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‘If we’re spending time on it in college, surely it’s worth it in school’:
Increasing the visibility of creativity in ITE

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Context for Module on Creativity

Value of creativity

- Increased academic outcomes (Gajda et al., 2017; Manaf et al., 2022)
- More engaging and meaningful learning experiences (Barroso & Dias, 2023)

Countering the arts bias (Glăveanu, 2014; Patston et al., 2018)

Systemic barriers (Richardson and Mishra, 2018)

- Large class sizes (Runco et al., 2017)
- Bureaucratic and overly rigid school structures (Monahan et al., 2019)
- High stake exams (Gleeson et al., 2020)
- School environment (Davies et al. 2013)

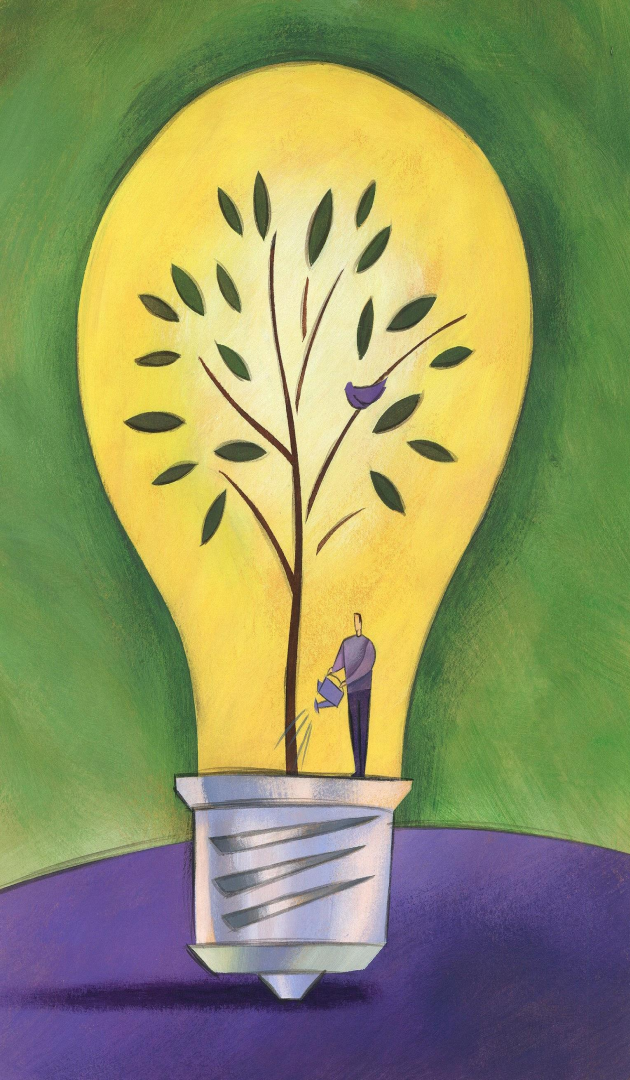
Creative self-beliefs (Beghetto and Karwowski, 2023)

- Creative identity (Culpepper & Gauntlett, 2024)
- Creative mindset (Karwowski, 2014; Karwowski et al., 2020)
- Creative efficacy (Hass et al, 2016; Liu et al., 2025).

Calls to embed creativity in ITE programmes

(OECD, 2023, Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019)





Rationale for the Module

1. Demystify and enhance preservice teachers' understanding of what 'being creative' in the classroom looks like (Key Skill in Junior Cycle curriculum)
2. Creativity is relevant and applicable to ALL subjects across the curriculum (countering the arts bias).
3. Explore learning environments conducive to fostering creativity.

The Study

Based on 3 iterations of the
module

- Data from students via
 - Online surveys ($n=56$)
 - Focus Groups ($n=12$)
- Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013). Three overarching themes:
 - 1) exploring creativity in an interdisciplinary and collaborative way
 - 2) bridging the gap between theory and practice in relation to creativity in the classroom
 - 3) becoming a creative practitioner



Theme 1: Exploring Creativity in an Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Way

Professional Master of Education (Post Primary)

Fostering Creativity and
Innovation in Education:

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graph TD; A[Fostering Creativity and Innovation in Education] --> B[Digital Media]; A --> C[Drama]; A --> D[Linguistic Responsiveness];
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Digital Media

Drama

**Linguistic
Responsiveness**

What did the students think?

