

UNESCO World Reference Levels (WRLs)

*A new way
to compare
learning
outcomes.*



John Hart (WRLs Consultant) – Riga, 20th February, 2020

Background paper

CHAPTER 1.

WORLD REFERENCE LEVELS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: A TOOL FOR COMPARISON AND RECOGNITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Borhene Chakroun, UNESCO



**Global inventory of
regional and
national
qualifications
frameworks 2019**

**Volume I:
Thematic chapters**

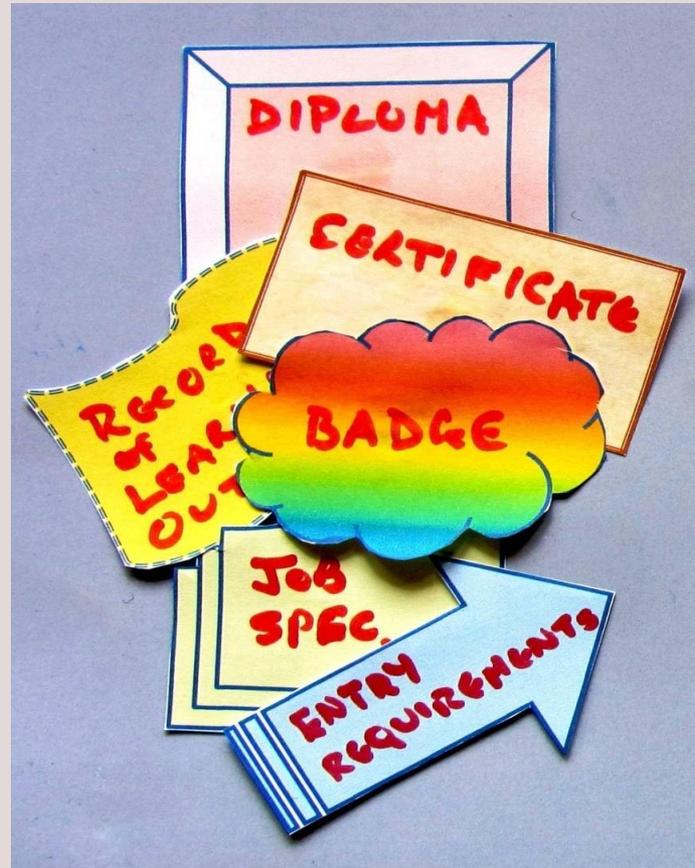


<http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/recognition-validation-accreditation/global-inventory-regional-and-national>

The recognition of learning across boundaries is urgent and challenging for...

