

## Part VI

# Assessing Professional Learning

This part addresses research on issues of judging, evaluating, monitoring, and assessing professional learning. The articles address evaluation processes on the micro-, meso-, and macro level of analysis by exploring methodological and normative issues of work related judgement processes. Research that reports how professional learning can be assessed and the means by which the assessment progresses feature within this final part. This featuring largely focuses on making judgements about what constitutes professional competence, means for validly and reliably assessing that learning, and extends through to considerations and practices associated with the evaluation of education programs, provisions of educational institutions and other kinds of experiences that seek to secure, certifying and order professional knowledge.

The contributions here commence with Thomas R. Guskey's chapter entitled – *Evaluating professional learning* (Chap. 44). The author takes the opportunity to introduce and explore key concepts and practices associated with evaluation through a consideration of how these can be understood and practiced in an era of professional accountability. He structures this contribution through a consideration of the meaning of evaluation, the purposes it serves and what are its critical applications. All this is directed towards informing the ways in which professional education and learning can be planned and enacted in ways focused on key outcomes, in this case accountability. Similar sentiments and foundational issues are addressed in the chapter by Dineke E. H. Tigelaar and Cees P. M. van der Vleuten, entitled – *Assessment of professional competence* (Chap. 45). They propose that the single purpose of assessing professional competence is aligned with developing that competence. They hold that different forms of assessment can assist the development of this competence in particular ways and that assessment practices for both educational and practice-based purposes including formative and summative assessment are central to this goal. Yet, salient here is the development of capacities such as expert judgement, developing guidelines for assessment and more broadly enhancing the impact of assessment upon learning.

In her contribution, Tara Fenwick returns to the issue of professional accountability and its manifestations with the mechanisms of regulatory agencies and measurable outputs. In the chapter – *Assessment of professional learning in practice* (Chap. 46) – she outlines a series of conflicting and complicating factors that blur the distinctions amongst the purposes of assessment within an era of accountability. Above all, she makes the case for having useful assessment which it is purposes and processes that need to reduce the complexity of the monomer being assessed but are helpful in making judgements about professional performance and in ways which are not tied to individual performances. Examples from teaching pharmacy and accounting are used to elaborate these ideas and emphasise fidelity to the practice about which judgements are made. Following this theme on judgements within assessment, Patrick Griffin, Esther Care, Judith Crigan, Pamela Robertson, Zhonghua Zhang and Alejandra Arratia-Martinez discuss how teachers can further develop their decision-making capacities to improve and offer comprehensive assessments of student learning. Entitled – *The influence of evidence-based decisions by collaborative teacher teams on student achievement* (Chap. 47) – the key focus here is on a collaborative efforts by teachers to develop their capacities for organising effective assessment practices and, in particular, developing their decision-making capacities in ways which use student data more fully to arrive at decisions about student achievement. These efforts are also directly linked to improving particular kinds of outcomes and embed assessment within curriculum considerations, rather than being seen as separate from and making post-event justifications about it. Importantly, their contribution with advancing the conception of assessment and learning partnerships as premises for promoting intentional educational interventions and effective learning informed by collaborative assessment practices.

Finally, in this part, a contextualised and expansive approach to student assessment is illustrated and discussed by Frank Achtenhagen and Esther Winter in their contribution entitled – *Large-scale assessment of vocational education and training* (Chap. 48). This chapter illustrates the way in which a very large assessment process can be enacted through adopting a series of typical workplace tasks associated with the field of business administration. These tests were identified as being common to these fields across a range of European countries. Subsequently, these tasks are then presented through a web-based format aiming to provide authentic activities and valid assessments through students' engagement with them. Through these processes, effective assessment and comparable data can be gathered and analysed and decision-making informed about the nature of workplace learning and the kinds of knowledge which are developed and their contributions to professional competence.