Journal of Creative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching (CPLT)
Volume 14, Number 2, 2026

Investigating Creative Literacy: A Survey of Teachers in Estonia, Finland and Latvia

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Received: 13 July 2026
Accepted: 19 August 2026
Published: 25 October 2026

CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Kauppinen, M., Aerila, J.-A., Siipola, M., Jürimäe, M., Kalnina, S., Lukanenok, K., Margeviča-Grinberga, I., & Pandis, M. (2026). Investigating creative literacy: A survey of teachers in Estonia, Finland and Latvia. *Journal of Creative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching*, *14*(2), 126–141. 10.24191/tgs1cs24

ABSTRACT

Within the framework of multiliteracies, teachers require a broader understanding of reading, writing, and pedagogy. Creative literacy approaches can extend traditional literacy by integrating imagination, collaborative meaning-making, and critical reflection into literacy practices. This study examines teachers' perceptions of creativity in literacy education across different grade levels. It also explores, from the teachers' perspective, the role of creative literacy methods in fostering students' learning. The research is situated within a collaborative project that included Latvia, Estonia, and Finland and that aims to investigate the pedagogy of creative literacy and identify best practices in this area. A pooled survey was conducted and the data were collected through an online questionnaire completed by 250 teachers from the three countries. Participation was voluntary and data collection was not systematic. The results indicate that most teachers employ creative literacy methods at least occasionally and perceive them as important for developing students' literacy skills. The most frequently reported challenges include insufficient resources, such as time, materials, and physical space. The teachers perceived creative literacy methods as particularly effective for enhancing expressive creativity and student engagement. Teachers who used the methods occasionally or regularly evaluated creative literacy as more important in developing students' literacy skills compared to those who did not use them. The findings suggest that strengthening teachers' professional competence in creative literacy requires structured support to achieve meaningful impact.

Keywords: creative literacy, professional development, pedagogy, teacher

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, literacy has evolved from a narrow concept primarily focused on reading and writing skills to a broader understanding that includes intertwined competences of multimodal meaning-making, interaction, creativity, critical thinking, and participation in increasingly complex social environments. International organizations and educational researchers emphasize that literacies nowadays involve the ability to access, create, interpret, and communicate information across multiple contexts and modalities, like in the multilingual spaces of formal education as well as informal learning environments of social media (Organisation for

Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2026; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023).

As societies become more knowledge-intensive and digitally interconnected, educational systems are being challenged to prepare learners not only to consume information but also to generate ideas, solve problems creatively, and actively participate in civic and cultural life. Within this context, the concept of creative literacy has emerged as an educational construct. Creative literacy extends traditional literacy by integrating imagination, creativity, personal meaning-making, critical reflection, and transformative action of knowledge into literacy practices (Cremin & Chappell, 2021; Kiosses, 2019). It recognizes learners as active creators of meaning rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Through creative literacy, individuals engage with texts, experiences, and cultural resources in ways that encourage renewed thinking, multiple interpretations, and personal expression.

Creative literacy is increasingly perceived as essential for lifelong learning, social participation, cultural engagement, and individual well-being (Magro & Pierce, 2016). It contributes to the development of key competencies in the twenty-first century, including multifaceted ways of communication, collaboration, adaptability, and critical thinking (OECD, 2026). Consequently, creative literacy may be viewed not only as an educational outcome but also as a pedagogical approach that supports learners in becoming active, reflective, and creative participants in both society and continuous education. However, it appears that literacy learning and engaging in reading are still focused on worksheets and measuring reading development through various tests (Au, 2007) rather than emphasizing students' own active agency and opportunities to express their personal reading experiences (Aerila et al., 2026a). Furthermore, the implementation of creative literacy exercises may be hindered by the fact that curricula focus on traditional subjects rather than integrating subject content in training transversal skills. An integrative learning method, such as creative literacy, could be the answer to an increasingly complex world and ever-expanding learning content (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019).

