



IDIOT BOX vs. INTELLIGENT BOX

Ravi Kant

Maulana Azad National Urdu University,
College of Teacher Education,
Darbhanga, Bihar, INDIA.

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Abstract

In the twentieth century, television's superiority as a medium of information and entertainment is getting more and more pronounced. This magical chatter box has won laurels as it can tell so much without requiring the ability to read. As such it is popular with the illiterate or semi illiterate masses and also with children who are said to be uncritical and unaware receiver of information. The media especially TV, has created an important area and a growing number of today's researches are exploring as to how images of general roles suggested in educational television might influence young minds, children attitudes and beliefs which could be measured and related to the amount of television they watch. An attempt has been take in this paper to determine the role of television in the development of young children's mind.

Key Words: Television, children's viewing habits, children's development

Introduction

Education of an individual starts from his/her childhood. It is the time, when both school and parents put their efforts to make strong base of a child. In this age of information technology, there are so many things to attract children towards them like television, internet, videogames etc. Various surveys tell us that children are more attracted towards television. Today it is very common for household to have one television at least. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a house without television. At this time, it becomes difficult for parents to make the children learn to utilize their time effectively. Children are having such a magnetic attraction for television that they prefer to spend most of their free time in front of television. On an average, a child views television for 2 to 4 hours daily. They can even enjoy television viewing for whole of the day and it is becoming a great threat to their learning environment. John Dewey who was the great educator innovator once said, "Environment teaches". He meant by that simple statement that what surrounds children. Television has a vital influence

on human mind especially on children's mind. It is already proved that learning through multisensory organs, has a great impact. Kaur J (1998)¹ and Taj and Masthan (1998)² stated that television is the most effective modern device which has conquered the imagination of any person of any perspectives. Television has gained an edge over all of them and has risen beyond in the imagination of knowledge. They also stated television is a potent medium of information, education and entertainment. It is one of the most significant technological developments for the uplift of society. The viewing of television has influenced the social life of both urban and rural. There has been a controversy between educationist and media person as to whether television should be used for enrichment or for formal education or in other words should role of television are finally instructional? Many researches show that television influenced children's mind very much. Students get advantages from television programs. They can increase their knowledge from television. They get many experiences from television. Research findings in recent past prove fact that slow learner appear to learn faster and better from classroom instruction. Subject content taught by television is retained for a longer period than taught conventionally in classroom. On other hand, not all programs on television are suitable for children to view. There is a dramatic increase of violence, coarse language, murder and crime. This is setting a very bad example for children. It may even lead to them attempting to commit such crimes and acts that would most probably put a bad name to all youths.

History of television

There is no single inventor of television. Television is the product of widely spread discoveries by many men from many nations. The beginning of today's television set go back 131 years. In 1928, television got its first play "a one act spy melodrama". The Queen's messenger presented by General Electrical's experimental station in Schenectady, New York. Amateur TV bugs, an advance version of the radio ham, reported receiving the performance as the pacific cost. The picture received was three by three inches, but it was promised a twelve by twelve enlargement in the near future. The world's first regular television service was started in 1936 by the British Broadcasting Corporation, heir to John Logy Baird's development. The BBC's programs went on three times a day for a total time of three hours and the picture was ten by twelve inches. Reception was on sets which amateurs built for themselves. Only 3000 sets had been produced in two years. Some of the programs featured by the BBC were the 1927 coronation, the Wimbledon tennis matches, the opera, top plays and news reads. The era of satellite television was inaugurated in July 1962, when Telestar I satellite television was launched. The first commercial communications satellite, Early Bird, was launched in 1965. This enabled the expansion of cable television at a fast pace. By 1965 an estimated 1.7 million homes in the US were served by about 1600 cable TV systems. By 1996 there were about 11600 cable systems in operations in the US. With the arrival of cable TV, the number of TV channels available to home TV sets increased by scores.³ Television in India has got a history of 40 years. In the first 20 years it was confined mainly to the metropolitan cities like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. In the 1980's it reached out to all the regions and become a truly national phenomenon. Television came to India on September 15, 1959 on an experimental basis which was later on launched in selected schools of Delhi on a regular basis from October 22, 1961. This experiment had a grant from UNESCO and with equipment offered by the US and Phillips (India) company. The objective

