A portrait of disaffection with school mathematics: the case of Helen.


Summary: Disaffection with mathematics is a complex problem, and one that is not easy to characterise in research terms. It is argued in this paper that it is necessary to look beyond the quantitative study of attitudes and beliefs in order to investigate the phenomenon more fully. It is proposed that a focus on the motivational and emotional aspects of disaffection from a phenomenological perspective might offer new insights. The paper describes a study of disaffected students studying mathematics at a further education college in the UK. The novel theoretical framework of reversal theory and the novel methods used in the study are described. An interpretative phenomenological analysis is applied to the data concerning one student, and her intense subjective experience of disaffection is reported.

Classification: C20

Keywords: attitudes; beliefs; disaffection