

# The Structure and Content of Locally-Produced Children's Television Programmes in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study examined the structure and content of locally-produced children's television programmes with a view to finding out the quality and appropriateness of the media content that children are exposed to in Nigeria. It also investigated the factors affecting the quality of locally-produced television programmes targeted at the child audience. Data were obtained through content analysis and in-depth interviews. Three locally-produced children's programmes ('*Children's Funtime*' – BCOS-TV, '*Children's Funspace*' – Galaxy TV, '*Kids and Food*' – NTA Network all in Ibadan, Nigeria) were selected for the study. Eighteen episodes of the selected programmes were content analyzed while twelve purposively selected broadcasters were interviewed. Findings showed that though the entertainment-education content of the programmes were geared towards meeting the socialisation needs of the child audience, some programmes lacked professional packaging as evident in poor post-production such as missing inter-segmental links, substitution of closing montages with captions as well as poor and unstable timing. Factors which determine the quality of media content revealed in the study include media funding, competence of producers and level of participation of children. The study, therefore, recommended adequate funding of children's television productions as well as training and re-training of broadcasters to ensure quality programmes production.

**Key Words:** Children's television programmes; Locally-produced programmes; Television production; Media content; Socialisation

## Introduction

In most countries of the world including Nigeria, children are considered as assets and referred to as "the natural resources of the nation". Since childhood is a period of development, it is expected that children would be properly groomed by the social and

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cultural resources of their society in order to ensure appropriate socialization. If this is not done, defective or deviant products will result.

Although television has been recognized as one of the agencies of socialisation, research has shown that watching television can affect children positively or negatively, depending on the quality of a programme and the quantity of time that a child spends watching as well as parental guidance or the lack of it (Anderson & Daniel, 2001; Buckingham & Bragg, 2003; Moses, 2008; Oakes, 2009; Kadiri and Muhammed, 2011).

Marsh, Brooks, Gillet, Hughes, Ritchie, Robert, Woodward, and Wright (2005:47) surveyed early-years teachers and found that 92% of them agreed or strongly agreed that children learn from television, 67% disagreed that it was harmful for children's language development, and 83% felt that children watched too much. Moreover, Marsh et al (2005) discovered that parents, especially of children under six, from all socio-economic backgrounds often see the media, including television, as important educational tools that can assist their children's educational development in areas such as mathematics and literacy. The parents described children as "actively engaged with television content, singing, dancing, copying characters' actions, shouting out answers and role-playing stories." This suggests that teachers and parents are positive about the role of television in their children's social, emotional, linguistic and cognitive development.

However, Kadiri and Muhammed's (2011) study indicated a positive correlation coefficient between mass media and children's behavioural problems. The results of the study suggest that children's behavioural problems can be predicted from the amount of media children are exposed to.

It can be deduced from the findings of these studies that television shapes and influences the lives of children. Hence, the quality of media content that children are exposed to should be of concern to media audience researchers/scholars. In short, the content of television programmes viewed by children matters a lot and needs to be investigated.

According to Boateng (2008:193) "it is recognized internationally that special provision needs to be made to ensure that children are provided with programming that entertains, informs and educates them" Bearing in mind the importance of children in society as well as their needs, the Children's Television Charter, drafted at the World Summit on Children and Television in Melbourne Australia in March, 1995 and adopted at the Prix Jeunesse Roundtable in May, 1995 stipulates as follows:

1. Children should have programmes of high quality which are made specifically for them and which do not exploit them. These programmes in addition to entertaining, should allow children to develop physically, mentally and socially to their fullest potential.
2. Children should hear, see and express themselves, their culture, their languages and their life experiences through television programmes which affirm their sense of self, community and place.
3. Children's programmes should promote an awareness and appreciation of other cultures in parallel with the child's own cultures in parallel with the child's own cultural background.
4. Children's programmes should be wide ranging in genre and content but should not include gratuitous scenes of violence and sex.
5. Children's programmes should be aired in regular slots at times when children are available to view and/or distributed via widely accessible media or technologies.
6. Sufficient funds must be made available to make these programmes to the highest possible standards.

7. Governments, production, distribution and funding organizations should recognize both the importance and vulnerability of indigenous children's television and take steps to support and protect it.

