CREATIVE TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM: INSIGHTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Aim. This study aims to elucidate the multifaceted nature of creative teaching within the specific context of educational reform by exploring the nuanced perspectives of in-service teachers through their real-life teaching experiences.

Methods. A qualitative approach was adopted, with semi-structured, vignette-based interviews with 19 teachers from elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in Taiwan. Data analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis methods.

Results. The findings underscore that in-service teachers perceive creative teaching not as the creation of entirely new educational paradigms but rather as the adoption of unconventional methods. This entails the adaptive and strategic utilisation of diverse teaching methods, the integration of multidisciplinary content, and an enduring commitment to continuous improvement. It is an incremental process involving the continuous absorption of new concepts, the adaptation of new methods, and making progressive adjustments.

Conclusion. Enhancing teachers' creative teaching requires a context-specific understanding of its essence, facilitating targeted promotion and teacher education.

This study addresses the research gap by qualitatively investigating teachers' perspectives on creative teaching and its implementation. The insights gained in this study are crucial in guiding the effective integration of creativity into pedagogical practice within teacher education and professional development endeavours.

Cognitive value. This study challenges the conventional notion that creative teaching involves the invention of entirely new methods, arguing instead that creative teaching is primarily concerned with the ways in which teachers implement unconventional approaches, rather than the novelty of those approaches. These findings offer a novel perspective on fostering creative teaching within teacher development endeavours.

Keywords: creative teaching, teacher perspectives, teacher development, educational reform, Taiwan

Introduction

Creative teaching has been recognised as effective in improving student learning outcomes and fostering creative thinking (Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Meintjes & Grosser, 2010). It enables educators to respond flexibly and innovatively to the diverse needs of learners, thereby promoting inclusivity and educational equity (Naz & Murad, 2017; Nkambule & Tang, 2023). However, while encouraging and promoting creative teaching is a recurring theme in educational discourse, the manifestation of creative teaching varies across different contexts. Therefore, encouraging and improving teachers' creative teaching requires a context-specific understanding of its essence to facilitate targeted promotion and teacher education.

Under the global trend of educational reform, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive understanding of creative teaching from the perspective of in-service teachers, how creative teaching is perceived and recognised in such a context (Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020; Mullet et al., 2016). Such an understanding not only contributes to the elucidation of existing knowledge and theories on creative teaching, but also proves to be crucial for the effective integration of creativity into pedagogical practice in teacher education and professional development.

This study sought to meet the literature's call for qualitative research that provides an in-depth understanding of how teachers perceive, understand, and practice creative teaching (Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020; Mullet et al., 2016) and to respond to the claim that the specific ways in which creative teaching practices are perceived and implemented in the classroom in particular contexts are not well understood (Nkambule & Tang, 2023). The primary aim of this study was to explore in-service teachers' perceptions of creative teaching. Drawing on the concept of real-life vignette-based interviews, in which practical examples are used to facilitate the expression of thoughts (Sampson & Johannessen, 2020), we asked participants to recall typical examples of real-life creative teaching practices in their minds, either in their classrooms or as manifested

by their colleagues, in order to explore their perspectives on creative teaching. While traditional interviews have limitations, as participants may be more likely to give present acceptable responses anchored in social norms or idealised characters than how they actually think, this method holds the potential to reveal their honest thoughts (Marques Nascimento Macêdo & Bispo, 2023; Sampson & Johannessen, 2020), which are also closely linked to real-world practice.

Given the recent educational reform developments in Taiwan, which are in line with global trends (Pan et al., 2020), Taiwanese teachers served as appropriate participants for us to understand creative teaching. By exploring their perspectives on creative teaching practices, this study provides valuable insights not only for Taiwan, but also for a broader understanding of global educational reform trends in different countries.

Literature Review

Creativity and Creative Teaching

Creativity involves the generation and effective communication of novel ideas or products within a specific social context, whether by an individual or a group (Puryear & Lamb, 2020; Sternberg & Karami, 2022). In the field of education, creative teaching can be understood as the adoption of innovative or novel approaches that enhance the learning process, making it more engaging, interesting, or effective (Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Wei, Lacaste, et al., 2022).

