



## Educational Programs on Children Television: A Content Analysis

Vol. IV, No. IV (Fall 2019) | Page: 388 – 397 | DOI: 10.31703/grr.2019(IV-IV).42

p- ISSN: 2616-955X | e-ISSN: 2663-7030 | ISSN-L: 2616-955X

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### Abstract

*This research study is about children's educational TV programs broadcasted by Top 10 International children entertainment TV channels. The researcher has adopted a content analysis method to analyze the number of educational TV programs broadcasted, their themes and genres. What kind of message these educational programs deliver, for which specific age group they were designed. The data was collected from educational television research organizations. TV has a vital place in children's life. They consume a share of their leisure time in front of the television. This research study proved that watching educational programs in childhood improved their academic performance and it has a positive effect on their learning behavior, cognition, and socialization skill, emotional and intellectual development.*

**Key Words:** Educational TV, School Readiness, Academic Performance, Language, Math, Science, Cognitive Development, Emotional, Intellectual

### Introduction

The traditional concept of education and learning was associated with schooling and instructor. Educational TV programs only considered those that were dedicated to the improvement of children's performance in school. The educational TV programs impart the concept of reading, numbers and scientific information and social skills. The entertainment-based dramatic script of children TV programs stimulate motivation and fulfill the emotional needs of the children. The children's TV educational programs improve the psychological, emotional and cognitive needs of the children. Children TV programs provide entertainment, form playful humoristic pleasure, create a formative attitude of happiness and strength for multi-dimensional growth of the children in this world. Children TV entertainment programs boost emotional and behavioral development that remains neglected in family and school.

TV is an instrument that is being used for formal and informal education. Educational TV functions as a supportive and reinforcement tool to support formal education. The role of educational TV is comprehensive in informal education. The researchers admitted the importance of television to deliver information, skills, ideas, and attitudes. TV is a mediator to increase economic, social development and cultural activity. TV creates awareness by informing them about their environment, rights, duties, and privilege. It educates about etiquette, language skills, leisure pursuits, social skills, and religious doctrines. The role of TV is multidimensional and immeasurable. The role of TV can be enhanced, how the planners are serious and resolute to use television. TV can improve social life, quality of education and reduces dependency on formal teaching (Naveed, 2020).

According to Children TV Act 1990, the children are spending more than 3 hours in front of the television. The CTV defines that core programming should be intended to aid the educational and information need of children 16 years old and under, with the child's academic, intellectual, community and emotive needs. According to CTA, the broadcaster must air a minimum of three hours of instructive and informational programs each week and core programming. The abiding of FCC laws was mandatory for the renewal of a TV License.

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FCC defined core programming as those EDTV programs aired between 7 AM and 10 AM, when; children are expected to be present in front of the television (Linebarger & Pitrowski, 2010).

The first educational program was Sesame Street. It was designed to achieve academic goals. It was created by a children's TV workshop. The program was designed around an academic curriculum to raise, academic, communal and traditional development. Sesame Street discussed academic themes like numbers and letters. They discussed delicate subjects related to children's emotional, cognitive, intellectual and social evolution. Such as demise, racial, pride, interaction, individuals with a disability, wedding, prenatal period and even space exploration. This approach laid the foundation to work in collaboration with TV producers and educational experts (Plomp & Ely, 1996).

Educational programs are planned to improve academic and social skills. Their language and production techniques are considered to enhance learning. The children's TV educational programs are planned to create readiness for school. The studies on Sesame Street EDTV programs are produced and plotted to solve problems and hardships that appear in everyday life (Fuenzalida, 2005).

Educational TV programs advance school readiness, raise them to the extent where a child exhibits the skills and behavior knowledge necessary for success in elementary school. These skills are categorized into four groups, social, emotional development. Oral language development and pre-reading skills, or thematic development and pre-mathematics skills, and general knowledge (Calvert, 2019).

It was observed that EDTV programs do not similarly benefit children. In this study two kinds of direct effects were measured; the additional effects of disclosure to educational TV on children. The children living in advantaged ecologies than the deprived environment. The compensatory effects of EDTV programs benefit those who possessed a low level of skills and supportive development ecologies. This study has shown that EDTV programs proved beneficial for the socio-economically deprived audience than the privileged strata of society (National Centre for Education Statistics, 1999).

It has been commonly observed that all media and programs are in some way educational. A group of researcher defines educational media," Any medium that conveys a message to the audience however others refers only to media with positive cognitive and pro-social themes to be considered educational. These EDTV programs are designed around a course with a specific goal to transfer academic and social skills (Kirkorian, 2008).

