

Review Article

A Review of Literature on the Influence of Different Types of E-Content on Students' Creativity.

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Abstract: The increasing integration of digital technology in education has led to widespread use of e-content in teaching–learning processes. Alongside academic achievement, creativity has emerged as a crucial educational outcome required for innovation, problem-solving, and adaptability in contemporary society. The present paper is a review of existing literature examining the influence of different types of e-content—such as text-based, multimedia, interactive, and gamified content—on students' creativity. The review analyses theoretical perspectives, conceptual frameworks, and empirical studies related to e-content and creative learning outcomes. Findings from previous studies indicate that e-content has the potential to support creativity by enhancing learner engagement, autonomy, and cognitive interaction; however, results across studies remain inconsistent. While multimedia and interactive e-content are often associated with higher engagement and idea generation, creativity is not found to be solely dependent on the digital format of content. Instead, pedagogical design, instructional strategies, and learning environments play a more decisive role in fostering creative thinking. The review identifies key conceptual, methodological, and contextual gaps in existing research and highlights the need for systematic, theory-driven, and longitudinal studies. The paper concludes that e-content should be viewed as an enabling tool for creativity rather than a determining factor, and its effective use depends on meaningful integration with learner-centred pedagogical practices.

Keywords: E-content, Creativity, Digital Learning, Multimedia Learning, Interactive Learning, Higher Education, Review Study

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and context of e-content in education

The integration of digital technology into education has brought about significant changes in the way knowledge is created, shared, and accessed. Over the past few decades, the emergence of electronic content, commonly referred to as e-content, has transformed conventional teaching-learning processes by offering flexible, learner-centred, and technology-mediated instructional experiences. Educational institutions across the world have increasingly adopted e-content in the form of digital textbooks, online modules, multimedia lessons, and interactive learning platforms. This shift has been driven by the need to expand access to education, enhance instructional efficiency, and align learning practices with the technological realities of contemporary society. As learners become more digitally oriented, e-content has assumed a central role in shaping their learning experiences, making it essential to examine its broader educational implications beyond academic achievement alone.

1.2 Emergence of creativity as a key educational outcome

In recent years, creativity has gained recognition as a fundamental outcome of education, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving social and professional environments. Creativity is increasingly viewed as a vital competence that enables learners to generate original ideas, adapt to new situations, and solve complex problems. Educational frameworks worldwide emphasise the development of creative thinking alongside cognitive and technical skills. Unlike rote learning outcomes, creativity involves higher-order mental processes such as imagination, flexibility, originality, and elaboration of ideas. These processes are influenced by both individual characteristics and the learning environments in which students engage. As education systems place greater emphasis on nurturing creative learners, it becomes important to understand how contemporary instructional tools, including e-content, contribute to or constrain creative development.

1.3 Need for reviewing research on e-content and creativity

Although a growing body of research has examined the effectiveness of e-content in improving learning outcomes, much of this work has focused on achievement, motivation, and engagement rather than creativity. Studies addressing creativity in digital learning contexts are often fragmented, with varying conceptual definitions, methodologies, and findings. Some researchers suggest that multimedia and interactive e-content can stimulate imagination and divergent thinking, while others argue that highly structured digital materials may limit creative exploration. These inconsistencies highlight the need for a comprehensive review of existing literature to synthesise current knowledge and identify emerging patterns. A systematic examination of prior research can provide clarity regarding the relationship between different types of e-content and students' creativity, thereby offering a stronger foundation for future empirical investigations.

1.4 Purpose and scope of the review paper

The purpose of the present review paper is to critically examine existing research studies that explore the influence of various types of e-content on students' creativity. The review seeks to analyse conceptual frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings related to e-content and creative learning outcomes. By synthesising research across diverse educational contexts and methodological approaches, the paper aims to identify key trends, strengths, and limitations within the existing body of literature. The scope of the review is confined to studies focusing on digital or electronically delivered instructional content and its relationship with creativity among students. Through this analysis, the review intends to highlight research gaps and propose directions for future studies, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how e-content can be effectively used to support creative development in education.

2. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF E-CONTENT

2.1 Meaning and characteristics of e-content

E-content refers to instructional material that is created, stored, delivered, and accessed through electronic means with the support of digital technologies. In educational settings, e-content encompasses a wide range of learning resources such as digital text, audio-visual materials, animations, simulations, and web-based modules. One of the defining characteristics of e-content is its flexibility, as learners can access materials anytime and anywhere according to their individual learning pace and preferences. E-content is also characterised by its capacity for multimodal representation, allowing information to be presented through a combination of text, images, sound, and video. This multimodality is often considered advantageous for addressing diverse learning styles and enhancing conceptual clarity. From a pedagogical perspective, e-content is not merely a digital substitute for printed materials but a distinct instructional medium with the potential to reshape learning experiences by enabling interactivity, immediacy of feedback, and learner autonomy.

