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Writing Practical Experience in the Writing Workshop

Awareness of written communication in training is not new. It was developed under the aegis of technicism and normativity: the teaching of rules directing the production of standard writing, proper communication, good editorial style, readability, diverse editorial and graphical rules, etc.

This approach is being questioned. Competence in professional writing is an aptitude for the production of diverse texts in diverse situations using diverse media. It assumes the presence of participants and brings into play their abilities and their professional strategies. It is not merely a question of writing to take action: so-called writing of practical experience also assumes in this context a greater importance whether it is a question of capitalizing, legitimizing, formalizing or know-how.

Three tendencies can be affirmed, from this point of view, by trainers:

- making professional gestures a priority by focusing on abilities (to be accumulated and transmitted) within a logic which is that of formulation, and the analysis of practical experience;
- making a priority of the emergence of the meaning of practical, professional experience which writing allows by focusing on the participants, the contents, and the difficulties associated with changes in the work process;
- making the practice of the process of writing itself a priority by focusing on medium and its productivity.

It is this final position which the Aleph contributors have adopted in their writing workshops on practical professional experience. It allows them to work with the tools which are those of any workshop concerned with articulating the experience of a subject and the elaboration of texts capable of reaching readers. Writing gives rise to the emergence of meanings that the collective reader and the process of re-writing make, by distancing and in turn socializing in a new form. Concern with accompanying this project of enunciation leads to the use of tools and genres called "artistic": journal, fragment, narration etc., in stead of more traditional writing practices like reports, projects, and analytical articles of practices. We return by way of experience: narrative as "theoretical space for practical experience" (that is to say, a mimetic activity already in place, identification of themes, recognition of that which has been until then unknown). This project reminds us that writing is "one": that writing for one's job is above all, writing.

It is therefore a matter of evoking these theses, in light of several recent workshop experiments which focused on practical experience, with psychoanalysts, writing workshop leaders, and trainers who accompany writing teams of teachers committed to innovation.