Trends in Children TV program structure changed, while initially, children's TV programming was adult-directed. The adult host can see on screen or his voice can be heard off-camera. This ideology was borrowed from school, the mature mentor that teaches the child who must inactively learn knowledge from the adult. The new program format symbolically takes in children in an active and character role model, performing different actions and tasks in which they show themselves to be proficient of doing creative initiative and intelligent problem solving, like;" Bob the Builder" and " Dora the Explorer are best examples of this structural interactive creativity. Children acquire from prosaically TV programs that deliberately promote encouraging social skills, realization in behavior, diverse imaginings and inspiration. Research proved that the "Mister Rogers Neighborhood" preschool series developed encouraged preservice, acceptance for interruptions and rule compliance. All of these aspects are associated with the concept of positive behavior. Children program Mister Roger's Neighborhood", increased prosaically interpersonal behavior such as cooperation, nurturance, and verbalization.

EDTV programs can achieve desired goals if they will be designed by following certain formats during production. This format's effectiveness is proven through several types of research. The recurrence of key program ideas, rehearsal activities in the actual viewing environment, use of comprehensible language, interesting program techniques have been revealed to improve children's learning of target content, boosts understanding of content (Schement,2002).

The researchers described six essential components for educational TV programs: The lesson should impart clearly. The degree to which the primary lesson is presented. The level of interaction during watching required for the comprehension of the program. The extent to which the primary lesson is linked with the real world. The usefulness of the lesson and lesson reinforcement the extent to which learning required effort for the comprehension of program contents (Jordan and Woodward, 1997)

## **Aims and Objectives of the Research**

1. To know the significance of Television educational programs.
2. To identify the positive effects associated with educational television programming.
3. To know the number of educational programs broadcasted from the top 10 children television channels during the last twenty years (1999-2018).
4. To explore the themes discussed in these educational TV programs.
5. To identify the genre, age group, and channel in the EDTV programs.

## **Significance of the Research**

The children are a very important part of the demographic variable. They are the future of any nation. Media organizations are considered the fourth pillar of any estate. Television is still the most popular and easily accessible entertainment medium. It has access to every social stratum of the community. This medium can be utilized more persuasively to enhance literacy, multidimensional physical and mental growth to educate children with minimum budget.

## **Theoretical Frame Work**

### **The Education Entertainment Theory**

states the use of scholastic and societal issues in programs intentionally, in making and distribution process of an entertaining program, to achieve preferred, community, institutional and societal changes among the anticipated media user population. Miguel Sabido television producer presented Education and Entertainment theory in light of Albert Bandura Social Learning theory. He supported the ideology of social learning theory that Television role models help children in imitation of behavior. They idealize television models, characters and ideas to present their ideas. They imitate the presentation of TV program themes, characters, role and adopt in their real life. They resolve family and social issues in light of Television Programs (Wang, et al).

Most of the Education entertainment theory investigation focused on providing rational and cognitive stages. He explains the audience's effects by employing theoretical frameworks such as the elaboration likelihood model. The people are rational and logical to acquire any behavior, custom or trend. If they feel that free adaptation will be criticized by the community. They imitate any behavioral adaptation on ration grounds (Gibson, 2004).

### **Genre Theory**

It's also known as David Buckingham's theory. He states that children acquire a discourse of genre. He discovered that children interact with electronic media and media education. He claims that genre is not given by the culture, it's a constant process of negotiation and alteration. The media reveals the bad side of the world, therefore; the parents keep their children indoors to hide them from this bitter reality. Due to this aspect children spend a lot of their time in front of the TV, they explore most of the world in front of the TV. They develop perceptions, opinions, and ideologies apart from the real world. They develop their approach based on the content they are watching. Their developed approach is in constant change due to the perceived world that is seen on TV and entertainment media (Buckingham, 1993)

### **Education Learning Theory**

The education theory discusses theories that explain the application, interpretation, and purpose of learning and education. Educational theories are behavior-based (Varon, 1936).

Education Theory is associated with more paradigms such as Behaviorism; it refers to the notion of learning to adopt a certain behavior or not by way of reinforcement and punishment. Cognitivism: is related to the human process of understanding. This theory revolves around four stages of cognitive development. Gradually; Children learn to make connections between symbols letters, sounds, and words. The children develop logical skills at the age of seven years old during teen children start to comprehend abstract ideas (Glickman, 2001). Constructivism: states the perception of the environment varies in individuals based on their personal social and emotional

experiences. Humanism supports that human beings are in the constant evolution process, the purpose of education should be aware of self-actualization. Connectivity: is related to the formation of connection. They must develop a positive connection for their growth. Human beings are responsible to perform their roles, duties, rights, obligations and other aspects of everyday life. Education must be designed to meet these goals (Hill, 2002).

