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Alrø, Helle; Blomhøj, Morten; Bødtkjær, Henning; Skovsmose, Ole; Skånstrøm, Mikael
Mathematics teaching in a risk society. (Farlige små tal - almendannelse i et risikosamfund.)
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'When flying is there an increased risk for accidents if some of the passengers are frequent flyers?' Mia asked implying that when travelling frequently the risk of falling down increases and, as a consequence one must avoid the ill-fated frequent flyers as travel companions! Some sociologists use the term 'risk society' to characterise the development of the modern highly technological society. The main thesis is that the highly technological organisation of production and society will create risk phenomena and that the handling of these phenomena is a challenge for our democracy. Based on this thesis we raise the following question: How can mathematics teaching contribute to the general education in a risk society? We have tried to answer this question in a cooperation between two mathematics teachers and three researchers in mathematics education. Our method is characterized by the interaction between research and development of practice. Using the setting as a didactical tool we have developed courses giving the pupils the possibilities of working with risk phenomena and with concepts like risk estimation, credibility and responsibility. The courses are planned, observed and analysed with the aim of providing meaning to the concept of general education in a 'risk society'. This paper refers to a 9th grade working with very small probabilities, spot tests, calculation and estimating the risk of salmonella poisoning.

Classification: D30