International studies indicate that many students read less frequently for pleasure and, thus, experience difficulties deeply engaging with texts (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019; Tegmark et al., 2022). Therefore, creative approaches to reading have the potential to revitalize reading engagement and promote meaningful literacy experiences. However, teaching practices tend to update slowly, and the effectiveness of in-service teacher education related to literacy teaching have to be reconsidered for critical reflection (O'Sullivan, 2002), particularly when teacher training has been noted to have an effect on teachers' conceptualizations of creativity (Mullet et al., 2016). According to Mullet et al.'s (2016) systematic literature review, the conceptions of creativity are fuzzy and vary considerably among teachers. Further, creative behavior in the classroom is interpreted in many ways, mainly through intelligent qualities or divergent thinking—manifested through curiosity, flexibility, and autonomy to make sense of phenomena and the world around by, for example, making novel connections among things through art expression.

In this study, we investigate early childhood, primary, and secondary school teachers' perceptions of creativity in literacy education as well as how creative literacy methods can boost students' learning from the teachers' perspective. This article is part of a broader study (Creative

Literacy 2024–2026) in Latvia, Estonia, and Finland, which aims to describe the pedagogy of creative literacy, compiling best practices related to creative literacy, and expanding the use of creativity at various educational levels. The study builds on the Reading Nest project, which focused on developing learning environments that encourage reading (Aerila et al., 2024b). During this earlier project, we observed the benefits of cross-national comparisons of enhancing motivating reading environments and collaboration among stakeholders, mostly between schools and libraries. The conditions for learning and teaching as well as the pedagogy and curricula in Latvia, Estonia, and Finland are sufficiently similar to permit joint development efforts; however, they also provide a more diverse foundation for such efforts than a single country would. For example, the Finnish education system has long been shifting toward a student-centered approach that strengthens peer interaction (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014), whereas the systems in Estonia and Latvia represent a more traditional, teacher-led approach.

The following research questions (RQs) are addressed in this study:

RQ1) What kind of perceptions do the early childhood, primary, and secondary school teachers have about creativity in literacy education?

RQ2) How can the use of creative literacy methods stimulate students' learning from the teachers' perspective?

The Potential of Creative Literacy in Learning

From the sociocultural perspective, literacy is a social practice embedded within cultural, historical, and institutional contexts (Street, 2003). Meanings in text interpretation and production contexts are constructed through interaction with others, participation in cultural activities, and engagement with various symbolic systems and combinations of them. Furthermore, understanding creativity as a part of literacy practices implies treating it as a socially mediated process with the entire potential of multimodal meaning-making. Stated within the framework of multiliteracies, the multilingual and the multimodal ways of producing, interpreting, and evaluating meaning have been highlighted (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Creative approaches render reading experiences multimodal, offering opportunities to express them visually, aurally, kinesthetically, or through various combinations of these modes (Deans & Wright, 2018).

According to Vygotsky (1978), creativity is a fundamental human capacity that is inseparable from the social and cultural environments in which learners actively participate and emerge through the transformation and recombination of experiences. Learners develop creative literacy through interactions with texts, peers, teachers, communities, and cultural resources. Such interactions enable them to negotiate meanings, explore alternative perspectives, and reconstruct interpretations, thus sharing and designing meanings locally and globally via technological devices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Creative literacy at its best extends beyond academic achievement and school-based learning. It contributes to lifelong learning by fostering curiosity, reflection, adaptability, and openness to new experiences. Engagement with literature, storytelling, artistic expression, and creative meaning-making provides opportunities for

empathy, emotional exploration, identity development, and social connection (Holden, 2004).

When creative literacy is examined as a broader framework of aesthetic literary expression, reading is understood as a communal and interactive process (Aerila et al., 2024a, 2024b). Correspondingly, creative literacy refers to creative production in which readers and writers assume an active role and experience themselves as meaningfully connected to a community (for a discussion of sense of community, see McMillan & Chavis, 1986). According to Wilhelm (2016), the pleasure produced by reading may emerge both individually and in relation to a community. This pleasure arises from immersion in the world of literature, learning through literature, the emotional experiences generated by literary texts, and the sociality that develops around literature. Wilhelm (2016) further argues that social pleasure is realized only in interaction with a community of readers; however, in engaged reading, readers can also interact with the literary world through creative literacy practices. For example, readers may position themselves in the roles of characters through creative activities by recognizing, understanding, and responding to the emotions evoked by reading in themselves and others (for details on immersed and engaged reading, see McWilliams et al., 2014).