was to discover what television could achieve in community development and formal education. The emphasis of broadcasting in the beginning was on its public service function. In 1961, educational television programs began to be broadcast from Delhi station for the benefit of science teachers. But by 1965 entertainment programs had to be introduced under pressure from television manufacturers and the public. That year television service was regularized in Delhi with daily broadcasts of educational programs and entertainment. In 1967, the Krishi Darshan program for farmers was introduced. This program with its rural orientation still remains a part of Doordarshan programming of all its centers. In 1972 Calcutta, Madras, Lucknow, Pune and Amritsar centers also became operational. The pace of television expansion was accelerated in 1975 when Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was used for instructional purposes in about 2400 villages in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa. The Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) under the umbrella of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the State Institutes of Educational Technology (SIET) was set up by the Government of India to ensure effective use of mass media and television in education as a step to achieve Universalization of Primary Education covering rural, urban, tribal and backward areas by the formal and non-formal systems of education. In 1980's India entered into the era of satellite communication. Communication satellite designed by India was put in geostationary orbits. Through the first satellite INSAT-I A failed to become fully operational, INSAT I B began to provide communication facilities throughout India. Educational television as a part of Instructional satellite was launched in India during 1982-83 for schools and also for home viewing. To achieve the gigantic task Ministry of Education, GOI (now MHRD) distributed more than 33000 color television sets to primary schools to ensure maximum viewing in schools. During 1984-85, 120 television transmitters were installed to increase coverage. By 1988 television broadcast covered 500 million people which constituted 62% of the population.⁴ In 1993-94 Doordarshan signals reached 83.6% of the population. Today, the national channel of DD operates through a network of 897 terrestrial transmitters to make available the television signals for over 87% of population. According to the Doordarshan audience research wing, in 1988, 90 million peoples watched TV regularly. In 1997, DD programs were watched by 350 million viewers. There were 17.34 million TV sets in India in 1988, 40.34 millions sets in 1993; the number of sets went up to 63 million in 1999.⁵ In 1990's foreign satellite channels invaded the Indian skies which brought about radical changes in the conception of TV. It was the Gulf War in 1991 that brought CNN to Indian homes. Star TV a Hongkong based TV network, began operations in India in the same year. Other foreign and national channels began to broadcast programs not only in English but also in Hindi and other regional languages.

Television at its good

Television today has a lot of positive effects and influence on our society. Television gives us helpful information, various forms of education and entertainment, which are all the part of the positive effects that television has on our society. On a day to day basis, television keeps us informed with plenty of helpful information. Over the past forty years, television sets have become a standard activity for most families. Children in our culture grow up watching television in the morning, in the afternoon and often in the evening as well. There are many excellent programs for children. It can be entertaining and educational and can open

up new worlds for children, giving them a chance to travel the globe, learn about different cultures and gain exposures to ideas they may never encounter in their own community. Programs with positive role models can influence people to change their behavior for the better. Many researches in the field of television show the potential and effect of television on school going children. Schmidt et al.(2008)⁶ in his study found that viewing educational television is linked positively with academic achievement. They also found that electronic media, particularly video games can enhance visual spatial skills, such as visual tracking, mental rotation and target localization. Kirkorian et al.(2008)⁷, Anuradha et al.(2006)⁸, Meenu (2006)⁹, Kalpna (2004)¹⁰ in their studies found that knowledge value of children increase due to television and makes better knowledge value than females, whether they were cable network viewers or Doordarshan viewers. Sharma et al.(2002)¹¹ in his research found that there was a significant effect in achievement in science of students belonging to different video based instructional strategies for teaching science. Anderson et al.(2001)¹² in a long study of high schools, researcher found that viewing educational television programs as pre school children was associated with higher grades, more reading, less aggression and more value placed on academics when these children reached high school. Malick (1995)¹³ in his study found that there was a significant positive effect of technology acquaintance of students at lower primary and upper primary stages in their achievement in Educational Television Lessons. Sahoo (1995)¹⁴ in his Ph.D. work on appraising impact of UGC program had positive effect on student learning. Mohanty (1988)¹⁵ in his study found that children exposed to ETV programs have superior scholastic achievement as compare to non exposed groups. The greatest achievement was in respect of language.