When exploring the concept of creative teaching, it is crucial to distinguish between two fundamental aspects: teaching for creativity and teaching creatively. Teaching for creativity involves teaching practices that aim to cultivate students' creative thinking and behaviour. In contrast, teaching creatively refers to educators using creative approaches to enhance the interest and effectiveness of learning experiences (Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Wei, Lacaste, et al., 2022). These two concepts are interrelated, with teaching creatively inherently embedded within teaching for creativity, as it is often through the adoption of creative strategies that teachers are more likely to nurture students' creative abilities (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004).

However, while the significance of creativity in contemporary society is widely acknowledged, educational research has predominantly focused on fostering students' creative abilities (Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2018; Cremin & Chappell, 2021; Liu & Wang, 2019; Tanggaard, 2011). This has resulted in relatively limited attention being paid to teachers' creativity and their creative teaching (Wei, Lacaste, et al., 2022). Moreover, much of the limited literature that has addressed teachers' teaching creatively has focused on the objective of enhancing students' creativity (Cremin & Chappell, 2021; Tanggaard, 2011).

It is essential to note that the purpose of teaching creatively extends beyond merely fostering students' creativity. As highlighted by R. Keith Sawyer (2004), creative teaching is pivotal for fostering effective classroom discussions with unique student groups, emphasising teachers' interactive and responsive creativity. Creative teaching also plays a vital role in encouraging active student participation, such as inquiry-based learning, constructivism, project-based learning, and collaborative learning, all of which align with contemporary pedagogical approaches (Sawyer, 2004).

Creative Teaching from Teachers' Perspective and Practices

Creative teaching can be comprehended through how in-service teachers perceive and conceptualise real-life creative teaching practices, as their perspectives significantly shape their teaching approach (Lin & Liu, 2016; Mullet et al., 2016). Within the limited literature exploring teachers' perspectives on creative teaching, two main approaches emerge. One approach focuses on identifying teachers' creative teaching practices (e.g., Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020), but with a limited focus on their perceptions. The other approach seeks to understand teachers' viewpoints (e.g., Lin & Liu, 2016), focusing on abstract-level discussions rather than exploring creative teaching practices as the central object of investigation.

Currently, there is limited research on how creative teaching practices are implemented in the classroom (Nkambule & Tang, 2023), and, to the best of our knowledge, no research has focused on understanding creative teaching from in-service teachers' perspectives on the practical implementation of creative teaching in teaching practice. To address this gap, our study aims to uncover the nature of creative teaching by exploring the nuanced perspectives of in-service teachers through their real-life teaching experiences.

Current Educational Environment in Taiwan

In qualitative research, it is imperative to explore the context comprehensively to understand findings and their implications (Merriam & Grenier, 2019), therefore, the educational environment in Taiwan will be introduced in this section. In Taiwan's current education system, students undergo around 12 years of schooling before entering university or the workforce, including six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, and three years of senior high school (Ministry of Education, 2022). For several decades, Taiwan's educational landscape has been predominantly influenced by an examination-centred education system deeply rooted in its historical and cultural contexts. From 1954 to 1994, college admission and choice of major were solely determined by student's performance on the Joint College Entrance Examination

(JCEE) (College Entrance Examination Center, 2021). This extensive history of the JCEE has left a profound impact on students' learning attitudes toward learning and societal values associated with education. Consequently, schools gradually adopted an exam-centric, grade-focused approach, prioritising high scores in traditional paper-and-pencil exams.

In response to criticisms and concerns surrounding the JCEE, Taiwan introduced various alternative pathways to college admission, leading to the abolition of the JCEE in 2011 and the subsequent comprehensive educational reforms. In 2014, Taiwan introduced the 12-year Basic Education, adding to the nine-year Compulsory Education system since 1968 (Ministry of Education, 2022). Accompanying the 12-year Basic Education, a new curriculum guideline was launched in 2019, marking the most extensive education reform in the country's history (Fwu, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2022). This reform aimed to establish an integrated, cross-level, and interdisciplinary curriculum emphasising the development of "core competencies," encompassing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to adapt to present-day life and future challenges (Fwu, 2018). Embracing a learner-centred approach, the new curriculum guidelines challenge traditional teaching and learning paradigms, grant schools greater autonomy in curriculum management, and signify a shift to social constructivist teaching and learning. The reform aligns with global trends in educational philosophy (Pan et al., 2020).

