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I have been avoiding writing this paper for six months because I did not want to 'knock' education in any way and yet I find after that period of time I have very little to say that is positive.

The current militant action concerns me, in that like many strikes its effects on the innocent victims are probably much greater than the results gained by the strikers. It also has the effect of making the teaching profession appear less caring in the eyes of many parents and their children.

Talking to one of my teacher colleagues a couple of weeks ago, she told me about a month spent in the wilds of Mexico where the children queued to touch her hand and to speak to her because she was that magical being, 'a teacher'. In western society teachers are no longer valued in this way; a headmaster complained to me that he tries to avoid giving his profession in social gatherings, because inevitably it attracts moans and groans, or in extreme cases, verbal abuse. I don't know if this is a normal response across the country but these sorts of comments from teachers are becoming increasingly more common as I visit schools and run in-service courses.

In the eight years since I left teaching this change in teacher morale and parental and pupil values about education seems to be getting lower and lower.

Young people don't see much point in getting educated since it doesn't guarantee them a job, but is that really what it's all about? Is education not valid for its own sake; is a bright, enquiring mind and an enthusiasm for knowledge no longer worth having? Where do we lose this feeling of joy in learning? Most infants and juniors seem to have such enthusiasm, so is it the system that deadens the joy - exam pressures, peer group pressures or just the tedium of routine?

My role in health education is much more joyful - for my 'pupils' are adults, mostly professionals and generally there from choice, but I still have a duty to lighten the tedium, create some fun and function as an enabler rather than a dictator. It's not easy, as most of our audiences come with expectations built on past experience, i.e. they expect to be lectured at, and some resent having to think or to react for themselves.

Funnily enough, trying to translate my methods back into secondary classrooms is proving tough as the young people are filled with so much antagonism towards adults and authority figures, they seem unable to relate at all, even when given some choice. I think it's the Masai who send their teenage boys off into the desert for a year or two to get rid of their aggression - perhaps our 'kids' need a break too!

It's amazing, the number of sixteen year olds who later say they wish they had worked in school, and yet how can they know what they need without any experience? Like 'Doubting Thomas', they need to see to believe, for why should they believe parents and teachers; so many of us have not achieved total satisfaction in our own lives. How many of us are stuck in jobs we dislike, or have little enthusiasm for, and how many have no job at all in spite of a reasonable standard of education?

I wish I could feel happier about the future of education in England, but with resources cut to the bone, low teacher morale, very little parental support for schools and children who do not want to learn, I'm not sure what the answers are. I do feel for my ex-colleagues, teaching is not a lot of fun these days, and I do feel for those parents and children who do care - there's not much for them to look forward to, unless we all stop fighting amongst ourselves and start fighting together to create a fairer system for all. But most of all, I wish we could rekindle that joy in learning for its own sake.