Modern communication technology has brought a revolution in the world of mass communication. It has a vital role to play in the modernization of developing communities in to national mainstream. There has been tremendous growth of mass media in India- newspaper, radio, television, magazines and periodicals. Television is an excellent resource even though it is not always used to its full potential. Television has its good side. Television provides many undeniable advantages for students. First of all, there are many different types of programs on television. The viewer can watch a weather report to prepare the day. Cartoons and sports provide relaxation and fun. School programs, documentaries and the news teach students about the world. And advertisements inform us about products and new ideas. Secondly, the content is appealing because it is realistic and up to date. As television is a medium that combines moving color images and sound. It resembles to real life so the viewers can identify with what they see. Furthermore, modern technology means that the content is up to date for example, new reports can be broadcast live and from all over the world. Finally television can use to enhance many important aspect of everyday life, Children want education, information and instruction because they are inquisitive and like to learn. Television gives them this in documentaries or educational program and in report or cultural programs. Students or children enjoy creativity and television gives them that in the work of all the people involved in creativity, clever films, scripts, documentaries and effective sceneries. Television gives students the world, other people, languages and ideas. It introduces them to knowledge. Television offers students or children a wide range of valuable programs and content and serves many purposes in our daily lives. Television not only provides many types of programs with inventory and broad content but it also serves to fulfill

their needs in terms of entertainment and knowledge. Television is an integral and vital medium today. It can contribute positively to the education of society and children's awareness of others and it will continue to have a sharing influence for many years to come. In conclusion, television today has a lot of positive effects and greatly influences our society. Through various news programs and documentaries the television keeps students educated. Students who are interested get educated through these sports events. Televised games create and initial interest in the sport and generate a fun base. Through television students can be informed about world wide news. Television is a great way of educating the people throughout society with important issues that affects student's life very much.

Television on it's bad

Everything contains good side and bad side and television has no exception. Research studies over the world over have brought out various types of negative impact of intense viewing of television by children. Wasting time is one of the inherent disadvantages of watching television. Let us imagine, if one day one person spends an hour watching television without gaining any useful information, then in one year he will waste 365 hours and in 10 years 3650 hours. With that time, he can learn several languages as well as finish some studying course. In today's generation television has a great influence on students or children. Unfortunately most of the programs watched by students have a negative impact and give the wrong impression of what really happened in everyday life. If also influenced their development and their behavior. Children would act out the scenes they saw on TV. A number of cases were reported during the broadcast of "Ramayana"(an Indian mythological drama) a popular serial, in which children's eyes got injured in their attempt to act out certain scenes of serial involving fights with bow and arrows. The broadcast of a serial "Shaktiman" (The superman) had to be suspended on complaints that children put their life at a great risk imitating the superman feats of the hero of the serial. A Delhi boy who was a XII student, 16 years old climbed upon the top of the train with his friends at Nizamuddin station in order to enact a musical scene from the Hindi film "Dil se". As the line was charged he was thrown off the train top and died later in hospital. The boy was the great admire of the hero of the film and other film stars. Such bizarre incidents shows that some young persons, their number may be a few, confuse the virtual reality of television with real life. It also indicates the susceptibility of children to media messages in general and advertisement message in particular.

