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Enhancing Reading Literacy in Transitional Societies: Methodological Interventions in the Albanian K-12 Context

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Abstract

This study examines reading literacy challenges in Albania's K-12 education system, with a focus on instructional practices, teacher strategies, and institutional factors that affect comprehension and literary analysis. Using a mixed-methods design, the research combined theoretical analysis with a nationwide questionnaire completed by 143 language and literature teachers. Findings indicate that teachers demonstrate strong awareness of contemporary reading strategies, including critical questioning, debate, comparative analysis, creative rewriting, and dramatization. However, these methods are applied inconsistently due to limited professional training, rigid curricular requirements, and insufficient institutional support. Based on the results, the study proposes integrative, innovation-oriented interventions to strengthen students' critical, interpretive, and creative reading competencies. These interventions aim to bridge the gap between pedagogical knowledge and classroom implementation, enhance engagement with texts, and contribute to broader educational improvement. The findings offer actionable insights for improving reading literacy in transitional educational contexts and supporting student-centered, evidence-informed teaching practices.

Keywords: reading literacy, instructional methodology, innovative pedagogical strategies, K-12 education, transitional societies, curriculum reform

1. Introduction

Reading literacy represents a cornerstone of educational development and a key determinant of students' academic success across all disciplines. Beyond basic decoding skills, reading comprehension encompasses the ability to interpret, analyze, and critically engage with texts—capacities that underpin higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning. In contemporary societies, where information

circulates rapidly and meaning is increasingly constructed through diverse textual and digital forms, reading literacy has also become essential for informed civic participation and social inclusion.

In transitional societies such as Albania, the development of reading literacy assumes particular urgency. Ongoing social, economic, and technological transformations place heightened demands on educational systems to equip students with adaptable and critical literacy skills. Yet within the Albanian pre-university education system, reading comprehension remains one of the most persistent and complex challenges. National assessments and international evaluations consistently indicate significant weaknesses in students' ability to comprehend, interpret, and critically evaluate written texts. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which repeatedly place Albania below the OECD average in reading literacy, reveal systemic difficulties in inferential reasoning, textual analysis, and the evaluation of authorial perspectives and sociocultural contexts. These limitations extend beyond school performance, constraining students' capacity to engage meaningfully in knowledge-based economies and increasingly information-saturated public spheres.

The roots of this challenge are multifaceted. Instructional materials and textbooks often present linguistically dense, abstract, or culturally distant texts, with limited scaffolding to support differentiated comprehension. Although Albanian teachers are generally well-trained and professionally committed, classroom practices often remain dominated by traditional pedagogical models that emphasize memorization, factual recall, and content reproduction rather than interpretation, dialogue, and critical inquiry. At the same time, the rapid digitalization of society has introduced new literacy demands—multimodal, critical, and technological—that are still insufficiently integrated into reading instruction and teacher preparation.

Recognizing these challenges, Albania has initiated a series of educational reforms aimed at aligning national education with international standards and contemporary pedagogical paradigms. The National Education Strategy (2021–2026) prioritizes competency-based learning, the systematic integration of digital tools, and continuous professional development for teachers. Similarly, the National Strategy for Scientific Research, Technology, and Innovation (2023–2030) situates education at the center of sustainable development and innovation. Together, these policy frameworks conceptualize reading literacy not merely as a curricular requirement but as a foundational competence for interdisciplinary learning, social mobility, and democratic participation. They call for renewed teaching methodologies, improved instructional resources, and stronger alignment between classroom practices and global benchmarks.

However, the effectiveness of these reforms ultimately depends on teachers, who serve as the primary mediators between policy intentions and classroom realities. Despite reform-oriented frameworks, teachers often operate within structural

constraints, including limited institutional support, restricted access to sustained training, and rigid curricular expectations that discourage pedagogical experimentation. Understanding how teachers interpret, adopt, or resist contemporary reading methodologies is therefore essential for addressing the persistent gap between policy aspirations and instructional practice.

Situated within this context, the present study investigates the current state of reading literacy instruction in the Albanian K-12 education system, with a particular focus on methodological interventions employed by literature teachers. It seeks to examine the extent to which contemporary reading approaches are integrated into classroom practice, the frequency and nature of creative and student-centered strategies, and the challenges that hinder pedagogical innovation. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

To what extent do Albanian literature teachers apply contemporary reading methodologies, such as critical questioning, comparative analysis, and structured debate?

How frequently are creative strategies—such as rewriting, dramatization, perspective-shifting, and textual transformation—employed to enhance comprehension and engagement?

What institutional, curricular, or professional challenges limit the adoption of innovative reading practices in Albanian schools?