When creative literacy is situated within literature education, fictional texts become part of creative education while simultaneously functioning as tools for learning, communication, and belonging through which children and young people can experience multiple art forms and their combinations (Fettig et al., 2018). Integrating creative literacy with literature education expands the pedagogical use of literature by creating opportunities for learners to engage with texts through diverse verbal and nonverbal forms of expression. Such creative activities support the development of cognitive, embodied, emotional, and social capacities while enabling learners to regulate their mental states at their own pace (Deans & Wright, 2018).

Meaningful creative experiences help children and young people understand how creative methods can be used to express and make visible thoughts, emotions, and experiences (McClure & Fullerton, 2017), while also creating space for individual voices, creativity, collaboration, and diverse modes of expression (De Bruin et al., 2018). In this way, creative literacy serves as a gateway to the emotions and experiences evoked by reading: it provides readers with a concrete channel for articulating and extending their reading experiences at both conscious and subconscious levels (Aerila et al., 2026b), makes individual meaning-making processes visible, and, at its best, builds a bridge toward shared understanding (Aerila et al., 2024a). From an educational perspective, integrating creative literacy with reading also offers educators valuable opportunities to observe and understand children and young people in terms of their knowledge, skills, and unique characteristics (Lo & Matsunobu, 2014).

By integrating creative literacy into literature education, it is possible to support engaged reading, whereby channels for creativity are activated and expression through artistic modes becomes possible. Engaged reading can serve as a starting point for creative activities, while different forms of creativity can also evoke sensory and experiential responses to literary worlds, thereby deepening immersion in the text (Aerila et al., 2026b; Ivey & Johnston, 2015). Engaged reading combined with different art forms, like drama or visual expression, promotes learners' emotional skills, supports their aesthetic and psychological development, as well as encourages their engagement with reading and literature (McWilliams et al., 2014). Simultaneously, it

creates a space in which readers can settle themselves and reflect more closely on themselves, others, and their environment (Drew & Rankin, 2004).

One of the most influential pedagogical approaches to creative literacy was developed by Ada and Campoy (2003). The authors conceptualize reading as a creative, dialogical process in which learners actively construct meaning by relating texts to their own lived experiences and by engaging in reflective and creative responses. Her model provides a practical framework for integrating creative literacy into educational settings. Further, Ada and Campoy (2003) conceptualize reading as a multidimensional process that involves four interconnected phases: descriptive, personal interpretative, critical, and creative action. The descriptive phase focuses on understanding and familiarizing learners with the content. The personal interpretative phase encourages learners to connect textual content with their own emotions, experiences, and prior knowledge. Through reflection and personal response, learners begin to establish meaningful relationships with the text. The critical phase involves analyzing assumptions, questioning perspectives, and exploring broader social, cultural, and ethical implications. Finally, the creative action phase extends learning beyond interpretation by encouraging learners to apply their insights through creative production, social engagement, or transformative action. This framework reflects contemporary constructivist and sociocultural approaches to learning by positioning learners as active participants in knowledge construction (Ada & Campoy, 2003). Moreover, it illustrates how creative literacy can connect personal meaning-making with broader social engagement and civic participation.

