CHAPTER 2
INNOVATIONS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

EVOLUTION OF CHILDREN'S YOUTUBE CONTENT FORMATS: FROM SKETCHES TO STORYTELLING

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Abstract. *The article focuses on the analysis of transformations in children's content formats on the YouTube platform, particularly the shift from simple sketches to more complex forms of digital storytelling. The aim of the study is to identify the key features in the evolution of video content formats for children on YouTube in the context of changing approaches to education, entertainment, and digital information perception. The research employed general scientific methods of cognition: analysis, synthesis, generalization, systematization, comparison, as well as content analysis of 48 video materials. The results of the study show that over the past decade, children's YouTube content has undergone significant changes not only in terms of visual design but also in the structure of information delivery, where narrative elements have started playing a crucial role. It was found that early children's content was mainly based on simple visual sketches that served an entertaining function and relied on repetitive actions, sounds, and basic plots. However, with the development of digital pedagogy, changes in parental expectations, and the influence of social learning theories, there has been a gradual shift toward videos incorporating storytelling—coherent narratives with moral, educational, or linguistic value. The study reveals that modern formats of children's videos increasingly align with the principles of digital storytelling, which contributes to better material retention, emotional engagement with characters, and the development of language skills in children. It is shown that storytelling in children's YouTube content allows for the integration of entertainment and educational elements, enhancing learning through empathy, attention, and identification with characters. Moreover, the use of storytelling aligns with the trends of humanizing education and considers the individual characteristics of children's perception, making such videos an effective tool for informal learning in a digital environment. The practical significance of the study lies in the potential application of its findings for the development of high-quality, pedagogically sound video content for children.*

Keywords: *YouTube, children's content, storytelling, sketch, digital education*

JEL Classification: L82, O33, I21

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Introduction. The evolution of children's content on YouTube is a dynamic story that reflects the transformation of the digital environment from simple entertainment videos to complex educational formats. In the early stages of development, around the mid-2000s, the platform became a space for amateur videos, particularly sketches that appealed to children with their bright visuals and humor. These short, often unstructured videos were among the first attempts to engage young audiences with digital content.

Literature review. Over time, dedicated children's content channels began to emerge, such as Little Baby Bum (2011) and ChuChu TV (2013), which started using animation and musical accompaniment to create educational videos. These channels blended traditional children's songs with modern visual effects, supporting the development of speech and memory in children. The appearance of Cocomelon in 2006 (initially as checkgate) marked a new stage, as the channel introduced 3D animation and created series with recurring characters, allowing children to identify more deeply with the characters and become immersed in the storyline.

By the mid-2010s, new formats emerged, including DIY videos and family vlogs, encouraging children to be creative and express themselves. Channels like Blippi (2014) began combining entertainment with education, showing children different professions and scientific concepts in an accessible way. This supported the development of critical thinking and curiosity.

Today, children's content on YouTube spans a wide range of formats, including storytelling that integrates narrative, emotional engagement, and interactivity. This enables children not only to consume information but also to interact with content actively, helping them develop communication skills and emotional intelligence. Thus, the evolution of children's content on YouTube illustrates a shift from passive viewing to active learning and creativity, aligning with modern developmental needs of children.

The topic of the evolution of children's video content on YouTube, its influence on child development, and the transformation of information formats is relatively new and remains largely unexplored in academic literature. Existing studies lack a systematic analysis of changes in the structure and content of video materials as well as their impact on young audiences. However, in order to draw substantiated conclusions in this research, scholarly sources were used that, although not directly focused on content evolution, address issues related to video creation, their features, and their influence on children's cognitive and psychological development.

Significant contributions to this subject have been made by authors such as Afriyeni & Masbiran (2021), who studied storytelling skills development through YouTube videos; Babilonia et al. (2023), who explored the impact of YouTube songs on preschoolers' second language acquisition; Rahiem (2021), who emphasized the need for digital storytelling in early childhood; Caldeiro Pedreira et al. (2022), who conducted a review analysis of videos for young children. Also noteworthy are the works of Dubovi and Tabak (2019), who analyzed the educational value of videos in the context of collaborative learning, and Bouchrika (2025), who discussed modern educational approaches in the context of social learning. The perspective of Ørngreen

et al. (2017), who examined the potential of video sketches as learning tools, is also important.

The study also relied on expert literature available on websites such as Research.com (Bouchrika, 2025; Digital Storytelling, 2025), which outline current trends in digital storytelling and video education. These sources help provide a clearer understanding of the broader dynamics involved in implementing advanced technologies in children's education.