## **Research Methodology**

The researcher has adopted the content analysis method, top 10 Children entertainment channels are selected according to their popularity index. The researcher analyzed all programs broadcasted from children television programs within the last twenty years (1999-2000). The detailed analysis and classification provided the data about educational television program themes, message, age group specification, and genre. Conferring further shortlisting revealed that the top three Children TV channels have broadcasted a major part of educational TV programs. The total number of 100 EDTV Programs broadcasted during the last 20 years. Top 10 programs were selected to analyze according to their popularity on TV online data archives. The researcher has collected the data from the following TV Programs archives.

- [www.common.sense.com](http://www.common.sense.com)
- [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- [www.IMDb.com](http://www.IMDb.com)
- [TV.tropes.com](http://TV.tropes.com)
- [www.wikifandom.com](http://www.wikifandom.com)
- [www.tvdb.com](http://www.tvdb.com)
- [www.rotten.tomatoes.com](http://www.rotten.tomatoes.com)

## **Results and Findings**

According to the results, the educational television programs started to broadcast from “Sesame Street”. Gradually; Television evolved into a major instrument for imparting learning, education, and entertainment. The shortlisted Children TV channels are the following:

- Nickelodeon
- Disney Channel
- Cartoon Network,
- PBS Kids
- Disney XD
- Boomerang
- Nick jr
- Disney Junior
- Teen Nick
- Nick Toon

The titles of all educational television programs broadcasted from the top 10 children entertainment channels during (1999-2000) are following.

### **Nickelodeon**

Bubble Guppies, The Backyardigans, Wonder Pets, Lazy Town, Blue Clues, Go Diego Go, Wallykazam, The Backyardigans, Dora and Family in the City, Jacks Big Music Show, Dora the Explorer

### **Disney Channel**

Little Einstein, The Octonauts, Bear in the Big Blue House, Guess How Much I Love you!, Imagination Movers, Jack and the Never Land Pirates, Phineas, and Ferb”

## **Cartoon Network**

Thomas and Friends, Angelina Barelina”

## **PBS Kids**

Sesame Street, Wild Kratts, Arthur”, “Curious George”, Daniel Tigers Neighborhood, Odd Squad, “Cyberchase”, “The Cat in the hat knows All that”, “Word World” Sid the science kid”, “Pocoyo”, Dinosaur Train”, “Peg Cat”, “Peep and the Big Wide World/Peep”, Nai hao Ki Lane, “Martha Speaks”, “Bob the Builder”, “The Magic School Bus”, “Zoooomafoo”, Dragon Tales, “Barney and Friends”, “Fetch with Ruff Ruffman”, “Between the Lions”, “Bill Nye the Science Guy”, “Super Why”, “Clifford the Big Red Dog”, “Wish Bone”, “Reading Rainbow”, “Mr Rogers Neighbourhood”, “Peg + Cat”, “The Electric Company/ The Electric Company(part II)”, “Design Squad Nation”, “Nature”, “Sci Girls”, “Genius by Steph Hawkings”, “United States of America revealed”, “American Experience”, “Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Grler Jr”, “Jacks Big Music Show”, “Super Why”, “Walykazam , Wimze’s Home”, “Barney and Friends”, “Reading Rainbow”, “Dragon Tales”.

## **Nick Jr**

” Team Umizoom”, “Busy World of Richard Scary”, “Julius Jr”, “Ni Hao Ki Lane”, The Wonder Pets, “Zack and Quak”,

## **Disney Junior**

” The Mickey Mouse Club”, “Shariff Calls Wild west”.

## **Children Demographic**

Preschool (2yr-4yr), Children (4yr \_ 9yr), Tweens (10yr\_12yr), Teen (13yr\_19yr)

## **Educational Television Program Themes**

### **Children Television Educational Program**

These programs are designed to educate toddlers, preschoolers & Tween. The programs broadcast their message by adopting the following genre: Animation, sketch comedy, Adventure, sitcom, action, science fiction, education, interactivity, magic and fantasy, CGI series, puppetry, Gameshow, Reality show, children comedy-drama, animation family, documentary, fantasy supernatural and children.

