

INCLUSIVE JUSTICE AND THE ETHICS OF RECOGNITION: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

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Abstract

This article explores the philosophical foundations of social inclusion through the lens of justice and recognition. It argues that inclusion is not merely a socio-political practice but a deeply normative concept grounded in ethical theory. Drawing on contemporary philosophy, the paper examines how recognition, dignity, and equality intersect in the construction of inclusive societies. Special attention is given to the challenges of implementing inclusive principles in pluralistic and unequal social contexts.

Keywords: Inclusion, justice, recognition, ethics, equality, dignity, social philosophy.

Introduction

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Аннотация:

В данной статье автор изложил почему важно включать в жизнь общества людей с ограниченными возможностями здоровья. В мире живут десятки миллионов людей с различными особенностями физического и ментального развития. Как и все, они должны иметь возможность полноценно участвовать в жизни общества. Разбираемся, что такое инклюзивность и как она может изменить к лучшему всё общество.

Ключевые слова: инклюзив, инклюзивное общество, ограничения, особенность, возможность, ментальное и физическое развитие

In recent decades, the concept of inclusion has become central to social policy, education, and human rights discourse. However, its philosophical underpinnings are often underdeveloped or treated superficially. Inclusion is frequently reduced to policy frameworks or institutional reforms, overlooking its deeper ethical and ontological dimensions. This article aims to conceptualize inclusion as a philosophical problem, rooted in theories of justice and recognition.

Inclusion is commonly defined as the process of ensuring equal participation of all individuals in social, political, and economic life. Yet, from a philosophical standpoint, inclusion raises fundamental questions: Who is included? On what basis? And according to which norms?

Inclusion presupposes the existence of exclusion. Therefore, it is inseparable from power structures, social hierarchies, and historical inequalities. Philosophically, inclusion must be understood not as mere integration into existing systems, but as a transformation of those systems to accommodate diversity.

The theory of recognition provides a crucial framework for understanding inclusion. Recognition refers to the acknowledgment of individuals as morally and socially valuable beings. Without recognition, individuals experience marginalization, alienation, and injustice.

Recognition operates on multiple levels:

- Emotional recognition (respect and empathy)
- Legal recognition (rights and equality before the law)
- Social recognition (esteem and value within a community)

A failure in any of these dimensions leads to forms of exclusion. Thus, inclusion requires not only access but also acknowledgment of identity and dignity.

Classical theories of justice often emphasize distribution—of resources, rights, and opportunities. However, inclusion demands a broader understanding of justice that incorporates recognition and participation.

An inclusive conception of justice includes:

- Distributive justice – fair allocation of resources
- Procedural justice – equal participation in decision-making
- Recognition-based justice – respect for identity and difference

Without recognition, distributive measures remain insufficient. For example, providing equal education opportunities does not guarantee inclusion if cultural or linguistic differences are ignored.

Modern societies are characterized by diversity, globalization, and increasing inequality. These conditions complicate the implementation of inclusive principles.

Key challenges include:

- Structural inequality and economic disparity
- Cultural and identity-based discrimination
- Institutional inertia and resistance to change
- Tension between universalism and particularism

Inclusion must therefore navigate the balance between universal human rights and respect for cultural specificity.

Inclusion should not be understood as assimilation into dominant norms, but as a transformative process that reshapes social structures. This implies:

- Redefining norms and standards
- Empowering marginalized groups
- Creating dialogical spaces for mutual recognition

In this sense, inclusion is both an ethical imperative and a political project.

Inclusion is fundamentally a philosophical concept that goes beyond policy and practice. It is grounded in ethical principles of justice, recognition, and dignity. A truly inclusive society is not one that merely accommodates difference, but one that values and integrates it at all levels. Future research should continue to explore the intersection of inclusion with emerging global challenges, such as digital inequality and migration.

The theoretical framework of inclusive justice and recognition acquires concrete meaning when examined through specific socio-political contexts. In the case of Uzbekistan, inclusion has become a key priority in recent reforms, particularly in the areas of education, gender equality, and social policy. These developments

provide valuable empirical illustrations of how philosophical principles of inclusion are translated into practice.

One of the most significant steps toward inclusion in Uzbekistan has been the reform of the educational system to accommodate children with disabilities. The government has introduced policies promoting inclusive education, aiming to integrate students with special needs into mainstream schools.

This initiative reflects the shift from a **medical model of disability** to a **social model**, emphasizing environmental adaptation rather than individual deficiency. From a philosophical perspective, this aligns with recognition-based justice, as it acknowledges the equal dignity and potential of all learners.

However, challenges remain:

- Lack of trained teachers in inclusive pedagogy
- Insufficient infrastructure (e.g., accessibility in schools)
- Social stigma toward disability

Thus, while legal recognition is expanding, full social recognition is still in progress.

Gender equality has become a central dimension of inclusion policies in Uzbekistan. Legislative reforms and institutional mechanisms have been introduced to enhance women's participation in public and economic life.

For instance, the activities of Senate of the Oliy Majlis and national gender equality strategies demonstrate a commitment to increasing female representation and protecting women's rights.

From the standpoint of the ethics of recognition:

- Women are increasingly acknowledged as equal political agents
- Legal frameworks aim to secure rights and opportunities
- Social attitudes, however, still reflect traditional norms in some areas

This case illustrates the tension between **formal inclusion (legal equality)** and **substantive inclusion (actual social recognition)**.

The traditional institution of the Mahalla plays a unique role in fostering social inclusion at the grassroots level. As a form of local self-governance, the mahalla integrates social support, cultural identity, and community participation.

Philosophically, the mahalla embodies:

- **Communitarian ethics** (emphasis on social cohesion)
- **Relational identity** (individual defined through community ties)
- **Participatory justice** (local involvement in decision-making)

At the same time, the mahalla system raises critical questions:

- Does strong community control limit individual autonomy?
- Can traditional structures fully accommodate diversity (e.g., gender, disability)?

Thus, it represents both a resource and a challenge for inclusive development.

Youth employment and labor inclusion have also become priorities in Uzbekistan's development strategy. Programs aimed at vocational training, entrepreneurship, and job creation seek to integrate young people into economic life.

These initiatives reflect principles of **distributive justice** (access to resources) and **capability development** (enhancing individual potential). However, structural issues such as regional inequality and labor market mismatch persist.

In philosophical terms, this highlights the importance of:

- Moving beyond formal access to **real opportunities**
- Ensuring that inclusion translates into **agency and self-realization**

The Uzbek experience demonstrates that inclusion is a **multi-dimensional process** involving legal, social, cultural, and economic factors. While significant progress has been made, the case studies reveal a gap between normative commitments and lived realities.

From a philosophical perspective, this confirms that:

- Inclusion requires both **justice (distribution)** and **recognition (dignity)**
- Institutional reforms must be accompanied by **cultural transformation**
- Local traditions (e.g., mahalla) must be critically integrated into modern inclusion frameworks

The case of Uzbekistan illustrates that inclusion is not a static achievement but an ongoing ethical and political project. It requires continuous negotiation between universal principles and local contexts. By grounding inclusion in the ethics of recognition and justice, societies can move toward more equitable and genuinely inclusive forms of development.

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