In the course of the research, a set of general scientific methods was applied, including analysis, synthesis, generalization, systematization, comparison, and content analysis of video materials. The primary focus was placed on exploring the evolution of children's video content formats on the YouTube platform over the past three years (2021–2024), which made it possible to identify current transformations in approaches to information delivery, narrative structuring, and the integration of educational components.

A total of 48 videos were selected for analysis from six widely viewed YouTube channels aimed at young audiences. The selection criteria included a stable subscriber base exceeding one million, regular content publication over a period of at least two years, and the presence of content in at least three distinct formats – such as sketches, animation, storytelling, musical videos, or DIY segments. The analysis encompassed prominent channels including Like Nastya, Cocomelon – Nursery Rhymes, Blippi, Little Baby Bum, ChuChu TV, and Haminations.

Special emphasis was placed on the Like Nastya channel, which, over the period from 2021 to 2024, has demonstrated a consistent transformation in content structure. The channel evolved from predominantly family vlog formats to more narratively organized videos, marked by clear storytelling frameworks and moral messaging. The three-year observation of this channel's trajectory provided insight into the changing strategies of audience engagement, the increasing focus on educational value, and the enhanced emotional resonance of its content. The development of Like Nastya reflects a gradual incorporation of digital storytelling techniques, including recurring characters, coherent plotlines, moral conclusions, and subtle viewer engagement through questions or implied interaction.

Aims. The Aim of the study is to demonstrate how YouTube video content influences children, how it has evolved over time, and how various formats (animation, music videos, storytelling, etc.) affect cognitive, emotional, and speech development in children.

Methodology. This study employed a qualitative content analysis approach combined with general scientific methods of cognition, including analysis, synthesis, generalization, systematization, and comparison. The primary objective was to investigate the evolution of video content formats on children's YouTube channels and understand how these changes influence cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development in young audiences.

A total of 48 videos were selected from six popular children's YouTube channels: Like Nastya, Cocomelon – Nursery Rhymes, Blippi, Little Baby Bum, ChuChu TV, and Haminations. These channels were chosen based on three main criteria: (1) a

minimum subscriber base of one million, (2) consistent content publication over at least two years, and (3) availability of diverse content formats (e.g., sketch-based, animated, musical, storytelling, or DIY videos). The sampling period spanned from 2021 to 2024.

Each video was examined for structural elements such as the presence or absence of plot, character development, narrative arc, emotional cues, interactivity, and educational value. Special attention was paid to the Like Nastya channel due to its pronounced shift from family vlog formats to storytelling with clear narrative structures and pedagogical implications. This allowed for a longitudinal analysis of format transformation and its implications for child engagement and informal learning.

The coding process included categorization based on video format (e.g., sketch, animation, musical, storytelling), objective (entertainment vs. education), and the type of learning promoted (informational, procedural, or conceptual). Observational notes were kept regarding visual, auditory, and narrative components. The results were systematized to identify emerging trends in children's digital content consumption and content creation dynamics.

Results. In today's childhood, media are becoming increasingly popular. Research by Rahiem (2021) shows that the average age of viewers is steadily decreasing. Modern preschoolers often become familiar with digital technologies before they encounter printed books. Children are able to enjoy video content of various types even without knowing how to read. Although this type of content is one-way and not interactive, it still contributes to the development of communication skills. However, this happens indirectly, through interaction with peers during classroom activities and while creating digital stories in different formats (Rahiem, 2021).

As noted by Caldeiro Pedreira et al. (2022), the active presence of children under the age of 13 on YouTube is a well-established fact. Most younger children use the platform primarily for leisure and entertainment. As a result, YouTube has become one of the most popular content distribution platforms, enabling two-way communication: users can not only consume but also create and share their own content, as well as interact with others. According to Statista, videos featuring children receive an average of 416,985 views, indicating strong audience interest in this type of content. Moreover, 84% of children aged 10 to 12 regularly watch YouTube, highlighting the growing popularity of children's video blogs on the platform. This phenomenon has given rise to so-called "kidfluencers," who not only attract large numbers of subscribers but also generate substantial income for their families through sponsorship deals and merchandise sales. Due to the significant presence of children on YouTube, the YouTube Kids platform was launched in 2015, targeting a younger audience (Caldeiro Pedreira et al., 2022). This platform allows users to freely upload, watch, and share videos, and is regarded as "the most popular online video content community." Content here is segmented according to the target audience, allowing for better control over children's access to information.

When examining different formats of video content in an educational context, it is important to note that it has become one of the most popular tools for self-education. Despite skepticism from some academics, it is increasingly embraced by parents, as it

often proves effective in addressing a range of pedagogical goals by offering engaging, dynamic, and easily memorable video materials.