The introduction of the new curriculum guidelines in Taiwan has brought changes to the educational environment, such as increased acceptance of inquiry-based and practical-based instruction (Lai, 2020), literacy-based assessment that integrates life experiences, social issues, and multidisciplinary knowledge (Hsieh, 2018), and the promotion of open teaching practices, such as co-planning, peer observation, and lesson discussions (Pan & Cheng, 2021). The new curriculum guidelines also promote school-based curriculum development and a broader range of elective courses and flexible courses (Ministry of Education, 2022), encouraging schools and teachers to design new subjects, content, and teaching methods (Chen, 2021; Pan et al., 2020). These initiatives could lead to the evolution of teacher education (Fwu, 2018), with a growing trend to aligning college entrance exams and recruitment processes with the principles and objectives of the new curriculum guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Overall, the evolving landscape in Taiwan offers the potential to foster an environment conducive to creative teaching practices. However, in-service teachers' perceptions and understanding of creative teaching may not align with policy. Therefore, it is even crucial to understand how teachers perceive creative teaching in such a context since their perspectives hold increasing importance in dominating their behaviour. Such understanding could not only benefit Taiwan but also other countries in the global trend of educational reform.

Research Questions of the Study

The primary focus of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of creative teaching through their perspectives of real-world creative teaching practices. We first investigated how teachers recognise creative teaching and perceive its importance, followed by how teachers recognise creative teaching through their expression of implemented creative teaching practices. Specifically, the research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

- What are the general perceptions of creative teaching among teachers?
- How do teachers perceive the importance of creative teaching in the educational context?
- What specific creative teaching practices do teachers implement and perceive as such?

Methods

Participants

Nineteen elementary, junior high, and senior high school teachers from Taiwan participated in this study. They were randomly selected from a larger pool of 349 teachers who answered a questionnaire survey on a related topic. After sending invitations to 168 randomly selected teachers, 24 teachers expressed their willingness to participate, resulting in a response rate of 14.3%. Subsequently, 19 teachers were interviewed due to scheduling constraints. This recruitment process ensured voluntary participation, allowing teachers to freely express their viewpoints and thoughts.

Among the 19 participants, 16 were female and three were male. Five of them were elementary teachers, while six and eight taught in junior and senior high schools, respectively. The participants taught a variety of subjects, including language, literature, STEM, social science, art, home economics, and integrated subjects. While all elementary teachers taught multiple subjects, some junior and senior high school teachers also taught more than one subject.

Data Collection

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to explore the participants' perception of creative teaching based on their own work and that of their colleagues. While the potential constraints of interviews arose as participants tended to offer responses that aligned with societal norms or idealised character rather than expressing their genuine thoughts (Marques Nascimento Macêdo & Bispo, 2023; Rice, 2017; Sampson & Johannessen, 2020), we borrowed the concept of vignette-based interviews and asked participants to express the most typical creative teaching practices from their perspective,

enabling researchers to understand creative teaching from those examples rather than relying on abstract opinions. Moreover, the inclusion of colleagues' work in the discussion aimed to alleviate the pressure on participants, especially those who lacked confidence in their own creative work, enabling them to share their experiences, observations, and viewpoints comfortably and openly.

The interviews adhered to a semi-structured format based on an interview protocol comprising three main sections. The first section involved a warm-up and the collection of demographic information to establish rapport and contextual understanding. In the second section, teachers responded to questions starting with "Do you think it is important for (the school level) teachers to be creative?" and "What do you think creative teaching is?" The third section focused on eliciting representative examples of creative teaching practices. Participants identifying themselves as creative teachers were prompted with "please provide some examples of what you actually did," encouraging them to share detailed instances of their creative teaching practices. Additionally, participants were invited to share observations about other teachers they considered creative, responding to the questions, "Have you ever known any other teachers who you consider creative? What did they do that made you think they are creative teachers?" This line of inquiry aimed to reveal rich and specific details about both participants' creative practices and their perceptions of creativity in the teaching practices of others, offering insights into their perspectives of creative teaching while extending their own abilities.