2.2 Classification of e-content used in education

The literature on digital learning commonly classifies e-content based on its structure, level of interactivity, and mode of presentation. Text-based e-content represents the most basic form, where learning materials are provided in digital text formats resembling traditional textbooks or lecture notes. Multimedia e-content integrates textual information with visual and auditory elements, such as images, videos, and narrations, to enrich understanding and engagement. Interactive e-content allows learners to actively participate in the learning process by manipulating content, responding to prompts, and receiving instant feedback, thereby promoting experiential learning. Gamified e-content

incorporates game-like features such as challenges, rewards, and progression mechanisms to sustain motivation and engagement. These classifications highlight that e-content varies significantly in its instructional design and learner involvement, which has important implications for cognitive processing and creative engagement.

2.3 Pedagogical assumptions underlying digital content

The design and use of e-content in education are grounded in several pedagogical assumptions derived from learning theories and instructional models. Constructivist perspectives assume that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with content and context, suggesting that e-content should promote exploration, reflection, and meaning-making rather than passive consumption. Cognitive theories emphasise the organisation and presentation of information in ways that align with human information processing, highlighting the importance of clarity, coherence, and cognitive load management in e-content design. Socio-cultural perspectives further assume that learning is mediated by tools and social interaction, positioning e-content as a cultural artefact that shapes and is shaped by learners' experiences. These pedagogical assumptions influence how e-content is developed and implemented, and they play a crucial role in determining whether digital learning environments support or constrain creative thinking. Understanding these foundations is essential for interpreting research findings related to e-content and students' creativity.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CREATIVITY

3.1 Psychological theories of creativity

Creativity has been conceptualised within psychology as a multifaceted construct involving the generation of novel and useful ideas. Early psychological theories emphasised divergent thinking as a central component of creativity, highlighting abilities such as

fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. From this perspective, creativity is viewed as a cognitive process that can be nurtured through environments that encourage open-ended thinking and exploration. Later theories expanded this view by recognising the role of motivation, personality traits, and cognitive styles in creative performance. Humanistic approaches emphasise self-expression and intrinsic motivation, suggesting that creativity flourishes when learners experience autonomy and a sense of psychological safety. These psychological perspectives provide an important foundation for understanding how learning environments, including those mediated by e-content, may influence creative thinking by shaping cognitive engagement and motivational states.

3.2 Educational theories supporting creative learning

Educational theories have further contributed to the understanding of creativity as an outcome of instructional practices and learning contexts. Constructivist learning theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, making it conducive to creative learning when instructional experiences are open-ended and inquiry-driven. Experiential learning theory emphasises learning through reflection on experience, suggesting that activities involving experimentation and problem-solving can enhance creative thinking. Inquiry-based and project-based learning models also support creativity by engaging learners in authentic tasks that require idea generation, collaboration, and innovation. These educational theories underscore the importance of learner-centred approaches and suggest that instructional tools such as e-content can support creativity when they are designed to facilitate active participation rather than passive information transmission.

3.3 Role of learning environments in creativity development

Learning environments play a critical role in shaping creative development by influencing how learners engage with content, peers, and tasks. Environments that provide opportunities for autonomy, experimentation, and meaningful interaction are more likely to foster creative thinking. Digital learning environments, supported by e-content, have the potential to create such conditions by offering flexible pathways, diverse representations of information, and opportunities for collaboration beyond physical classrooms. However, theoretical perspectives also caution that highly structured or restrictive environments may inhibit creativity by limiting learners' freedom to explore and express ideas. The effectiveness of e-content in promoting creativity therefore depends on how it is embedded within the broader learning environment and aligned with pedagogical goals. Understanding these theoretical perspectives is essential for critically reviewing empirical studies that examine the relationship between e-content and students' creativity.