... AWARDING ORGANISATIONS

... HOLDERS OF CREDENTIALS



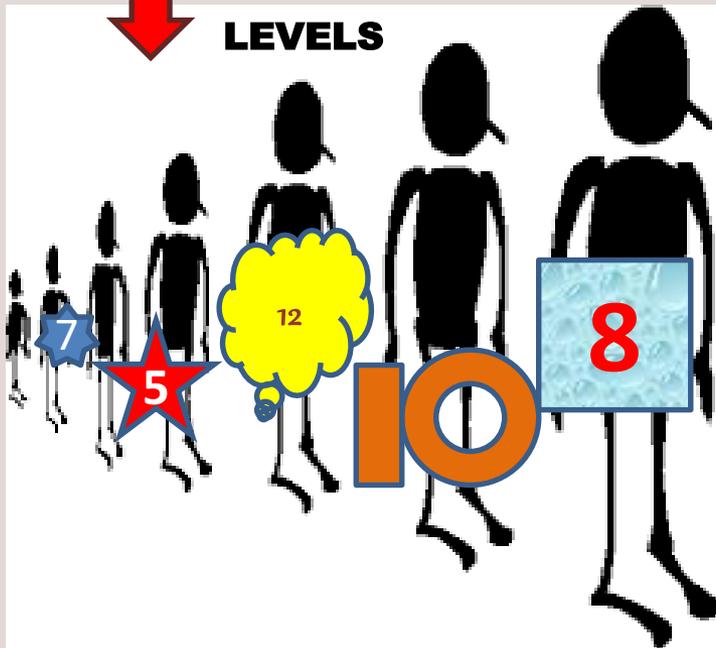
... EVALUATORS

... RECRUITERS

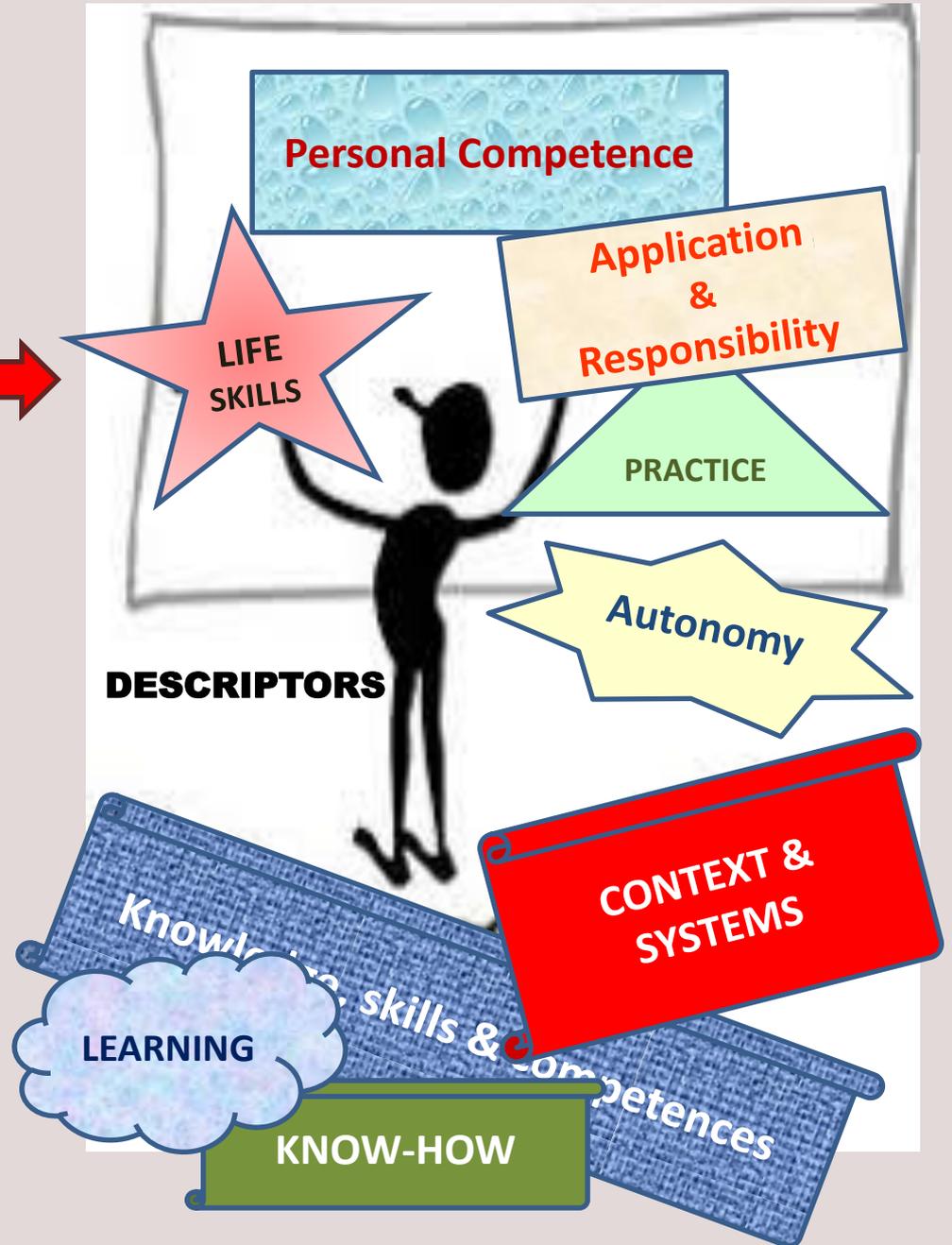
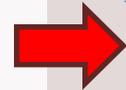
... GATEKEEPERS



Even to discuss international recognition, they have to deal with many different categories & levels of achievement.



<http://clipart-library.com/bean-people.html>



To assist owners and users, we need...