The interviewer fostered a friendly and comfortable atmosphere to encourage participants to freely express their thoughts. Two interviews were conducted face-to-face, while the rest were conducted online via a video conferencing platform. Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in Mandarin, the most familiar language for the participants, facilitating better expression and information sharing (Cortazzi et al., 2011).

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded, either through video or audio, and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The data analysis process employed the constant comparative method and thematic analysis, which are qualitative analytic methods that identify, analyse, and report recurring patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The analysis followed the six steps of reflexive thematic analysis, which included: (1) data familiarisation and immersive reading, (2) initial coding and code creation, (3) generation of initial themes, (4) development and review of themes, (5) refinement, definition and naming of themes, and (6) writing up the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joy et al., 2023; Nkambule & Tang, 2023).

In the initial phase of data familiarisation, we reviewed the video and audio recordings, carefully read through the transcripts, and took extensive notes. The initial coding

involved a line-by-line analysis facilitated by the qualitative data analysis software AT-LAS.ti, resulting in the identification of 58 initial codes. Subsequently, the analysis steps were applied iteratively, involving a revisit of the data with a reflexive perspective and recoding to explore it from a fresh standpoint, in line with recommendations by Eileen Joy et al. (2023). These iterative steps were repeated until the research team reached a consensus during the sense-making process, outlining five categories encapsulating the reasons for the importance of creative teaching, as well as five overarching categories with 15 sub-categories that elucidate various creative teaching practices.

While the results will be elaborated in the subsequent section, it is worth noting that the numbers in parentheses denote the number of participants expressing perspectives or providing examples within each theme or subtheme. They do not indicate the number of teachers who adopt specific creative teaching practices but reflect participants recognising these practices as creative teaching approaches rather than the actual implementation by teachers.

Addressing Trustworthiness

Given this study's qualitative nature, it is crucial to prioritise trustworthiness rather than traditional quantitative measures like validity and reliability (Craft et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). According to Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba's (1985) framework, the fundamental components of trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, all of which are essential for upholding qualitative research rigour.

In this study, credibility was established through the interviews rooted in real-life practices rather than abstract concepts, preventing socially desirable responses (Marques Nascimento Macêdo & Bispo, 2023; Sampson & Johannessen, 2020). We also included in-service teachers from diverse regions, teaching levels, subjects, and experiences, facilitating data triangulation (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, we engaged multiple coders, conducted regular debriefing sessions, held peer discussions, and maintained reflective commentaries (Craft et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004). To address transferability, a comprehensive contextual overview was provided, allowing readers to evaluate the findings' applicability to their contexts (Craft et al., 2014; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Dependability was ensured via transparent research design and implementation, continuous evaluation, and an audit trail during data analysis, including documenting decisions, justifications, and the details of processes (Craft et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004). Finally, we maintained confirmability by involving participants from various backgrounds and experiences across different regions, as well as continuous and rigorous researcher scrutiny and peer debriefing, as discussed earlier under credibility (Craft et al., 2014; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Shenton, 2004).

Findings and Results

This section begins with an overview of participants' general perceptions of creative teaching, providing a foundational understanding. Subsequently, we examine their perspectives on the significance of creative teaching, then extend to a meticulous analysis of their narratives showcasing specific instances of creative teaching practices.

Perceptions of Creative Teaching

Overall, the examples and descriptions provided by the participants indicate their belief that creative teaching does not necessarily rely on being at the forefront of technological advancements or introducing ground-breaking innovations. Instead, they highlighted examples of creative teaching that aligned with the prevailing educational trends and received support within the educational system. The participants' examples reflect the view that creative teaching is an evolving approach, rather than one involving disruptive innovations. They perceive it as an ongoing process that continuously absorbs new educational concepts, adapting methods to suit students' characteristics, and making incremental adjustments.

A notable number of teachers (n = 13) emphasised the significant aspect of adjusting their teaching practices based on students' diverse characteristics, learning situations, and needs in their creative teaching. This emphasis aligns with a student-centred teaching approach. While creative teaching and student-centred teaching are not conceptually equivalent, the findings of this study suggest that, within the current educational context in Taiwan, creative teaching primarily revolves around student-centred instruction. Additionally, two teachers (n = 2) particularly highlighted the characteristic of "continuous adjustment", emphasising the practice of closely observing students' responses and using feedback to refine their creative teaching methods. The descriptions provided by the participants regarding examples of creative teaching practices supporting these characteristics will be analysed and elaborated on in a later section, offering a more detailed presentation of participants' perspectives on creative teaching through practical examples.

