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UNESCO's work in the recognition of qualifications and competences transnationally

Hiromichi Katayama

Programme Specialist, Section for Youth, Literacy and Skills Development, UNESCO



Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks (1)

Context:

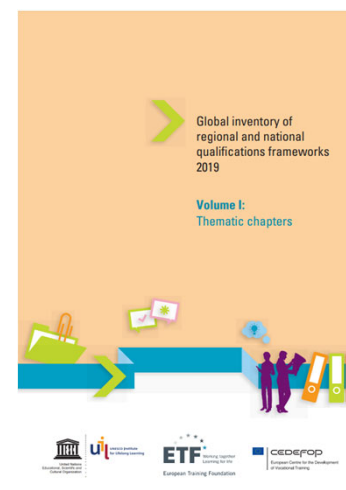
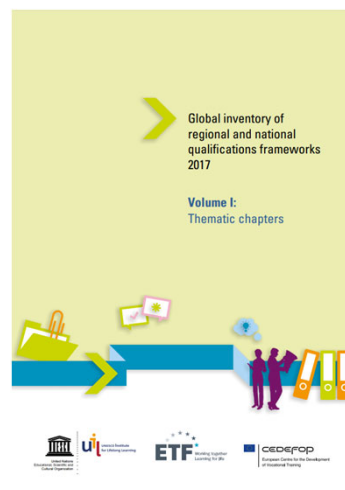
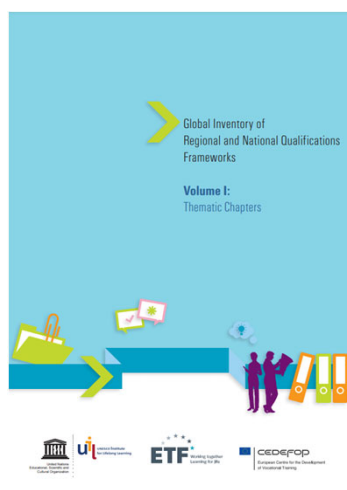
- Increased globalization of LM and education systems
- Need for readability of qualifications at national and international levels: supports international mobility and lifelong learning of workers and learners
- Only a handful of countries had NQFS before the 2000 $\Rightarrow$ More than 140 were working on/implementing NQFs by the end of 2012

What?

- **An interagency initiative:** ETF, Cedefop, UIL and UNESCO
- Conducted **every two years:** 2013-2015-2017-2019-2021

Objective?

- To **monitor and map global and regional qualification reforms** and discuss key trends and policy issues emerging from qualifications framework reforms and development around the world



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Education
2030

Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks (2)

Key findings of the 2019 edition:

- More than 150 countries developing NQFs.
- **Learning outcomes – common conceptual basis of almost all QFs** – a significant trend worldwide.
- Comprehensive frameworks – including all levels and types of qualifications are gaining grounds in Europe and elsewhere
- NQFs provide visible structures and common standards **to support recognition and validation of non-formal learning**.
- NQFs **influence quality assurance and strengthen focus on learning outcomes**. Quality assurance may be integrated in NQFs or linked to them.
- **Several regional frameworks (RQF) at different stages of development and implementation**: EQF, SADCQF, CARICOM, ASEAN, Commonwealth countries etc.
- Growing digitisation of education and credentials - digital technology is also expected to offer new credentialing methods and systems that can capture, recognise and validate a broader range of learning outcomes in the era of lifelong learning



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Overview of some of the RQFs currently being developed/implemented and covered by the global inventory

- ▷ **The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) - ASEAN**
- ▷ **The CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF) - CARICOM**
- ▷ **The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) - European Union**
- ▷ **The Pacific Qualifications Framework (PQF) - Pacific Community**
- ▷ **Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) - SADC**
- ▷ **Harmonizing the Economic community of west african states (Ecowas) qualifications systems - Ecowas**

The Association Of Southeast Asian Nations Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

History

Stems from the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Economic Blueprint both signed in 2007. The AQRF was completed and the document containing its principles and structure was endorsed in 2016.

