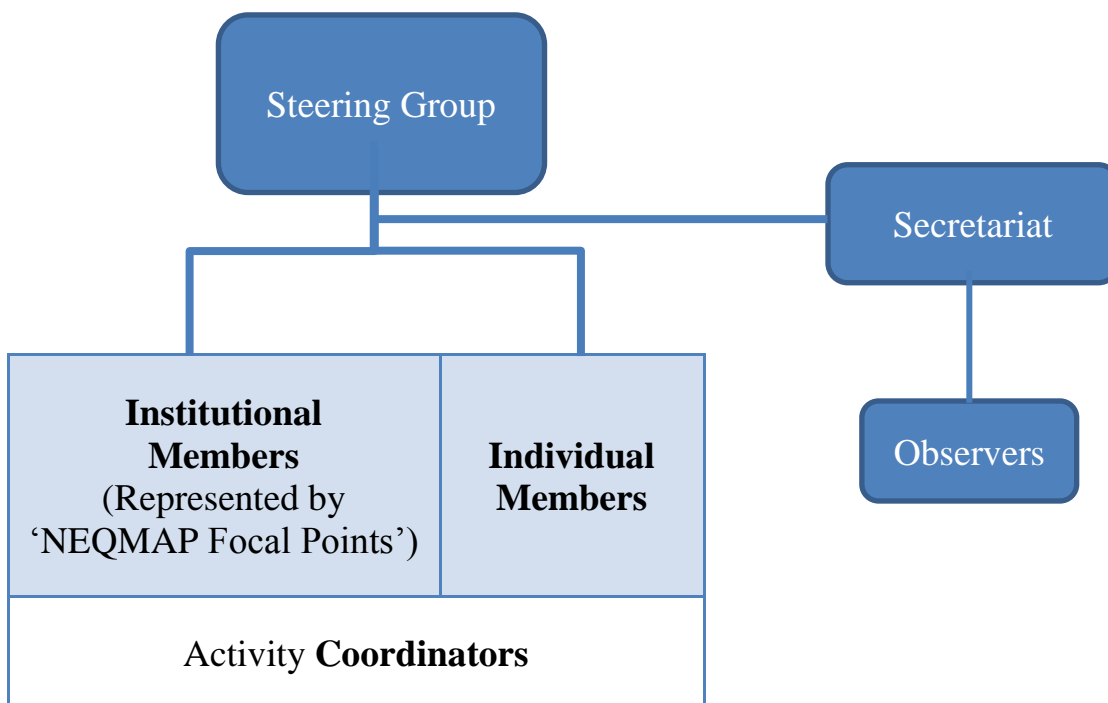
While the network will primarily focus on issues relating to assessment to ensure alignment with curriculum and pedagogy, other closely related topics such as teachers will also be addressed.

3. Activities of the Network

Activities of the network would 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 (5) members representing the various sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific (including Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific & South and West Asia). 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.

In the initial stage, the Steering Group will meet biannually to provide consultation for planning of the network. The Steering Group would be elected to by network members for a term of up to two years, or up to the next network meeting if earlier. The first Steering Group would be approved by the attendees of the inaugural meeting.

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 Team at the Education Policy and Reform Unit (EPR), UNESCO Bangkok would serve as the head of the Secretariat.

4.3 Membership

4.3.1 Institutional Membership

Institutional membership to the network would be open to all institutions and organizations, based on the following criteria:

- Mandate of the institution/organization/association strongly linked to quality of education, specifically assessment, curriculum and/or pedagogy
- Track record of activities linked to monitoring the quality of education
- Approval by a simple majority of the Steering Group

Applicants for institutional membership 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 will also represent the institution/organization in meetings. A letter of notification would be issued to successful applicants by the Secretariat after consultation with the Steering Group.

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.

4.3.2 Individual Membership

Individual membership to the network is also possible in exceptional cases and for a limited number. This would also be open to all who are interested in the work of the network or have professional strengths in the relevant area(s), based on the following criteria:

- Track record of activities linked to monitoring the quality of education
- Approval by all members of the Steering Group

Applicants for individual membership may submit the application form and a letter of interest to the Secretariat. A letter of notification would be issued to successful applicants.

4.3.3 Observers

In addition to the institutional and individual 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 Activity Coordinators

Activity Coordinators, as the name suggests, would be designated based on activities, as required. While only members of the Network can be considered for the role of Activity Coordinator, Observers are free to lend their support. Activity Coordinators would be free to convene working groups in consultation with the Secretariat if the need arises. They will report on their activities informally to the Secretariat on a regular basis and officially to the Annual Meetings.

For activities initiated by the network, separate Terms of Reference would be developed to specify the working arrangements for Activity Coordinators.

4.5 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

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

- Sharing among members of the network
- Update of membership
- Opportunity for networking
- 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 respective Network/Activity Coordinator. Decision making through virtual meetings and/or e-discussions would be explored for minor decisions.