Importance of Creative Teaching

When questioned about the importance of creative teaching, the majority of participants (n = 18) unequivocally acknowledged its importance for educators. Only one participant expressed hesitancy, driven by a contemplation of the definition of "creative teaching" and whether it necessitates technology involvement. Despite the hesitation, this participant recognised the value of creative teaching as long as it did not rigidly

mandate technology integration. This nuance underscores the importance of clarifying participants' conceptions and definitions of creative teaching and the significance of analysing implemented practices to understand participants' judgments regarding what constitutes creative teaching.

The reasons participants identified for the importance of creative teaching can be categorised into five groups: adopting to changes in students, adjusting to educational reform, enhancing student motivation in learning, achieving teaching objectives, and assisting underprivileged students (refer to Table 1).

Table 1
Perceived Reasons Why Creative Teaching is Important

Categories	n
Adapting to changes in students	11
Adjusting to educational reform	6
Improving student motivation in learning	5
Achieving teaching objectives	4
Assisting underprivileged Students	2

Source. Own research.

Creative Teaching Practices

The creative teaching practices most frequently mentioned can be classified under two major categories, namely new teaching methods and new teaching contents, and three other minor categories (see Table 2). It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive but often interrelated.

Table 2
Creative teaching practices perceived and applied

Categories	Sub-categories	n
New Teaching Methods		18
	Interactive Teaching	9
	Project-based Approach	9
	Assisting with Information Technology	7
	Group-based Approach	6
	Game-based Learning	5
	Interdisciplinary Connections	5
	Role-playing	4
	Before and After Class Engagement	3
	Hands-on Activities	2

Categories	Sub-categories	n
New Contents		13
	Real-life Contexts	8
	Interdisciplinary Connections	5
	Critical Thinking	2
Extra-curricular Activities		6
Classroom Management		2
New Assessments		1

Source. Own research.

The majority of the examples provided by the participants revolved around the adoption of new methods (n = 18), including interactive teaching, project-based approach, assisting with information technology, group-based approach, game-based learning, interdisciplinary connections, role-playing, before and after class engagement, and hands-on activities. Notably, in most of the examples, the student-centred concept is recognisable, emphasising the importance of moving away from traditional lecture-based approaches and toward fostering active student engagement and self-learning abilities. Participants also highlight the pivotal role of new teaching content in creative teaching practices (n = 13). It is crucial to recognise that participants' views suggest their perception of creative teaching is shaped by their comprehension of these new contents, underscoring the category's significance. The most frequently mentioned new teaching content focuses on connecting with real-life contexts. Due to limitations in space, this article only provides detailed discussions of some categories.

Interactive Teaching

Interactive teaching methods emerged as the most frequently mentioned and emphasised practice among the participants. These methods involve transforming knowledge content into questions, enabling students to learn through interactive question-and-answer sessions. Some participants also incorporate group activities, videos, or other teaching aids to stimulate student expression and generate more interaction. Besides promoting active student learning, interactive teaching allows teachers to assess which concepts require reinforcement or clarification based on students' expressions. Participants expressed that they adopted these methods in response to contemporary pedagogical requirements and to address existing issues, such as improving student motivation and effectively achieving teaching goals, including delivering key knowledge and communicating ideas.

Project-based Approach

Some teachers adopted a project-based approach. Through the design of projects, students were provided with multiple challenges and had the opportunity to develop

comprehensive abilities. A significant number of them incorporated hands-on activities to encourage physical participation, motivation, and enjoyment of learning. Some projects were implemented within existing subject-based classes. A senior high school Chinese literature teacher required students to conduct independent research, analyse information, and write a comprehensive project report about a topic in which they are interested. Similarly, a mathematics teacher instructed students to investigate data related to campus life, apply statistical analysis learned in class, and present their findings.

