Abstract

Women and mathematics – an intervention through networking

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The imbalance between women and men in mathematics at higher levels in Sweden seems to be worse than in most counties (Grevholm, 1996). Girls and women achieve better results in school and educational institutions but as soon as mathematics is no longer compulsory they choose to leave the subject to a much higher degree than boys and men. Many projects have been started during the years since the sixties with the aim of attracting more girls to mathematics (and science and technology). The methods have differed and so have the values and theories behind the projects. Girls should be convinced that they did not know their own best, girls should change, girls should be attracted, girls should given a special quota for less demanding entrance to higher education and so on. Later the perspective changed to a conviction that the conception of the subject had to be changed, the ways of teaching, the work forms and so on. All projects had a limited effect when they run but after the end of them not much had changed.

As a contrast to this way of working I started a durable long term intervention for women and mathematics in 1990. A network for women and mathematics was created with the aim of supporting girls and women interested in studying mathematics. The network has arranged five conferences and documented them in solid books. Following this development reveals the raising level of women’s consciousness and ability to express themselves. Through the network women have entered the ‘official world’ by taking the chance to run projects in their own work place, present these in the conferences and appear in press with their reflections and thoughts. The effect of the intervention through the network will be analysed and discussed in the presentation.