*I loved this. I found this to be a really fruitful way of making links and generating ideas for my own practice. **The strands were porous and constantly interconnecting.** It also helped to conceptualise ways of making my own teaching more interdisciplinary [...] it was **a reinforcement of the idea that creativity knows no subject boundaries.***

*I liked the fact that we had **different people talking about creativity, all coming from different backgrounds.** It made the course very rich.*

This assignment invites you to reflect on your practice and consider how you might apply the various tools, skills and strategies explored in this module.

- You are asked, in groups of five or six, to work collaboratively and imaginatively to **create a video on the theme of ‘Fostering Creativity and Innovation in the Post-Primary Classroom’**.
- The video should include **audio content** (voiceover and/or music), **visual material** (e.g. images, photos, drawings, diagrams, video footage) **and written text** (e.g. headings, references, quotes).
- It should be 10 minutes in duration and aimed at an audience of PME students and teachers.

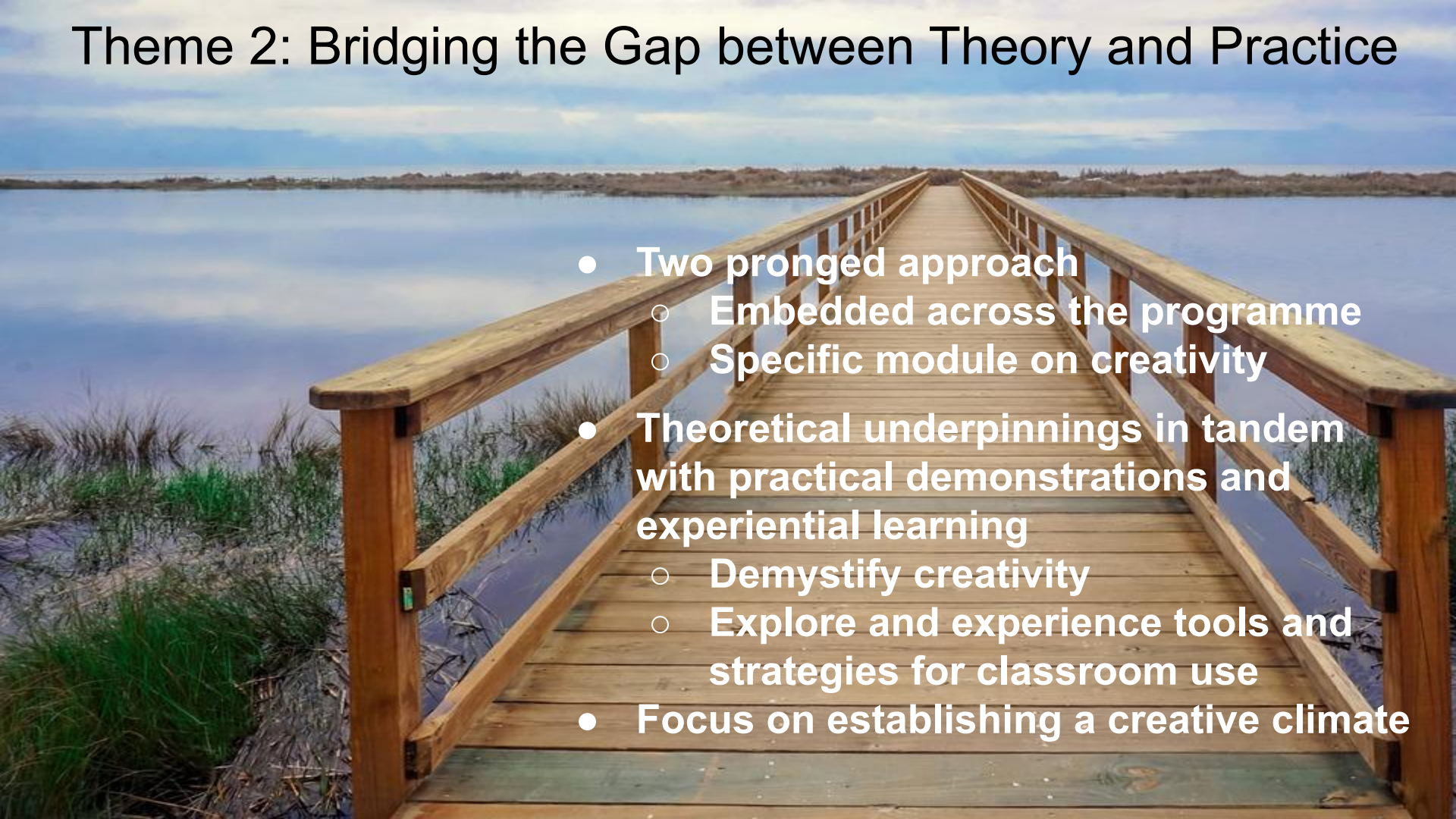
THE ASSIGNMENT BRIEF

It was really good for me to see what some of my other group members were doing because we all had different subjects, so like the business teacher the way that they were integrating creativity into their classroom, music teacher, a science teacher, so all of these different ways that they were bringing creativity into their practice, which was really cool because they were all completely different, and it was good fun as well.

I really learned so much about the other subjects [...] it was really, really interesting to see what everybody else was doing and how everybody else was implementing it in their classroom [...] it was lovely to see.

It gave an open platform in which to explore, reflect and create from what we had learned - a creative assessment for a creativity module! Having a group project was a good way to approach this, as we could collaborate and see how others were integrating creativity across different subject specialisms and school contexts.

Theme 2: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

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- A long wooden pier with railings extends from the foreground into a calm lake. The water reflects the sky and the pier. In the distance, there is a line of trees and a cloudy sky. The pier is made of light-colored wood and has a central walkway with railings on both sides.
