Preface

The field of assessment is a complex aspect of teaching and learning process in higher education. Academics and students are both involved in the assessment process and they are expected to perform high level assessment in the face of multiple and varied competing conditions.

In the last years there are an ample variety of studies focused on innovations developed in order to enhance the participation of different agents in the assessment activities, especially enhancing the role of students in their own assessment through self-assessment and peer- feedback and the introduction of new technologies in the assessment process. Despite the wide interest in these topics, the consequences of such innovations and processes measured in terms of satisfaction and perceived learning, and especially in terms of performance improvements remain still under-investigated.

This book will focus on educational assessment especially in the field of innovations carried out at international level, from a triple perspective: theoretical, practical and research-based. The aim is to provide the latest research based on first-hand practice, experience, observation and knowledge of scholars and researchers in the field, in order to provide an international framework for those interested in improving their assessment practices.

Regarding to this topic fits in the world today, international and local perspectives on Educational Assessment are very much in demand nowadays, especially in the present moment when the both professionals in the educational field and stakeholders are interested in measure and improve students learning in order to form them to the challenges of the current society. In the recent years, concepts as change, reform and innovation appear with a greater frequency in the researchers’ studies and interest. All these are referring from micro- individuals’ level, mezzo-organizational and macro- policy making level and are justified by the preoccupation to ensure better prepared students. The book approaches all these levels and its justify its importance can be articulated around several arguments: the adequacy of the temporary time; the relationship between theory and practice and the desirability of contributing to the enrichment of a very relevant sub-area of knowledge.

First, the book topic is justified by the opportunity of this historic moment. In 1999 the Bologna Declaration marked the starting point for the creation of the European Higher Education Area, setting 2010 as the horizon to be launched leading to the harmonization of qualifications, to the implementation of necessary reforms, Credit System European curricula and competency-based approaches. There is still a very recent experience, with a few classes or cohorts of graduates trained under the new competency-based designs. While changes are reflected in the policy and strategic documents, the teaching practice is still traditional and the changes in the academics’ ways to do are changing very slowly. The process of European Convergence is complex and requires time as any innovation process involves. We expect this
book will bring new insights at innovative strategies already implemented and successful and it could stimulate the implementation of new ones in the field of higher education.

Secondly, in recent years an extensive literature about assessment processes in higher education has been published. However, a gap between the political discourses, theoretical approaches on effective assessment processes and teaching practices implemented in both to-face and online classes, still exists. Academics often referred to difficulties in design and implement formative assessment practices viable and coherent to the contextual conditions and applicable to different scenarios at European universities. For all this, we consider that this book justify its opportunity arguing in favor of necessity collecting not only the state of the art regarding the assessment but to offer a set of successful innovative practices that can be useful to all readers.

Thirdly, the book aims to make a contribution to the field of educational knowledge and more specifically to the subarea of learning process and assessment based on students’ competences. The fact of assessment is a key element in the learning process, while guiding these processes and determines the type of cognitive skills that students develop, is something well known. Therefore, the book is not intended to justify the importance of assessment but to enhance a different conception on the topic, in the direction indicated by the current pedagogical knowledge centred on constructive approaches and connectivist models; reviewing the agents involved; looking for a truly formative purpose through implementation of dialogic feedback experiences and incorporating possibilities of technology. The book indeed must to offer a framework on the current situation and to open new perspective on assessment practices.

For all these reasons mentioned above, the book includes both theoretical contributions as research on assessment processes in higher education as concrete experiences of innovation in the universities classrooms around the world.

Regarding to people that might be interested in this book, the audience for the book consists in the following categories:

1. Academics working in higher education field who will find valuable theoretical and practical knowledge for teaching and assessment improvement;
2. Professionals working in training for teachers and researchers who will use the book in their professional development activities;
3. Practitioners who serve in secondary and high school for their continuous professional development;
4. Academic coordinators and leaders in higher education. They will find interesting information which orients their managerial activities, designing and implementing teaching and assessment plans and programs;
5. Policymakers involved in educational field in general and in higher educational in particular. They will be able to analyze the impact of the assessment strategies implemented by academics and propose new strategic lines for improvement and
6. Graduate and postgraduate students carrying out their research projects in the field of educational assessment. They will discover new methodological strategies to approach students’ assessment issue.

All these collectives will find theoretical, practical and research-based contributions from a deep approach and under an international framework. In this way, the book is organized in three different sections: theoretical contributions, research –based evidences and teaching innovative experiences.
In the first section, the various chapters tackle with issues of assessment theories in the local and international contexts.

More specifically, the chapter by Mark Claver titled ‘Feedback, Feedforward, or Dialogue?: Defining a Model for Self-regulated Learning’, following Sadler’s theories, discusses about feedback, feedforward or dialogue. The author offers arguments that dialogic feedback and feedforward are currently conceptualized in a purely positive way, which serves to limit effective critique of these models. The chapter’s main contribution consists in describing principles of any type of feedback which have clear links to self-regulated learning, offering these as a reframing of feedback preferable to current etymological models.

