

# BBC ignores some key details

**Wenqi Nelson**

THE BBC documentary "Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School" follows five teachers from China as they attempt to use Chinese teaching methods at Bohunt School in Hampshire, UK. Fifty students participate in the program to determine whether a Chinese education model can succeed in the UK.

Five teachers come to Bohunt with the goal of improving the students' overall scores but they face a very unexpected challenge — classroom management. This problem is made apparent as one of the Chinese teachers expresses her concern that the students are not listening to her lectures. In China, she states that she doesn't



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have to worry about keeping students' attention because she claims they are naturally very respectful to teachers.

Is it really true that Chinese students naturally respect their teachers? Yes, and no.

As someone who has experienced both Chinese

and Western education systems as a student and as a teacher, I understand the struggles and challenges of the students and teachers who participated in the experiment. However, there is an untold reality not fully covered in the documentary.

It is true that these particular teachers are not required to learn classroom management techniques. How can this be? The answer is that these teachers come from elite schools in China.

One teacher is from Nanjing Foreign Language School (NJFLS). In 2014, 48,000 12-year-olds applied to enter the school but only 315 were admitted, an acceptance rate of a minuscule 0.6 percent. The teachers simply have no need to try to convince the students to listen to their lecture as it is very clear that these 315 students already have the extreme drive to succeed. Bohunt School is one of the top performing schools in Hampshire, but is the student population as strictly selected as NJFLS? I think not.

Another reason Chinese education faces challenges at Bohunt is the methods in which the teachers convey knowledge. The sole delivery method is lecture. In a class of 50 students, a Western student would not find it difficult to lose interest. It is not a surprise to find the Bohunt students drinking tea, playing with their smartphones, and doing other things to keep themselves entertained while the teacher drones on. Such a method does not promote creativity or free thinking.

So, does Chinese education really work? At the end of the documentary, the test scores of the 50 students is 10 percent higher on average than the other students at Bohunt. Does that mean Chinese education is better than Western education? Possibly for achieving higher test scores, but for encouraging students to be free thinkers and life-long learners, I think not.