Building on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and The International Children's Television Charter (adopted in May 1995), The African Charter on Children's Broadcasting was adopted in 1997 at the African summit on Children and Broadcasting held in Accra, Ghana to address the particular needs and wants of the children of Africa.

The African Charter also held that children should have quality, well-funded programming addressing the developmental needs of children. In addition, the African Charter offers that:

- Children must be ensured equitable access to programmes and where possible be involved in the production process;
- Children's programmes must empower children and there should be ongoing research into the child audience, including the child's needs and wants (cited in Osei-Hwere and Pecora, 2008:18).

In Nigeria, the Nigeria Broadcasting Code stipulates the programming requirements for children and young persons aged 18 years and below. The requirements indicate that stations shall:

- Not broadcast a programme which violates social values, shows disrespect for law and order or departs from an honorable life style.
- Not broadcast a programme containing sexually explicit or obscene material.
- Avoid the use of foul or blasphemous language.
- Protect children from programmes that are likely to lower their self esteem.
- Promote indigenous values and present foreign folklores and values with care to avoid undue conflict influence in children at the impressionable age.

(Nigeria Broadcasting Code, 2006:45-46)

So, bearing in mind the various Charters on children's broadcasting and the guidelines of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, one begins to wonder: How well have the needs of the Nigerian child audience been addressed? What is the quality of locally-produced programmes targeted at children? What is the structure and content of these programmes? Do locally-produced programmes address the developmental needs of Nigerian children? What are the challenges faced by media professionals in providing quality media content for the child audience? These are the major questions that this study has set out to provide answers to. The study has become necessary in view of the fact that previous researches on children and the media have focused on the influence of media content on children but very little has been done to determine the quality of media content that children are exposed to. This contribution hopes to bridge this gap in knowledge.

This study is anchored on the entertainment-education framework. The framework also cited in Kaswoswe (2008) entails embedding of educational content in entertainment programmes presented through the mass media. It influences, at the individual level, awareness, attention and behaviour towards a socially desirable objective (Melkota, 2003). It is argued that the entertainment-education approach directly or indirectly facilitates social change (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). The approach uses a blend of core communication theories. However, the most important theoretical underline of entertainment-education approach relevant to this study is the social learning theory. The basic assumption in this study is that children learn from television.

### **Locally-produced television programmes.**

These refer to the programmes which are homegrown and are transmitted on local television stations, including the network service, with a view to affecting the individual's knowledge and behaviour. Locally-produced programmes are aimed at promoting social unity, national culture and identity. In Nigeria, local programme content is regulated to:

- (a) promote and sustain Nigeria's diverse cultures, mores, folktales and community, life;
- (b) provide diversity in types of programming content for the widest audience through the limitless variety in the cultural landscape of Nigeria;
- (c) promote Nigerian content and encourage the production and projection of Nigerian life within and outside its borders;
- (d) ensure that every terrestrial free-to -air station attains a local content minimum of 70 percent;
- (e) establish a dynamic, creative and economically vibrant Nigerian broadcast production industry.
- (f) (Nigeria Broadcasting Code, 2006:42).

Locally-produced children's programmes aim at exciting children about their community and the world around them. Moreover, Osei-Hwere (2008:183) notes that:

Locally-produced content give children the opportunity to participate in the various stages of children's media production. They can contribute content, help with technical aspect such as directing, sound control, camera work or perform as actors and talent for the program.

It is believed that this access to the media can have a positive impact on children's interaction with the media.

### **Approaches to children's programmes**

Imagination is the keyword in creating and producing children's programmes. The producer of a children's programme must consider the age, exposure, socio-economic background, cultural background, educational needs as well as the interests of his/her target audience. There are two main strategies for children's programme content:

- Promotion of educational aspects to strengthen the positive links that exist between educational programmes and school work. According to Zhao (1996, p.78) "programmes should be morally uplifting and intellectually educational". Osei-Hwere (2008) also acknowledges the important role educational and informational children's media content can play in children's cognitive, emotional, psychological and social development.
- Entertainment – Entertainment is a natural necessity of life as "all work and no play makes Jack/Jill (Jide and Joke) a dull boy/girl". The entertainment content is aimed at rejuvenating the child audience.

