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Teachers or writers, why not both?

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Summary

At university level, teaching is not enough, teachers need to publish. Full-time teachers should give more to the world of education, to the institution they work for. They have a responsibility to their peers and students, and as an institutional policy they need to publish articles, papers and so on, in order to get promoted. This situation stresses teachers because of that idea that writing is not for everybody, only the chosen ones can write and publish. Maybe it is true; teachers might not become novelists, book writers or poets, but they can share their teaching experience with others, their doubts and problems and make some research about them.

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There is a general tendency to believe that the ability of writing is something that you have to be born with, a gift to be able to write professionally; however, in education teachers are researchers, they are the ones that have the information at hand, because they are in the classroom, so why not write something about their teaching practice?, as Zinsser (2001, p. X) says, "Writing isn't a skill that some people are born with and others aren't, like a gift for art or music. Writing is

talking to someone else in paper. Anybody who can think clearly can write clearly, about any subject at all”.

Teachers are rich in teaching experiences, they deal with many teaching and learning issues, and at the same time they question themselves on how they are doing things, they have doubts, questions, and solutions for different issues. As they encounter these different situations they begin to research about the different topics, they ask peers for opinions, observe other classes and comment with students and peers to obtain answers to their questions, becoming, without noticing it, researchers, who now have something to write about, that in turn can help other teachers who have the same concerns or let them know that they are not the only ones trying to find out a solution to an specific issue.

Not everything has been written or researched; there is always something teachers are interested in. So why not start writing, but how does one go about writing? Well first, let's begin with a small article or paper about something you would like to share about your teaching practice; Ss' motivation or desertion, evaluation, teacher training, autonomy, etc. There are so many topics teachers can choose from, decide on one topic and then prepare yourself to write; however, that is the difficult part “getting started”. Reading Bell (1987, p.151), I found a quote related to this where Bogdan and Biklen (1982:172) say: “Novice writers are big procrastinators. They find countless reasons not to get started. Even when they finally get themselves seated at their desks, they always seem to find diversions: make the coffee, sharpen the pencil, go to the bathroom, thumb through more literature, sometimes even get up and return to the field.

Remember that you are never ready to write; writing is something you must make a conscious decision to do and then discipline yourself to follow through". Just decide on what and start jotting down.

Writing is not that easy, but teachers can do it. It takes hard work, you might have to write and rewrite sentences over and over again until you are satisfied with your work, few sentences come out right the first time. What you need to do is to write simple sentences, to transmit in your writing that you enjoy expressing yourself about that specific topic, as Hemingway once said, "My aim is to put down on paper what I see and what I feel in the best and simplest way". This way even a person not familiarize with the topic, will enjoy, understand and follow your writing, because what matters is the way you communicate with the reader. That is what makes your piece of writing interesting and easy to follow. Lose the fear of writing, as Zinsser (2001) states, "There is no subject you don't have permission to write about. If you follow your affections you will write well and will engage your readers".

References

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Zinsser, W. (2001). *On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction*. New York: Harper Collins.