Coverage

ASEAN countries (10 Southeast Asian countries)

Objective

The AQRF is a common reference framework that enables comparisons of educational qualifications across the ASEAN countries and thus the mobility of workers/learners.

The AQRF aims to support and enhance NQFs.

In the long term, the AQRF is expected to serve as a meta-framework to support recognition of its levels against other regional qualifications frameworks as well as support inter-regional recognition.

TAXONOMY

The AQRF includes a set of regional level descriptors and will, in the future, allow ASEAN countries to link the levels of their NQFs to the ASEAN framework.

The **8 level descriptors** cover **two domains: knowledge and skills** (demonstration of knowledge and skills); and **application and responsibility** (the contexts in which knowledge and skills are demonstrated).

Current state of implementation

Four ASEAN countries have completed the referencing of their NQF to AQRF (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand)

ASEAN countries are at different stages in the development of their NQF. The RQF aims to be a neutral influence on national qualifications frameworks although it seeks to promote higher quality qualification systems at the national level: the AQRF respects the Member States' specific structures and processes that are responsive to national priorities

The CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF)

History

In 2012 Caricom developed a draft regional qualifications framework (CQF). The CQF was approved in Georgetown, Guyana in 2017.

Coverage

Caricom countries (20 Caribbean nations)

Objective

The CQF was designed as a 'reference point' to facilitate mobility of learners and recognition and accreditation of qualifications within the region. The CQF also aims to provide sufficient independent data to improve the transparency of qualifications, both regionally and internationally

TAXONOMY

The CQF is informed by the principles of the 'ideal Caribbean citizen' as defined by Caricom and is based on **10 generic level descriptors. Five domains are used at each level:**

a. knowledge and understanding; b. application and practice; c. communication, numeracy and ICT; d. life skills; and e. autonomy, accountability and working with others.

Current state of implementation

At present, several Caricom countries have established national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) while others are still in the initial stages of NQF development. Guidelines for NQF development have been produced by the Caricom Secretariat.

UNESCO organized a regional workshop on strengthening the capacities of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean for the development of National Qualifications Systems in 2019

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

History

The European qualifications framework (EQF) came into force in 2008.

Coverage

EU Member States and neighbouring countries (39 countries)

Objective

Common reference point for comparing qualifications across national and institutional borders and making them easier to understand, both for study and working purposes.

TAXONOMY

Eight learning-outcomes-based levels, ranging from basic (level 1) to most advanced (level 8). Each level is defined in terms of **knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy**

Current state of implementation

Ten EQF referencing criteria and procedures have been set up to help ensure that NQFs are linked to the EQF in a coherent and transparent way.

The EQF has acted as a catalyst for development of learning-outcomes-based NQFs and contributed to changes in the qualifications landscape in Europe. In the 39 countries currently cooperating on EQF implementation, 43 NQFs using explicit levels of learning outcomes have been established or are being developed.

Qualifications documents (certificates and diplomas, and/or Europass certificate and diploma supplements) have started to include EQF/NQF levels in 27 countries

The Pacific Qualifications Framework (PQF)

History

Notion of a Pacific qualifications register was first mooted in 2001 at the Pacific Islands Ministers of Education Forum

Establishment of a dedicated unit within the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) to champion the development of the Pacific qualifications register in 2009

Coverage

15 countries from the Pacific Community

Objective

Initial expectation of a Pacific qualifications framework (PQF) was to achieve a regional commitment to continually improving the quality of all forms of Pacific education and training

The PQF is a common reference framework that is linked to the Pacific register of qualifications and standards (PRQS). The PQF supports the current international move to outcomes-based learning. This is expected to shift the focus from teaching and delivery to learner achievement and learning outcomes.

TAXONOMY

The PQF includes a set of **10 level descriptors**. The level descriptors include **three domains: knowledge and skills; application** (deconstructed to type and problem solving); and **autonomy** (deconstructed to level of support and degree of judgement).