In developing children's programme content, there is a need to bear in mind the characteristics of effective children's programmes. These include:

- Engaging children via the use of appealing elements such as humour, mysteries and games among other elements.
- Choosing age-appropriate topics that are both interesting to children and relevant to their lives.
- Presenting content via age-appropriate language and at levels of difficulty that are tailored to children's knowledge and developmental level.

- Using engaging or action-filled visuals or 'talking heads' including characters that viewers see as competent and intelligent and with whom they can identify.
- Motivating children to carry their learning production via activities that extend the experience after viewing (Fische, 2005).

Individual countries have different and contextual stipulations for their children's programmes.

Osei-Hwere (2008) reports that in developed countries for example, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan, media content is created to teach school-based curriculum on the internet and television. There are also programmes which offer social skills and cultural identity and educate children about current events and things about their communities/environment. In Nigeria, children's programmes are targeted at children between the ages 2 and 13 years and usually feature people of that age group. The programmes in the children's belts deal with subjects which are meant to be of interest to the growing child.

Although children are exposed to different programme genres, this study focuses on the variety genre. A typical children's variety programme is segmented and tends towards entertainment and education. The elements in the variety format include: captions/montage; sign on/introduction; sign off/outro, segments, links (oral presentation that links the various segments and duration (length of programme)).

#### **Method of Research**

Two methods of research (content analysis and in-depth interview) were employed in the study. Through content analysis, the study examined the structure and content of some locally-produced children's programmes on television to see how relevant they are in addressing the developmental needs of children in Nigeria. It also investigated the factors which affect the quality of locally-produced children's television programmes by conducting in-depth-interviews.

#### **Sampling procedure/Sample size**

**Programmes** - Three half-hour children's variety programmes in English, produced locally and considered specifically relevant to this study, were chosen from three television stations in Ibadan. '*Children's Funtime*' was selected purposively because it was the only children's variety programme in English running on BCOS-TV, Ibadan (state-owned station) at research time. On the other hand, all the locally-produced children's programmes in English on NTA, Ibadan a Federal-owned station (seven altogether), were featuring only on the network service. '*Kids and Food*' was chosen randomly by ballot from these seven programmes. The third programme '*Children's Funspace*' which is from Galaxy Television (privately-owned station) was purposively selected because it was the most recently transmitted locally-produced children's variety programme in English on the station during the study period.

Six episodes of each of the selected programmes were randomly selected by ballot. Altogether, eighteen episodes of the three programmes were selected for content analysis.

**Broadcasters** - The purposive sampling technique was used in choosing broadcasters for the indepth interviews. Those selected were the producers and presenters of the three selected programmes (one doubling as producer/presenter), Managers of the Programmes Division in the three stations as well as the Network Programmes Manager and General Managers of the stations. Altogether, twelve broadcasters were chosen for the study.

### **Content Categories**

Following Keyton's (2001) formula for priority ranking, the study employed six categories of scenes with different themes.

The theme categories which guided the analysis are listed below (the items are in parentheses):

### **Themes**

- Appeal  
(Opening Montage/Caption; Introduction/sign on; Links; Outro/Sign-off; Closing Montage/Caption)
- Instruction  
(Rhymes; Pictorials; Story-time; Question time; Drama; Songs)
- Awareness  
(Vox pop; Talk/News; Interview; Biography, Documentary)
- Ability  
(Recitation; Quiz; Skills in learning)
- Entertainment  
(Traditional Dance; Choreography; Songs; Drama, Games/Sports).
- External Social Interaction  
(Excursion/Visits)

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. After watching all eighteen editions of the programmes, the researchers marked the scenes according to the themes featured in the programmes. The length of each scene was noted and the total length of scenes was calculated and, with that, the degree of prominence of items featured in all the editions of the programmes was quantified. The percentages were worked thus:  $x/y \times 100$  i.e.  $x = \text{total duration of item}$  and  $y = \text{total duration of episode} \times 100$ . The score of each category was taken against the total score of all other categories and expressed in simple percentages.

