

Study finds first-generation immigrants struggling in education system

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Shaljan Areepattamannil examined the results of 2,636 13-year-old first-generation immigrant students from British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. Credit: Michael Onesi/Queen's University

First-generation immigrant adolescents in Canada performed below average in math and science in recent testing indicating that these students may be struggling to succeed in the educational system. These results from a study by Queen's University Faculty of Education PhD candidate Shaljan Areepattamannil are surprising because they contradict findings of other studies.

"Immigrant children are the fastest growing sector in the Canadian child population and account for nearly one in five Canadian [school](#) children. Therefore, the integration of [immigrant children](#) into schools should be

an important issue for educators," says Mr. Areepattamannil (pronounced "A-ree-pat-a-man-ill"). "How these [children](#) adapt and the educational pathways they take will clearly have profound implications for Canadian society."

The study examined the results of 2,636 13-year-old first-generation immigrant students from British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec who took part in the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

The data reveals those students' math and science results were "substantially below" the TIMSS scale average of 500.

Because TIMSS 2007 Grade 8 assessment was administered in only three Canadian provinces, Areepattamannil feels more research using Canada-wide data is needed. Still, he feels the findings should raise some concerns.

"Most of the parents of first-generation immigrant students arrived in Canada from China and India. Unlike schools in Canada, both curriculum and instruction in schools across these countries emphasize rote memorization," says Mr. Areepattamannil, who came to Canada from India in 2004. "I'd like to further explore the factors that precipitate first-generation immigrant students' disengagement from Canadian schools with a view to understanding what needs to be changed to better accommodate the needs of first-generation immigrant students in the Canadian school setting."

Provided by Queen's University

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