4. E-CONTENT AND LEARNING PROCESSES

4.1 Cognitive engagement in digital learning environments

Cognitive engagement refers to the extent to which learners invest mental effort in understanding, processing, and applying information during learning activities. In digital learning environments, e-content plays a central role in shaping cognitive engagement by determining how information is presented and how learners interact with it. Research suggests that well-designed e-content can promote deeper cognitive processing by encouraging learners to make connections, reflect on concepts, and apply knowledge in varied contexts. Multimedia and interactive e-content, in particular, are often associated with increased cognitive engagement due to their ability to present information dynamically and respond to learner input. However, cognitive engagement is not guaranteed by the presence of technology alone. Poorly designed e-content

may overwhelm learners with excessive information or distract them with superficial features, thereby reducing meaningful engagement. Understanding the cognitive demands imposed by different types of e-content is therefore essential for evaluating their potential influence on creative thinking.

4.2 Learner interaction and autonomy through e-content

Learner interaction and autonomy are widely recognised as important contributors to meaningful learning and creative development. E-content has the potential to enhance interaction by enabling learners to engage with content, peers, and instructors in flexible and dynamic ways. Interactive e-content allows learners to manipulate variables, explore alternative solutions, and receive immediate feedback, fostering a sense of control over the learning process. Autonomy is further supported by the self-paced nature of many digital learning resources, which allows learners to choose when and how they engage with content. Research indicates that such autonomy can increase intrinsic motivation, a key factor associated with creativity. At the same time, excessive independence without adequate guidance may lead to confusion or disengagement. Therefore, the balance between structure and freedom within e-content is critical in determining its impact on learner interaction and creative expression.

4.3 Digital affordances influencing higher-order thinking

Digital affordances refer to the possibilities for action that digital technologies offer learners within a learning environment. E-content provides affordances such as non-linear navigation, multimodal representation, and opportunities for collaboration, all of which can support higher-order thinking processes. These affordances enable learners to explore content from multiple perspectives, experiment with ideas, and engage in reflective thinking. Higher-order thinking, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation,

is closely related to creativity, as it involves the generation and refinement of ideas. Studies reviewed in the literature suggest that e-content that leverages these digital affordances effectively is more likely to support creative learning outcomes. However, the presence of affordances alone does not ensure their use; learners must be guided and motivated to engage with e-content in ways that promote higher-order thinking. This understanding provides a basis for reviewing empirical studies that examine the relationship between e-content and creativity.

5. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON E-CONTENT

5.1 Studies related to text-based e-content

Empirical studies examining text-based e-content have primarily focused on its effectiveness in supporting comprehension, retention, and independent learning. Research findings generally indicate that digital text materials offer advantages such as ease of access, portability, and opportunities for self-paced study. However, studies also suggest that text-based e-content often mirrors traditional instructional approaches and may not significantly alter cognitive engagement patterns. In relation to creativity, the literature indicates mixed outcomes. Some studies report that text-based e-content supports reflective thinking by allowing learners time to process information and generate ideas independently. Other studies argue that the limited interactivity of text-based formats may restrict opportunities for divergent thinking and creative exploration. These findings highlight the importance of instructional context and learner engagement in determining the creative potential of text-based e-content.

5.2 Studies related to multimedia e-content

Multimedia e-content has been widely studied for its potential to enhance learning through the integration of visual and auditory elements. Empirical research suggests that multimedia materials can improve conceptual

understanding and learner motivation when designed according to cognitive principles. Several studies indicate that multimedia e-content can stimulate imagination and support creative thinking by presenting information in rich and varied formats. Visual representations, animations, and videos are often found to aid idea generation and conceptual flexibility. However, the literature also points to challenges associated with multimedia learning, such as cognitive overload and passive consumption of content. Some studies report that when multimedia e-content is overly prescriptive or entertainment-focused, it may reduce opportunities for creative engagement. These contrasting findings underscore the need to examine not only the presence of multimedia elements but also their pedagogical purpose and design quality.

5.3 Studies related to interactive and gamified e-content

Interactive and gamified e-content has attracted growing research attention due to its emphasis on learner participation and engagement. Studies examining interactive e-content often report positive effects on problem-solving skills, exploratory learning, and motivation, all of which are closely linked to creativity. Interactive simulations and virtual environments allow learners to test ideas, experiment with alternatives, and learn from feedback, thereby supporting creative thinking processes. Gamified e-content has been found to increase learner engagement through challenges and rewards, which can indirectly enhance creativity by sustaining motivation and interest. Nevertheless, some studies caution that excessive focus on game mechanics may divert attention from creative learning objectives. Overall, the empirical literature suggests that interactive and gamified e-content holds promise for supporting creativity, but its effectiveness depends on thoughtful integration with instructional goals.