Data were presented in tables, where necessary, in order to facilitate easy interpretation.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Structure of the selected programmes**

The structure is the layout of the programme after the format has been determined. The format of the three programmes '*Children's Funtime*' (BCOS, TV), '*Children's Funspace*' (Galaxy Television, Ibadan) and '*Kids & Food*' (NTA Network) is variety. Their half-hour duration respectively means that each is technically 24 – 26 minutes.

To examine the structure of the programmes, the basic elements of appeal in a variety programme layout were considered. These are: opening caption or montage; presenter's sign on or 'intro'; presenter's links for the segments; presenter's sign off or 'outro' and end captions or montage. The number of segments as well as the duration of the episodes were also considered.

Tables 1 – 3 give a picture of the structure of the selected programmes:

#### **Keys to symbols used:**

- ✓ - indicates presence of the element sought
- C - indicates presence of captions
- M - indicates presence of montage
- x - indicates non-existence or non-availability of the element in question.



**Structure of 'Children's Funtime'**

'Children's Funtime' featured mainly pupil presenters from the schools who usually appeared very briefly at the beginning of the programme.

**Table 1: The Structure of 'Children's Funtime'**

Elements/Episodes	1	2	3	4	5	6
Opening Captions/Montage	M	M	M	C	x	X
'Intro'	✓	x	✓	✓	x	X
Links	✓	✓	X	x	x	X
'Outro'/Sign off	✓	x	X	x	x	X
Closing Captions/Montage	M	x	X	x	x	X
No of Segments	6	3	6	6	8	5
Duration	25' 20"	15' 45"	30' 10"	28' 30"	31'	21'

Table 1 shows that only Edition 1 of the programme can be said to be well structured as it reflects the presence of all the elements of a variety programme format. The other episodes, particularly 5 & 6 are considered substandard. All the elements are lacking in the last two editions (5 & 6). The number of segments range between three and eight while the duration range between 15' 45" and 31'. Technically, a half-hour programme is expected to run for 24 – 26 mins. This is to make room for the announcer's programme sign on/sign off and commercials.

**Structure of 'Children's Funspace'**

As evident in the data presented in Table 2, all the episodes of the programme have the presenter's introduction, links and 'sign off'. Montage was used at the beginning of all the editions while captions were used at the end of the programme.

**Table 2: The Structure of 'Children's Funspace'**

Elements/Episodes	1	2	3	4	5	6
Opening Montage/Captions	M	M	M	M	M	M
'Intro'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Links	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Outro'/Sign off	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Closing Montage/Captions	C	C	C	C	C	C
Segments	8	8	8	7	7	6
Duration	31' 45"	24' 35"	27' 45"	25'	27' 30"	27' 50"

The number of segments on the programmes range between six (edition 6), seven (editions 4 & 5) and eight (editions 1, 2, and 3).

In relation to duration, only two editions (2 and 4) are within the standard 24 – 26 minutes time-frame while the others are not.

**Table 3: The Structure of 'Kids and Food'**

Elements/Episodes	1	2	3	4	5	6
Opening Montage/ Captions	M	M	M	M	M	M
'Intro'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Links	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Outro'/Sign off	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Closing Montage/ Captions	M	M	M	M	M	M
Segments	5	5	5	5	4	6
Duration	22' 15"	23' 30"	24'	25'	25' 30"	27' 15"

From Table 3, we see that the programme is well-structured – all the episodes of the programme featured montage at the beginning and end. There are the presenter's introduction, links and 'sign-off' as well.

The number of segments vary; four episodes have five segments while episodes 5 and 6 have four and six segments respectively. However, for the length of the programme, only three episodes (3, 4 and 5) are within the standard time-frame.

#### **Content of the selected programmes**

A variety programme is characterized by segments which cover various items such as story-telling, facts-file/documentary, excursion, drama, arts and craft, games, talent hunt, poetry, interview and so on. These items are subsumed in six theme categories. An attempt was made to find out how many of the items listed earlier under the six themes are present in each of the episodes of the programmes under study.