Overall, the learning potential of creative literacy lies in the knowledge transformation of textual practices (O'Sullivan, 2002), such as experience-based knowledge building, holistic meaning-making with tools using various senses, and cooperative learning activities (see Ada & Campoy, 2003). These practices are becoming increasingly important, while the digital transformation of society has fundamentally changed the ways in which people create, access, and communicate information (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Jewitt, 2014). In an era where information can be automatically generated, human creativity, critical reflection, ethical judgment, and meaning-making become increasingly valuable competencies. Therefore, creative literacy supports learners not only in navigating digital environments but also in creatively and thoughtfully contributing to them. Consequently, creative literacy extends beyond traditional print-based reading and writing to encompass multimodal meaning-making. Learners engage with diverse forms of communication, including digital storytelling, visual narratives, video production, social media, podcasts, and interactive digital environments. Such practices require the ability to interpret, evaluate, and create meanings across multiple modes and platforms. Research has demonstrated that creative and multimodal approaches can increase learner engagement and support deeper understanding of texts and concepts (Lähdesmäki et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The research data were collected via a pooled survey in Finland, Estonia, and Latvia conducted by the local reading associations FinRA, EstRA, and LatRA, respectively, between April 2024 and September 2025 via an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed through

collaboration among all the authors, and previous research on creative literacy (Aerila et al., 2024b) was utilized in the development of the questionnaire. In addition, the questionnaire was designed to address the overall objectives of the Creative Literacy project to determine how and where teachers utilize creative literacy in their pedagogy. The questionnaire was collaboratively drafted in English, after which each country's participants translated it into their own native language. To ensure consistency, the Estonian, Latvian, and Finnish versions of the questionnaire were then reviewed against the English version.

For the study, an online survey was distributed via the Reading Associations' email lists. In addition, the researchers drew on their own networks of teachers as well as various social media platforms aimed at teachers. The questionnaire consists of 14 questions, of which 3 are Likert-scale questions, 9 are multiple choice, and 2 are open-ended questions. The questions were divided into the following themes: background information, definitions of creative literacy, the application of creative literacy, and the challenges and opportunities associated with applying creative literacy.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to the research ethics guidelines of each country. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were permitted to withdraw at any stage of the study. Each participant was asked to provide consent to participate in the study at the beginning of the questionnaire, and all participants had access to the study's privacy notice. In addition, participants were informed that once a questionnaire was submitted, it could no longer be removed from the dataset. No personally identifiable information was collected during the data collection process.

The Data and Data Analysis

The data consists of 250 answers from teachers in Estonia (35.2%, n = 88), Finland (34.4%, n = 86), and Latvia (30.4%, n = 76).

This study uses only quantitative data from multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions. Teachers' background was explored by asking questions about the grade level(s) the participants primarily teach (multiple-choice question), their teaching experience (in years), whether the participants had received training in creative literacy methods, and whether the teachers used creative literacy methods in their teaching.

The participating teachers taught in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (n = 90), primary education (n = 105), lower secondary education (n = 71), and upper secondary education (n = 33). Most of the teachers in Estonia (61.4 %, n = 54) and Finland (67.4 %, n = 58) had over 15 years of experience; in Latvia, experienced teachers were less common (14.5 %, n = 11). Teachers with 6–15 years of experience accounted for approximately one-fifth of the entire dataset (Estonia 20.5%, n = 18; Finland 20.9%, n =18; Latvia 17.1%, n = 13). Teachers with less than five years of teaching experience were mostly those in Latvia (68.4%, n = 52), while there were not many such teachers in Estonia (18.2%, n = 16) and Finland (11.6%, n = 10). The differences between teachers' teaching experience among the three countries should be noted

when interpreting the results, as teaching experience and country-specific differences might be confounded.

Teachers' experiences in creative literacy were further explored with questions regarding how important teachers believe creative literacy is in developing students' literacy skills (5-point Likert scale); what challenges they have faced in implementing creative literacy methods (multiple choice question); whether they receive support for implementing creative literacy methods from administration, colleagues, parents, and children (5-point Likert scale); and how effective they believe creative literacy methods are in improving reading comprehension, critical thinking, creativity in expression, student engagement, and writing skills (5-point Likert scale). Teachers' responses to these four questions were analyzed in relation to their background characteristics, specifically: 1) whether the teachers had received training in the creative literacy methods (Mann–Whitney U test), 2) the grade level at which they taught (Pearson's chi-square test), 3) their teaching experience (Kruskal–Wallis test), and 4) how often they used the methods (Mann–Whitney U test). The nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test and Kruskal–Wallis test was selected, as the number of data was small and not normally distributed (Field, 2018). Statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) results are reported in the results section. All tests were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29.0.