An international tool which

- establishes a common way of describing and comparing achievements with requirements
- is relatively detailed and can match to any descriptors or number of levels
- combines factual information, professional judgements & supporting evidence
- introduces consistent/uniform formats which do not require alterations to regional, national or local arrangements (enabling not regulatory)



Origins of the WRL Components

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF

National Qualification Frameworks

Regional Qualification Framework

Sectoral Qualification Frameworks

+

Competence Frameworks

Job Evaluation Systems

Job Specifications

Programme Entry Requirements

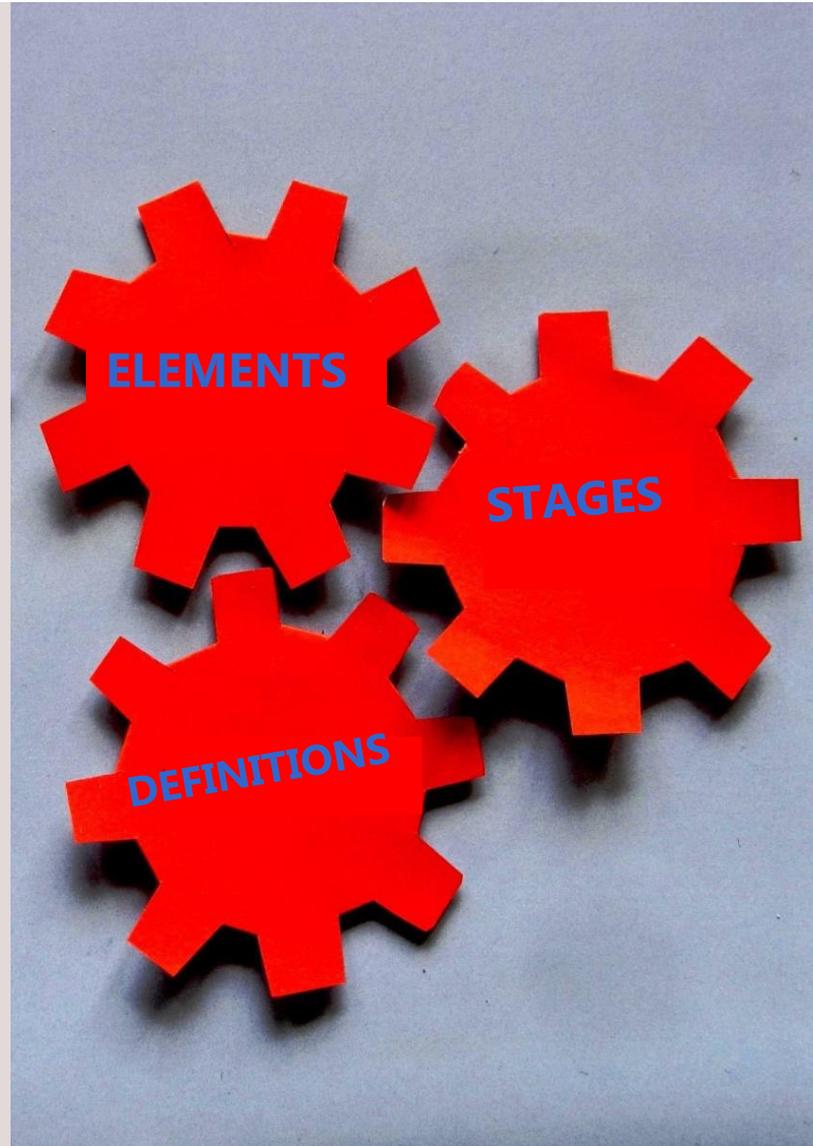
The WRL Components

“Elements of Capability”

11 ways of describing achievement

“Indicators of Progression”

