

Dr Leo Casey | National College of Ireland

General Biography

I am Director of the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning (CELL) at National College of Ireland. Since 2009 the Centre has grown substantially under my direction. CELL provides degree and postgraduate programmes in education as well as conducting research and large-scale sectoral innovation projects. CELL specialises in initial teacher education for teachers in the further education sector, teacher professional development for teachers in all sectors, and early childhood education degree programmes.

I am interested in all aspects of the enhancement of learning through good teaching. In my opinion, there is no substitute for a fully resourced, and competent teacher to encourage, guide and assess student attainment. International evidence points to teaching capability as a core enabler for improved learning outcomes. Teaching capability incorporates not just teacher knowledge and skills, it also extends to resources, digital and otherwise, and school and community involvement.

My research interests are (i) inquiry learning, especially how it may be encouraged through classroom practice; (ii) teaching and learning in a digital world and (iii) teacher professional development and the associated concept of teacher professional identity.

My current involvement with the P-TECH initiative captures all three of these interests. P-TECH, a collaboration between DEIS schools in the NEIC area of Dublin, business partners, National College of Ireland and the Department of Education. The Certificate in P-TECH was recently validated by QQI and will be delivered as a pilot part of the senior-cycle for 3 participating schools. Transition Year students are enrolled on the Special Purpose Award and will complete it alongside their other senior cycle subjects over three academic years. A specially designed teacher professional practice qualification has also been developed. The P-TECH Initiative also has Junior Cycle elements. We are working closely with the teachers in the participating schools as they pioneer this innovative approach to education.

I am also collaborating with an Irish NGO based in Cambodia called SeeBeyondBorders. Together we have developed a project called "What Makes a Good Teacher". This project looks at teacher effectiveness in the context of early grade school education in Cambodia. In all education settings the challenge of enhancing teaching capability to achieve better learning outcomes is complex and multifaceted. In the context of early grade education in Cambodian schools, this is especially the case.

My experience spans all of the sectors in Irish education and I believe this gives me a unique perspective. I have been involved in research on primary schools (digital literacy and inquiry), post-primary (P-TECH), further education (Activity Theory and classroom practice), higher education (teacher competences) and adult education and lifelong learning (especially digital literacy).

I am an advocate for the 'teacher researcher' who engages in structured and documented practice innovation as a form of educational research. This is why I support teachers and schools who wish to innovate for improvement.