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“Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give”, is one of the principles of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

In most parts of the world children watch more than one hour and a half of television per day – a proportion of their daily leisure time that should not be underestimated. Television provides them with enjoyment; they acquire knowledge and they experience different outlooks on life, they develop values and take up positions, and the next day they have plenty of material to talk about with friends.

When children are given a choice, they prefer to watch the shows that are made specifically for them: children’s television. And it is precisely here that we owe children the best selection of programmes that we can offer them: in one word, quality.

From a theoretical point of view, quality criteria are always developed on the basis of specific perspectives and agendas. They are also influenced by culturally determined experiences and values, professional expertise and – even if this is rarely explicitly stated – personal taste. Thus, it is more appropriate to talk about different aspects of “quality” (Mikos), in order to consciously underline these various perspectives. From an educational perspective, as far as personal development of the individual is concerned, a programme should tackle the themes of children (Neuss). Regarding the promotion of learning, quality is located in the way educational topics are presented with the widest possible variety of entry points (Reich/Speck-Hamdan/Götz). The quality of TV programmes manifests itself also in applying strategies for conflict management, rather than – for example – placing an emphasis only on crises and spectacular images of disaster (Lemish). Precisely because the aim of the market is the maximisation of profits, discussions on quality, products, commerce and the children’s perspective are all the more important (Steemers). In the everyday working lives of TV professionals, it is a key requirement to be able to confront such questions over and over. It is a balancing act between what is desired and what is achievable, and it always has to have the essential aim in view: the well-being of the children – and the best we have to give them.

# TELEVISION

## WHAT IS QUALITY IN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION?

### RESEARCH

Lothar Mikos  
**Quality is a matter of perspective**  
 There is more than one type of "quality" in children's television. Many programmes fulfil only a few criteria of quality, and yet they are successful. Quality, therefore, does not just depend on the production style of a programme, but also on its usefulness for the children.

Norbert Neuss  
**Tackling the themes of children**  
 Quality is generated in the head of the viewer, through the interaction of programme and recipient. Seen from a pedagogical perspective it is essential to pick up the children's developmental themes and to find appropriate forms of narration for them. Here quality means to relate the abilities and themes of the children to the corresponding genre.

Astrid Plenk  
**"I think it's very good, because ..."**  
 For the most part it is adults who engage with the issue of quality in children's television, but in this study it is different: here it is children who discuss the quality of programmes.

G. Neubauer/R. Winter  
**Quality from a boys' perspective**  
 Are boys a lost cause for quality TV programmes? Or is it possible to reach boys with innovative characters and boy-related topics? Drawing on reception research conducted in boys' workshops in Germany the authors show what 9- to 13-year-old boys like (and dislike) about quality characters.

K. Reich/A. Speck-Hamdan/M. Götz  
**Quality for educational programmes**  
 Educational programmes for children should specifically aim to create learning environments through their dramatic construction. Here, "quality" means repeatedly creating entry points into the subject matter and offering various learning routes and entry points along the way, but also incorporating "the learning of learning".

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### PROGRAMME

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Peter Lemish  
**Quality in presenting conflicts on TV**  
 Conflict is an integral part of every fictional programme. A media analysis of PRIX JEUNESSE programmes demonstrates that conflict resolution concepts are insightful for understanding and producing TV programmes. Non-violent alternatives enable young people to manage conflicts in their lives; and in doing so they can assume responsibility and advance change desire for their own and others' lives.

Jeanette Steemers  
**The thin line between market and quality**  
 This article raises the question about the compatibility of quality programming with commercial considerations linked to licensed merchandising, and whether shows that are less well-suited to licensed merchandise can actually survive in an economic climate where broadcast license fees do not cover the costs of production.

Maya Götz  
**Constructing entry points to knowledge**  
 A series of reception studies with primary school children shows how the appeal of the German educational programme *Knowledge makes you go Ah!* was increased, improving the learning outcomes at the same time. Multimodal entry points for different types of learners were carefully conceived and elaborated with a great deal of humour.

### EXPERTS' OPINIONS

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