How can targeted methodological interventions be designed to improve reading comprehension within the Albanian national education framework?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to broader discussions on reading literacy in transitional societies and to propose context-sensitive pedagogical pathways for strengthening comprehension, critical engagement, and interpretive competence in the Albanian K-12 context.

2. Literature Review

International perspectives on reading literacy and instructional interventions have been in continuous development over time. Contemporary understandings of reading literacy conceptualize it as a multidimensional competence that extends beyond basic decoding to include interpretation, critical evaluation, intertextual integration, and sociocultural awareness. Over the past five decades, international scholarship has progressively reframed reading from an individual cognitive act to a complex process shaped by social interaction, pedagogical mediation, and technological environments. As a result, the literature on reading interventions reflects an evolving synthesis of cognitive, constructivist, transactional, and evidence-based approaches.

2.1 Cognitive and Interactive Model of Reading

It is noted that *Cognitive and Interactive Models of Reading* are known in the education practices of the 1970s–1980s. Early theoretical foundations in reading research were predominantly cognitive in orientation. Rumelhart's (1977) Interactive Reading Model marked a significant departure from linear, bottom-up views of reading by proposing that comprehension emerges through the continuous interaction between textual input and readers' prior knowledge. According to this model, readers simultaneously process visual, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic cues, constructing meaning through hypothesis testing and confirmation. Visual processes—such as word recognition and perceptual cues—are likewise central to constructing meaning, making this model particularly relevant for high-school students, whose reading proficiency can be strengthened through strategies that enhance both decoding and comprehension. Empirical studies throughout the late 1970s and 1980s confirmed that explicit instruction in decoding strategies, vocabulary development, and schema activation significantly improves comprehension outcomes, particularly among adolescent readers.

Closely related research on *metacognition* (Flavell, 1979; Baker & Brown, 1984) further demonstrated that students who are taught to monitor their understanding, ask clarifying questions, and regulate reading strategies outperform peers who rely on passive reading. While Topping (2009) emphasized that self-assessment practices have similarly been shown to promote metacognitive awareness and continuous improvement. These findings laid the groundwork for strategy-based interventions that remain central to literacy instruction today.

2.2 Social Constructivist and Dialogic Approaches

The cognitive turn was soon complemented—and partially challenged—by social constructivist theories and dialogic approaches (1980s–1990s). Constructivist theories, most notably those inspired by Vygotsky (1978). From this perspective, reading comprehension is not solely an internal mental process but a socially mediated activity that develops through interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development. Vygotsky argued that such interactions allow students to develop higher-order thinking, acquire new concepts, and refine language abilities, demonstrating that reading skills emerge through shared activity rather than isolated effort. Empirical studies demonstrated that dialogic teaching, peer discussion, and teacher scaffolding significantly enhance students' interpretive abilities and critical thinking.

One of the most influential instructional models emerging from this paradigm is reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), which integrates prediction, questioning, clarification, and summarization through guided dialogue. Large-scale studies across diverse educational contexts confirmed its effectiveness for both struggling and proficient readers, particularly in middle and secondary education.

During the 1990s, research increasingly emphasized collaborative literacy practices, such as literature circles and reading clubs (Applebee, 1993; Daniels, 1994). These practices encouraged interpretive dialogue and deeper engagement with texts. Such interventions positioned students as co-constructors of meaning, fostering interpretive negotiation, engagement, and textual ownership. International comparative studies showed that dialogic classrooms supported deeper comprehension and greater motivation, especially in culturally diverse or transitional educational settings.

2.3 Transactional and Reader-Oriented Perspectives

Parallel to constructivist developments, reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995) provided a powerful conceptual framework for understanding reading as a transactional event shaped by readers' experiences, emotions, and interpretive stances. This view positions reading as a dynamic process in which meaning is co-constructed by the text and the reader. Rosenblatt distinguishes between aesthetic engagement—centered on personal, emotional, and experiential responses—and efferent reading, which focuses on extracting information. Because each reading event is shaped by the reader's knowledge, experiences, and interpretative stance, comprehension becomes inherently subjective, underscoring the need for pedagogical strategies that connect texts to students' lived experiences. Empirical research grounded in this theory demonstrated that pedagogical practices encouraging personal response, creative rewriting, dramatization, and perspective-shifting enhance both comprehension and literary engagement.

Studies conducted in secondary education contexts across Europe and North America confirmed that allowing interpretive plurality—rather than enforcing authoritative readings—supports higher-order comprehension and critical literacy skills. These findings are particularly relevant in systems with traditionally teacher-centered instruction, where interpretive autonomy may be underdeveloped.