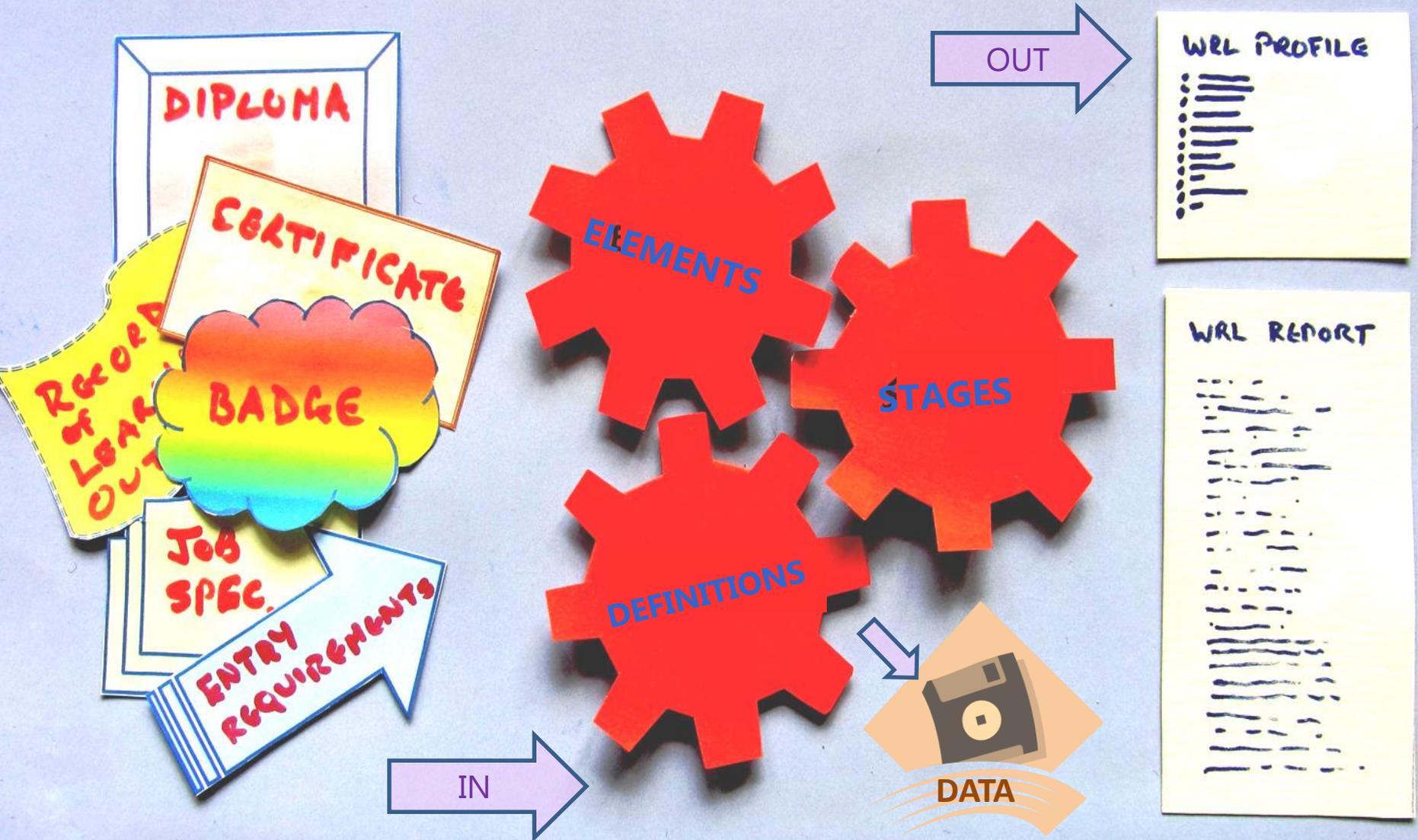
Definitions of key terms (51 at present)



“Stages of Progression”

4x2 levels of achievement

Brought together in the WRL Digital Tool



What is the WRL Digital Tool?

UNESCO has followed work to develop a system of World Reference Levels (WRLs) with the creation of a program which can make it easy to translate learning outcomes into an internationally recognised form. This is in response to the global growth in ways of measuring kinds and levels of achievement.