RESULTS

The Teachers' Use of Creative Literacy Methods and Their Training in These Methods

Most of the teachers reported that they occasionally use creative literacy methods in their teaching (Estonia 51.1%, n = 45; Finland 51.2%, n = 44; Latvia 47.4%, n = 36). A few of the teachers regularly used the methods (Estonia: 21.6%, n = 19; Finland: 25.6%, n = 22; Latvia: 13.2%, n = 10), and some did not use the methods at all, but would like to use them in the future (Estonia: 23.9 %, n = 21; Finland: 22.1%, n = 19; Latvia: 39.5%, n = 30). However, one teacher from Estonia and one from Finland reported that they do not use the methods and are not interested in using them either.

When asked if the teachers had received training in creative literacy methods, many of the teachers in Estonia (39.8%, n = 35) and Finland (52.3%, n = 45) answered that they had received some training, while none of the participants in Latvia reported having received training in this regard. Almost half of the teachers in Latvia (47.4%, n = 36) reported that they were unfamiliar with creative literacy methods, while one-third in Estonia (34.1%, n = 30) and one-fourth in Finland (25.6%, n = 22) reported such unfamiliarity. Approximately one-fifth of the teachers in the entire dataset reported that they had learned about creative literacy methods themselves (Estonia: 20.5%, n = 18; Finland: 16.3%, n = 14; Latvia: 26.3%, n = 20). In addition, one-fourth of the teachers in Latvia reported they received training as part of a literacy course (26.3%, n = 20), and a few teachers in Estonia (2.3%, n = 2) and Finland (5.8%, n =5) reported they had received extensive training.

The Importance of Creative Literacy in Developing Students' Literacy Skills

On average, teachers believed that creative literacy is important in developing students' literacy skills (M = 4.19, SD = 0.72). Teachers who had received training in creative literacy methods considered creative literacy to be more important (Md = 4.00, IQR = 1) as compared to those who had not received any such training (Md = 4.00, IQR = 0, U = 8689.5, $p < 0.01$, r = 0.20). Further, there were no differences among teachers in terms of how important they considered creative literacy to be in relation to the grade level they teach or how much teaching experience they had. Those who used the creative literacy methods regularly or occasionally in their teaching evaluated creative literacy as being slightly more important (Md = 4.00, IQR = 0) than those who did not use these methods (Md = 4.00, IQR = 1, U = 8074.0, $p < 0.001$, r = 0.22).

Challenges in Implementing Creative Literacy Methods

Overall, the most common challenge the teachers reported when implementing creative literacy methods was lack of time in the curriculum, as stated by 77.6% (n = 128) of the teachers. Half of the teachers (52.1%, n = 86) informed that lack of resources, physical spaces, and materials challenged the implementation of the methods. Approximately one-fifth of teachers maintained that difficulty in assessing student learning (19.4%, n = 32) and resistance from students (15.2%, n = 25) were challenging the implementation. A few teachers also perceived that lack of interdisciplinary links in the curriculum (5.5%, n = 9) and resistance from administration, colleagues, or parents (3.6%, n = 6) posed a challenge in the implementation of such methods.