**Table 4: Content of 'Children's Funtime'**

Themes	Episodes and Duration						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Appeal	1' 50" (6%)	1' 15" (7%)	3' 40" (12%)	30" (1%)	-	-	6' 35" (4%)
Instruction	4' 30" (17.5%)	-	4' (13%)	3' (11%)	-	-	11' 30" (7%)
Awareness	-	-	-	3' (11%)	4' (13%)	4' (19%)	11' (7%)
Ability	5' (20%)	3' 30" (22%)	7' (24%)	12' (42%)	7' (22%)	11' (52%)	45' 30" (30%)
Entertainment	14' (56%)	11' (71%)	15' 30" (51%)	10' (35%)	20' (65%)	6' (29%)	76' 30" (51%)
External Social Interaction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	22' 20" (100%)	15' 45" (100%)	30' 10" (100%)	28' 30" (100%)	31' (100%)	21' (100%)	15' 05" (100%)

In Table 4, it is clear that scenes/segments with entertainment themes recorded the highest duration with a total of 76' 30" (51%). They feature dance (conventional, choreographed and traditional) as well as songs, games and drama. This is not surprising since the major objective of the programme is to provide fun for the children and thus relax them after a hard day's work.



Scenes with 'ability' themes are the second highest, with 45 minutes 30 seconds which is 30% of total air time. These scenes/segments feature talent hunt, quiz and recitations where children demonstrate their skill in learning. Scenes with 'instruction' themes (11' 30" - 7%) and 'awareness' themes (11' - 7%) feature talks and drama respectively. The element of appeal recorded 6' 35" (4%) which is quite low. There is nothing on the external social interaction theme.

**Table 5: Content of 'Children's Funspace'**

Themes	Episodes and Duration						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Appeal	5' (16%)	4' 20" (18%)	3' (11%)	2' 30" (10%)	3' 45" (13%)	4' (15%)	22' 35" (14%)
Instruction	15' (48%)	10' (42%)	15' 30" (57%)	12' 30" (50%)	16' 45" (61%)	12' (44%)	81' 45" (50%)
Awareness	6' 45" (20%)	6' 30" (26%)	3' 30" (12%)	4' (16%)	2' (7%)	4' (15%)	26' 45" (16%)
Ability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Entertainment	5' (16%)	3' 45" (14%)	5' 45" (20%)	6' (24%)	5' (19%)	7' 50" (26%)	33' 20" (20%)
External Social Interaction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	31' 45" (100%)	24' 35" (100%)	27' 45" (100%)	25' (100%)	27' 30" (100%)	21' 50" (100%)	164' 05" (100%)

The data in Table 5 indicate that, in all the episodes, the programme featured messages under four themes – 'Appeal', 'Instruction', 'Awareness' and 'Entertainment' but has nothing on 'Ability' and 'External Social Interaction' themes.

Most of the time on the programme that is, 81' 45" (50%) was spent on scenes with 'instruction' theme. This is followed by scenes with 'entertainment' theme - 33' 20" (20%), 'awareness' theme - 26' 45" (16%) and 'appeal' theme - 22' 35" (14%) respectively.

This programme featured many adult presenters who enlightened the children. This has added value to the programme.

**Table 6: Content of 'Kids and Food'**

Themes	Episodes and Duration						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Appeal	4' (19%)	2' 45" (11%)	4' 30" (18%)	4' 30" (18%)	6' 30" (25%)	4' 45" (17%)	27' (18%)
Instruction	8' 45" (39%)	9' (39%)	11' (47%)	9' (36%)	10' 30" (42%)	9' (33%)	57' 15" (39%)
Awareness	3' 30" (16%)	2' 45" (11%)	6' 30" (27%)	2' 30" (10%)	8' 30" (33%)	10' 30" (39%)	34' 15" (24%)
Ability	1' 30" (6%)	9' (39%)	2' (8%)	3' (12%)	-	3' (11%)	18' 30" (12%)
Entertainment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
External Social Interaction	4' 30" (20%)	-	-	6' (24%)	-	-	10' 30" (7%)
Total	22' 15" (100%)	23' 30" (100%)	24' (100%)	25' (100%)	25' 30" (100%)	27' 50" (100%)	147' 30" (100%)

Data presented in Table 6 show that 'instruction theme' is highest with 57' 15" (39%) of total air-time, followed by 'awareness' theme with 34' 15" (24%) and 'appeal' theme with 27' (18%). Ability theme is 18' 30" (12%) and 'external social interaction' theme is 10' 30" (7%).