2.4 Differentiated, Tiered, and Motivation-Oriented Interventions (2000s)

The early 2000s witnessed a growing emphasis on differentiated instruction, responding to increased awareness of learner diversity (Tomlinson, 2001). International studies demonstrated that adapting texts, tasks, and assessment methods to students' readiness levels significantly improves comprehension outcomes. Building on this work, Response to Intervention (RTI) and tiered support models (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006) provided empirically validated frameworks for early identification and targeted support of struggling readers.

At the same time, motivation emerged as a central variable in reading success. Guthrie et al. (2007) showed that student choice, relevance of texts, and goal-oriented instruction positively affect engagement and comprehension. These findings were reinforced by studies on self-assessment and peer assessment, which demonstrated gains in metacognitive awareness and reading autonomy (Topping, 2009).

2.5 Digital, Multimodal, and Gamified Reading Interventions (2000s–2010s)

Technological innovation has profoundly reshaped reading instruction over the past two decades. Early studies on digital texts, audiobooks, and hypertext environments (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998; Leu et al., 2004) indicated that multimodal resources can support comprehension by offering alternative entry points into texts. Subsequent meta-analyses confirmed that digital reading environments are particularly effective when combined with explicit instructional guidance.

More recent research has explored gamification and adaptive technologies, demonstrating that interactive platforms, feedback systems, and game-based mechanics can enhance motivation, fluency, and comprehension. The integration of gamified elements—rewards, challenges, and interactive formats enhanced participation (Anderson & Walther, 2014). Adaptive reading software improved fluency and comprehension (Baker et al., 2009). However, scholars caution that technological tools are most effective when embedded within coherent pedagogical frameworks rather than used as standalone solutions.

2.6 Evidence-Based Instruction and the “Science of Reading” (2010s–2020s)

In recent years, international literacy research has increasingly converged around the Science of Reading, a paradigm synthesizing findings from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and education. Large-scale studies emphasize systematic phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension strategies as core instructional components (Goodwin & Jiménez, 2020; Lane, 2021). Lane (2021) emphasizes the centrality of cognitive processes and empirically validated pedagogical methods in literacy development, while Ordetx (2021) highlights multisensory approaches that address the neurobiological foundations of reading. This shift reflects a broader movement from theoretical propositions toward applied, data-driven instructional models. Multisensory approaches grounded in neurobiological research have shown particular promise for students with learning difficulties (Schwartz, 2021).

While this movement has contributed to stronger evidence-based practices, critical scholars note the risk of narrowing literacy to cognitive efficiency at the expense of interpretive, cultural, and critical dimensions (Luke, 2018). Consequently, current international discourse increasingly calls for integrative models that balance cognitive rigor with critical and sociocultural engagement.

2.7 The Albanian Context and Research Gaps

Within the Albanian educational system, the integration of these international developments remains uneven. While curriculum reforms emphasize competencies and student-centered learning, empirical research on reading interventions—particularly those combining interdisciplinarity, creativity, and digital literacy—is still limited. Nonetheless, recent studies have demonstrated that technology-enhanced literature instruction can significantly improve reading engagement and

interpretive competence among secondary and university students (Shehri & Macaj, 2020, 2022; Macaj, Shehri & Osja, 2024).

Despite these promising findings, large-scale investigations into teachers' methodological practices, constraints, and professional needs remain scarce. International research consistently underscores that the effectiveness of any reading intervention depends on teacher mediation, institutional support, and contextual adaptation. Teachers thus emerge as pivotal agents in translating theory into sustainable classroom practice.

Against this extensive international backdrop, the present study seeks to contribute empirically grounded insights into reading literacy instruction within the Albanian pre-university system. By examining teachers' reported use of contemporary methodologies, creative strategies, and interdisciplinary practices, the research aims to bridge the gap between global literacy scholarship and local educational realities. Through this lens, the study situates Albania within broader debates on reading literacy in transitional societies, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for methodological innovation.

3. Methodology

This research is shaped through several approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. The first covers the theoretical dimension, as it provides the basis for articulating the theoretical framework related to specific methodologies for improving reading literacy. Through this approach, contemporary trends are also identified, including the explanation, description, and analysis of relevant concepts, as well as comparisons informed by theoretical developments. The quantitative/statistical approach directs the research toward field data gathered from the direct responses of the focus group.

The latter is particularly important, as the questionnaire is designed specifically for teachers, who are best positioned to unpack the situation both theoretically and practically—how the literature lesson is conducted, how it may develop, and how it should develop. The questionnaire, composed by a team of specialists, contains approximately 58 questions aimed at ensuring accurate information for this study. Its purpose is to understand, in depth and detail, the real situation regarding the organization and delivery of knowledge in our pre-university education system, in this case, specifically in literature teaching. The questionnaire records the anonymous participation of active teachers between the ages of 25 and 60. The questions span multiple levels and vary in nature. They focus on learning competencies—such as critical thinking in reading texts—in order to observe how techniques related to this competency are applied. The questionnaire also addresses creative thinking during the reading and analysis of texts, identifying how teachers concretely interpret and implement this competency. Thirdly, it provides insights into the real situation of digital competence in our pre-university education system, a competence that (ideally) interrelates with both critical and creative thinking.