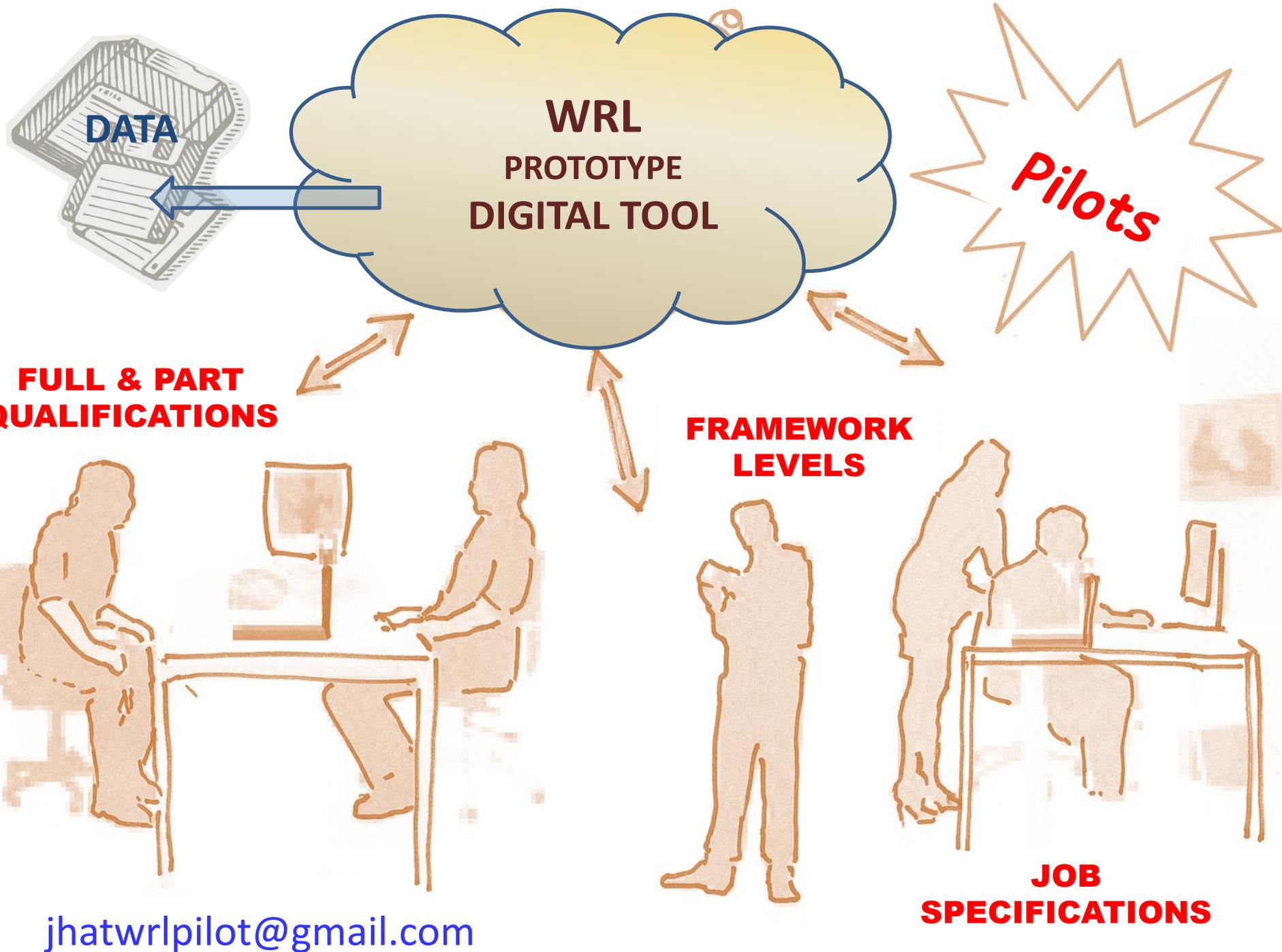
The WRL Tool is designed to work with any outcomes-based qualification, credential, set of entry requirements, job specification or framework level. It translates them into an internationally recognised form of description which can be used to compare achievements and/or requirements.

The WRL Digital Tool

... designed to...

- support owners and users to describe credentials, job specifications or entry requirements in a common language.
- produce a **WRL Profile** based on the WRL Elements of Capacity and Stages of Progression for any achievements or requirements .
- produce a **WRL Report** giving vital information on any quality assured credential.
- combine factual information, professional judgements & supporting evidence.
- use a standardised way of representing outcomes without changing them.





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Using the WRL Digital Tool.

1. Registering the user.

The WRL Digital Tool is accessed at

<https://www.surveygizmo.eu/s3/90151068/Pilot-World-Reference-Levels-v-2-1>

There is no formal registration process for the tool, but the first screen asks for four simple pieces of information.

The program will send a copy of the profile and/or report to your email address, but it will not archive them.

All these items will be reproduced in the WRL Profile and the WRL Report, showing how you can be contacted.

Pilot World Reference Levels - v.2.1

World Reference Levels Profile

Welcome to the World Reference Levels tool, which will help you to translate any outcomes-based qualification, credential, entry requirements, job specification or framework level into an internationally recognised form of description which you can use in deciding on or negotiating recognition or progression arrangements.

