

Terms of Reference

UNESCO Bangkok

Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific

Programme evaluation

I. Background

The Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) was established in March 2013 as a platform for the exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of monitoring of the quality of education in the Asia-Pacific region. Since then, the network has focused mainly on student learning assessment, in all its manifestations, as a key tool for monitoring the quality of education, while acknowledging the importance of maintaining strong linkages with other enablers of learning in classrooms, including curriculum and pedagogy. Since its inception, the Quality of Education Team of the Section for Inclusive Quality Education at the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok) has been serving as the NEQMAP Secretariat.

NEQMAP supports the countries in the region to achieve SDG 4, particularly targets SDG 4.1 and 4.7 through three pillars of activities, *namely*, capacity development, research and knowledge sharing. The activities under NEQMAP make a direct contribution to UNESCO's mandates, including:

- 37 C/4 (2014-2021), Strategic Objective 1, supporting Member States to develop education systems to foster high quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all, and
- 39 C/5, Expected Result 1, focused on improving national education policies and plans to advance access to equitable and quality ECCE, primary and secondary education through a system-wide lifelong learning approach.

In particular, NEQMAP activities aim to strengthen national capacities in the area of learning assessment; enhance understanding and enriching the knowledge base on learning assessments including the measurement of 21st century skills through research and analytical work as well as enhance knowledge sharing among target countries. Consequently, NEQMAP support should lead to strengthened learning assessment systems and better use of assessment results in policy and planning for improved quality of education.

Over the past five years, NEQMAP has established itself as a solid platform and go-to point for educational assessment in the Asia-Pacific. Its membership corpus has grown significantly since its establishment, now consisting of 52 members (46 members and 6 associate members) from some 29 countries of which the majority are in the Asia and the Pacific region. All this time, the Network has supported the countries in strengthening their national assessment systems through activities in its three pillars of activities: *capacity development, knowledge sharing and research*. NEQMAP is now seen as a model of network cooperation

in this area for other parts of the world and has, consequently, been invited to share its experience and lessons learned at various international fora and platforms.

NEQMAP celebrated its 5th anniversary on the 28 March 2018, and UNESCO Bangkok (NEQMAP Secretariat) and the NEQMAP Steering Group (SG) agreed that this would be a good point in time to take stock of what the Network has achieved and where it wants to go. UNESCO-Bangkok will contract an independent consultant to conduct the evaluation.

II. Purpose

The main objective of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which NEQMAP achieved its objectives and how relevant and sustainable its governance structure and activities are. The evaluation will review and assess NEQMAP's work since its inception, particularly looking at the outcomes from its activities at regional and national levels and the extent that these outcomes were effective. It will also review its three pillars of activities and identify what has worked well and what can be improved moving forward.

The findings from this evaluation will inform the development of a strategy on NEQMAP's future direction. It was discussed and agreed at NEQMAP's 6th Steering Group (SG) meeting that the NEQMAP strategic plan should be developed upon the completion of the evaluation so that outcomes from the evaluation exercise could be fully reflected in the strategy. The recommendations from the evaluation should help not only enhance the governance structure but also to renew or redefine the vision, mission, goals and scope of activities of the network. The NEQMAP strategy will be drafted by the Secretariat, in consultation with the SG members. The strategy, which will reflect the network's plan for 2020-2023, will be developed in line with UNESCO Bangkok's Education Support Strategy 2014-2021 (to be updated).¹ The NEQMAP strategy will be discussed at NEQMAP's 7th annual meeting in November 2019 (dates TBC), and then finalized following the conclusion of the evaluation.

The evaluation results will also be used to inform the project progress report to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which has served as the main donor of network activities since its inception. In addition, both evaluation and strategy documents could serve as important references for the external evaluation to be carried out by GPE in 2020 for "Assessment for Learning Initiatives (A4L)".