In the same line, the chapter authored by Zineb Djoub and titled ‘Assessment for learning: Feeding back and feeding forward’ also addresses the issue of feedback and feedforward and the quality of these processes. This chapter aims first to clarify for teachers what quality feedback means. Then, it provides practical tips and strategies for teachers to stimulate their students’ interest in feedback, assimilate its significant role and get involved in interpreting, reflecting and acting upon feedback comments. The author focuses on both summative and formative feedback. The author also discusses strategies and instruments as reflective worksheets and other post-exam tasks in class useful to improve students' learning. Feedback within self, peer and group assessment approaches is also concerned in this chapter.

Guardia, Crisp and Alsina, in their chapter ‘Trends and challenges of e-assessment to enhance student learning in Higher Education’ make a reflection on the online assessment, including a brief catalogue of both traditional and innovative formats relevant to this type of training. The main purpose of this chapter is precisely to highlight the necessity for teachers to be aware of the new opportunities for enhancing the quality of assessment tasks through the use of computers and the Internet and offers strategies in order to achieve it. Some of these strategies discussed by authors are: reviewing the literature, exploring what is already done basically in online and blended environments and what are the trends and challenges of eAssessment to enhance student learning in Higher Education.

The next chapter, ‘Competency-based Assessment: From conceptual model to operational tool’, written by Mohammed Khalidi Idrissi, Meriem Hnida and Samir Bennani, shows the characteristics of CBA (Competency-Based Assessment) model. The main purpose of the chapter is to present an online placement test for assessing student competencies, describing a developed competence model using domain ontology and Instructional Management System (IMS) Global standards. Also, it tends to demonstrate how to use a psychometric model that belongs to the Item Response Theory, to effectively analyze student level of competence and classify learners into homogeneous groups.

Walaa M. El-Henawy in the chapter ‘Assessment Techniques in EFL Brain-Compatible Classroom’ offers approached the topic of brain-supported classroom and the main challenges of this practice. The information provided by this chapter is related about the brain and how it learns. Brain-Based Learning is student centered learning that utilizes the whole brain and recognizes that not all students learn in the same way. Feedback also motivates students and allows students to apply what they have learned to real-life situations.

In the chapter ‘Formative Evaluations of Teaching: Involving Students in the Assessment Process’, Gina Mariano reviews current research on Students Evaluation of teaching, while highlighting ways to effectively use the information given in Students Evaluation of Teaching (SETs) to help students become active participants in their learning by better understanding student perceptions of courses. This chapter presents interest for any faculty in higher education looking to improve teaching quality and assessment related to teaching improvement.
The section 1 of the book ends with the contribution of Marije Lesterhuis, San Verhavert, Liesje Coertjens, Vincent Donche, and Sven De Maeyer on the validity and reliability of comparative judgment and focuses on the advantages of the method in order to achieve reliable and valid scores, especially for large-scale (summative) performance assessments.

The second section of the book is dedicated to the research based evidences on assessment and presents in seven chapters interesting contributions on different topics from students’ perspectives to academics views in face to face and online environments.

The first chapter on this section is titled ‘Students’ Conceptions of Understanding and Its Assessment’ and it’s authored by Rebeca Hamer, and Erik Jan van Rossum. The chapter provides a revision of the historical conceptions (reproduction vs meaning) of assessment. This is an empirical study with 170 Dutch and German psychology students who were asked to elaborate their understanding of the concept of ‘understanding’ and to describe their views on how to best assess understanding. The data consisted of written essays that were analyzed using the phenomenographic method. This study introduces two new conceptions of understanding beyond the interpretation of flexible performance.

In the chapter ‘Teacher Self-Assessment of Feedback Practices in an EFL Academic Writing Class: A Reflective Case Study’, Eddy White explains a research about Classroom-based assessment, showing how essays could be assessed and how the feedback interventions scaffold the second version of the essays. The purpose of the study presented is to systematically analyze his written feedback practices, in a writing course at a Japanese university, to determine the form and kind of feedback provided on student essays, and, to see how these feedback practices would measure up against recommended practice in the feedback on writing literature. A close examination of the teacher feedback on the first draft of 21 student essays was undertaken and more than 800 feedback interventions were identified and coded.

Maite Fernández-Ferrer and Laura Pons-Seguí show in the chapter number ten, entitled ‘Feedback. The key to improve learning in higher education’, data derived from a inter-university experience about feedback in terms of motivation and achievement of students. The purpose of this study is to detect an improvement in students’ learning linked to an improvement in their results (assessed in the second version of each assignment) and in the final achievement of the course.

The next chapter titled ‘Teaching for Epistemological Change: Self-direction by Self-Assessment’, written by Gloria Nogueiras, David Herrero, and Alejandro Iborra, shares an experience regarding innovative assessment practices as Higher Education teachers in a Teacher Training Degree. Authors approached the use of self-assessment as a way to promote and supervise the competence of self-direction in freshmen students. Data have been collected in a course on Developmental Psychology that was taught to 149 students.