Researches also revealed the adverse effect of television on children. Reinking etal.(1990)¹⁶ in his research found that children who are heavy television viewer (over 3 hours per day) show the greatest decline in reading ability. Saroj Kothari (1993)¹⁷ founds that the impact of television programs on moral behavior, negative effect was more than the positive one. Angela etal. (1997)¹⁸ in his study found that television viewing time was negatively related to school readiness for children at 6 years. Study of Caldas (1999)¹⁹ revealed that television viewing has a moderate negative effect on the academic achievement of the advantages (white) group. In their study Agarwala and Amrita (2000)²⁰ noted that TV viewing in higher secondary school was negatively related to study habits. It had negative effect if it goes beyond four hour's duration. Hershberger (2002)²¹ found that the greater extent of television viewing among students, the lower was their school performance level. In a study Shejwal (2006)²² explored that the long hours spent in television viewing not only

adversely affected the subject's academic growth and cognitive development but also did not contribute towards the development of their academic skills and abilities.

According to many researches excessive television viewing is contributing to poor grades, sleep problem, behavior problems, obesity and risky behavior. Most children's programming do not teach what parents say that want their children to learn, many shows are filled with stereotype, violent solution to problems and mean behavior. Advertisers target children and on average children see thousands of television commercials every year. This includes many advertisements for unhealthy snack foods and drinks. Students are not engaging in the activities they need to help them develop their bodies and brains when they watch television. Spending time on watching television is taking time away from healthy activities like active play outside with friends, eating dinner together as a family or reading. Television time also takes away from particularly in sports, music, art or other activities that requires practice to become skillful. Television brings with it serious problems. Watching television could lead to a number of health issues. For instance in developed countries where television is popular, many children acquire obesity because of watching television too much without exercise. As a consequence it leads to laziness and health deteriorations. There are a number of ways in which television may interfere with a child's cognitive development. Television is inherently a passive form of one way communication the lack of reciprocity means that television is irresponsible to the moment to moment communicative signals of a child. It is from those reasons that television even educational content designed specifically for children is incapable of teaching children how to use the lesson it purports to teach in a general or sticky manner. Children require interactions with other people to learn the lessons of communication and socialization that will help them confidently master their world.

Taming the television's effect

As we have seen that television has a potential effect on children or students. Some researches shows that television is very helpful and educative instrument for student's learning but on other hand some studies show its adverse effect. Being of these controversies almost all educationists and instructors accepts that television can be a strong medium of learning and healthy socialization of a child or student. If we take some vital decision for children regarding their television viewing habits for the advancement and development of their children.

Parents and educators should consider following implication-

1) Set limits: Children under age two should watch no television, children under eight should consume no more than 1-2 hours. Know how much television your child watches. Set some basic rules such as no television before homework or chores are done or during meals. Establish good viewing habits for your children. Suggest and participate with your children in alternative activities such as reading, sports, conversation, games and hobbies.

2) Plan: Encourage your children to plan their viewing by using a TV guide or newspaper listing rather than flipping channels. Help the children decide which show to see and encourage them to watch a variety of programs appropriate for their level of understanding. The television should be turned on only for specific programs; it should be turned off when they are over.

3) Participate: Know what your children watch on television. Watch with them and talk about the programs afterward. Explain situations that are confusing. Ask why any violent scenes occurred and how painful they were. Ask them questions and express the view. This will also let you know what your child likes to play.

4) Monitor: Avoid shows, movie or video games that have violent or sexual content. Encourage children to watch program about characters and care for each other. Such programs can influence children in positive ways by modeling desirable and setting good examples.

5) Analyze Commercials: Children need your help it critically evaluate the validity of the many products advertised on television. Help children to critically evaluate advertisement. Explain to your child the difference between a 'want' versus 'need' and that advertisement are designed to sell us things we don't need.

6) Express your view: Call your local television station when you are offended or pleased by something on television. Stations, network and sponsors are all concerned about the effects of television viewing on children and are responsive to parent's concerns.

7) Background noise: Turning off the television even if you are not watching. Researches show that young children are disturbed when a television is on. It interrupts their play and can reduce the interactions between parent and child.

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