Current state of implementation

Both the register and the framework are underpinned by a set of quality assurance standards for agencies as well as minimum standards for providers and programmes: the Pacific quality assurance framework (PQAF)

A number of countries have made progress in developing their own NQFs while some others have aligned theirs with other existing QFs (New Zealand's) or adopted the PQF as theirs (Kiribati and Tuvalu notably).

The Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF)

History

After much preliminary work, the SADCQF was officially launched in 2017. It is a comprehensive regional qualifications framework for schooling, TVET and higher education.

Coverage

Southern Africa Development Community countries (16)

Objective

Ease mobility of learners and workers across the region and internationally. Member States have agreed to align their qualifications and QA mechanisms with those of the SADCQF.

All new qualification certificates, diplomas and other credentials issued by competent authorities throughout the region will need to include the SADCQF relevant level.

The implementation of the SADCQF includes 6 programmes, each being overseen by a distinct Member State: (1) development and alignment; (2) quality assurance; (3) verification; (4) communication and advocacy; (5) recognition of prior learning, credit accumulation and transfer, and articulation; and (6) governance

TAXONOMY

The SADCQF includes a set of **10 level descriptors**. The level descriptors include **three domains: knowledge; skills; and autonomy and responsibility**.

Current state of implementation

Regional QA and RPL guidelines were established to ensure consistency across SADC (respectively in 2008 and in 2016)

Countries are currently piloting the alignment of their national qualifications frameworks or national qualifications systems with the SADCQF. South Africa and Seychelles have completed the alignment of their respective NQFs to the SADCQF in 2019.

Harmonizing the Economic community of west african states (Ecowas) qualifications systems

History

Two reference documents were published in 2003 by Ecowas: the Protocol on education and training and its annex on the equivalence of certificates.

Coverage

Ecowas countries (15 West African States)

Objective

Assessment of knowledge, skills and competences and their recognition; for (re-)entering the formal education and training system and/or the labour market. This approach aims at facilitating geographical, occupational and social mobility.

Current state of implementation

There is already a set of arrangements and initiatives between neighbouring countries that aim to facilitate labour mobility and the recognition and use of qualifications between countries in the region.

The Ecowas Commission and UNESCO launched a new initiative to strengthen the capacities of its Member States in reforming qualifications systems while adopting a combined national and regional perspective in 2018. The initiative may lead to the development of a regional qualifications framework as adopted in other regions in the world.

In the context of this initiative, focal points from ECOWAS countries have so far met at three workshops organised by UNESCO.