## **Educational TV Program’s Themes**

### **The Mickey Mouse Club**

This show broadcasted a variety of programs, musicals, dance, guest appearance, classic Disney cartoon series. It also broadcasted the adventure of The Hardy Boys and Spin and Marty.

### **Sesame Street**

This program was curriculum-based designed to formulate cognitive and emotional skills, captured scenes on roads. They believed that the program will develop self-esteem and insight for the advancement of competency.

### **Wild Krats**

It is about two brothers Chris and Martin Kratt. They explored the wild world to learn more about animals and share information about their protection. The villains re using endangered species for their business pursuits. The plot of each episode is designed to save an animal under threat.

### **Arthur**

The story revolves around eight years old Arthur his family and friends. How they interact with each other. Arthur often contracts with significant issues families suffer such as; asthma, dyslexia, tumor, diabetes, and an autism spectrum disorder. It supported to enhance reading skills. It created acceptance for personality clash and variation in interest to accommodate.

### **Curious George**

It's about George a sweet African monkey and his friend, "The man in Yellow Hat". The monkey is the cause of trouble, while; the man saves the day. The program theme is about knowledge, compassion and playful curiosity.

### **Daniel Tigers Neighborhood's**

It presented 4 years old Daniel tigers, son of an original programmer's Daniel stripy tiger. Each day Daniel puts on his red sweater, ties his shoes and calls a new peer group of preschoolers into the neighborhood of make-believe. Daniel shares his daily voyages with pals O the Owl, Katerina Kitty cat, Prince Wednesday and Miss Elaina.

### **Odd Squad**

The juvenile characters are using mathematical models, addition, and multiplication and using data in graphs. The child actors are the staffs of the "Odd Squad". They use indirect reasoning and basic math skills to resolve and inspect strange activities in their town. The organization is completely run by children. They are using indirect reasoning and math skills to solve problems. They detected culprit by using math skills, while; the villains are also using mathematics twists in their plots.

### **Cyber Chase**

The series narrates three children from the earth. They were brought into cyberspace, a digital universe, to protect the world from the villain Hackers. The kids prevent hackers from taking over cyberspace by using problem-solving skills in conjunction with basic math rules.

### **Thomas and Friends**

The Thomas the Tank Engine is based on stories considered by a young British boy early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who would listen to the trains as they delighted through the countryside. The book is written by Wilbert told to entertain his son. Wilbert told these stories to his son, who has consequently passed them on to his son. This book follows the quests of a group of anthropomorphized locomotives and road automobiles who live on the fictional island of Sodor.

### **Little Einstein**

Designed to teach about art and music. The significance of culture, paintings, and classic music, Baroque, classical and Romantic era. The scenery, plot, and soundtrack of each episode are evolving around these themes.

### **Children TV Educational Programs & Intended Message**

- 1) The Mickey Mouse Club; broadcasted the classic series.
- 2) Sesame Street; It was Curriculum-based, promoted cognitive & affective development, self-esteem, empathy.
- 3) Wild Krats; It taught about animal Protection, nature preservation, an animal rescue in case of any threat.
- 4) Arthur; It promoted reading skills, healthy relationships with family & friends. How to serve relations suffering from any disease.
- 5) Curious George; It imparted the lesson of forgiveness and curiosity.

- 6) Daniel Tigers Neighborhood; It stimulated Fun, enhanced life skills, and controlled emotions. It discussed Socio-Emotional Themes like disappointment, sadness, anger, thankfulness, appreciation, emotional intelligence and human respect.
- 7) Odd Squad; It taught about academic learning like; mathematic, reasoning, and problem-Solving.
- 8) Cyberchase: It's about Cyber Crime and the development of Problem Solving Skills.
- 9) Thomas and Friends; It's a narrative series, has educational and behavioral modeling aspects.
- 10) Little Einstein; It's about art, music, and the importance of a happy feeling to manage life.
- 11) The Octonauts; promoted adventure and thrill.