- Two pronged approach
 - Embedded across the programme
 - Specific module on creativity
 - Theoretical underpinnings in tandem with practical demonstrations and experiential learning
 - Demystify creativity
 - Explore and experience tools and strategies for classroom use
 - Focus on establishing a creative climate

Understanding what creativity looks like in the classroom



*It's fantastic to have a module focusing on creativity, as this is such an important area in education. [...] **the gap between theory and practice is daunting.***

*I really enjoyed the practical element of it because I was practising it and then felt more comfortable implementing it [...] so **I could picture it in my head how it had panned out in the lecture and so I felt comfortable actually doing it myself because I had seen it happen and I had taken part in it and [...]** if I had just been given the activity I probably would have just 'ehhhh' you know ... I would have looked at them and probably thought that they were great but probably wouldn't have done them.*

*This module influenced my understanding of creativity.[...]I find that all the key skills in Junior Cycle, when I read them on the Specification, they don't make much sense to me, but then when I see it happening, it's like, '**Ok, now I get what they're trying to achieve**'. [...] **Now I understand what they want and what being creative looks like in the classroom.***

*I think it [the module] definitely **broadened my perception of what creativity could be within the classroom**, like it doesn't have to be a big output at the end, it doesn't have to be something that is performed or **it doesn't have to be a song and dance [...]** it could literally be just drawing notes instead of writing them.*

Gave them the language...



*You need to be comfortable with noise and a sometimes perceived sense of lack of control. It can seem like the students are misbehaving, but they're not, they're probably enjoying it. **I knew these things intuitively, but the assignment made me consolidate and put words on the why.***

*I'm not saying I had fantastic understanding, no, it's just something that I valued. **So what the module did was to give us the language and the theory around being able to conceptualise it in that way and to talk about it, you know, everyday little C creativity and things like that, so I didn't have that language.***

Gave permission...

