

Book Review

**Educational Justice: Liberal Ideals, Persistent
Inequality, and the Constructive Uses of Critique**

By: Michael S. Merry

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Book Review

This book was written with the aim of discussing the ideas taken for granted about the school system in terms of educational justice. The author offers a clear and strong arguments to find the answers to the question how it is possible to find a fair school system with empirical, sociological and philosophical approaches. The discussions and examples given make the readers to query their own ideas and beliefs related to educational justice. The author has been successful in discussing the ideas of liberals on the one hand and the advocates of the present school system on the other. The interrelations among students, parents and school system which have been inured are also elaborately handled. Readers encounter with many disputed

liberal thoughts on educational justice and some examples or compared ideas of the advocates of the contrast beliefs.

The author outlines the book, including 286 pages, into three parts and nine chapters. The first part, consisting of two chapters, warns the readers about their beliefs and encourages them to question their ideologies and paradigms related to educational justice. Besides, the writer criticizes the ideals of liberals maintaining that schools should be public and equal for all. The second part accounts for the relationship between educational justice and three different themes as public school, citizenship and diversity and this relationship is exemplified with some liberal ideals in three chapters. These involve three liberal notions pointed out as schools should be public, should foster citizenship, and must be diverse. Even if the author thinks that diversity can extinguish dogmas, he criticizes diversity as a proxy of justice. Instead of promoting diversity, he proposes that non-diverse schools should alter the situation by implementing more diversity-opponent policies. This brings about a dilemma, as the author is not genuinely in favor of diversity because he believes that diversities based on fears and hopes might increase tension in schools. In the last part, there are four chapters dealing with exclusion, ethics, and pragmatic alternatives, and this part is detailed with some references to inclusion of school system with the examples of disabled students, religious schools, and selection issues to schools. The upshot of the last chapter comes with his hopes to find alternative ways for educational justice.

In my opinion, even if the author does not prescribe anything, he stresses his ideas about the issue repetitively in every chapter, at the end of each part in conclusion. Furthermore, there are two caveat parts in Chapter 2 and Chapter 8 and one possible objections part in Chapter



7 (which may be granted as the topics he handles are really sensitive). Another point is that he mentions the outline of the chapters in detail in many places; even when I finished the introduction chapter, I thought that probably I knew everything about the book and wondered if there was something else worthy of continuing reading, which killed the curiosity about the rest of the book. These summaries are given repetitively as well; in the conclusion part, at the end of chapters, and even there are summaries about previous ones in the introductions of new chapters. Besides, an abbreviation list would be helpful for the readers as in some parts of the book the initials used as abbreviations make it complicated to follow. Lastly, there are a lot of Latin words in the book, making reading hard for readers.

Overall, the author offers an informative, interrogative and criticizing discussion on educational justice, and makes me think about my beliefs which may seem as dogma. While trying to find the answers to how to establish a fair educational system, he successfully underlines the false proxies and forces the reader to reconsider the present system. I support that we should find new alternatives to reach justice in education, be more critical germane to certain beliefs preventing us from making progress and, last but not least, be honest with the past applications comparing them to the present.

References

Merry, M. S. (2019). *Educational justice: liberal ideals, persistent inequality, and the constructive uses of critique*. Palgrave Macmillan.
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