Effective educational television has the potential to positively impact children’s cognitive development. For the purpose of this essay, “effective educational television” refers to any program that comprises of linguistic and production techniques specifically designed to promote children’s learning of academic and prosocial content. Extensive research has been done to support the claim that informative children programs can have favourable effects on many aspects of child development.

Firstly, televised programs that use appropriate language-promoting strategies can help children learn language. In a study conducted on toddlers between three and thirty months old, it was found that television shows, such as “Blue’s Clues” and “Dora the Explorer”, were positively related to expressive language production and vocabulary (Linebarger D & Walker D, 2005). These programs that include interactive activities through the use of characters who prompt participation from viewers and label onscreen objects create an informal learning environment that improves children’s vocabulary skills and language expression.

Additionally, the development of executive cognitive functions, such as problem-solving and emotional self-regulation, are associated with curriculum-based programming. Curriculum-based programming uses information about children’s intellectual and behavioural activity in order to effectively communicate its educational messages to its young target audience. A two-year program evaluation compared a group of preschoolers who regularly watched “Blue’s Clues” to a group who did not. In comparison to the non-viewers, the group of regular viewers were more successful and systematic when solving problems (Kirkorian H et. al, 2008). Furthermore, a meta-analysis that investigated thirty-four studies on the effects of television discovered that young audiences of prosocial content behaved more positively toward others (Mares M & Woodard E, 2005). Television that encourages social acceptance improves children’s problem-solving strategies and social skills.

Finally, educational programs could have long term positive effects on a child’s interests and motivation. Children who were exposed to more educational television devoted more time to reading books and other educational activities than viewers who were rarely exposed to educational programs (Wright et. al, 2001). This, in turn, can improve upon various cognitive abilities and increases school readiness. Thus, when children begin school, students with more exceptional school readiness skills are more likely to achieve academic success and be academically motivated than those who aren’t well-prepared for school. A number of longitudinal samples found that frequent exposure to educational programs in preschool were positively associated with academic achievement in high school (Wright et. al, 2001; Kirkorian H et. al, 2008).

Clearly, early exposure to educational television is significantly beneficial to children’s cognitive development, and, thus, future academic success.
References