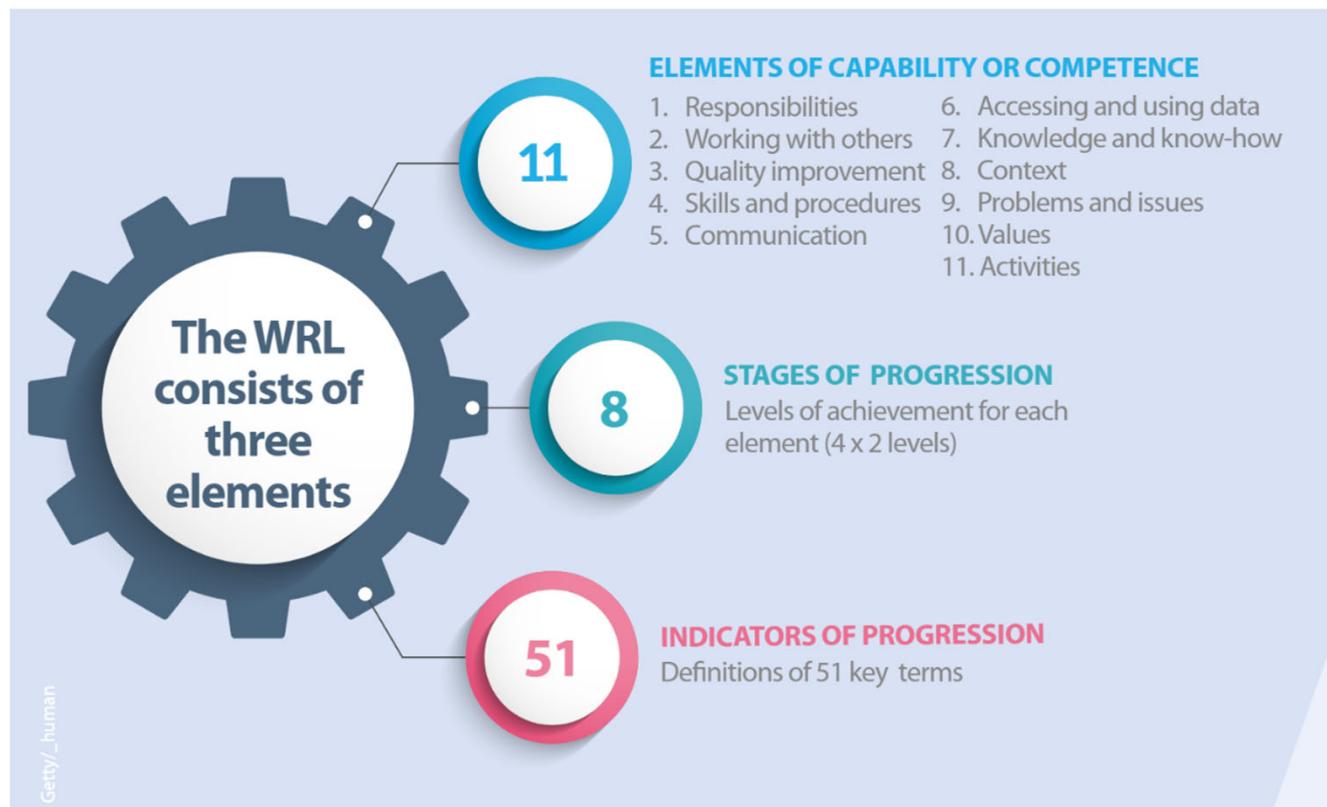
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The World Reference Levels (WRLs)

WRLs are:

• **Common**

• **Comparable**



World Reference Levels

Background:

- The same qualifications from different countries can differ quite considerably with regard to the scope of the learning outcomes
- No global skills recognition framework
- **Third International Congress on TVET, 2012:** to consider a set of world reference levels (WRLs) to facilitate the international recognition of TVET qualifications.
- UNESCO has since then been engaged in leading the process of development of WRLs in collaboration with external partners. An expert group has been meeting regularly since 2014 (the latest meeting took place in April 2021)

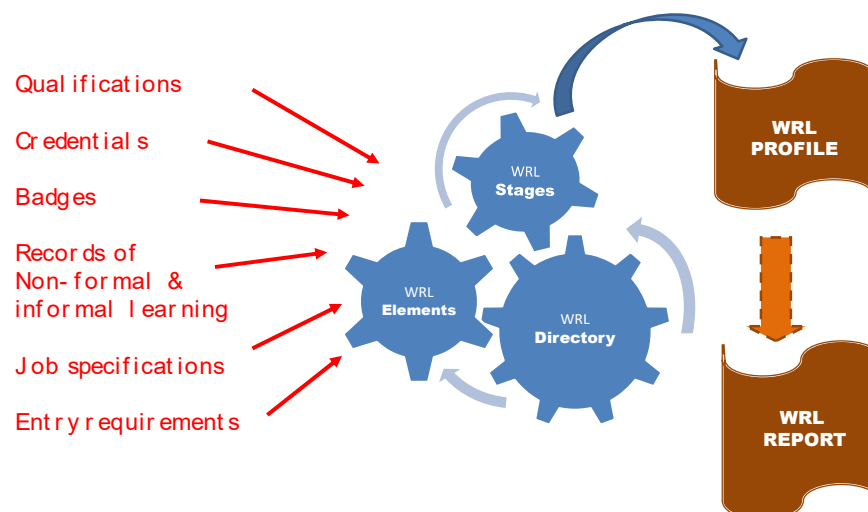
Objective:

- To **translate** any outcomes-based qualification, credential, set of entry requirements, job specification or framework level into an internationally recognised form of description
- The **output is a concise report and a graphical profile** in a format that contains key information on the qualifications or outcomes-based achievements, obtained, expected or required, using the WRL common language.

How?

Based on a conceptual analysis of NQFs, RQFs, sectoral frameworks, competence frameworks, job specifications, programme entry requirements etc.

WRL TOOL



World Reference Levels – the graphical profile

- The answers are used to create a **graphical WRL profile**: a graphical representation, element by element of the outcomes of a qualification /credential, entry/work role requirements, or a framework level.
- Throughout the process, users are also **asked to enter the evidence which supports the matching, and this is used to create a more detailed report.**

Pilot World Reference Levels - v.2.4

World Reference Levels Graphical Profile

a record of achieved learning outcomes: WorldSkills Occupational Standard for Electrical Installations

Main purpose: vocational skills and knowledge

Typical candidates: holders of technical, vocational or professional qualifications

Selected stage of **Activities** Element

☒ A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 D1 D2

Provided evidence for Activities Element:

Selected stage of **Responsibilities** Element

☒ A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 D1 D2

Provided evidence for Responsibilities Element:

Selected stage of **Working With Others** Element

☒ A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 D1 D2

Provided evidence for Working with others Element:

Selected stage of **Context** Element

☒ A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 D1 D2

Provided evidence for Context Element:

Selected stage of **Problems and issues** Element

☒ A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 D1 D2

Provided evidence for Problems and issues Element:

Selected stage of **Values** Element

☒ A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 D1 D2

Provided evidence for Values Element:

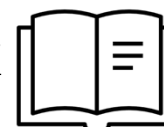
Profile created by Sally Messenger on 08/11/2021
Consultant at WorldSkills International

Excerpt from a graphical WRL profile created for the WorldSkills Occupational Standard for Electrical Installations.

The WRLs Digital Tool - breakdown

8 STAGES	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2
11 ELEMENTS								
1. Activities								
2. Responsibilities								
3. Working with others								
4. Quality								
5. Skills & procedures								
6. Communicating								
7. Data								
8. Knowledge & know-how								
9. Context								
10. Problems & issues								
11. Values								

Linked to the WRL Directory



The **WRL Directory** contains definitions and explanations of the **51 terms** which indicate changes of technical difficulty, scope or autonomy.

- The WRL App uses **11 Elements of Capability**.

Elements are descriptions of different kinds of individual capability described in outcome statements. They use the concepts which are commonly combined to define the levels in qualification and skills frameworks to create a description in WRL terms.

- Each element is described at **8 Stages of Progression**.

Users are asked, element-by-element, to decide which stage is the best match for the outcomes of their qualification/credential, entry/work role requirements, or framework level.

- ▷ **Level A:** essential demands of modern society, learning and work (basic studies and simple work roles).
- ▷ **Level B:** end of compulsory education to entry to tertiary or higher education studies. In work terms - relatively independent, but routine, work roles to skilled work and supervisory roles.
- ▷ **Level C:** first cycle of tertiary or higher education or the work roles of paraprofessionals, junior professionals, specialists and managers.
- ▷ **Level D:** advanced intellectual and occupational capabilities. It includes outcomes associated with the second and third cycles of higher education, and the activities and responsibilities of independent specialists, technologists, analysts, and executives with extensive and/or strategic responsibilities.