Name of user

Organisation

Position/role

Email

Next

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

2. Registering the specification.

The program asks for information about the product (ie credential, job spec, entry requirements, etc) being profiled. The optional answers to the questions in the prototype are focused on credentials, but there is scope to give your own appropriate answer in the box marked “Other”.

What is being profiled

- Full qualification
- Part-qualification, module, unit
- Another kind of credential
- Entry requirements for a course of learning
- Work role/job specification
- Framework level

Main purpose/focus

- Learning general/basic skills and knowledge
- Learning in a specific school subject
- Learning in a specific academic discipline
- Acquisition of vocational skills and knowledge
- Development of academic skills and knowledge
- Personal development
- Professional development
- Other *

Typical candidates

- Adults with no/low qualifications
- Young adults in secondary education
- Young adults in training or in the workplace
- Employed adults with routine skills
- Technicians / supervisors
- Managers or paraprofessionals
- Holders of professional qualifications
- Undergraduate students or professional apprentices
- Postgraduate students
- Holders of academic qualifications
- Other *

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

3. Hints

The Digital Tool works by asking you to profile against the WRL Elements in any order. Some of the Elements may not be important (“fully relevant”), in your product. That can be reported in the Profile.

You will be asked to select words and phrases from lists of options. Use the links provided to make sure that what you mean by a term is the same as the WRL definition and decide which best describe the product being profiled.

Select as many options as you need OR select “none of the above”.

Here are some hints for making your selections:

- In the App, many of the items are linked to WRL definitions – please use the links and check the meanings before you make a selection.
- Remember that you can select as many options as you need to fit your outcomes.
- If you can't see a suitable option, just select “none of the above” and move on.
- If an Element is not really dealt with in your outcomes, select “none of the above” for each set of options for that Element – this will be recorded in the Profile as “not fully relevant”.

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

4. Selecting an Element for matching

Now you will be asked to select an Element of Progression and decide which Stage of Progression your product is linked to for that Element.

You can follow the WRL order, or any order that is more convenient or more usual to you. You could start with an element that seems familiar or important to the product.

Pilot World Reference Levels - v.2.1

WRL Elements

Element profiled

Accountabilities	Capacities	Contingencies
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Skills & procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Context
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems & issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Working with others	<input type="checkbox"/> Data	<input type="checkbox"/> Values
<input type="checkbox"/> Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge & know-how	

[Click here for more information on the WRL Elements groupings](#)

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

5. Understanding the Elements

Every time you select an Element of Progression you will be given a definition of the Element showing how it should be understood, what it covers and explaining in broad terms how progression is measured in the Element from the lowest to the highest stages. For example:

Activities - Characteristics

In the WRLs, an activity is any kind of academic, social or occupational task, procedure or process, or responsibility. An activity could be allocated, supervised or directed by another person, carried out as a normal function, or taken on voluntarily. The activity may be carried out by an individual or it may involve planning, organising, supervising, managing or overseeing the work of others.

Activities in the WRLs may be academic (eg acquiring knowledge, undertaking an enquiry to gather data, or communicating the results of academic research); social (eg contributing to the achievement of an objective, participating in a network, or motivating others to contribute to a campaign); or occupational, including training others.

In broad terms this element progresses:

- from [simple](#), highly structured activities which do not require knowledge or knowhow which is specific to the field of the activity
- through [complex technical](#) activities which require different kinds of expertise
- to activities which are highly specialised, strategic or critical in their impact and require the creative use of advanced knowledge and know-how.

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

6. Matching with an Element - profiling

For each Element, you will be asked a series of questions, each of which is accompanied by a list of possible answers. Many of the terms in the options are linked to a WRL definition in the WRL directory. The list is broadly hierarchical, but may not include every WRL Stage.

Select the best option(s) – if the term is highlighted, check that your choice matches the WRL meaning of the term – click on your choice(s).

If you can't find a match, click on "None of the above".

For example:

Which of the following is/are most appropriate to describe the kind of activities which a holder of this credential will be able to carry out?

- [Simple](#)
- [Highly structured](#)
- [Familiar](#)
- [Structured](#)
- [Technical](#)
- [Routine](#)
- [Non-routine](#)
- [Complex](#)
- [Specialised](#)
- [Highly specialised](#)
- [Strategic](#)
- [Critical](#)
- Affecting a [field](#) or [organisation](#)
- None of the above

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

7. The Program's finding

The Digital Tool will make a calculation based on your choices and tell you what stage your answers imply. It will also display the stages above and below to help you decide the correct stage match.

