2.1 What is Worth Teaching and Assessing?

This chapter addresses some of the most challenging aspects in teaching: deciding what to teach, what to assess and how to align assessment in the classroom to the learning goals and outcomes for our students. Such goals and outcomes may be explicitly defined for a whole programme by benchmarks and standards, curriculum and external tests, or implicitly defined by teachers through textbooks at the classroom level. Teachers may also define outcomes by eliciting information from their students through needs analysis, student–student and student–teacher interaction, student self-assessment, and so forth.

Look at Figure 2.1 and think about what it means to us as teachers to achieve instructional goals or outcomes through teaching and assessment. In the centre of this triangle is our students’ learning. The first question we need to ask relates to the learning goals or outcomes we have for our students: What do I want my students to learn? What do I want my students to be able to do? Moving clockwise in Figure 2.1, we need to ask how we will monitor and evaluate learning, or what information is
What Do We Assess?

Essential in order to determine whether my students have met or exceeded the required expectations: What will my students do to show that they have learned? What will I do as a teacher and what will my students do as learners? Given the evidence that we plan to collect during our course, we then need to identify the actual classroom activities that will support our students’ learning and development.

Assessment serves as the key to check on learning and provide essential information to teachers. This process is cyclical, as instruction is a process of providing support to learners through assessment and teaching. In this sense, teaching and assessment are an integral process in learning. Teachers need to constantly ask themselves: Have my students learned? How well have they progressed through assessment practices? The assessment component of Figure 2.1 illustrates the why, what and how of your assessment.

Figure 2.1 Alignment of learning goals, assessment and classroom activity