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Writing Assignment #1

Numerous characters in the film *Freedom Writers* strive to follow the ideas and practices in the Adult Career Development Theory. Mrs. Gruell and her students constantly persevere through their own personal trials and tribulations in their lives in order to make themselves “better off”, but the journey does not come without sacrificing personal elements in their lives. Mrs. Gruell’s motivation, high expectations, and enthusiasm promote a safe, comfortable, and positive learning environment for her students so that they in turn can strive to develop and make in difference not only in their lives, but the lives of others around them. The “calling” to teach that Mrs. Gruell emphasizes on a daily basis with her students allows her to develop as an individual, but this career development had to be balanced throughout her early teaching career in order to get where she wanted to go and to get the response she hoped for from her students. The juggling act to develop one’s career is on constant display from Mrs. Gruell and her students throughout the movie in which all of them have to sacrifice something in their lives to ultimately end up at the point in their life in which they are truly happy and satisfied with others they have reached as well as themselves on a personal level.

Mrs. Gruell demonstrates a passion for career development by reaching her students on a very personal level through motivation, innovative teaching techniques, and setting high expectations. Setting high expectations for her students and striving to do her best to reach every single one of her students on a daily basis is a great example of her “calling” to teach. The article *“Jobs, Careers and Callings: People’s Relations To Their Work”* remains a great reference point to Mrs. Gruell’s adult career development in the fact that she does not do her job for monetary gain, she does not engage in her job so that she can gain advancement, but instead does her “calling” because of her passion and dedication to herself and her students. Wrzesniewski, McClauley, Rozin, and Schwartz (1997), state, “Finally, people with calling find their work is inseparable from their life. A person with a calling works not for financial gain or career advancement, but instead for the fulfillment that doing the work brings to the individual” (pg. 22). The quote coincides with Mrs. Gruell because of her motivational drive to reach every single student, while ignoring monetary and other external distractions in her life (father, unfortunately her husband) to make their lives and ultimately her life more fulfilling.

Mrs. Gruell and her students created a long lasting positive relationship amongst themselves, which in turn created success, passion, personal advancement and a sense of “flow” at the school both for Mrs. Gruell in her teaching and her students in their learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) writes, “Flow also happens when a person’s skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that is just as manageable, so it acts as a magnet for learning new skills and increasing challenges”(pg. 47). The quote related to Mrs. Gruell in the fact that she was challenged by the students she turned out to love and appreciate in her first few months of school because of their stereotyping of her race, the school environment in which gangs and other factors challenged her development and pursuit of her “calling”, and even other teaching staff that challenged and tried to dampen her teaching passion. The quote also resonates with all of the students in “Room 203” because of physical abuse, physical violence, gang relations of students, and even eviction from a living space. The students all had to learn new skills to combat those negative factors in their life in order to move on and become successful.

Mrs. Gruell's Adult Career Development was constantly in balance with her students and her personal life. Adult Career Development is a struggle in the fact that individuals (i.e. Mrs. Gruell) attempt to make the most out of their present situation, usually a job, in order to further their career, establish meaningful connections with others, or just to find satisfaction and personal joy in whatever it is that they do, but this development is challenged by pre-existing relationships and the notion of time. Mrs. Gruell's relationship with her husband deteriorates and ultimately ends because of her dedication to her job, her students, and her "calling", and not her husband. The time and energy that is put in to her teaching was subtracted from her life at home and her relationship with her husband. The article "*Why Good Workers Make Bad People*" by Richard Sennett relates well to the reality of Mrs. Gruell in the fact that she was a very passionate, motivated, and energized individual in her teaching "calling", but not in her relationship with her husband, which led to her love of teaching, but disaster in her relationship with those around her. Adult Career Development is a great theory and journey for those of us (including Mrs. Gruell) motivated and passionate individuals wanting to advance our skills, thought processes, and our lives, but a balance has to remain in which we all have to have a holistic approach to how we develop and go through our lives without too much fluctuation and variance in our journey.