Summary

The aim of the work presented in this thesis was to gain more insight into training and education for sport psychology practice. Specifically, the aim was to explore existing education, to gain insight into what future practitioners have to learn, how they learn, and how to assess whether and what they have learned. Answers to these questions can contribute to high quality training and assessment in education for sport psychology practice.

In Chapter 2 the training routes that are available in applied sport psychology in Europe were outlined. Findings illustrated that education in applied sport psychology is available in most European countries, but programs and courses vary widely in terms of level, size, and applied focus. In addition to the overview of available training, the study marked the start of a network for educators in applied sport psychology, the EASY network. The participants of the study indicated that they were interested to form a network, to collaborate, and to exchange knowledge, staff, students, experiences, and quality standards.

Chapter 3 and 4 investigated what trainee sport psychologists want to learn, and which learning experiences they find helpful. A model of supervision questions was developed, which consisted of two higher-order categories (‘Know-how’ and ‘Professional development’), six lower-order categories (‘Intake’, ‘Treatment plan’, ‘Execution’, ‘Reflections’, ‘Working principles’, and ‘Coping with dilemmas’) and 19 separate themes. These 19 themes were subsequently presented to neophyte sport psychologists, who were asked which learning experiences had helped them to develop on these themes. It was found that traditional learning experiences (e.g., courses, teachers) were related to the development of practical know-how. Learning from others (e.g., peers, colleagues) was related to professional development (i.e., dealing with issues, challenges, and dilemmas that occur in sport psychology practice). Practical experience and reflective activities were related to both know-how and professional development. Together, Chapter 3 and 4 shed light on issues that trainee sport psychologists find challenging during their first professional strides, and which learning experiences help them to develop on these issues.

Chapter 5 and the Appendix focus on assessment of competence for sport psychology practice. As part of an action research to improve the assessment methods in our sport psychology education program, two assessment methods were compared: written case report assessment, and the so-called structured case presentation assessment. In structured case presentation assessments the assessment of written case reports is combined with a discussion with the trainee about the case. It was concluded that, for assessment by external assessors such as an exam committee, structured case presentations provided a more reliable and acceptable method of assessment than
written case reports only.

Chapter 6 and 7 are accounts of experiences obtained in the post-master program in applied sport psychology. In Chapter 6 the challenges, and our solutions, of starting a supervision system from scratch were presented. In addition to our struggles with assessment (see also Chapter 5 and Appendix), I shared how a competency profile for supervisors gave us a solid basis to select the right supervisors. Chapter 7 discusses challenges that supervisors may encounter in supervising the new generation of sport psychology practitioners: the Millennials. We reflected on personal limits for professional conduct and the fear for ‘guilt by association’ that supervisors may experience. We admitted how we struggle to find a balance in empowering and restraining Millennials, and questioned whether supervision actually contributes to deep learning or merely makes Millennials jump through the hoops we hold for them.

Collectively, the chapters shed light on all relevant aspects of training in applied sport psychology – learning outcomes, learning activities (learning experiences in general and supervision specifically), and assessment –, and provide a starting point for exploring the relations among these aspects of training. In this manner, the work presented in this thesis seeks to contribute to the advancement of training and assessment for sport psychology practice.