*Before doing this module I was very by the book, sticking to the textbook, [...] you realise how important creativity is [...] I was very apprehensive, like **what would the principal think if he walked into my room and sees me doing drama**, do you know, and so we were looking at older teachers or teachers [...] who were like 'what the hell is that' so it kind of **gave me a new perspective**, [...] I'm a creative person and it's something that I would love to value and what I'd like to do in my future classes and [...] **it kind of gave me the permission to do that.***

*I felt I was quite creative as a person, but **I felt I was very by the book** in my teaching last year and I was too afraid to spend time on creative tasks [...] **[this year] I wasn't as afraid to incorporate more creativity and even more physicality in my own classroom.** Yeah, I wasn't afraid to spend time on it because like **if we're spending time on it in college, surely it is worth it in school.***

***You want to be a creative teacher but is there time for it? So it gave permission to try out strategies** with the purpose of fostering creativity in the students.*

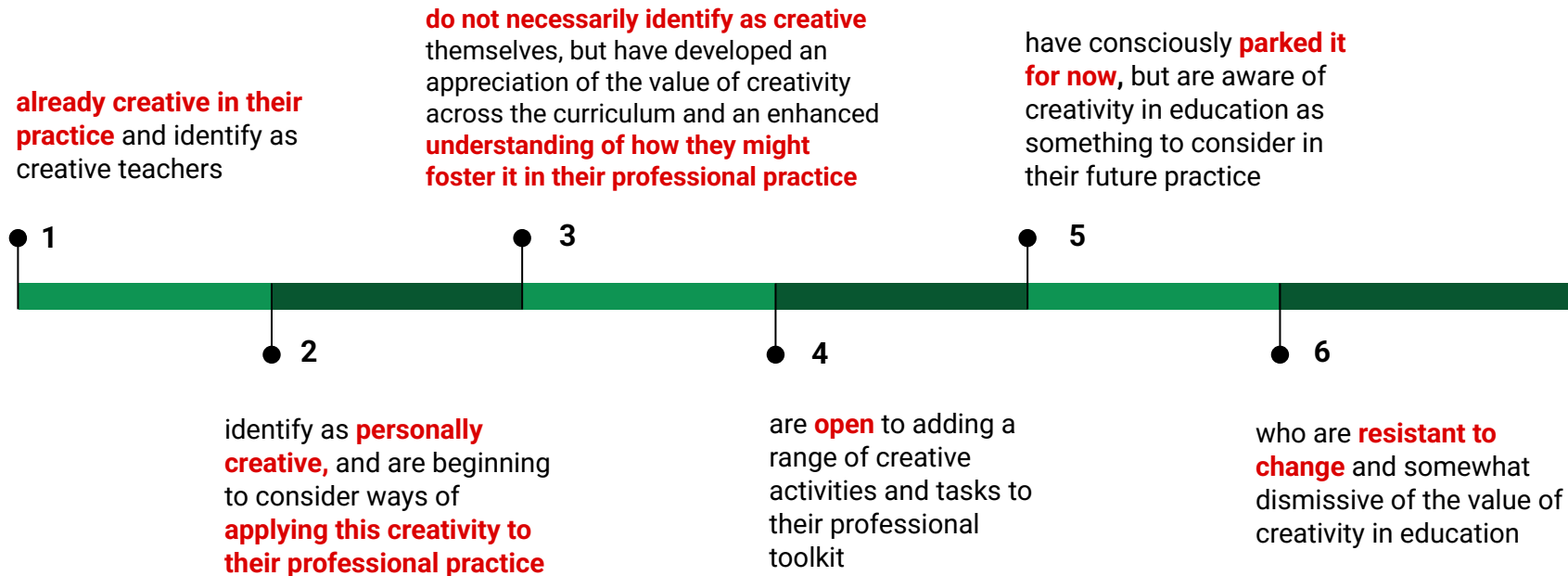


Theme 3: Becoming a Creative Practitioner

A process and a continuum

The Continuum

Preservice Teachers who are:



Key Findings and Recommendations

Although the study pertains to a single ITE programme in post-primary education in Ireland, we believe the findings are also of relevance to ITE providers in other contexts. In light of this, we recommend the following:

1. An **explicit designated component on creativity** in education should be provided on all ITE programmes
2. This course needs to be **mandatory** for all ITE students
3. Assessment of the course should ideally involve the design of materials, coursework or other **artefacts** related to their teaching contexts.
4. **An interdisciplinary approach** should be embedded in the design of the creativity component.

