

General Biography

In the 1990s, while seconded from my teaching position, I gained many insights into supporting schools over the five years I spent working on and leading the mainstreaming of Transition Year. Indeed, supporting teachers' learning has been central to my professional work since 1984, when I was appointed as a deputy principal. While working as a lecturer in the Education Department in Maynooth University from 2000 onwards, I engaged in numerous projects, ventures, and collaborative support activities in schools. To cite one example, a teacher collaboration project in a school in West Dublin might illustrate something of my thinking and approach. An account of this appeared in *Irish Educational Studies* in 2006 and can be accessed through MURAL, the Maynooth University Research Archive Library. The reference is Jeffers, Gerry (2006) Talking about teaching in non-crisis situations: learning from a teacher support project. *Irish Educational Studies*, 25 (2). pp. 187-206. ISSN 0332-3315 More recently, Carmel Lillis and I engaged in a study with 20 teachers and principals working in challenging circumstances. "Responding to educational inequality in Ireland; Harnessing teachers' perspectives to develop a framework for professional conversations" was published last year and is available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03055698.2021.1931043>.

This reflects that, while working together on the Toraicht/Future Leaders programme, we saw the need for more focused research on inclusion/exclusion; equality/inequality. Carmel and I are currently engaged in the early stages of a research project that aims to link reflective practice, professional conversations and school leadership. One hope is that this project might lead to a greater focus on leading teaching and learning in schools. From my school experience as a guidance counsellor as well as lecturing on the school guidance and counselling programme in Maynooth, I have maintained a strong interest in care teams, pastoral care, holistic education, and wellbeing.

This Teaching Council initiative offers an exciting opportunity to put some formal structure in place where schools can work collaboratively with researchers. I would very much like to be part of this process and think I could make a useful contribution to schools taking part.