Findings presented in Tables 1 – 6 will now be discussed. First, the **structure**: From the picture reflected on Tables 1 – 3, it is clear that although the three programmes adopted the variety format, they defaulted on the provision of conventional elements of a variety programme. '*Children's Funtime*' (Table 1) is particularly guilty of this without the elements of appeal such as proper opening and closing of programmes with captions or montage. Presenter's 'intro' and 'outro' as well as links are also missing in some of the programmes. '*Children's Funspace*' had montage at the beginning but rounded off the programmes with captions (Table 2). A more professional approach would have been to use the montage at the end as well, as was done in '*Kids and Food*' (Table 3). Elements in the 'appeal' theme add aesthetic value to a programme. Aesthetic factors are production variables seen in the ways in which they can be manipulated to affect audience response to the video message (Compesi, 2000:241).

In some editions of '*Children's Funtime*' and '*Children's Funspace*' the segments were too many (8) for a half-hour programme. The messages, therefore, seem very brief and rushed and it appears the messages ended even before children could grasp them. It was also observed that some editions of the selected programmes did not run within the standard time-frame. A programme that under-runs or overshoots its time range is not marketable (Armstrong, 1992: 26).

All these show little evidence of post-production or editing, an element that is much desired in programming. The post-production deficiencies in the programmes may arise from inattention to details by the producer or the station.

Findings, therefore, suggest that in terms of structure of locally-produced children's television programmes, local television stations, the state-owned station in particular, need to pay more attention to broadcast programme production techniques and standards. The federal owned station (network service) however seem to fare better than the state and privately-owned stations.

As for the **content**, data presented on Tables 3 – 6 indicate that the selected locally produced children's television programmes utilize the entertainment education approach to engage children. Although findings reveal that some of the programmes laid emphasis on certain themes – '*Children's Funtime*' emphasized entertainment theme while '*Children's Funspace*' and '*Kids and Foods*' emphasized 'Instruction' theme, all the programmes were quite informative, educative and entertaining. Ekstrom (2000:467) has argued that "information can be entertaining and entertainment informative". Thus, the fact that a theme does not feature on its own in a programme may not necessarily mean that there are no messages on it, but that the message may have been incorporated into another theme. In which case, excursions and visits can be as entertaining as songs and dance.

Moreover, given the content of the programmes, it can be deduced that they are all likely to impact on the socialisation process. For instance, '*Children's Funtime*' featured rhymes, songs, stories and drama which taught the children moral/societal values such as neatness, tolerance, respect, obedience, hardwork and honesty. In Edition 6, children were enjoined not to stigmatise persons living with HIV/AIDS. They were also taught how to use sign language. This is to encourage and teach children how to appreciate the less privileged and communicate with the mute in society.

'*Children's Funspace*' featured folksongs, stories which highlighted important values in life such as good education, good health, wealth, cleanliness and contentment. The 'philosophy corner' educated the children on various issues such as tribal marks,

origin of proverbs, and so on. Aunty's corner enlightened children on various health and societal issues. However, certain topics treated in the programme such as the consequences of ante-natal care and the importance of immunization - "EPI and NPI" were best suited for an adult audience. The meaning of 'EPI' and 'NPI' were not even explained to the children. The documentary segment of *'Kids and Food'* enlightened children on food sources and benefits of vitamins. The kitchen segment taught kitchen hygiene and exposed children to various cooking methods. While the children learnt how to express their views through the vox-pop segment, the drama and interview segments highlighted the essence of good nutrition. The children were also exposed to other details of social life through excursions and shopping activities.

### **Factors which affect the Quality of Locally Produced Children's Television Programmes**

Data gathered through in-depth interviews conducted with the producers, production supervisors, programme managers of the selected programmes as well as their station managers reveal the challenges faced by broadcasters in providing quality media content for children. The constraints identified include:

- **Lack of Funds:** There is the issue of poor financing of the programmes because of lack of funds in the stations. Running a television station is cost intensive and programme production is expensive and in the production of children's programmes, much is required, specifically because of the peculiarities of their age range. All the interviewees lament that the materials/equipment needed for quality programming are in short supply. They are aware that they need to engage children through the use of appealing elements such as animation, illustrations, mysteries and games among others but they do not have sufficient funds to achieve their programme objectives. One of the interviewees claimed that producers, sometimes use their personal money to produce programmes since they are emotionally attached to the programmes and do not want their programmes to fail. This finding lends credence to Osei-Hwere's (2008) assertion that economic factors present challenges for improving or sustaining output of children's television programmes.
- **Competence of Producers:** The managers interviewed also identify lack of knowledge of research and the lazy attitude of some producers as factors which affect quality of children's programmes. A station manager states:

