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Chances and opportunities of international cooperation in mathematics education - what the Eastern and the Western debate can learn from each other

Eastern and Western cultures are often described as being either more collectivistically or individualistically oriented. Accordingly, mathematics education in Eastern and Western cultures is characterised by sharp distinctions, amongst others concerning the role of basic knowledge, the importance of memorisation and the structure of mathematics teaching. The question arises, in which areas both cultures can learn from each other despite these sharp differences and contrasts.

In the lecture a few areas in which potential for mutual enrichment is identifiable will be analysed and discussed, such as an intensive preparation of lessons and their according structuring, joint lesson planning and joint classroom research activities, promotion of multiple solutions and diversity in the solution processes important in the Eastern cultures. In addition, aspects more important in the Western debate will be analysed such as the high importance of interdisciplinary activities and support of connections to the real world within concept introduction, promotion of modelling activities, encouragement of communicative skills. These analyses will be linked to current research on teaching-and-learning-environments and their cultural basis, empirical research on the role and importance of teachers, their expertise and their education.

The reflections and analyses aim to contribute to a mutual understanding and the development of proposals for the improvement of mathematics education in Eastern and Western cultures bearing in mind the cultural basis of teaching and learning.