

Ricci, C. (in press). [Review of the book *Action for Social Justice in Education: Fairly Different*]. *Journal of Educational Thought*.

actions; actions; consultation, cooperation, and collaboration; and empowerment and voice.

Overall, I believe that the book makes a positive and significant contribution to our understanding of action for social justice in education. From the stories we gain insight into what it means to educate well and what it means to educate poorly. One final caution about the book, under Acknowledgements Griffiths lists nine earlier versions of articles that were reworked in this book and, at times, it does feel as if some of the chapters were previously written and published and later forced into the book.

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A point that gets repeated by many of the voices in the text and that resonates with me is finding ways to get people to make their education “what they want it to be” (p. 28). In an era of standardized curricula, standardized testing, standardized reporting and so on, this message is vital for those who are interested in social justice issues. As well, she correctly makes the point that reasons for learning or not learning are always intensely personal (p.18). The chapter on empowerment adds to our understanding of this laudable goal.

The best chapter in Part 2 is the first: Self-esteem: Ordinary Differences and the Differences They Make. It makes the point that “respecting and valuing oneself and others is central to recognizing, getting and struggling for justice” (p.63).

For Griffiths, “justice refers both to individual’s personal circumstances and experience, and to systematic, institutional effects of different political and social positions, like race, class, gender and so on” (p. 19). Griffiths suggests that actions of a single person can bring about change, but urges us to act together to achieve permanent and significant change (p. 128). She argues that despite the fairy tale myths about heroines and heroes acting together is the best way to bring about change.

Ultimately, Griffiths defines social justice as a “dynamic state of affairs that is good for the common interest , where that is taken to include both the good of each and the good of all, in an acknowledgement that one depends on the other” (p. 54). In addition, Griffiths makes the important point that social justice is a verb and that it is always unfinished and revisable (p.57). In her final chapter she brings it all together with an acronym: SPACE. Space stands for self-respect, for all; public spaces and public

weaving of stories in the first part was much more interesting and effective than the weaving of stories in the second.

When I first turned to the list of co-authors and contributors section, I was thrilled to see Sharon Baillon a cleaner at Nottingham Trent University. I was preparing myself for a Studs Terkelesque type of text. A text about different voices that truly valued and represented this difference; unfortunately, as I continued to read down the list, it became apparent that this was not the case. Almost all of the other co-authors are university lecturers or researchers. Moreover, in a footnote Griffiths continues to tease the reader by revealing that she interviewed students and what they had to say interested her, but decided not to include their stories because she was concerned that their stories might be identified and could be detrimental to them (p. 3). Despite the potential in having so many voices; unfortunately, too many speak from a common outcome. Nevertheless, they still offer some critical insights into social justice and how it relates to education.

Another of the book's strengths is that throughout the text Griffiths asks central questions; For example, "how is it possible to understand difference and diversity within a single humanity?" (p. 7), "How should we best live with the lovely diversity of human beings?" (p. 10), "How can education best benefit all individuals and also the society in which they live?" (p.10). These questions provoke and challenge the reader to think about substantive issues.

Another of the book's strengths is that throughout the text Griffiths is aware of the limitations and dangers of some of the points she advocates and does an honest and effective job of sharing these with the reader (see p. 21, 65, 82 for examples).

Griffiths, M. (Ed.). (2003). *Action for Social Justice in Education: Fairly Different*. Berkshire, UK: The Open University Press. Softcover, 166 pages.

Given all that is going on in the world, there is no doubt that this book is timely and valuable. The book addresses the tension between equality and difference, and “getting a fair deal for all” (p.1). The author tells us that the book is written for teachers, headteachers, school governors, policy makers, educational researches, teacher educators, university tutors and university administrators who are interested in getting social justice in education.

The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 is titled *Living with Difference*, and Part 2 is titled *A Framework for Social Justice in Schools and Colleges*. Each chapter in Part 2 includes a section titled *Getting Real: A Different Education* where “examples are used to illuminate the theorizing” (p. 70). Each chapter in Part 2 also includes a section titled *Answering Back* where “the intention is to have more than one perspective on each of the issues in Part 2” (72). Griffiths tells us that each chapter is free standing and can be read without reference to the others (p.1). To make this possible the chapters in Part 2 repeat over and over and over and over the same paragraph that outlines the purpose of the *Getting Real* and the *Answer Back*. This annoyingly detracts from the flow of the book. In addition, the *Answer Back* section that is supposed to offer more than one perspective often degenerates into an affirmation of what Griffiths has already said, rather than doing what Griffiths purports it is supposed to do: offering more than one perspective.

The book’s main strength is that, “Twenty-two people helped write the book by contributing their stories and responding to my chapters” (p.2). This very creative and postmodern “weaving” of stories throughout the text has a lot of potential. For me, the