...Some local programmes for children I have watched are very good. A little more attention to details, still, will make them even better. But there are some that are not measuring up to what should be on air. It is the same old format - sitting down. "How are you children?... When you are talking about programming for children, we ought to have gone past that. You can entertain children, teach them a lot by going beyond the old style...

Findings suggest that lack of creativity, insufficient exposure and lack of knowledge of research on the part of producers contribute to sub-standard programming. Many of the children's programmes are not backed by research.

- **Children's level of participation and performance:** Findings reveal that children themselves as performers on the programmes contribute to the quality of programmes targeted at them. According to one of the programme supervisors, "children do not perform to expectation... you have to give them a lot of training and supervision before they perform". Similarly, one of the producers complained that most children memorize scripts given to them by adults, probably their teachers, and there is no originality. It was also discovered that it is often difficult to get children for recording because recording time may not be suitable for parents or teachers, and sometimes, the children themselves arrive late for recordings. Moreover, many children are discouraged from participating in programmes because, due to incessant power outage, they do not get to see the programmes when transmitted.
- **Feedback from viewers:** Feedback is an important element in broadcasting. The quality of feedback that producers receive impacts on the quality of the programmes that they produce. Hence, producers who do not seek, value or pay attention to feedback may not be able to address or meet the needs of children. The producers interviewed claim that they always welcome feedback from viewers of their programmes.

According to a producer:

We always give a telephone line with which our audience can contact us for questions and suggestions. I get amazed when we get calls from Kano, Minna, Maiduguri, Ilorin, Aba, Warri and so on. It means that people watch the programme and they like it. When people make suggestions on the style and quality of the programme, we work on it as our major aim is to get to our audience and make impact.

Thus, the interviewees recognize that quality programming requires that producers utilise the feedback they receive from their audience.

### **Conclusion**

The study has provided a detailed analysis of the structure and content of some locally-produced children's programmes transmitted on selected television stations in Nigeria. Findings reveal that in line with the entertainment-education framework, the programmes were designed to entertain and educate the child audience. The programmes' messages have the potential of meeting the developmental needs of children. However, the results suggest that the element of appeal in locally produced children's programmes is quite weak; some of the programmes analysed lacked professional packaging as evident in poor post production such as missing inter-segmental links, missing 'intro and outro', substitution of montages with captions and poor timing.

The need to provide children with quality locally-produced television programmes that can improve their social, emotional and cognitive well-being has become imperative. Children now live in a fast changing world and the media have a role to play in equipping them to become citizens in this global world. Moreover, as noted by Osei-Hwere (2008), a new media landscape and a new media order are emerging; media cultures are changing hence, children now have a choice as cable and satellite operators offer a bouquet of imported channels to subscribers. Local stations in Nigeria, therefore, need to re-strategise in order to meet the challenges of broadcasting in modern society.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Children's programmes are delicate productions requiring good content and adequate 'effects' in order to attract and sustain the target's interest. To achieve these standards and basic objectives, programmes should be adequately funded and assigned to knowledgeable and experienced producers who can navigate and manipulate the intricacies of children's minds and curiosities. This is in accordance with the International Children's Television Charter which states:

Governments, production, distribution and funding organizations should recognize both the importance and vulnerability of indigenous children's television and take steps to support and protect it.

- In order to effectively reflect children's world in the programmes targeted at them, producers need to engage in research. Schools and broadcast stations should also collaborate in more productive ways to develop useful programme content for children.
- Television producers of children's programmes in the twenty-first century, need to keep abreast of technological development, be creative, current and highly knowledgeable. They also need to understand the psyche of their target audience. There is therefore the need for training and re-training of producers of children's programmes. This will ensure effective media content development in the television industry.
- The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should also be more alert in the area of monitoring and policing content in relation to children's programming on television.

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