

The seven sustainability competences according to the RESFIA+D Model. Part B: practical experiences

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Abstract:

Aim: In a previous article within this same journal, called “The Seven Sustainability Competences according to the RESFIA+D Model. Part A: Conceptual background”, the origins, structure and validation were described of a model for professional competences for sustainable development, called RESFIA+D. The model provides an assessment and policy instrument that can easily be applied practically. Examples of such applications are offered in the current article. Companies, NGO’s and other organizations may apply RESFIA+D as a structured tool for human resource development (HRD). Institutions for higher and vocational education can use the instrument for education (re)development, where curricula and didactic approaches are derived from a systematically designed competence profile in which sustainable development is integrated. Finally, individual professionals may use RESFIA+D as a tool for professional development.

Design / Research methods: The practical applications described in this article offered a way to evaluate and improve the RESFIA+D model, which contributed to the validation process of the assessment tool.

Conclusions / findings: Based on reactions of users, it is concluded that the RESFIA+D assessment is helpful to enable organizations and individual professionals to understand their strengths and weaknesses in their competences in relation to sustainable development; and to enable educational institutions, e.g. universities, to improve their educational goals, competence profiles and curricula related to sustainable development.

Originality, value of the article: The article focuses in a unique way on the roles of individual professionals towards sustainability, whereas most or all usual assessment models focus on the roles of either entire organizations, or of individual persons seen as civilians or customers.

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1. Introduction

In a previous article by the authors of this article, called “The Seven Sustainability Competences according to the RESFIA+D Model. Part A: Conceptual background”, the theoretical framework of RESFIA+D was explained. The current article continues, by offering examples of the application of RESFIA+D in real life.

RESFIA+D can be applied in three ways. For all three of them, the tool is used as an assessment instrument, paving the way to create development plans: for individual professionals (Section 2), for entire teams of an organization or department (Section 3), or for higher education (Section 4).

As an extra, Section 5 offers a simplified Self-Test that can directly be applied by the reader, followed by Section 6 in which a Pledge for professionals is proposed.

2. Individual professionals: Personal Development Plan

The first and easiest application is by an individual professional. It might be the reader, a colleague, a supervisor, a staff member, or an intern. Students can do it, as a part of their study program in a university, a college, or a school.

The assessment can be done repeatedly, for instance every one, two or three years, as a part of a cyclic professional development process.

Step 1: Your present competence, according to yourself

First, you go through all six generic competences one by one; and for each of them, you go through the three achievements that are defined.

If, as a preparation, a set of disciplinary competences has been defined for your profession (e.g. by an expert group, by the organization you work for, or by you), you include those as well.

For each of these 18 or more achievements, you sincerely ask yourself, after reading the detailed level descriptions: Do I really do this, or at least do I do things that are comparable with these descriptions? At which level do I do it?

Don't fool yourself by being too optimistic; why would you?

Step 2: Feedback from others

Next, you invite one or more persons who are familiar with you and your work and whom you trust to score the 18 or more topics with you in mind. If enough people do this, you get a 360° feedback.

Of course, if you cannot or don't want to get this kind of feedback, you can leave Step 2 out.

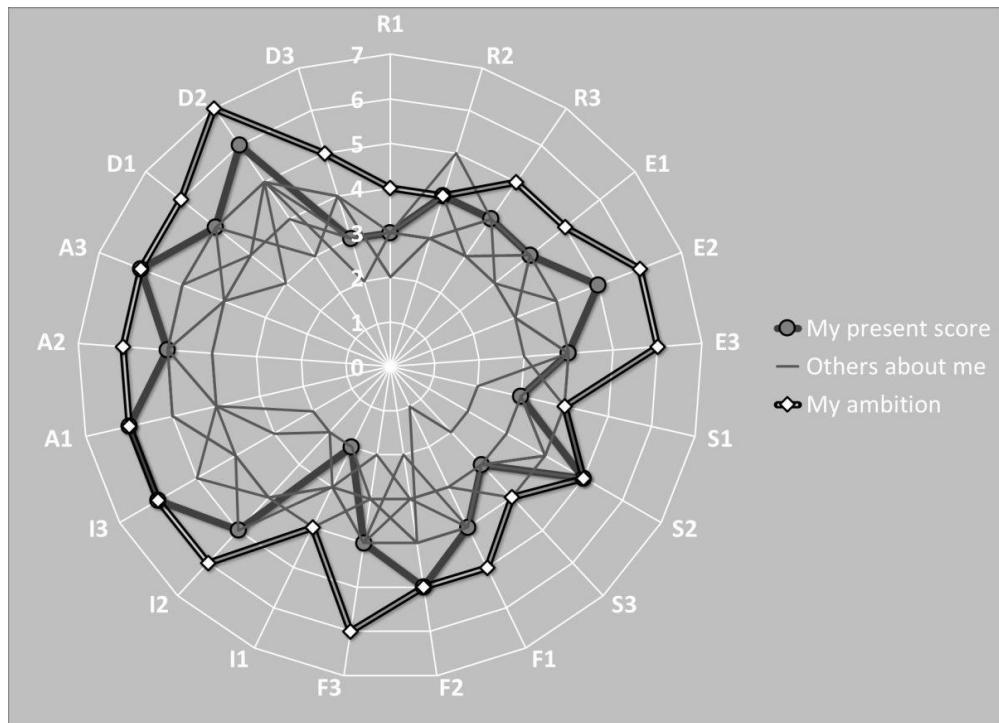
Step 3: Your ambition

Then, you define your ambition for each of the topics. Before you do, you might select a certain period of time in which you want to realize this ambition: i.e. a target date. The result may look like Figure 1, which is an actual result, scored a few years ago by a Dutch professional working as a consultant.

Step 4: Personal Development Plan

After you complete the assessment, you use the results to think about how you can realize your ambition. This includes things like: setting priorities, selecting methods to improve your competence levels (e.g. reading a book, doing an internship, participating in a training course, playing a serious game, investigating internet pages, accept coaching), finding facilities to do this (e.g. time, money, equipment, teachers, permissions).

Figure 1. A RESFIA+D result of an individual professional



Source: Authors' own elaboration

3. Organizations: Human Resource Development (HRD)

If you work in a company, it may be decided that not only you but also others perform an individual *RESFIA+D* assessment. Perhaps all the members of a certain team will participate: the consultants, the teachers, the doctors or nurses, the financial staff, the salespersons, and the top managers.

Step 1: Minimum acceptable level

As a preparation, a *minimum requirement* can be defined. This is a set of 18 (or more, if disciplinary competences were defined) levels that are the lowest acceptable level for anyone within the team.

Step 2: Ambition level

At the other end, also an *ambition level* is defined for the entire team. This does not require *every* team member to meet the demands of this ambition; it involves the combined strength of the team as a whole. It may, for example, be decided that all ambition levels need to be possessed by at least one or two team members; if not, the team may not be able to perform its tasks properly.

Step 3: Individual assessments

All team members – or at least those who were selected for the assessment – do the assessment, as described in 8.1. In this case, the 360° feedback should definitely not be left out!

After the individual assessments are finished, the result may look like Figure 2.

Figure 2. A RESFIA+D result of an organization