III. Scope

Delimitation

The evaluation should be carried out for the entire programme of NEQMAP including its three pillars of activities during the period between March 2013 and June 2019. In particular, the evaluation will look into relevance and effectiveness of the network's overall vision, objectives as well as current governance structure, which includes the NEQMAP Secretariat, Steering Group (SG), membership categories and observers. In doing so, roles and responsibilities (ToRs) of NEQMAP members (including SG, institutional, individual and associate members) should also be closely examined. In addition, the evaluation will focus on assessing the effectiveness and outcome of NEQMAP's activities undertaken at both regional and national levels over the indicated period. These activities include capacity development (i.e. workshops organized at national, sub-regional and regional levels), research and analytical works (e.g. case studies,

¹ NEQMAP's strategy should also reflect and be in line with global and regional frameworks and strategies, such as SDG4 - Education 2030 Agenda and the Regional Roadmap on Education (for Asia-Pacific). NEQMAP's objectives should also contribute to the advancement of SDG Target 4.1 in particular, but also SDG Target 4.7.

topical research) and knowledge sharing (i.e. NEQMAP knowledge portal, annual meeting, and seminars/webinars).

Criteria

The criteria that will guide the evaluation:

- **Effectiveness.** The extent to which NEQMAP and the programme's objectives² were achieved, or are expected to be achieved.
- **Relevance:** The extent to which NEQMAP and the programme activities were aligned to the priorities and policies of the UNESCO, NEQMAP members, donor(s) and other stakeholders.
- **Sustainability:** The extent to which NEQMAP and the programme's governance and activities are able to continue under the current TOR, management (e.g. financial and technical assistance, resource mobilization).

Evaluation Questions

Effectiveness

- **NEQMAP governance:**
 - To what extent has the management structure (SG, Secretariat) contributed to the achievement of the programme's objectives.
- **NEQMAP activities:**
 - To what extent have the national and regional capacity development activities of Pillar 1 achieved their set objectives?
 - To what extent has the Research and analytical work (and activities?) of Pillar 2 achieved its set objectives?
 - To what extent have the Knowledge sharing activities (*e.g. knowledge portal, newsletter, webinar, annual meeting*) of Pillar 3 achieved their set objectives?

Relevance

- **NEQMAP governance:**
 - What is the stated purpose and vision of NEQMAP? Do they well reflect the needs and priorities of the Network members?
 - What are the stated functions of the SG, and how well do these functions fit or serve the purpose of the network?
 - What are the membership categories and functions? How well do they fit or serve the purpose of the network?
 - What is the expected role and function of the NEQMAP Secretariat hosted in UNESCO Bangkok? How well does it fit or serve the purpose of the network?
 - How have any or all of these components evolved since the programme started?
- **NEQMAP activities:**

² Note: NEQMAP is both a 'network' and a 'programme' (as a part of UNESCO).

- To what extent do Network members participate in activities and utilize the outputs from the programme in their own work/context at the country level.

Sustainability

- **NEQMAP governance:**
 - To what extent is the management structure sustainable (e.g. SG, Secretariat mechanism, membership status, etc.) in terms of financial and human resources and resource mobilization.
- **NEQMAP activities:**
 - To what extent are the programme's activities (capacity development, research, knowledge sharing) sustainable (e.g. financial and human resources) from regional level down to national level.

Based on these findings provide a concrete set of recommendations on the scope and focus of future governance, activities and potential resource needs.

IV. Methodology

The consultant will develop an inception report in line with relevant UNEG norms and standards. The inception paper will include an evaluation framework, outlining in detail the methodology, methods/tools and analysis plans, the report outline, references, as well as a work plan for the evaluation exercise.

As part of the methodology, the consultant will:

Review documents, including:

- The original ToR of NEQMAP, which defines the purpose, vision/expectation of NEQMAP when it was established in 2013.
- The ToR of the Steering Group (SG)
- The ToR of the members, which defines membership categories and functions
- Meeting, workshop and research materials, reports, evaluations, etc. from 2013-2019.

Conduct interviews:

Develop and design a method to interview a representative sample of NEQMAP members and relevant stakeholders. Ideally, the consultant would interview those who have been part of NEQMAP activities from 2013-2019, as well as SG member(s)(past and present) and technical experts. The consultant is encouraged to arrange interviews with other relevant stakeholders including UNESCO and/or former UNESCO staff who are familiar with NEQMAP.