Classifying educational content on children's channels is a complex task due to its thematic diversity. On one hand, users have access to a wide array of videos; on the other hand, children and adolescents view these videos as trustworthy sources of both learning and entertainment (Caldeiro Pedreira et al., 2022).

According to Dubovi & Tabak (2019), educational videos on YouTube can be categorized based on the type of learning:

– informational learning – related to information seeking;

– procedural learning – aimed at solving specific tasks through step-by-step instructions;

– procedural-conceptual learning – helps develop intellectual skills; this is the rarest type of learning through YouTube videos.

Overall, as Afriyeni & Masbiran (2021) point out, YouTube can be effectively used as a tool for developing students' cognitive skills. Through the use of paired storytelling techniques, learners can share ideas, which fosters cooperation, responsibility, partner interaction, as well as self-confidence and courage in public speaking. Moreover, the dynamic nature of such videos – their pace, layered imagery, and the combination of text, visuals, and motion – stimulates working memory and enhances cognitive flexibility, as children learn to quickly shift between different types of information and integrate them into a cohesive whole. Even passive consumption of this content involves active comparison, recognition of familiar elements, hypothesis building, and evaluating the effectiveness of demonstrated actions.

Children's video content continues to evolve rapidly. Table 1 illustrates that the main goal of such content is not only entertainment but also development.

Table 1. Evolution of children's YouTube content formats

№	Format	Main objective	Format characteristics	Typical example
1	Sketches	entertainment, humor	short fragmented scenes, often without a plot	Smosh Kids (early), amateur shows
2	Musical content	sensory development, rhythm	animated clips with songs, lullabies, rhymes	Cocomelon, Little Baby Bum
3	Craft /DIY	motor skills, creativity	instructions for crafts, drawing, experiments	5-Minute Crafts Kids, Art for Kids Hub
4	Family shows/vlogs	socialization, identification	family life, challenges, "a day in the life"	Like Nastya, The ACE Family
5	Animated content	visual engagement, storyline	2D/3D cartoons, short episodes with repetitive structures	Peppa Pig, Morphle
6	Storytelling	emotional and narrative literacy	personal or fictional stories, often in animated style	Haminations, BrodyAnimates, illymation

Sources: developed by author

Sketching in professional design is more than just a drawing technique. It serves as a cognitive and reflective tool used for visual thinking, idea development, problem analysis, and solution generation. Both experienced and novice designers actively rely on it in their creative processes (Ørngreen et al., 2017).

Musical videos on YouTube have a positive impact on children's development. Research by Babilonia et al. (2023) indicates that music contributes to emotional intelligence, academic achievement, and prosocial behavior in children aged 3 to 12. Musical content can also enhance focus and memory, while helping to create a favorable learning environment.

DIY videos on YouTube support the development of children's creative skills. Studies show that participation in DIY projects helps children improve problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, and self-expression. Such content also fosters fine motor skills and coordination (Dubovi & Tabak, 2019).

Family vlogs on YouTube may influence children's socialization. Research has shown that watching family vlogs can shape children's understanding of family values, social norms, and behavior. However, concerns also exist regarding children's privacy and the potential for promoting materialism (Dubovi & Tabak, 2019).

Storytelling through YouTube offers the benefit of increasing learning interest and motivation for educational engagement. Using YouTube as a learning medium has received positive feedback, as it leads to greater enthusiasm and drive among students to participate in the learning process.

According to Bouchrika (2025), using social media, including YouTube, as educational material positively impacts learning both inside and outside the classroom. YouTube storytelling, in particular, helps increase students' interest and motivation in developing communication skills. Researchers have identified seven effective elements of storytelling on YouTube:

- point of view – establishing a connection between the audience and the material;
- a dramatic question – raising curiosity and engagement;
- emotional content – elements that evoke or involve the listener emotionally;
- the gift of your voice – using narration to improve material comprehension;
- soundtrack – incorporating music and sounds to enhance emotional impact;
- economy – streamlining delivery to maintain effectiveness and avoid boredom;
- pacing – the rhythm of storytelling that determines its flow and dynamics.

The effectiveness of storytelling is also supported by the University of Houston's College of Education, which states that digital storytelling "provides a solid foundation for various types of literacy, including information, visual, technological, and media literacy." Brown et al. (2005) refer to these as "21st-century literacy skills."

Overall, multimedia tools allow students to take active roles in the learning process and classroom interactions, while simultaneously developing new skills such as synthesis, analysis, and evaluation.

There are several advantages to incorporating digital tools into education:

1. They create space for meaningful listening. Digital stories enable students to absorb information in a deeper, more thoughtful way – especially valuable in today's world of constant information overload. These stories help educators genuinely engage students with content.