6. REVIEW OF STUDIES ON CREATIVITY IN DIGITAL LEARNING

6.1 Creativity outcomes in technology-supported learning

A substantial body of research has explored creativity as an outcome of technology-supported learning environments. These studies generally suggest that digital tools can create conditions conducive to creative thinking by providing access to diverse resources, flexible learning pathways, and opportunities for experimentation. Empirical findings indicate that students engaged in technology-supported learning often demonstrate improvements in creative skills such as idea fluency and originality, particularly when learning tasks are open-ended and problem-oriented. However, the extent of creative development varies widely across studies, reflecting differences in instructional design, duration of intervention, and learner characteristics. The reviewed literature emphasises that technology acts as an enabler rather than a determinant of creativity, highlighting the importance of pedagogical alignment in digital learning contexts.

6.2 Comparative findings across different digital tools

Comparative studies examining different digital tools and platforms provide valuable insights into how various forms of technology influence creativity. Research comparing multimedia tools, interactive platforms, and collaborative digital environments suggests that tools encouraging active participation and peer interaction tend to support higher levels of creative engagement. Collaborative digital tools, in particular, are associated with enhanced creativity due to the exchange of diverse ideas and perspectives. However, comparative findings also reveal inconsistencies, with some studies reporting minimal differences in creativity across tools. These inconsistencies suggest that the effectiveness of digital tools depends less on their technical features and more on how they are embedded within learning activities. Such findings reinforce the need for a nuanced understanding of the relationship between

digital tools, including e-content, and creative outcomes.

6.3 Methodological trends in creativity-related studies

An examination of methodological approaches used in creativity-related studies reveals considerable variation in research design, measurement tools, and analytical techniques. Many studies employ quantitative methods using standardised creativity tests, while others adopt qualitative approaches such as observations, interviews, and artefact analysis to capture creative processes. Mixed-methods designs are increasingly used to provide a more comprehensive understanding of creativity in digital learning environments. Despite this methodological diversity, limitations are evident in areas such as small sample sizes, short intervention durations, and lack of longitudinal analysis. These limitations affect the generalisability and depth of findings, underscoring the need for more rigorous and sustained research efforts. Understanding these methodological trends is essential for critically evaluating existing studies and identifying directions for future research.

7. SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE ON E-CONTENT AND CREATIVITY

7.1 Patterns and trends emerging from previous studies

A synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals several recurring patterns regarding the relationship between e-content and students' creativity. Across diverse educational contexts, e-content is generally found to enhance access to learning resources and support flexible engagement with instructional material. Studies consistently suggest that e-content formats which encourage active participation, exploration, and learner autonomy are more likely to support creative thinking. Multimedia and interactive e-content are frequently associated with increased engagement and idea generation, while text-based formats tend to support reflective and

individualised learning processes. However, these patterns are not uniform, as findings often vary depending on instructional design, learner characteristics, and assessment methods. The literature indicates that creativity is influenced by the quality of learning experiences facilitated by e-content rather than by the digital format itself.

7.2 Areas of convergence and divergence in findings

The reviewed studies show convergence in recognising the potential of digital learning environments to support creativity when aligned with learner-centred pedagogical approaches. There is broad agreement that e-content can serve as a valuable tool for fostering creativity by enabling diverse representations of information and opportunities for exploration. At the same time, divergence is evident in empirical findings regarding the relative effectiveness of different e-content types. While some studies report superior creative outcomes associated with interactive or gamified e-content, others find no significant differences across formats. These divergences reflect variations in research design, duration of exposure, and contextual factors. The lack of consensus underscores the complexity of creativity as an educational outcome and highlights the need for more systematic and comparative research.

7.3 Critical evaluation of existing research

A critical evaluation of the existing literature reveals several strengths and limitations. On the positive side, the growing number of empirical studies reflects increasing scholarly interest in the intersection of digital learning and creativity. Many studies employ established theoretical frameworks and validated measurement tools, contributing to the credibility of findings. However, limitations are evident in the frequent reliance on short-term interventions and small, context-specific samples. Additionally, some studies focus more on technological features than on pedagogical processes, limiting their explanatory power. The reviewed literature

also reveals a tendency to generalise findings without adequately accounting for learner diversity and contextual variation. These limitations suggest the need for more comprehensive and theory-driven research to deepen understanding of how e-content influences creative development.

8. RESEARCH GAPS IDENTIFIED FROM THE REVIEW

8.1 Conceptual gaps in existing literature

The review of literature reveals several conceptual gaps in research examining the relationship between e-content and students' creativity. One notable gap lies in the lack of a unified conceptual framework that clearly defines creativity within digital learning contexts. Different studies adopt varying definitions and dimensions of creativity, making it difficult to compare findings and draw coherent conclusions. Additionally, many studies treat e-content as a broad and homogeneous construct without adequately distinguishing between its different forms and pedagogical functions. This lack of conceptual clarity limits understanding of how specific characteristics of e-content influence creative thinking. Addressing these conceptual gaps is essential for developing a more precise and consistent body of knowledge in this area.