This survey serves as the main measurement instrument for processing the data collected. The distribution of the questionnaire took place during a defined period and was conducted mainly online through Google Forms. The questions were coordinated to cover various sub-thematic aspects of the two aforementioned indicators (critical thinking and creative thinking). They are designed to collect as much information and as many suggestions as possible, according to each teacher's professional practice. So, the research design included: A quantitative component, based on a structured questionnaire containing closed-ended items assessing the prevalence and frequency of specific reading practices, a qualitative component, drawing from open-ended responses where teachers described their methods, provided examples, and reflected on challenges and a theoretical analysis, connecting empirical findings with established research on reading comprehension, pedagogical innovation, and literacy development.

The questionnaire underwent a face validity check by three experts in literacy pedagogy and Albanian language instruction to ensure construct relevance and clarity. The study adhered to ethical guidelines consistent with the Declaration of Helsinki and institutional research norms. Key ethical measures included: voluntary participation with the option to withdraw at any time, anonymity: no identifying information (names, school codes) was collected, data protection: dataset stored on encrypted drives accessible only to the research team.

4. Data Research Analysis

The primary data collection tool was a 58-item questionnaire, designed specifically for this study to assess: *Critical Reading Practices* measured the frequency of inferential questioning, analysis of authorial intention, evaluation of stylistic devices, moral and philosophical questioning, text-dependent analysis; *Creative and Interpretive Methods* covered: perspective-shifting, alternative endings, text transformation (e.g., into scripts, posters, podcasts), imaginative role-play, dramatization; *Collaborative Strategies* assessed the use of: group discussion, structured debates, peer teaching, literature circles, guided interpretive dialogues.; *Visual and Structural Tools* provided a report on the use of Venn diagrams, concept maps, storyboards, graphic organizers, narrative arc diagrams; *Technology Integration* evaluated: multimedia resources, e-reading platforms, gamified learning, audiovisual support. *Open-Ended Questions* invited teachers to: describe a methodological innovation they use, explain how they support struggling readers, identify challenges in adopting new methods, provide examples of creative student work, and express professional development needs.

Data collection took place over two months. Steps included: Distribution via Google Forms: selected for accessibility and anonymity. Reminders are sent every two weeks to increase participation. Automatic data export for quantitative analysis and thematic grouping. Teachers were encouraged to respond honestly and were assured that their responses would be used exclusively for research purposes.

The study combined descriptive statistics and qualitative thematic analysis. Quantitative Analysis data were analyzed using: frequency distributions, percentage analysis, cross-tabulations (e.g., frequency of method use by region, age, or education level), and trend identification across categories. Because the study aimed to describe patterns rather than infer causal relationships, basic descriptive statistics were sufficient to answer the primary research questions. Qualitative Analysis Open-ended responses underwent inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), involving: familiarization with responses, coding meaningful segments, categorizing codes into themes, refining themes based on overlaps, and integrating themes with quantitative findings. Themes included: creativity in method application, structural and resource-based challenges, teacher enthusiasm for innovation, disparities in technology use, professional development needs, and examples of effective classroom practices. There was also an awareness of the limitations of the Methodology. Although rigorous, the methodology contains inherent limitations: self-reported data may reflect optimistic biases, convenience sampling limits generalizability, the absence of classroom observations means actual practice may differ from reported practice, and digital distribution could reduce participation from technologically limited rural areas. These limitations are acknowledged and accounted for in the interpretation of results.

This study investigated the extent to which Albanian literature teachers employ contemporary reading comprehension methodologies in K-12 classrooms. The findings indicate strong methodological awareness among teachers, widespread adoption of innovative strategies, and a persistent tension between pedagogical aspirations and systemic constraints. Related to general patterns in methodological practices, the survey revealed that Albanian literature teachers are highly cognizant of modern reading comprehension strategies. Across most methodological categories—including critical reading, collaborative learning, creative text transformation, and visual tools—reported usage exceeded 85–95%, suggesting widespread recognition and familiarity with innovative practices. Despite this overall awareness, the frequency and consistency of implementation varied considerably. Qualitative responses highlighted the challenges teachers face in translating pedagogical intent into classroom reality, particularly in resource-constrained and rural contexts. Key trends included the universal use of open-ended interpretive questions, broad application of group work and debates, frequent deployment of creative and transformative methods, limited access to technological resources, variability in systematic application, and a strong desire among teachers for further professional development.