Further, there were no differences among teachers who had or had not received training in creative literacy regarding the challenges they had encountered. None of those who taught in ECEC encountered the challenge of lack of interdisciplinary links in the curriculum, whereas a few of the others did (8.3%, n = 9, ($X^2(1) = 5.024$, $p < 0.05$, Cramer's V = 0.25). Those who taught in primary education faced the challenge of difficulty assessing student learning (26.4%, n = 19) more than others (14.0%, n = 13, ($X^2(1) = 3.998$, $p < 0.05$, Cramer's V = 0.05). Teachers who taught in lower secondary education encountered the lack of resources, physical spaces, or materials (66.0%, n = 31) more than other teachers (46.6%, n = 55, ($X^2(1) = 5.042$, $p < 0.05$, Cramer's V = 0.18). Teachers in upper secondary education informed that they experienced a lack of time in the curriculum (95.0%, n = 19) to make room for such an implementation more than other teachers (75.2%, n = 109, $X^2(1) = 3.972$, $p < 0.05$, Cramer's V = 0.16). These teachers also experienced lack of interdisciplinary links in the curriculum (15.0%, n = 3) more than other teachers (4.1%, n = 6, ($X^2(1) = 4.021$, $p < 0.05$, Cramer's V = 0.16). No differences in the range of challenges were found in relation to teaching experience or between those who employed the methods occasionally or regularly and those who did not employ the methods at all.

Support Received for Implementing Creative Literacy Methods at School

With regard to the support the teachers received from administration, colleagues, parents, or children, the support from children was evaluated to be the highest (M = 3.57, SD = 1.02) by the respondents, support from colleagues was the second highest (M = 3.19, SD = 1.05), and support from administration (M = 2.76, SD = 1.18) and parents (M = 2.40, SD = 1.16) were evaluated to be the lowest. No differences in relation to support were found in terms of whether the teachers

had received training in creative literacy or how many years of teaching experience they had. Teachers who taught in ECEC informed that they received more support from parents (Md = 3.00, IQR = 2) than teachers in other grade levels did (Md = 2.00, IQR = 2, U = 4754.0, $p < 0.001$, r = 0.33). Teachers who taught in lower secondary education reported receiving less support from parents (Md = 2.00, IQR = 2) than teachers in other grade levels (Md = 3.00, IQR = 1, U = 2165.5, $p < 0.001$, r = -0.25). No differences were found between those who occasionally or regularly employed the methods and those who did not employ the methods at all. Additionally, when analyzing the association between received support and the challenges the teachers had experienced in implementing the methods, the results revealed that the teachers who mentioned experiencing lack of resources, physical spaces, or materials received less support from administration (Md = 2.50, IQR = 1) than those who did not encounter such a lack of resources (Md = 3.00, IQR = 2, U = 2550.0, $p < 0.05$, r = -0.20).

The Effectiveness of Creative Literacy in Improving Students' Skills

On average, teachers reported that creative literacy was most effective in improving creativity in students' expression (M = 4.59, SD = 0.62) and student engagement (M = 4.25, SD = 0.80). Further, the effectiveness of creative literacy in relation to reading comprehension was also evaluated as being high (M = 4.13, SD = 0.73) as was critical thinking (M = 4.03, SD = 0.77). The effectiveness of writing skills was evaluated the lowest (M = 3.96, SD = 0.85), although the average was rather high in writing skills as well.

Teachers who had received training in creative literacy evaluated the methods as being slightly more effective in improving critical thinking skills (Md = 4.00, IQR = 1) than other teachers did (Md = 4.00, IQR = 1, U = 5745.5, $p < 0.05$, r = 0.14). Moreover, teachers in ECEC evaluated the methods as being less effective in relation to critical thinking skills (Md = 4.00, IQR = 3) as compared to the evaluation of teachers at other grade levels (Md = 4.00, IQR = 1, U = 4391.5, $p < 0.05$, r = -0.15). In relation to teaching years and thoughts about critical thinking, a few differences were found ($H(2) = 8.123$, $p < 0.05$, r = 0.04), as those with less than five years of teaching experience were slightly more positive about critical thinking (Md = 4.00, IQR = 1) than those with 6–10 years of teaching (Md = 4.00, IQR = 1, $p < 0.05$, r = 0.18). Further, no differences were found between teachers who employed the methods occasionally or regularly and those who did not employ the methods at all.