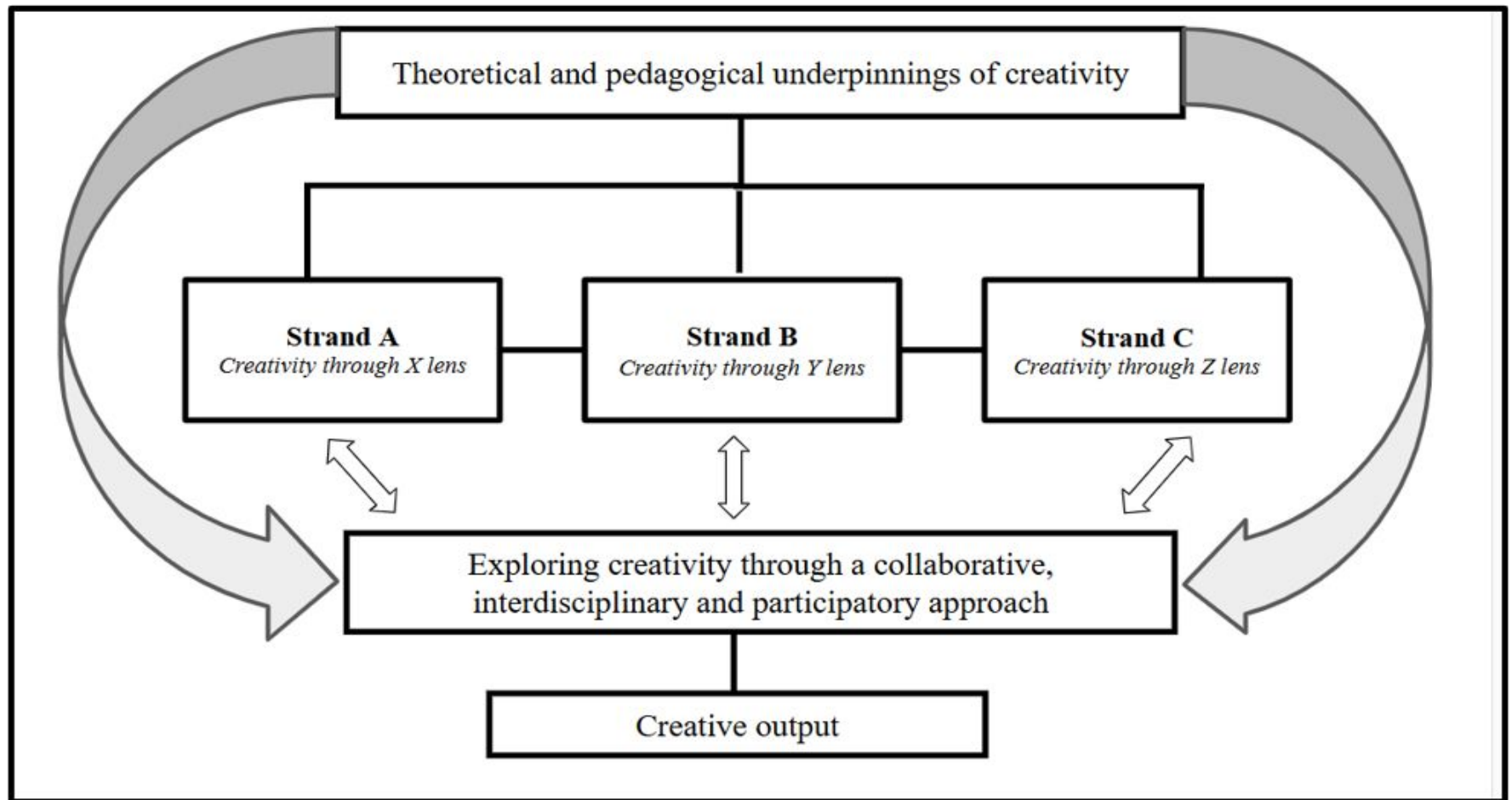


Figure 1 Interdisciplinary framework to foster creativity in ITE programmes

Related Work

White, I., Gallagher, F., & Tiernan, P. (2026). 'Now I Understand What Being Creative Looks Like': Preservice-teachers' experiences of a module on creativity in education. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*.
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