Critical Reading and Analytical Questioning- Critical reading practices emerged as a foundational element of classroom instruction. All surveyed teachers reported using open-ended questions designed to engage students in textual analysis, exploration of symbolism, thematic investigation, examination of authorial intent, character psychology, and moral or philosophical dilemmas. Quantitatively, 86% of teachers

regularly analyzed authorial attitude, 89.5% posed questions regarding authorial motives, and 92% employed higher-order thinking questions encompassing analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Qualitative feedback illustrated the depth of these practices, with teachers offering prompts such as: "Why does the author choose this narrative perspective, and how does it shape the reader's understanding?" or "What moral dilemmas does the protagonist face, and how might the outcomes differ under different choices?" Such examples suggest that Albanian literature teachers prioritize interpretive depth, aligning with international standards in reading comprehension pedagogy and reflecting a shift from rote memorization toward meaning-making, consistent with Rumelhart's interactive model (1977), Vygotsky's scaffolding theory (1978), and Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading (1978). Table 1 summarizes self-reported instructional practices emphasizing critical and interpretive reading strategies. The high prevalence of higher-order questioning reflects alignment with international models of reading comprehension and constructivist approaches to literary instruction.

	Critical Reading Practice	Percentage of Teachers (%)
1	Analysis of authorial position	86%
2	Questions addressing authorial motives	89.5%
3	Use of higher-order thinking questions (analysis, synthesis, evaluation)	92.0%

Table 1. Prevalence of Critical Reading and Analytical Question Practices among Albanian Literature Teachers

Collaborative and Discussion-Based Learning- Collaboration is a central component of modern literacy instruction, and survey results demonstrate extensive application of discussion-based methods. Nearly all participants (98.6%) reported organizing structured debates, with 77.8% using them frequently and 20% occasionally due to time limitations. Debates were integrated into activities such as character analysis, ethical dilemmas, thematic interpretation, and comparative literature exercises. Teachers described student panels defending interpretations with textual evidence, "courtroom-style" debates assessing character culpability, and discussions of themes including justice, freedom, and moral responsibility. Group discussions were similarly prevalent, with 100% of teachers employing them and 84% reporting frequent use.

Teachers highlighted that discussions promote peer interaction, interpretive flexibility, justification of claims, and collaborative reasoning. Qualitative feedback emphasized that discussion-based learning increases engagement, particularly for struggling readers, who benefit from clarifying misunderstandings through peer support. These findings align closely with contemporary pedagogical frameworks, including reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), literature circles (Daniels, 1994), and dialogic pedagogy (Alexander, 2006), demonstrating the Albanian classroom's responsiveness to international best practices. Table 2 illustrates the data obtained. Percentages reflect teachers' self-reported instructional practices. Qualitative data derive from open-ended survey responses. Overall, the data suggest

that Albanian literature classrooms are actively embracing collaborative, student-centered approaches consistent with global best practices in literacy education.

	Collaborative Practice	Percentage of Teachers (%)	Frequency Notes
1	Use of structured debates	98.6 %	77.8% frequent; 20% occasional
2	Use of group discussions	100%	84% frequent
3	Integration of debates in ethical/thematic analysis	Qualitative evidence	Character analysis, moral dilemmas, thematic interpretation
4	Peer-supported discussion for struggling readers	Qualitative evidence	Enhanced engagement and clarification

Table 2. Prevalence of Collaborative and Discussion-Based Learning Practices

Comparative, Visual, and Structural Techniques- Comparative and visual approaches are widely employed to support analytical reasoning and multidimensional interpretation. All teachers reported using comparative analysis, often examining characters, themes, genres, literary eras, or film adaptations, with 67.1% doing so frequently. Visual tools — including concept maps, Venn diagrams, storyboards, and graphic organizers — were utilized by 97.2% of teachers, with 70% indicating frequent application. Teachers emphasized that these strategies aid in organizing ideas, clarifying relationships, simplifying complex texts, and supporting differentiated learning. One teacher described employing a Venn diagram to compare two poems about nature, enabling students to visualize similarities in imagery and differences in tone. These data are illustrated in Table 3, where percentages are based on teachers' self-reported practices; qualitative data derive from open-ended survey responses.

	Instructional Technique	Percentage of Teachers (%)	Frequency Notes
1	Comparative analysis (themes, characters, genres, media)	100%	67.1% frequent
2	Use of visual tools (concept maps, Venn diagrams, graphic organizers, storyboards)	97.2%	70% frequent
3	Support for differentiated learning	Qualitative evidence	Idea organization, simplification of complex texts
4	Visualization of similarities and differences	Qualitative evidence	Example: Venn diagrams for poetic comparison

Table 3. Use of Comparative, Visual, and Structural Techniques in Literature Instruction

These methods, while widely used, were often applied intuitively rather than systematically, suggesting opportunities for targeted professional development on their theoretical and cognitive underpinnings. This finding points to an important area for professional development, particularly in strengthening teachers'

understanding of how visual and comparative tools support schema construction, metacognitive awareness, and higher-order thinking. Overall, answers highlight both the pedagogical value of these techniques and the potential for further optimization through targeted methodological training.