DISCUSSION

Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity in Literacy Education

This study reveals that teachers in three countries eagerly utilize creative literacy in their instruction, but a deeper understanding of its educational meaning can remain rather limited. Most teachers at various educational levels reported employing creative literacy methods at least occasionally. This suggests that creative literacy is present in classrooms, but its implementation may remain uneven and there could be latent demand for wider adoption. As previous studies (Kauppinen et al., 2020; Aerila et al., 2026a; Fried, 2025) on creative education indicate, training for creative literacy emerged as a key differentiating factor in this study as well. A considerable proportion of teachers across all three countries reported self-directed learning, thus highlighting

teachers' personal initiative. However, the findings indicate that formal professional development plays a crucial role in implementing creative literacy methods (see Kauppinen et al., 2020; Aerila et al., 2026a), as teachers who had received training also evaluated creative literacy as more important. It appears obvious that pedagogical adoption is not only a matter of awareness but ought to also include structured support and professional learning opportunities.

The most significant challenge identified in this study by teachers using creative literacy methods was lack of time in the curriculum, followed by lack of resources. These findings suggest that structural and pedagogical constraints could outweigh attitudinal barriers. According to the teachers, resistance from the administration or parents was relatively rare. A similar finding was also reported in a study by Aerila et al. (2026a) on in-service training for teachers, which found that teachers are willing to apply new methods more frequently, but that time constraints and, for example, a lack of support from colleagues hindered innovation efforts. Further, the challenges of a lack of time identified in this study can be interpreted in relation to the nature of creative learning itself. Creative literacy often involves collaborative, problem-based, and multifaceted processes (Cremin & Chappell, 2021; Kiosses, 2019), which are inherently time-consuming and less aligned with traditional timetables and assessment practices.

Educational contexts still appear to focus on literacy practices that are measurable and within the teacher's control (Au, 2007; see also Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019). This was also the case in this study, while teachers identified the issue of assessment as an obstacle to the use of creative methods. Further, a tension is evident between creative literacy and standardized evaluation systems. The restrictions of institutional structures and curriculum demands were particularly recognized by teachers at higher levels of education. Upper secondary teachers reported greater time constraints, while lower secondary teachers reported resource challenges. Thus, it can be said that institutional standards with tight structures can limit pedagogical flexibility among teachers working at higher levels.

In addition, teachers reported receiving the most support for creative literacy from students, followed by colleagues, and lower levels of support from parents and the administration. In the current study, the relatively high level of perceived student support aligns with the perception that creative literacy methods enhance student engagement. However, the weaker support from administration may contribute to the previously identified challenges, particularly lack of resources. This is further supported by the finding that teachers who experienced resource shortages also reported lower administrative support. Differences in teachers' perceptions in various educational levels—such as greater parental support in ECEC and less in lower secondary education—suggest that support structures vary across schooling contexts.

Interestingly, the use of creative literacy methods did not significantly vary by teaching experience or grade level, thus suggesting that teacher's own beliefs and preferences concerning these methods may have more influence than a teacher's background factors in determining implementation. Mullet et al. (2016) argue that teachers' perceptions of creativity may be somehow related to the extent of a teacher's experience but the connection remains unclear. Teachers' interest and preferences proved to be evident in a study by Aerila et al. (2026a), in which teachers across different levels of education developed and implemented creative literacy in their classrooms. These findings indicate that the use of creative literacy methods did not vary

according to students' age; rather, they were more closely associated with teachers' interests and areas of expertise.

Perceived Contribution of Creative Literacy to Student Learning

Teachers perceived creative literacy methods as being highly effective across multiple domains (see also Aerila et al., 2026a). The greatest impact was reported regarding creativity in expression and student engagement, followed by reading comprehension and critical thinking. Writing skills, while rated slightly lower, remained positively evaluated. These findings suggest that creative literacy contributes not only to traditional literacy skills but also to broader cognitive and motivational outcomes from the teachers' perspective, which is similar to the results of previous studies (Cremin & Chappell, 2021; Kiosses, 2019). The strong emphasis on creativity and engagement reflects the alignment between creative pedagogies and learner-centred approaches, while the high ratings for reading comprehension and critical thinking indicate that these methods also support core academic competencies. For example, cooperative activities with shared reading methods and recreation of reading experiences have proven to significantly aid and enhance students' understanding, appreciation, and grasp of poetry (Che Ab Aziz & Ngui, 2024; Lähdesmäki et al., 2022).

