

In search of explanations for the high achievement of East Asian students in international studies of mathematics achievement

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Students from some East Asian countries have consistently outperformed their counterparts around the world in mathematics achievement at international studies such as TIMSS and PISA. However, the high achievements of these students do not seem to have been accompanied by correspondingly positive attitudes towards mathematics. In seeking for explanations of the achievements and attitudes of East Asian students, some relevant background characteristics of these countries are examined and results of the TIMSS Video Study are briefly summarized. It is argued that the high achievements and yet negative attitudes of the East Asian students cannot be totally attributed to the background characteristics or the classroom teaching in these countries. Cultural factors are then discussed as possible explanations of achievements and attitudes. Finally, implications of the discussion will be explored.