Reflective and Creative Writing- Reflective and creative writing practices were strongly represented across responses. Reflective writing—assigned by 96.5% of teachers, with 82% using it regularly—included personal response essays, character diaries, thematic reflections, philosophical questions, letters to the author, and end-of-unit journals. These exercises facilitate metacognition and promote deeper comprehension by allowing students to engage personally with the text. Creative transformation of literary works was also highly prevalent. Teachers frequently assigned tasks such as rewriting alternative endings (97.9%), writing from a different character's perspective (85.3%), and genre transformations (74.8%), including diaries, scripts, poems, or news articles. Such practices enhance comprehension, empathy, motivation, and creativity, reflecting Rosenblatt's (1978) aesthetic reading stance, Smith and Wilhelm's (2010) creative reading theories, and embodied cognition frameworks (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005).

Dramatic Interpretation and Role-Play- Dramatization, role-play, and theatrical improvisation were reported by 94.4% of teachers. These methods were applied to classical tragedies, Albanian national literature, modern prose, mythological texts, and comedic scenes. Teachers emphasized that dramatization enhances student confidence, supports understanding of character motives, and fosters a more dynamic, engaging classroom environment. Representative examples included reenacting scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, improvising modern versions of Albanian classics, staging debates between fictional characters, and dramatizing monologues to analyze emotion and tone.

Ethical and Problem-Solving Dimensions- Teachers integrate moral reasoning and problem-solving into literary analysis. A significant majority required students to propose solutions to textual conflicts (89.5%) and evaluate alternative character decisions (91.6%). Activities such as exploring "What if Antigone had obeyed the king?" foster ethical reasoning, scenario analysis, hypothetical thinking, and emotional intelligence, supporting the development of higher-order cognitive and affective skills.

Multimodal and Digital Text Reworking- Teachers frequently ask students to reinterpret texts through visual and digital media. Assignments include posters, murals, visual essays, recorded monologues, short videos, and digital storytelling. While digital access varied, teachers reported that multimodal projects reinforce comprehension by enabling students to represent textual meaning creatively and actively. However, only 65% of teachers reported regular technology use, primarily in urban contexts, while 35% indicated inconsistent application due to infrastructure limitations, device shortages, lack of training, and restrictive school policies.

Systemic and Contextual Challenges- Despite widespread methodological awareness, teachers identified multiple barriers to consistent implementation. These included overloaded curricula, large class sizes, limited instructional resources, high-stakes assessment pressures, insufficient training in innovative methods, and rural-urban disparities in digital infrastructure. Such challenges reflect a tension between pedagogical aspirations and structural realities, constraining the depth and consistency of student-centered, creative literacy practices.

This section contains specific questions to understand concrete limitations related to the development of students. It puts teachers in front of the opportunity to freely express subjective reasons that arise from concrete teaching situations and real experiences. The 143 teachers have given a variety of reasons. From an analysis of them, we can say that the vast majority of teachers face several obstacles related to *internal factors* of the class (such as student level, preparation, concentration) and *structural exteriors* (such as the number of students, limited time, lack of didactic tools, or institutional support). Related to internal factors, many teachers say that it is impossible to develop critical thinking when students have not read the basic text, low-level students.

Teachers report that most students are at a basic or intermediate level, and cannot analyze, compare, or reflect deeply; they lack interest and concentration. Students are often described as carefree, tired, or overwhelmed by technology, which makes them passive and not engaged in discussion; they fear mistakes. Some teachers notice that students are reluctant to express themselves, because they are afraid of saying a "wrong" thought, being used to models that reward the "correct answer". Regarding structural exteriors, such as the environment/classroom, teachers refer to this as related to the large number of students in the class. It is cited as the biggest logistical obstacle. In grades of 35-38 students in urban areas, developing critical thinking through debate or group work is practically difficult and often impossible; non-stimulating physical environment – From lack of space in the classroom, to lighting, noise, or lack of technological tools (projectors, laptops, internet); lack of a safe climate for expression of thought. In some classrooms, there is a lack of a culture of listening and respecting different opinions. This makes it difficult for students to express themselves freely.