2. They engage both mind and heart. This approach provides a basis for developing emotional rhetoric, allowing students to explore new ways of thinking and

acting. Such methods can evoke emotional responses and inspire learners to explore topics that truly interest them.

3. They give students the opportunity to share their knowledge with peers. Learners benefit not only from viewing content but also from creating their own, reflecting their experience and acquired knowledge. Each stage of the creation process supports the development of technical, research, and writing skills (Brown et al., 2005).

When a child transitions from consuming to creating video content – for example, by filming a sketch or hosting a tutorial – a much broader range of cognitive functions is activated. Writing a script involves developing abstract thinking, planning, vocabulary, and logic. Editing and visual design require a sense of structure, aesthetic vision, editing skills, and attention to detail. Presenting material in front of a camera helps train speech, confidence, self-regulation, and critical thinking, as the child continually assesses their effectiveness and audience impact.

Renowned researcher Goldschmidt (2003) introduced the concept of the "backtalk of self-generated sketches," describing how sketching initiates a dialogue between the designer and the visualized thought. This dialogue can be both individual and collective, stimulating collaborative ideation. According to Goldschmidt (2003), sketching is not only a means of solving problems but also of formulating them – identifying what actually needs to be addressed. He describes this as the dialectic of problem-setting and problem-solving, where the designer engages in a reflective dialogue with the situation, allowing action under conditions of uncertainty. This type of thinking – reflection-in-action – is the foundation of the innovative design approach.

Thus, the shift from passive viewing to active content creation not only expands a child's cognitive repertoire but also fosters skills that integrate interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, and independent learning.

Discussion. The findings highlight a notable transformation in children's YouTube content, driven by the need for both entertainment and education in a digital-first environment. In the early 2010s, most children's videos consisted of simple sketches - short, visually driven scenes aimed at sensory engagement. These formats emphasized humor, repetition, and visual appeal but lacked depth in storytelling or pedagogical value.

However, by the early 2020s, a shift began toward structured storytelling, blending educational themes with emotional and narrative literacy. This evolution reflects broader societal and technological changes, including rising parental expectations, the digitalization of early childhood learning, and the influence of theories like social learning and digital pedagogy. Content creators adapted by integrating character development, moral lessons, and interactive elements into videos. Channels such as Like Nastya exemplify this shift, moving from passive observational formats to storytelling that fosters empathy, attention, and linguistic development.

This trend parallels the growing popularity of digital storytelling, which has proven effective in promoting active engagement, narrative comprehension, and long-term memory retention. The storytelling approach transforms screen time from passive consumption to a cognitively active process, supporting 21st-century literacies such as media, information, and emotional literacy.

Additionally, children's roles are evolving—from viewers to content creators. The participatory nature of platforms like YouTube enables children to script, record, and edit their own content, activating abstract thinking, planning, and expressive skills. This reflects a deeper pedagogical shift from knowledge reception to knowledge construction.

The diversity of content—ranging from musical videos and DIY tutorials to animated stories and family vlogs—demonstrates a pluralistic approach to informal learning. Each format targets specific developmental domains: musical content fosters rhythm and memory; DIY videos enhance motor and creative skills; vlogs promote socialization and identity formation; and storytelling supports language and emotional intelligence.

Ultimately, the discussion affirms that YouTube's evolving children's content ecosystem holds great potential as a complementary educational space. With proper design, regulation, and pedagogical guidance, it can become a transformative tool in early childhood development, capable of merging entertainment with holistic learning outcomes.

Conclusions. To summarize, children's content on YouTube can generally be divided into two broad categories: entertainment and educational. The first type mainly consists of short videos focused on visual appeal – design, effects, character creation, musical elements. This content appeals to aesthetic perception and sensory stimulation. Educational content, by contrast, appears in a far wider range of formats – sketches, music with educational elements, DIY videos, family shows, vlogs, animation, and storytelling. These formats are tailored to children of different ages, with each one stimulating cognitive development in its own way – memory, attention, thinking, emotional sensitivity, and communication.

It is important to distinguish between two levels of a child's participation in this environment. The first is passive, where the child acts as a viewer and acquires knowledge and skills primarily through perception – listening, observing, analyzing, and sometimes imitating what they see. This has undeniable benefits in terms of learning, expanding horizons, and acquiring new knowledge, but it also has limitations. The second is active participation, where the child becomes a content creator. In this case, they do not simply consume knowledge but model it, construct meaning, and express personal viewpoints using cognitive and metacognitive strategies – from scripting to visual design and presenting to an audience. Content creation engages a unique set of skills: abstract thinking, critical analysis, reflection, language competence, technical awareness, visual literacy, and interpersonal communication. This is the real potential of YouTube – as not just a viewing platform but a developmental space where children shape their world through their own screen-based narratives.

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