For example:

Suggested Stage of Activities

B1

Your answers so far suggest that your credential prepares/requires individuals to carry out Activities at **Stage B1**.

"Individuals will be able to carry out routine technical activities which are straightforward or clearly defined."

However, you can also consult the stages higher and lower to make a different choice:

A2: "Individuals will be able to carry out familiar, structured activities which require basic knowledge and know-how in the field."

B2: "Individuals will be able to carry out and/or supervise non-routine technical activities which require interpretation and planning."

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

8. The User's decision.

You will be asked to do two things:

- Select a stage to confirm or change the finding of the Digital Tool
- Record the evidence which supports the match between your product and the Stage Outcome Statement, taking account of the following advice. Similar kinds of direct and/or indirect evidence could be given for others kinds of product.

The most important evidence will take the form of assessed outcomes of the qualification which match the outcome statement for the element. However this can be supported with evidence about the purpose, target holders/users, assumed capacities on entry, structure of the qualification or information about progression in learning or work roles associated with the qualification.

The match can be that the Element is “Not fully relevant” to your product. No evidence is required for this choice.

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

9. Selecting the next Element.

The next screen will enable you to select the next Element for profiling. It will show you which elements have been profiled and which stages have been selected.

It will also give you a link which will allow you to close the Tool and re-open it later with your selections saved. You will need to copy and save the link so that you can paste it in your browser when you want to re-open the Tool.

If you have selected a different Stage from the one suggested by the Digital Tool, you can go back and review the options you previously chose, but this is not required by the Prototype.

If you click on  you will be taken back to the list of Elements. [Note that you will have to uncheck your previous choice.]

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

10. Save or print the WRL Graphical Profile

When you have completed profiling against all the Elements, you will be shown the graphical profile for your product, which you can download as a PDF file to save and/or print.

You can ignore this stage and go on to create a report – just click

Next

[Download to PDF or Print](#)

Back

Next

World Reference Levels Graphical Profile

Full qualification: Certificate in Intermediate Management

Main purpose: Acquisition of vocational skills and knowledge, Professional development

Typical candidates: Technicians / supervisors, Managers or paraprofessionals

Notional learning hours: 120 hours

Selected stage of **Activities** Element



Selected stage of **Responsibilities** Element



Selected stage of **Working With Others** Element



Selected stage of **Quality** Element



Selected stage of **Skills and Procedures** Element



Selected stage of **Communication** Element



Selected stage of **Data** Element



Selected stage of **Knowledge and know-how** Element



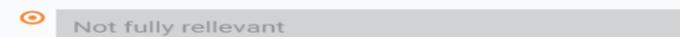
Selected stage of **Context** Element



Selected stage of **Problems and issues** Element



Selected stage of **Values** Element



Profile created by John Hart on 09/11/2019
WRL Consultant at UNESCO

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

11. Selecting the appropriate WRL Report

After that, you will be invited to select the kind of WRL Report you want to create.

The first could be called the Profile Report and is best used for entry or job requirements or other kinds of matching which is not linked to assessment.

The second could be called the Credential Report. It is intended to capture information necessary for evaluating any product with assessed outcomes.

Select the kind of report you want to create

- Profile + supporting evidence
- Profile + supporting evidence + information about assessment and awarding

Back

Submit

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

12. Completing and saving the Profile Report

If you select the Profile Report, you will be invited to  the report.

If you do this, you will be able to download as a PDF file to save and/or print. A copy should also be sent to the email address you entered at the beginning.

If you select the WRL Report for qualifications & other credentials, you will be invited to answer a series of questions before submitting.

When you do submit the WRL report, you will be able to download as a PDF file to save and/or print and a copy should also be sent to your email address.

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

13. Completing the WRL Report

To complete the WRL Report you need to give information about the status, design and quality assurance of the qualification or other credential which will help other WRL users to evaluate it.

STATUS QUESTIONS

Which organisation awards the credential? (free form)

Which organisation accredits the credential? (free form)

Which requirements/standards does the credential conform to? (free form)

DESIGN QUESTIONS

What are the entry recommendations and/or requirements? (free form)

What kind of delivery is the credential designed for? (4 options + "OTHER")

What is the structure of the credential? (4 options + "OTHER")

QA QUESTIONS

What are the main forms of assessment used? (6 options + "OTHER")

What are main quality assurance arrangements ?(9 options + "OTHER")

Using the WRL Digital Tool.

