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**Mathematics and Mathematics Education Policy**

Mathematics education policy is being conducted at a multitude of different levels, ranging from the individual teacher and the individual educational institution, over teacher trainers and teacher training institutions, politico-administrative authorities (including governments and ministries of education), through to transnational bodies and international agencies. These policy levels - and policy makers - are being influenced by a variety of different policy agents: textbook authors and publishing houses, employers, teacher organisations, mathematics educators (including researchers), mathematicians, people in other subjects, politicians, more or less well-defined lobby groups, media, and so forth and so on.

The policy levels, the policy makers, and the policy agents usually have different, and in some cases even conflicting, agendas and priorities. This often gives rise to substantive disagreements or fights, and sometimes "battles" and "wars". How come that such bellicose phenomena occur when dealing with such a peaceful and "unworldly" subject as mathematics?

In my talk I shall offer and elaborate on three key explanations for this fact. The explanations are, however, interrelated. The first - and fundamental - explanation focuses on what different policy makers and agents see as the very nature and essence of mathematics as a discipline. People often fight over mathematics education policy because they hold differing, and sometimes incompatible, views of the nature and essence of mathematics. These views are usually rooted in different experiences and images of mathematics and in different ensuing ideas about the roles of mathematics in society and in different parts of the educational system. The second explanation is to do with differing views of the real tasks of the educational system with particular regard to mathematics education in a societal context. This is the so-called justification problem: To whom should mathematics education be provided and for what purposes? Again, different policy makers and agents hold differing views on these issues. Clearly, answers to the questions also depend on underlying conceptions of mathematics as a discipline and its role in the world. The third explanation concerns the (best) ways to teach and learn mathematics for different categories of students. These issues have, of course, connections to teaching and learning in general, beyond mathematics, but their centre of gravity is what it takes to teach and learn MATHEMATICS. Views and perspectives on what constitutes human beings and learners as well as their relationships with mathematics differ across policy makers and agents. Again, these views and perspectives are related to perceptions of mathematics as a discipline, as well as to how the actual and prospective places and roles of those who have learned mathematics are construed.

In other words, my talk will concentrate on and detail these three explanations and their interrelations, taking the nature and essence of mathematics as the nodal point of the deliberations. In so doing, I hope to be able to pay due respect to parts of Ted's work, since this informs our understanding of positions encountered with regard to the key topics in all three explanations.