Observe NEQMAP activities:

The consultant will be expected to attend NEQMAP's regional workshop in September 23-27, 2019 in Manila, Philippines, where he/she can observe NEQMAP activities first-hand. This will also provide the consultant the opportunity for some in-person interviews with NEQMAP members, the Secretariat, and other stakeholders.

In addition, a virtual meeting will be arranged with the Secretariat and SG members in mid-October 2019 (dates TBC) to discuss the evaluation process and findings.

V. Roles and Responsibilities

The evaluation is under the overall authority of the Director of UNESCO Bangkok, and the direct supervision of the Chief of the Section for Inclusive Quality Education of UNESCO Bangkok.

While the project evaluator will be guided by the designated focal point at UNESCO Bangkok in terms of expectations on scope, focus and timing of the evaluation project, this is considered as an objective external evaluation and the consultant is responsible for the development of the evaluation framework (within the limits of the above parameters), its findings, analysis and recommendations. The consultant is expected to work from his/her own location and communications with UNESCO will be mainly through virtual means (e.g. emails, skype/video calls).

In order to realise the assignment, the consultant will have access to all relevant project documentation pertaining to all actors within NEQMAP and its activities, including the research study reports and documentation from various events organized by UNESCO Bangkok (NEQMAP Secretariat). The Secretariat will help facilitate the (virtual) meetings with NEQMAP members, SG members, as well as technical experts who participated in various events hosted by NEQMAP, and any other relevant stakeholders.

VI. Qualifications

For this assignment, UNESCO Bangkok is looking for a consultant who meets the following qualifications:

- Advanced university degree in education, social sciences, political sciences, economics or any related field;
- Minimum of 7 years of professional experience in evaluating programmes and/or projects at the international level or in an international setting. Proven experience in leading, evaluating or working in education programmes and/or projects is an asset.
- Knowledge and experience in applying qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques
- Excellent analytical skills as well as excellent oral communication and report writing skills in English.

Desired qualifications:

- Good knowledge and understanding of and/or experience working in the Asia-Pacific region
- Familiarity and previous experience with how regional networks or platforms operate is desirable.

As this is an external and independent review, NEQMAP members (including people from within member organizations) are NOT encouraged to apply for this position.

VII. Duration of assignment and time-lines for expected deliverables

The expected deliverables are:

- 1) An inception paper with an evaluation framework, detailed methodology, methods/tools and analysis plans, report outline, references, and a work plan for the evaluation exercise.
- 2) Draft evaluation report for comments and feedback by UNESCO and the NEQMAP SG members. A virtual SG meeting will be organized in mid-October 2019 for this purpose.
- 3) Presentation summarizing the key findings and recommendations to be presented at the NEQMAP annual meeting in November 2019 (dates TBC). The consultant will be expected to attend.
- 4) Final evaluation report, integrating the additional comments and inputs received, as relevant, during the NEQMAP annual meeting. The final evaluation report should include a concrete set of recommendations proposing a realistic and effective governance structure, timeframe (in light of on-going regional developments), scope of activities – thematic focuses, as well as potential resource needs. The recommendations based on the findings should:
 - Provide a concrete set of recommendations on how the NEQMAP governance structure could realistically and effectively be improved with the view to achieving the purposes of the network
 - Provide a way forward for NEQMAP for the next coming years.

The assignment for this consultancy shall be carried out between **July and December 2019**. The total number of working days is expected to be approximately 40 days spread over the six months.

ID	Deliverable	Due date
1	Inception report	31 July 2019
2	Draft report for review by SG/Secretariat	30 September 2019
3	Presentation of evaluation findings to the Secretariat and SG members at annual meeting	15 November 2019
4	Final evaluation report incorporating feedback from the annual meeting.	31 December 2019

Interested applicants are invited to submit: 1) a cover letter, 2) CV, 3) a one-page proposal (including remuneration or fees), and 4) a sample of recent project evaluation report to the NEQMAP Secretariat at UNESCO Bangkok, via email (neqmap@unesco.org) no later than **15 June 2019**.

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.