14. Submitting Feedback

The WRL Feedback Form can be accessed at

<https://worldreferencelevels.org>

Pilots were asked to respond to it as fully they could and send it to John Hart at jhatwrlpilot@gmail.com, attaching the WRL profile

Feedback Form - Questions

The WRLs – are they useful?

The ELEMENTS – are they helpful?

The DIGITAL TOOL - is it easy to use?

The PROFILE – would it be useful to you/your organisation?

The STAGES – are they clear?

The REPORT – does it ask the right questions?

Over the period of the piloting 12 organisations put one or more products through the Digital Tool and submitted feedback. The products profiled included:

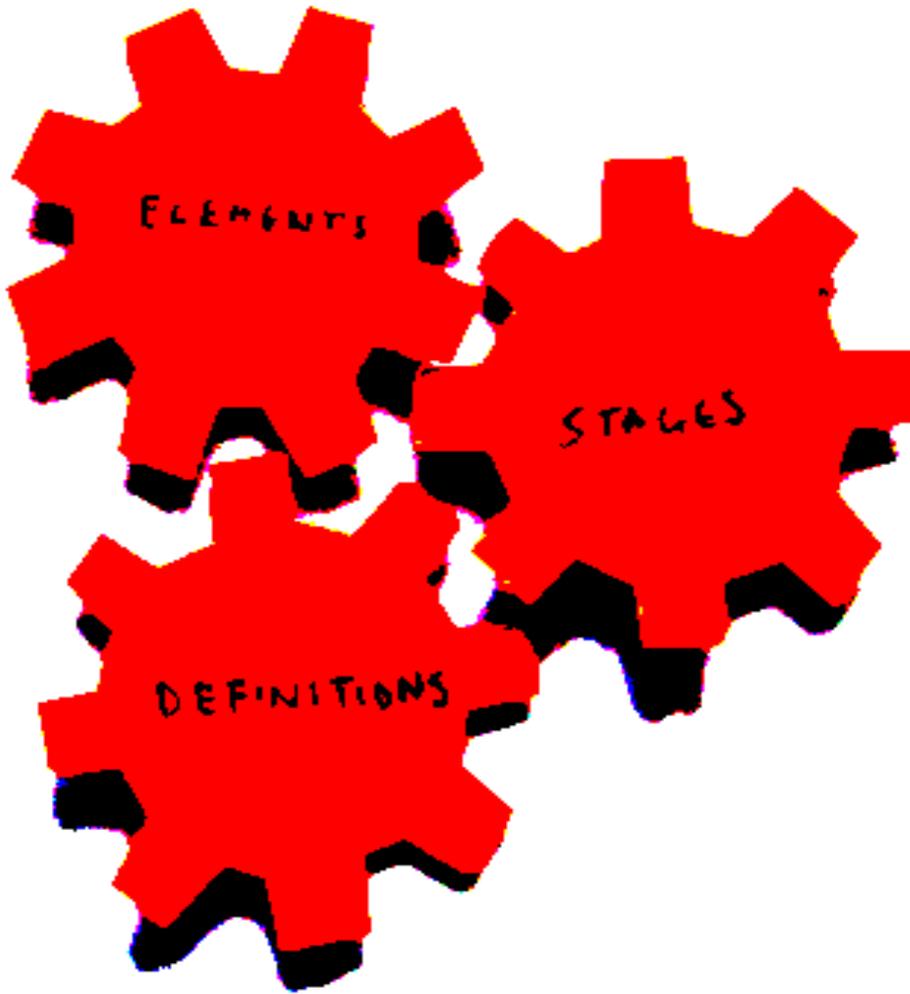
- 8 full vocational qualifications
- 21 full higher education qualifications
- 1 part qualification
- 19 framework levels from 3 NQFs
- 5 occupational standards
- 1 job specification

IMPLICATIONS

The Feedback suggests the need for:

- **Fine tuning of the elements**
- **More definitions**
- **Significant changes to the Digital Tool**
- **A review of the options approach**
- **Changes to the Profile and Report**
- **Work with partners on subjectivity**
- **Work on recording evidence to support the Profiles**
- **More work with partners to investigate ways of adapting the tool for different uses/users**





World Reference Levels

<https://worldreferencelevels.org>

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