

## General Biography

Initial exploratory research at the school identified teacher learning communities as a prerequisite for teaching effectiveness. This then led the team of collaborating teachers and academics to explore the characteristics of effective teacher learning communities (see for example pp. 28-40 in *Teacher Well-being and Diversity: A manual for teachers in diverse educational settings Teacher Wellbeing and Diversity Handbook 2019 (7).pdf*). The importance of such learning communities was highlighted by Tomás Ó Ruairc in a recent article in the Irish Times entitled 'Teachers have power and potential to shape the future'. Existing literacy and numeracy learning communities at the school were engaged. During this phase of the research, it was noticed by one of the teacher-researchers in reviewing interview data from teachers who participated in learning communities at the school that the capacity for critical reflection in these learning communities did not appear to register to the extent that was anticipated. This invited the project team to explore to what extent there is an association between TLCs and the capacity for teacher reflexivity in the literature. It was recognised by the collaborating teachers and UL academics that this would be a valuable area to explore. An application was submitted to the John Coolahan Research Support Framework in 2019 to support a project on Teacher Learning Communities and Teacher Reflexivity (RSF19S218). Emergent findings from this project were presented at FÉILTE 2020. The collaborating teachers took a lead in preparing and presenting at this event and also at ESAI 2020. The opportunity to be a researcher-in-residence will allow for a furthering deepening and enrichment of the mutual learning that accrues for both teachers and academics from the privilege and opportunity to engage in the types of collaborative work as that outlined above. Notwithstanding the challenging contexts that schools can find themselves in, they have a vital function in nurturing the next generation of active and engaged citizens. Having had the opportunity to work closely with TCC in the context of the Erasmus+ and Croí projects, exploring the potential of teacher learning communities, has alerted me to the natural ways in which schools inculcate dispositions for democratic and participatory engagements with colleagues and with their students. This recognition is inviting me to explore how schools in their daily activities and in their engagements with their surrounding communities foster dispositions and attitudes for democratic practice amongst their staff, students, parents and allied community partners. The opportunity to be a researcher-in-residence would allow for an initial identification of the existing processes and engagements within the life of the school that foster and promote positive dispositions and attitudes that could be identified as democratic practice in-the-making (see for example Ralls 2016 *Developing Democratic Engagement in School: can becoming co-operative help?* And Ralls 2019 'Becoming cooperative' – challenges and insights: repositioning school engagement as a collective endeavour')