There were examples of cross-disciplinary projects. One participant shared a collaborative teaching practice between a Chinese literature teacher and a chemistry teacher, where students read science articles and conducted corresponding laboratory experiments to deepen their understanding. Other examples involved collaboration with external resources to expand possibilities. For instance, one elementary school teacher shared a design within the school-based curriculum under the new guidelines, where they collaborated with a local non-profit organisation. This collaboration allowed students to become familiar with local specialities and even design and develop speciality cuisine through hands-on experiences. Three participants shared collaborations with schools overseas. One elementary teacher described their long-term collaboration with a Japanese school. The participant emphasised the significance of this international project for children from rural areas, echoing his previous emphasis on the importance of creative teaching in supporting underprivileged students.

Assisting with Information Technology

In the current digital age, with convenient access to information technology infrastructure, the use of information technology has become deeply integrated into people's lives and learning experiences, particularly in Taiwan. Therefore, it is not surprising that several participants mentioned the utilisation of information technology in their examples of creative teaching practices (n = 7). Information technology offers additional space and possibilities for creative teaching approaches. Teachers can enhance the content of their instruction by leveraging the vast resources available on the internet, accessing diverse teaching materials, and supplementary resources (n = 4). Furthermore, they can enrich their classroom activities by incorporating external resources found online (n = 2). For instance, game-based learning platforms can be utilised to facilitate interactive and engaging experiences for students during class. Additionally, there are instances where teachers establish connections and collaborations with schools abroad through online platforms, broadening the scope of their teaching practices (n = 2).

Information technology also plays a significant role in promoting active student learning. For example, assigning students to preview instructional videos online before class encourages their proactive engagement. Moreover, the ability to effectively use information technology has become an essential aspect of modern individuals' information-gathering and problem-solving skills. One junior high school teacher

shared a creative practice implemented by her colleagues, a geography teacher and a science teacher. Together, they organised a field trip to a museum in a nearby city and guided students on utilising mobile apps to plan and navigate their trip. Throughout the excursion, students used their smartphones to search for relevant information, design their itinerary, manage transportation arrangements, purchase mobile tickets, and maintain communication with the teachers. This experience not only enhanced students' proficiency in utilising information tools but also fostered their broader skills in resource utilisation, information collection, problem-solving, and teamwork.

It is important to note that one participant emphasised the belief that creative teaching should not be restricted to the use of technology. Upon careful examination of the seven participants who mentioned the use of technology, it was found that each of them also provided examples that did not involve technology. This observation suggests that the participants generally do not consider the use of technology as a mandatory component of creative teaching.

Connecting to Real-life Contexts

Among those practices with new teaching content, creating a connection to real-life contexts is an essential aspect of creative teaching practices (n = 8). In some cases, teachers establish a connection between the teaching content and students' life experiences (n = 5). In other instances, teachers introduce new content to familiarise students with the real world, providing them with a vivid understanding of the knowledge presented in textbooks (n = 3). These new contents enable participants to link their teaching with contemporary society and respond to the direction of educational reform.

Some participants emphasised the connection to social issues (n = 4). For example, a high school Chinese literature teacher invited a member of a studio, which was founded by an author of a traditional cultural literacy work, to share their recent cultural promotion efforts. The students also watched a performance by a local cultural theatre group. Through these experiences, the students explored the decline of traditional culture and its connection to an important current issue in Taiwan: the development and preservation of local languages.

Another junior high school teacher engaged students in discussions about the challenges that individuals in the LGBTQ+ community may face. She collected information from online resources, including relevant materials provided by the Ministry of Education, and design the course. The teacher even connected with LGBTQ+ organisations, inviting members of the community to share their personal experiences. Through these dialogue sessions, the teacher gained insights into students' perspectives on this important social issue and clarified misconceptions and preconceived notions.

Furthermore, some examples focus on local connections and regional ties (n = 3). For instance, an elementary school teacher in a rural school shared how teachers collaborated to design a new school-based curriculum related to indigenous culture,

leveraging the opportunities provided by the new curriculum guideline. Similarly, a middle school teacher in a town rich in historical and cultural heritage shared a colleague's approach:

Many children who live here may not fully understand this place. The teacher designed assignments that required them to seek answers, enabling them to discover the hidden stories and historical traces within the alley and lanes. I think this is a great creative teaching practice to help students become acquainted with their hometown (T09).