The pressure to complete the program leaves little room for in-depth discussion, reflective questions, or conceptual analysis; textbooks with limited content. Teachers criticize the textbook pedagogical apparatus as poor in fostering critical thinking. Some students (and sometimes teachers themselves) are socialized in learning patterns that favor the reproduction of knowledge, rather than its analysis. While some teachers try to integrate modern methods, the lack of training and materials makes this difficult for most. Findings reveal significant urban-rural disparities. Urban teachers benefit from robust internet access, richer library and media resources, proximity to training centers, and consistent technological infrastructure, enabling deeper integration of creative and multimodal practices. Rural teachers face

resource shortages, unreliable connectivity, limited professional development opportunities, and a lack of multimedia equipment, which impede equitable literacy development and constrain access to interactive and multimodal instructional strategies.

However, a proportion of teachers (approximately 10–15%) state that they do not encounter significant obstacles in developing critical thinking, which suggests that these obstacles can be overcome with support, sufficient professional preparation, and a collaborative classroom climate.

Synthesis of Methodological Trends. Overall, Albanian literature teachers demonstrate high motivation, creativity, and student-centered orientation. Critical reading, collaborative discussion, creative text transformation, dramatic interpretation, and reflective writing are widely employed, reflecting alignment with contemporary literacy theories. Debate and collaborative learning stand out as particularly strong practices, fostering argumentation, interpretive reasoning, and evidence-based discussion. Creative practices—rewriting endings, perspective-shifting, dramatization—are deeply embedded in Albanian teaching culture, suggesting that literacy creativity thrives even in low-resource contexts. Visual and structural tools are used extensively, though often without systematic theoretical grounding. Technology, while recognized as beneficial, remains inconsistently integrated.

Results

The analysis of questionnaire responses offers a comprehensive view of the pedagogical positioning of Albanian K-12 literature teachers and the opportunities for enhancing reading literacy in a transitional educational context. Demographically, the workforce is predominantly female, with the majority aged 25–55 years. Notably, 32.2% of teachers fall within the 45–50 age range, representing a cohort with extensive teaching experience but a heightened need for orientation toward contemporary methodologies. These patterns underscore the importance of continuous professional development to align instructional competencies with modern literacy demands and innovative pedagogical tools.

Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Literary Analysis. Findings indicate that literature instruction prioritizes the development of critical thinking, particularly through author-centered questioning. Teachers consistently focus on authorial intent, stylistic choices, and the sociocultural and historical dimensions of texts. Among respondents, 89.5% emphasized exploring authorial motives, and 88.1% reported that their questions target the analysis of author objectives. This demonstrates a robust recognition of the literary text as a multidimensional space, integrating aesthetic, cultural, and social aspects beyond narrative comprehension.

Traditional Pedagogical Practices. Structured debates, group discussions, concept mapping, and reflective writing remain highly prevalent. Debates are “often” used by

77.8% of teachers, while 77.6% frequently organize group discussions. Concept maps and diagrams are employed by 97.2% of teachers, and reflective writing is practiced by 96.5%. These methods provide a strong foundation for fostering analytical skills, critical reflection, and interpretive capacity.

Integration of Creative and Innovative Strategies. Creative thinking strategies, including rewriting endings (97.9%), perspective-shifting (85.3%), and text transformation (74.8%), are widely endorsed. Role-playing and dramatization, reported by 94.4% of teachers, are recognized for cultivating empathy and critical engagement. However, practical implementation often lacks systematic exemplars, indicating a gap between aspirational goals and classroom execution.

Technological Integration and Innovation Gap. Despite strong traditional and creative practices, the integration of contemporary digital tools remains limited. Only 65% of teachers reported regular use of digital resources, while collaborative platforms, multimedia, podcasts, and digital storytelling are sporadically applied. For example, 64.3% had never used podcasts or video creation in the classroom, and only 1.7% regularly employed fact-checking platforms. This gap underscores the need to align teachers' methodological repertoire with 21st-century literacy practices, particularly in transitional societies where digital competencies are increasingly critical.

Barriers and Institutional Constraints. Teachers identified infrastructural and institutional factors—limited access to technology, insufficient continuous training, rigid curricula, and large class sizes—as the primary barriers to innovation. Importantly, these challenges are not perceived as insurmountable; motivation to implement critical and creative approaches remains high, indicating strong potential for pedagogical reform. Table 4 below reflects the main findings:

	Analytical feature	Key Findings	Quantitative Indicators	Interpretive Implications
1	Teacher Demographics and Professional Profile	Predominantly female, a significant proportion represents highly experienced mid-career educators	1 or 0.7 % aged 25-30 4 or 2.8% aged 31-35 17 or 11.9% aged 36-40 20 or 14% aged 41-45 46 or 32.2% aged 46-50 36 or 25.2% aged 51-55 19 or 13.3 % aged 56-60	Highlights the need for sustained professional development to support the transition from experience-based to innovation-oriented pedagogy
2	Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Literary Analysis	Strong focus on author-centered and context-aware interpretation, integrating stylistic, sociocultural, and historical dimensions	89.5% focus on authorial motives; 88.1% analyze authorial objectives	Reflects alignment with constructivist and interpretive models of reading that move beyond surface comprehension