8.2 Methodological limitations of prior studies

Methodological limitations are evident across a substantial portion of the reviewed research. Many studies rely on cross-sectional designs that capture creativity at a single point in time, thereby failing to account for developmental changes in creative thinking. Short-term interventions are common, which may not provide sufficient exposure to e-content for meaningful creative development to occur. Sample sizes are often small and restricted to specific institutions or disciplines, limiting the generalisability of findings. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on quantitative measures may overlook qualitative aspects of creativity such as originality of ideas and creative processes.

These methodological limitations highlight the need for more rigorous, longitudinal, and mixed-methods research designs.

8.3 Contextual and population-based gaps

The literature also reveals contextual and population-based gaps that warrant attention. A significant proportion of studies have been conducted in technologically advanced educational settings, with limited representation from developing or resource-constrained contexts. This imbalance restricts understanding of how e-content influences creativity across diverse educational environments. Additionally, most research focuses on higher education students, with comparatively fewer studies examining creativity outcomes at the school level or in adult and lifelong learning contexts. Differences in cultural, institutional, and disciplinary contexts are often underexplored, despite their potential influence on creative expression. Addressing these gaps would contribute to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the impact of e-content on creativity.

9. IMPLICATIONS OF THE REVIEW

9.1 Implications for educators and instructional designers

The findings emerging from the reviewed literature have important implications for educators and instructional designers seeking to integrate e-content into teaching-learning processes. The review suggests that the effectiveness of e-content in supporting creativity depends largely on how it is pedagogically designed and implemented rather than on the digital format alone. Educators should therefore focus on creating learning activities that encourage exploration, reflection, and originality when using e-content. Instructional designers are encouraged to align digital content with learner-centred approaches that promote autonomy and active engagement. Emphasis should be placed on designing e-content that allows flexibility in learning pathways and

opportunities for creative expression, rather than relying solely on pre-structured materials.

9.2 Implications for curriculum planning and policy

At the curriculum and policy level, the review highlights the need for a strategic approach to the integration of e-content in education. Curriculum planners should ensure that digital resources are aligned with broader educational goals, including the development of creativity and other higher-order skills. Policies supporting digital education should move beyond infrastructure and access considerations to address pedagogical quality and teacher preparedness. Professional development programmes aimed at enhancing teachers' digital pedagogical competencies can play a crucial role in maximising the creative potential of e-content. By prioritising creativity as an explicit learning outcome, educational policies can encourage more thoughtful and effective use of digital resources.

9.3 Implications for future research directions

The review also offers clear directions for future research in the field of e-content and creativity. Researchers are encouraged to adopt more rigorous and diverse methodological approaches, including longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, to capture the complexity of creative development over time. Future studies should examine the interaction between e-content types and instructional strategies to identify conditions that most effectively support creativity. Greater attention should be given to underrepresented contexts and learner populations to enhance the generalisability of findings. By addressing these research directions, future studies can contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how e-content can be leveraged to foster creativity in education.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 Summary of major insights from the review

The present review paper has examined existing literature on the influence of different types of e-content on students' creativity within educational contexts. The reviewed studies collectively indicate that e-content has the potential to support creative thinking by offering flexible access to learning resources, diverse modes of representation, and opportunities for learner interaction. However, the findings also reveal that creativity is not automatically enhanced by the use of digital content alone. Instead, creative outcomes are closely linked to pedagogical design, learner engagement, and the degree of autonomy afforded within digital learning environments. While multimedia, interactive, and gamified e-content formats are often associated with higher levels of engagement, their impact on creativity varies across contexts and instructional approaches.

10.2 Concluding remarks on e-content and creativity

In conclusion, the review highlights that e-content should be viewed as an enabling tool rather than a determining factor in the development of students' creativity. The effectiveness of e-content in fostering creative thinking depends on thoughtful integration with educational theories, instructional strategies, and learning objectives. The synthesis of literature underscores the need for educators and policymakers to move beyond technology-driven assumptions and focus on creating meaningful, learner-centred digital experiences. By addressing the conceptual, methodological, and contextual gaps identified in this review, future research can provide clearer guidance on how e-content can be strategically used to nurture creativity across diverse educational settings.

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