Victoria Quesada, Eduardo García-Jimenez, and Miguel Angel Gomez-Ruiz, in their chapter about ‘Student Participation in Assessment Processes: way forward ’presents an investigation that aims to explore students’ participation in the assessment processes and to analyze different approaches to promote it, both at course and module level. The chapter answers the following questions: what is understood as ‘student participation in assessment processes’? To what extend can we enhance student participation in assessment? At the end of the chapter authors provide recommendations on how to develop student’s participation in assessment.

‘Peer assessment in an online context: What do students say?’ is the chapter thirteen. It is written by Alda Pereira, Luis Tinoca, and Isolina Oliveira, who presents a longitudinal research on a process of peer assessment on line in Portugal. They show the lack of confidence of students in assessments of their peers but also show the benefits of increasing reflective practice and responsibility. The results illustrate...
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the students’ perceptions of self and peer assessment as innovative practices and show the necessity to include the students in the definition of the competences to be assessed and on the development of the assessment criteria.

The last chapter of this section is entitled ‘Serious Games for Students’ E-assessment Literacy in Higher Education’ and it’s authored by Gregorio Rodriguez-Gomez and María Soledad Ibarra-Sáiz. They explain the results of the use of simulations and alternative assessment formats in ad hoc platforms. Data is derived from a survey administrated to students in the framework of DevalS Project (Developing Sustainable Assessment – Improving Student’s Assessment Competence through Virtual Simulations).

The third section of the book is dedicated to present innovative practices in students’ assessment and is organized in six chapters.

The first chapter of this section is proposed by Stefanie Panke and it is titled ‘Designing Assessment, Assessing Instructional Design: From Pedagogical Concepts to Practical Applications’. This chapter shows a teaching innovation focusing on authentic assessment. The chapter provides examples of the conceptual development and implementation of assessment approaches in three different areas: “Needs Assessment” (for designing projects with stakeholders through focus groups, interviews and surveys), “Impact Assessment” (using learning analytics, and interviews) and “Classroom Assessment” (for supporting students’ critical thinking abilities with portfolios, rubrics or peer-to-peer assessment).

The chapter number sixteen is dedicated to show an innovative experience of competence-based assessment. The title is ‘As Life Itself. Authentic teaching and evaluation of professional consulting competences in a Psychology course’ and its author are Esperanza Mejías, and Carles Monereo. The study analyze the influences on what and how students learn and also on the representation they construct about the future professional role they will play in a real context, when they start working.

The chapter ‘Demonstrating Positive, Learner-Centred Assessment Practice in Professional Development Programmes’, proposed by Patrick Baughan, shows a teaching innovation based on student-centered programs evaluation, incorporating the elements that makes a good evaluation practice. The chapter contributes to explain and argue that professional development programmes can and should have a key and distinctive role in developing and sharing innovative assessment practice.

In the same topic, James G M Crossley, shows 8 dimensions to study at an OSCE experience, from the health sciences field. The chapter eighteen reviews seven existing strategies for addressing these problems: delineating the constructs, using cognitive assessments as a proxy, making the subjective objective, sampling across performances and opinions, using outcome measures as a proxy, using metacognition as a proxy, and abandoning the existing measurement paradigm. Given the limitations of these strategies, the author finishes by offering three promising ways forward.

Simona Iftimescu, Romita Iucu, Elena Marin, and Mihaela Monica Stingu in the chapter entitled ‘Authentic Assessment: An Inquiry into the Assessment Process at Master’s Degree Level’, propose a study showing the student’s perception after an authentic assessment process carried out in the field of education in Romania. This chapter contributes to a better understanding of the Master’s program within the context of the Bologna system by providing a short historical perspective on the evolution of the Bologna process, as well as trying to identify the true beneficiaries. In addition challenges of the assessment process are identified.

The chapter number twenty, ‘Beyond the walls: project-based learning and assessment in higher education’, proposed by Catalina Ulrich and Lucian Ciolan provides an useful perspective on the current pedagogy trends and specific examples to support the idea that Project Based Learning leads to the type of authentic learning needed for nowadays students. Theoretical framework and examples are
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enriched by reflections on undergraduate and master degree students’ perceptions on learning process and learning outcomes.

All these 20 chapters contribute to outline an overview of educational assessment and its current challenges and to provide examples of innovative practices that have been implemented in different scenarios and which effects have been proved by research. In addition, this book provides a scholar account of the many facets of assessment, with particular focus on evidence and practice-based approaches. Assessment for self-regulated learning is a powerful academic tools and this book will constitute a comprehensive guide to the methods and issues involved. The relevance of the book is for both scholars, students and academic leaders in higher education context, all of them will find in this book valuable examples and guidelines in order to experiment new ways of assessment and to improve their practices.