

Challenge for 12-year-old teenagers

Challenge For 12-year-old teenagers was produced by China Central Television. Twenty 12-year-old teenagers from Beijing spend 8 days on a special summer camp. What happens in these 8 days? Can they meet all the challenges? What will their interpersonal relationship be during these days? This reality show answers all the questions above vividly.

Challenge For 12-year-old teenagers was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010 finalists in the 7-11 Non-Fiction category.

International experts' opinions

The program evoked a lot of discussion among the international experts. Since the program was made in a Chinese context, many Western experts had difficulty comprehending it. "I think in my country it would be very hard to understand, because there is a lot of competition, and then when they are kicked out they are being hugged, and they cry. You cannot really grab what is going on, what the benefit of it is, and what speaks against it. There is also so much yelling, fighting, and emotion" (male expert, Germany). Another expert from Germany made similar points. "It was really strange to watch for me, because I am not so familiar with Chinese programs. So, it is very strange to see how they just tell the kids and order them around. It is very stressful. The kids are under so much stress the whole time" (female expert, Germany).

Almost all of the speaking participants could not understand the competition that was shown in the program. Many thought that the program was unnecessarily way too aggressive. "As the show was shown for half an hour, we felt that it was not necessary to show these people suffering like that. Playing the games was nice, but to see the people, the children, fighting each other and suffering for not winning the game was complicated. On the other side, I am sure that this show has a high rating. I think it is a contradiction, because you need the rating, but not this way" (female expert, Argentina). Some added that the competition was damaging. "It was a really unhealthy competition. I didn't understand it really: the mix of the group, and then they changed it" (female expert, USA). Some also thought that the program was unsafe. "I was thinking when I was seeing the show, that if I was the producer: what happened if



Figure 1: The group of children who live together for eight days



Figure 2: Parents bring their children to the camp.



Figure 3: They were involved in lots of games.



Figure 4: The games left many kids in tears.

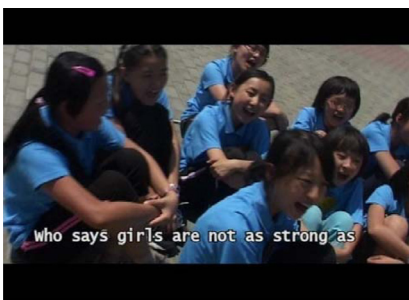


Figure 5: The games tried to teach the feeling of cooperation among the children.



Figure 6: There were a lot of fights among the kids.



Figure 7: Many experts felt that the games were too harsh.

something bad happened with the boy? Death or something bad; it is a very big problem – to produce a show like that. It is a little bit risky” (female expert, Argentina).

There were objections about the way the program was shot. “There were no mastered long shots; they were close-ups and jump shots. I did not understand it. My head was rolling at that ... It shouldn’t be shot that way. There should be a proper pace. Even in a game show, which is fast-tempo in nature” (male expert, Pakistan). They also felt that they might be missing the point because of the directing style. “I feel, because of the way it was put together and edited, that we are missing the point. What I would like to know: was this put on for this one-child policy, and it is used in the context of the class, or is it sheer entertainment? I think we are missing a huge context of this, and we are kind of beating up on this show a bit. I don’t think it is any different than a lot of those challenge shows that are out there in other countries like the ‘Adrenal Project’ or like ‘Survivor’ and what not” (female expert, Canada).

The male expert from China, who was present in one of the discussion groups, explained the reason behind showing such intense competition in the program. “There is a one-child policy in China. One family can have only one child; so it is very different from maybe all of your countries. So, our main primary goal is to give a better chance for the only child of each family the opportunity to cooperate with each other. Nowadays, more and more children in China may face lots of problems: maybe they are kind of self-concentrated, because they are the only child in a family. If they are under such kind of pressure, they will feel very isolated. They don’t know even how to cooperate with each other. So, as you have seen in the program, there are lots of tears of these children” (male expert, China).

However, despite this explanation, many international experts were left perplexed after watching the program. “I would like to say about the film that it is incredibly confusing. Was it a game show? Well, I never got the games explained, so I didn’t know what they were supposed to do. I think the one thing that they got right was their casting” (male expert, UK). Many other experts echoed the same sentiments. “Yes, it could have been an opportunity to show team work and so forth – and the sending home of the kids, I think, was too much – leave that to the adult shows where they do the same thing. Have a clear winner: this team won – red team and blue team. Keep it very simple; it was too all over the place and too long” (female expert, Jamaica).

The male expert from China further explained that originally the program was in eight episodes but for the purpose of inclusion in the Prix Jeunesse, they had to cut it short. As a result, the viewers missed a lot of the context. “It is really because of the duration of this short version. If you have the chance to see the longer version of our broadcast, I think then you can see the way, the process, the discussion about the problems that they are facing and the resolution they achieved together. As you mentioned, there were tricks on the other team. Actually, we set some of these tricks, as we wanted to know the reaction when they face these kinds of difficulties”

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Figure 8: Ultimately the kids were united with their parents.