

A STUDY
of
THE UP WITH PEOPLE HIGH SCHOOLS

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The Up with People High School was instituted to fill a specific need, that of providing the required courses for students whose plans for traveling prevented them from attending their former schools. These young people were part of a group who, dissatisfied with negative protest, had created a musical show presenting the positive aims and ideals of their country, and who suddenly found themselves in demand everywhere, across the country and abroad. Rather than resign from this project, they asked for help in carrying on their studies as they traveled. From the first thirty or forty students, the school has grown constantly. After four years it had graduated over two hundred fifty students.

The writer of this paper has been asked by the school to make a study of its development. Now in its fifth year, it has worked out an entirely new curriculum, and is accredited in the state of Oklahoma. The students, parents and faculty alike are enthusiastic about their school, and feel that it is working out solutions to a number of problems faced by education today. This paper considers some of these problems and attempts to assess the solutions and their significance for other schools.

The writer has read a great number of reports on the school and its history, both in its own publications and in

the public press. She has visited it in session, attended one of its Commencement exercises, talked with a number of students, alumni, parents and teachers. She has made an informal comparative study of the grades achieved by students in the first three years. She has read extensively in the literature of educational philosophy, both historical and current. She has corresponded with a number of the schools from which the students came, and with several other schools which are tackling some of the specific problems under consideration. She has discussed the Up with People High School with several leading educators who commend it highly.

This paper gives a brief history of the Up with People Movement, as necessary background for an understanding of the school. This is followed by an analysis of the school's operation. Other schools and writers are then considered and the Up with People High School compared with them in various particulars. Finally some conclusions are drawn with special regard to what this school might have to offer to present day education in America.

There is no doubt that this school is providing a unique education for its students. For those with the stamina, self-discipline and maturity to respond to its heavy demands, it gives far more than the average high school. The writer has concluded that there are a number of reasons for this. The primary one is that the initiative has been from the first in the hands of the students. They asked

for the school and have always felt a strong sense of responsibility about it. Another important factor is that these students have already found a constructive purpose in life together, and see the content of their schooling, as well as the diploma to which it will entitle them, as necessary to that purpose. With respect to this point, it can also be observed that the gap between learning and its application to life situations is greatly narrowed, especially in the case of foreign languages and social studies, which take on fresh meaning as the school travels in the United States and abroad. The other very relevant studies are the "involvement courses" which are connected with the production of the show itself, the business of transporting and caring for the cast of two hundred and their stage equipment, as well as the public relations required to reach the people of the communities visited.

The other aspect of the school which the students themselves feel is particularly significant is the warm and constructive relationship between the students and the faculty.

None of these features is wholly unique, but their combination in this particular educational venture is one which should be studied and watched with continuing attention.