### Children Television Educational Program

S.No	Program Title	Channel	Time Duration	Age Group	Genre
1	The Mickey Mouse Club Show	Walt Disney Production	October 3, 1955- March 7, 1996	Preschool (3yr-4yr)	Educational/Puppetry/Dancing/Singing/Classic Disney Cartoon Serials/
2	Sesame Street	PBS, Children Television Workshop	1969-Present (2015)	Preschool (3yr_4yr)	Educational/sketch comedy/,Puppetry/ Animation
3	Wild Kratts	PBS KIDS,	December 31, 2010-Present	(4-12) Tweens	Animated Television Series
4	Arthur	PBS	October 1996 - Present	Children 4-8 Little Kids	Adventure, Emotion, Education, Sitcom
5	Curious George	PBS KIDS,	September 4, 2006- April 1, 2015	Children 4yr_12yr	Animated
6	Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood	PBS KIDS,	September 3, 2012-Present	Preschool Age Children (2yr-4yr)	Animated
7	Odd Squad	PBS Kids	November 26 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2014 - Present	Children 5yr_12yr	Educational, Comedy
8	<u>Cyberchase</u>	PBS Kids	January 21, 2002-2007	Children_(5yr-12)	Action-adventure, Science-fiction, Educational
9	Thomas and Friends	Cartoon Network Disney-ABC	1984 –Present	Children (5yr – 12yr)	Educational/ Animated series
10	Little Einstein	Domestic Television (2007–09).Play House Disney	October 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2005 -22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2009	Children Pre School (3yr 9yr)	Interactive / Animated

### Discussion

The basic purpose of the children's TV program is to make children adaptable in their everyday life. This process of adjustment required flexibility in thoughts, emotions, and behavior. The art of resilience plays an important role in making children compliant in this world. The children's Television programs are designed not only to entertain children but also to develop required socialization skills, which are essential to bringing competence in academic, social and cognitive skills. They also need to master emotional control to keep balance in their life.

The educational TV programming started on Sesame Street. It was intended to teach children about basic concepts about letters, numbers, and science. This program tried to enhance learning, developed positive behavior, social, moral skills and civic education. It taught mastery about basic human life emotions and issues like; emotional control, happiness, sadness, health, disease, and death.

Education TV programs are designed to develop school readiness. It's proven by several researchers that EDTV watching improves academic grades and school performance. Educational TV programming resulted in cognitive, imaginative and intellectual skills. The children acquire controlled behavior; learn the mastery to control positive and negative feelings, anger management, sadness, love, and happiness. All these emotional controls lead towards self-actualization. The EDTV watching habit makes them well informed. They are flexible enough to accept change. They develop a friendly relation with parents, siblings, and peers. They are proving themselves as good and responsible citizens. They are well informed about their rights and duties. EDTV programming played a role as a dutiful and responsible instructor. The researches resulted in that educational TV programs remained successful in creating understanding about math and science. Educational TV programs couldn't achieve success in imparting knowledge about history, literature, and geography. The EDTV programs tried to create audience involvement during watching the program, they achieved it through interactivity. Most of the interactive programs are designed in game shows. They are teaching problem-solving skills and vocabulary. Educational TV programs are effectively achieving their goals.

This research study "Children TV Educational Programs: Content Analysis" investigated the number of educational TV programs broadcasted from children's entertainment channels. Children TV channels broadcasted the following number of EDTV programs. These EDTV programs promoted academic and s learning through their scripts, dialogue theme, and format.

The Children TV channels broadcasted 100 programs. The investigation disclosed that Top 10 CTV channels broadcasted following educational TV programs: Nickelodeon 11, Disney Channel 7, Cartoon Network 2, PBS Kids 46, Nick Jr 6, Disney Jr 2. Collectively 74 educational TV programs are broadcasted within the universe. However; the remaining 26 educational programs are broadcasted from other children's TV channels out of the sample.

This research study analyzed a sample of 10 EDTV programs critically. These programs were selected according to their popularity and rating on online TV data archives. In the selected program sample; The PBS kids broadcasted 7, Disney Channel 2, whereas; Cartoon Network has broadcasted 1, EDTV programs out of 10 selected samples. All these EDTV programs are designed for 2years to 9 years old children. These EDTV programs followed this genre: Educational, puppetry, singing & Dancing, Educational Sketch comedy, puppetry, animation, adventure, sitcom, educational comedy, action-adventure, science fiction, comedy, and interactivity. These EDTV programs were produced by adopting different genres simultaneously. The producers are trying to bring novelty through the script, genre selection, and hybridization.

## **Suggestions**

Television is scientifically proven as a very effective medium for entertainment. The importance of Children's TV channels is increasing rapidly due to the hybridization of technology and threats associated with new media technologies. It is crucial to make the TV medium more effective for the learning of children. The TV program can prove beneficial in imparting knowledge about the academic lesson, resilience, and self-actualization. The parents can keep control on-screen time and content. They can guide children in the selection of age-appropriate programs. The TV Programs should be designed in collaboration with educational experts, producers, and academic researchers. The government and Non-governmental organizations should take part in the establishment of educational TV. The foundation of educational TV can overcome the lack of competent instructors, substandard education system and uneducated parents in underdeveloped countries.

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