

It is simply impossible not to learn – and this is also true when children watch television. While the public discourse focusses rather on the negative items that children take from television, research clearly underlines the fact that children also win a lot of positive things from television (Fisch). For example, they learn various factual contents and also prosocial behaviour (Truglio inter alia). Admittedly, they do not always learn as much as would seem desirable – and often they take subject matter with them, which is not really intended (Neuss). To promote quality in educational programmes and to assist children in the acquisition of knowledge, we need a better understanding of the learning processes. The first thing is to accept that learning is an active process, where children construct their knowledge (Speck-Hamdan). Television programmes can be part of this if they relate to the children's constructions of reality and provide specific spaces of education (Götz).

Committed programme producers seek to bolster these learning processes. They develop “hidden secrets” in the dramaturgy (Grewenig), emphasise interactivity and encouragement (Schosser). As you can see from examples from the Finnish School Television, educational programmes are anything but unadventurous. They offer different subjects, from nature programmes to history and modern art (Rajavaara). No doubt about the success of global offers, but children's and young people's television still have to face a large number of national and regional challenges. In South Africa, for example, HIV/AIDS is, necessarily, a vital item on the agenda of programmes aimed at promoting adolescents' health and development (Bulbulia). How educational television can keep abreast of current developments is demonstrated by the example of Japanese broadcaster NHK (Kodaira).

Despite a host of positive examples, there are still many challenges to be met. In many programmes the fundamental question remains: Is it only quiz-show knowledge or education that is offered (Aufenanger)?



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