3	Traditional Pedagogical Practices	High prevalence of dialogic and reflective strategies supporting analytical and interpretive skills	Debates: 77.8% Group discussions: 77.6% Concept maps/diagrams: 97.2% Reflective writing: 96.5%	Indicates a solid methodological foundation for critical literacy and structured interpretation
4	Creative and Innovative Strategies	Creative approaches are widely endorsed but unevenly operationalized in practice	Rewriting endings: 97.9%; perspective-shifting: 85.3%; text transformation: 74.8%; role-play/dramatization: 94.4%	Reveals a gap between pedagogical intent and systematic classroom implementation, suggesting a need for applied exemplars
5	Technological Integration and Innovation Gap	Digital tools and media-based literacy practices remain limited and inconsistently applied	Digital resources: 65% regular use; podcasts/video: 64.3% never used; fact-checking platforms: 1.7% regular use	Signals misalignment with 21st-century literacy demands, particularly in transitional educational contexts
6	Barriers and Institutional Constraints	Structural and institutional challenges hinder innovation, but do not suppress teacher motivation	Qualitative evidence	Points to strong reform potential if infrastructural support, training, and curricular flexibility are improved

Table 4. Key Findings on Literature Teaching Practices in Albanian K-12 Education

Based on this analysis, interventions are recommended at several levels:

At the institutional level: Revision of the structure of textbooks, including more reflective questions, content with real connections, problem situations, and tools that stimulate analysis. Reducing the number of students in classrooms, as a basic measure for the quality of learning. Continuous training for teachers on critical thinking methods, leading discussions, and fostering student participation. Increasing investments in infrastructure, especially technology, to make the environment more convenient and interactive.

At the classroom level and teachers: Creating a safe climate for thinking differently, where every thought is treated with respect and without fear of judgment. Promoting independent reading beyond the curriculum, through reading clubs, literary projects, or cooperation with local libraries. Integrating active methods such as debate, case studies, opposing opinion, etc., even in situations where time is limited.

Regional Disparities-Findings reveal significant urban-rural disparities. Urban teachers benefit from robust internet access, richer library and media resources, proximity to training centers, and consistent technological infrastructure, enabling deeper integration of creative and multimodal practices. Rural teachers face resource shortages, unreliable connectivity, limited professional development opportunities, and a lack of multimedia equipment, which impede equitable literacy development and constrain access to interactive and multimodal instructional strategies.

To optimize reading literacy instruction, targeted interventions should include: Continuous professional development focused on critical, creative, and digital literacy skills. Structured didactic resources, including manuals, question banks, and exercises, to standardize and support classroom practice. Promotion of professional learning communities for reflection, experience exchange, and innovation. A balanced integration of traditional and innovative methods to ensure relevance to contemporary literacy demands. Systematic incorporation of digital tools to strengthen students' critical, analytical, and technological competencies.

Conclusions

In summary, some very important conclusions emerge from what survey exposed:

Predominance of traditional methods. Literature teachers extensively use traditional techniques for fostering critical and creative thinking (debate, group discussions, concept maps, reflective writing). These methods have created a sustainable pedagogical culture, but often remain at the borders of recognized and consolidated practices.

Technology Gap. The use of digital tools, collaborative platforms and multimedia resources is still limited. This creates a contrast between the potential of the technology and the real application in the classroom, pointing to the need for training and institutional support.

High declaration, low concretization. Although teachers report high levels of use of methods that promote creativity and empathy (role-playing, recreation of endings, alternate worlds), only a part of them manage to accompany them with concrete examples. This indicates a lack of standardization and structured didactic resources.

Critical thinking related to the author. Questions about the author, his motives and the influence of the text dominate teachers' strategies, proving an orientation towards deep analysis and cultural and historical contextualization. However, this often prevails over questions that put the student at the centre of reflection.

Innovation potential. Despite the obstacles (lack of time, technical support, and continuous training), teachers perceive fostering critical and creative thinking as achievable and necessary. This shows ample room for intervention and improvement through educational policies and institutional support. Overall, Albanian literature teachers exhibit strong foundational skills and a commitment to fostering critical and

creative thinking. However, bridging the gap between traditional and technologically enhanced practices, standardizing creative strategies, and providing institutional support are essential to modernize literature instruction. Findings highlight the significant potential for methodological interventions to strengthen pedagogical practice, enhance student outcomes, and align literacy education with global standards in transitional educational contexts.

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