From the perspective of students, teachers reported that students appear to prefer creative literacy methods when it comes to reading. For example, in a study by Aerila et al. (2022), even students who generally did not originally enjoy reading indicated that they enjoyed reading when it was combined with a creative literacy method, such as using Kamishibai theatre in the child-centred storytelling.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights professional development, structured support, collaborative learning, and pedagogical renewal in teachers' use of creative literacy. Overall, teachers in the three studied countries considered creative literacy methods important for developing students' literacy skills. These findings reinforce the connection among experience, training, and perceived value. Exposure to creative literacy methods—whether through training or practice—appears to strengthen teachers' beliefs in the educational relevance of such methods. Notably, the perceived importance of creative literacy was not linked to teaching experience or grade level as such, further emphasizing that engagement with the methods themselves appeared to be more important than teachers' background as such. Similar results are also found in other studies on the professional development of teachers, which emphasize the importance of hands-on experiences in developing literacy pedagogy (e.g., Kauppinen et al., 2020; Aerila et al., 2026a). This implies that guided training with colleagues as well as the opportunity to study together the possibilities of creative literacy methods impacts both the practical and motivational aspects of applying creativity in learning (Kauppinen et al., 2020; Aerila et al., 2026a).

The crucial result of this study that teaching experience was not related to the use of creative literacy methods aligns with that of systematic review of studies (see Mullet et al., 2016). However, teaching experience played a role in the perceived importance of these methods so that teachers who reported to use creative literacy methods also treated these valuable. Moreover, the

effect of pedagogical applications is also significant: when creative activities are used over a long period, their various benefits become more evident and the pedagogy of using them more focused (Aerila et al., 2026b). This is supported by the findings related to the perceived effectiveness of creative literacy methods in general, while no differences were found between the frequency with which teachers employed creative literacy methods. Thus, it is possible that accumulated pedagogical knowledge is more important than the frequent and regular use of creative literacy methods. In addition, the lived experiences in the classroom when employing creative literacy methods are emphasized by the teachers as a highly motivating factor.

Institutional conditions form the basis of employing creative literacy methods in teaching; however, the nature of creative processes is often unique, and implementing creative literacy methods needs courage and self-confidence from teachers. Time, materials, administrative support, and assessment structures are crucial for this. Opportunities for cooperative learning and sharing practices guarantee, at best, support for individual teachers. These also provide the social and emotional spaces needed for pedagogical renewal.

In the current school system, the perceived importance of creative literacy methods could be connected to welfare issues. Teachers may experience engaging in creative methods as an opportunity to develop a closer relationship with their students and meet them more sensitively in various circumstances via arts-based activities (Lo & Matsunobu, 2014).

In the limitations of this study, the data collection was not systematic but partially random and was entirely based on the respondents' voluntary participation. As the dataset is rather small, with less than 100 respondents in each country, the results cannot be generalised to apply to all teachers and education levels in these countries. Due to the small size of the dataset, the analyses lack statistical power, which implies that certain potentially meaningful differences may not have been identified, like the background factors connection to the use of creative literacy methods. Moreover, the diversity of teachers' backgrounds (i.e., country, teaching experience, training in creative literacy) may alter how detectable the differences in teachers' responses are. Further, the results are purely correlational, so it is not possible to make any causal interpretations. The results provide preliminary indications regarding creative literacy and teachers' related perspectives in this regard. Future studies would benefit from longitudinal studies and systematic cross-country comparisons.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

This manuscript was developed with the assistance of Copilot for the purpose of editing the text. The tool supported the authors in reviewing and refining the content, and the authors assume full responsibility for the final version submitted for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Acknowledgment

The Creative Literacy project (2024–2026) was funded by the Federation of European Literacy Associations.

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