Discussion

According to Taiwanese teachers' descriptions of creative teaching, their perspectives on creative teaching are characterised not by radical disruptive innovation but rather by a continuous process of absorbing new concepts, adaptive and strategic uses of diverse teaching methods, integration of multidisciplinary content, and an enduring commitment to continuous improvement. This finding aligns with Sawyer's (2004) suggestion that creative teaching is akin to an improvisational performance during the teaching process, highlighting the nature of the teaching profession involving close face-to-face interactions with students and necessitating creative adjustments to accommodate diverse student characteristics and varying sociocultural contexts.

Taiwanese teachers perceive creative teaching primarily through the implementation of creative teaching methods and the introduction of new teaching content, much of which is closely related to student-oriented approaches. This result echoes Wei-Wen Lin and Chia-Yu Liu's (2016) findings on creative science teachers in Taiwan with learner-centred teaching principles. Despite the long-standing promotion of learner-centred education in line with global trends (Chin & Lin, 2013) and recent educational reforms emphasising student-centred teaching (Ministry of Education, 2022), widespread adoption of student-centred approaches is yet to be achieved, which is also aligned with the findings of previous research regarding inquiry-based teaching in Taiwan (Wei, Chuang, et al., 2022).

The interconnection between creative teaching and educational reform emerges as a crucial aspect of teachers' perspectives. Educational reforms provide a contextual framework and motivation for teachers to implement creative teaching, creating space and support, such as mandating flexible courses and school-based curricula. Additionally, the emergence of teachers' communities under educational reform plays a significant role in supporting creative teaching, which echoes Fei-Ching Chen's (2021) study on the workshops conducted by cross-school teacher communities. Moreover, teachers' perspectives on creative teaching are influenced by their consideration of real-life environments and students' needs, leveraging available resources and opportunities to seek change, which also vary along with the reform.

The role of technology in teachers' perspectives of creative teaching deserves some discussion. While some teachers mentioned using information technology to assist their creative teaching, none of the interviewees considered it a necessity for creative teaching. These findings echo Seçil Tümen Akyıldız and Vildan Çelik' (2020) suggestion that technology can play both facilitating and constraining roles in the context of creative teaching. It is crucial to move beyond restrictive perceptions of technology's role and also consider the potential constraints introduced by its implementation in fostering creativity in education.

Furthermore, the broader implications of this study extend to an international audience, particularly policymakers and practitioners facing similar concerns and challenges in diverse educational environments. The continuous process of absorbing new concepts, adaptive teaching methods, and the integration of multidisciplinary content observed in our study align with the need for a flexible and creative pedagogical approach that transcends cultural and contextual boundaries. As educational systems worldwide confront the complexities of changes in the contemporary world and adopt to evolving pedagogical paradigms, the experiences of Taiwanese teachers offer valuable lessons. The interplay between creative teaching and ongoing educational reforms, as witnessed in Taiwan, underscores the importance of providing a supportive framework and motivation for educators to embrace creative practice. Policymakers can draw inspiration from the positive impact of mandating flexible courses and promoting collaborative teacher communities. Additionally, the findings highlight the critical role of teacher willingness and ability in the successful implementation of educational reforms, emphasising the need for a genuine incorporation of creativity in the classroom. The nuanced understanding of technology's role, both facilitating and constraining, in creative teaching practices also resonates globally. This study, anchored in the Taiwanese context, serves as a case study and a comparative reference for educational transformations, offering valuable insights to inform international discussions on educational reforms and creative teaching practices.

Conclusions

This study addresses a significant research gap by qualitatively investigating teachers' perspectives on creative teaching and its implementation in Taiwan, focusing on teachers' creativity in teaching for students' general learning. The findings highlight creative teaching as an evolving process, involving continuous adaptation to new educational concepts and student characteristics. Taiwanese teachers recognise the importance of creative teaching, driven by societal changes, educational challenges, and external impetus from reforms. Notably, student-oriented approaches like interactive teaching and project-based methods are highly valued as creative teaching, alongside the integration of real-life contexts into teaching content. This study not only enhanc-

es our understanding of creative teaching in Taiwan but also lays the groundwork for future cross-national research. As Taiwan's educational reform gains momentum, understanding how it influences and promotes creative teaching becomes crucial. The insights from this study have implications for teacher education in Taiwan and offer valuable lessons for countries undergoing similar educational reforms.

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