Evolution of the WRLs



First WRLs: paper form – piloted in 2017



Creation of the Digital Tool in 2019 (v2)

In 2019, **organisations from 10 countries piloted the Digital Tool** with different types of qualifications and other credentials and outcome specifications

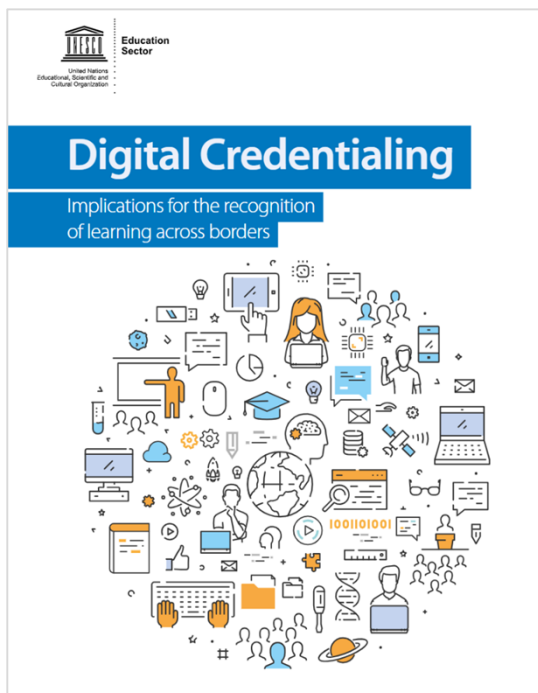
Belgium	Flemish Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Allowances
Latvia	Academic Information Centre
Luxembourg	Ad hoc team of expert and social partners
Norway	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)
Poland	Educational Research Institute
South Africa	South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)
Sweden	Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR)
Russia	WorldSkills Union of Young professionals
Turkey	Vocational Qualifications Authority, Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF)
UK: Scotland	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership
Global: Scotland	Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Organisation (OPITO)
Global	World Skills International (WSI)

Next steps and potential applications:

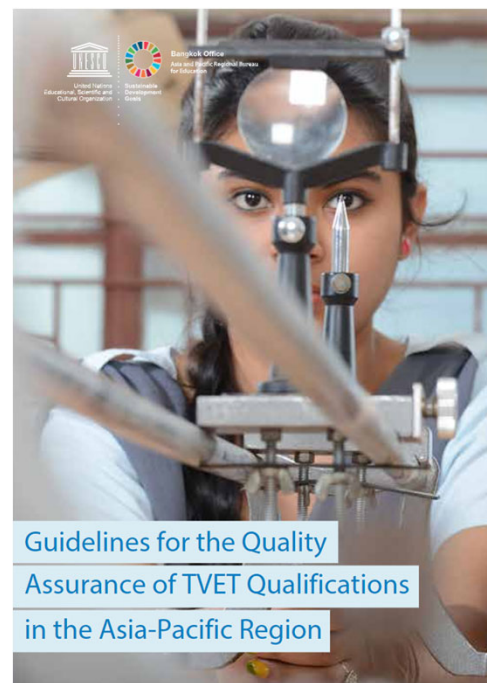
- Development of a **v2.5 of the WRLs Digital Tool** (currently v2.4) after further testing of the current one.
- Support the **WHO Academy** Quality, Standards and Credentialing team's vision for a global credentialing framework for learning recognition within lifelong learning for/on health in the context of the development of the WHO Academy.
- Further test **the WRL outcome analysis approach** with bodies responsible for QFs.

Other activities undertaken to support the development of QFs

- Recent publications



published in 2018



published in 2017

- **The Mahe Process**, an initiative geared towards strengthening TVET in Eastern Africa supported by the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, **since 2016**. Among other things, **the process aims to harmonize qualifications across countries (through a referencing process) and develop guidelines for quality assurance**.
- Upcoming publication: **“Towards a universal definition of micro-credentials”** - coming to a consensus on a universal definition: an attempt to distill what experts “agree that they agree on” so far about micro-credentials



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Mr. Hiromichi Katayama – Programme Specialist
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