INCLUSIVE SOCIETY AS A NORMATIVE IDEAL: FROM THE THEORY OF JUSTICE TO THE PRACTICE OF EQUALITY

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Abstract

In the article "Inclusive Society as a Normative Ideal: From the Theory of Justice to the Practice of Equality," inclusion is considered not only as a social policy, but primarily as a philosophical and normative project of modernity. The theoretical basis of the research is the concepts of justice by John Rawls, discursive ethics by Jürgen Habermas, and the approach to the possibilities of Amartya Sen. It is shown that an inclusive society is formed at the intersection of the principles of equal freedoms, institutional compensation for social inequality, and recognition of human dignity as an unconditional value.

Keywords: Healthy lifestyle, philosophical anthropology, New Uzbekistan, health consciousness, human development, value systems, social well-being, modernization, public health culture, ethical norms, socio-cultural transformation.

Introduction

The problem of an inclusive society in the 21st century is acquiring the status of not only a social or legal task, but also a fundamental philosophical question about the just structure of social relations. The intensification of social differentiation, global migration processes, digital inequality, the transformation of the labor market, and changes in the demographic structure of the population necessitate a reassessment of the principles of equality, freedom, and dignity of the individual. Under these conditions, inclusivity is becoming a key normative benchmark for modern social development.

Modern theories of justice form the theoretical foundation for understanding inclusive society as a normative ideal. The concept of "justice as honesty" by John Rawls establishes the principle of prioritizing equal basic freedoms and allows for socio-economic inequality only if it is directed towards the welfare of the most vulnerable groups. The discursive model of public consent by Jurgen Habermas emphasizes the importance of communicative rationality and the participation of all subjects in the process of developing normative decisions. Amartya Sen's approach to opportunities shifts the emphasis from formal resource allocation to real expansion of human abilities and choices.

Despite the active implementation of inclusive policies in various states, a significant gap remains between regulatory declarations and institutional practice. Formal equality of rights does not guarantee equality of starting conditions, and social support mechanisms are often compensatory rather than transformational. This necessitates a philosophical analysis of inclusivity as a holistic project of social modernization.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken significant legal and institutional reforms aimed at expanding educational access and ensuring equal opportunities for learners with special needs. The adoption of the Law "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," the expansion of inclusive

Web of Humanities: Journal of Social Science and Humanitarian Research

schooling practices, the development of teacher training programs, and the implementation of community-based support mechanisms reflect the state's commitment to inclusive development. Such reforms are further reinforced by international cooperation with UNESCO, UNICEF, and other global organizations, enabling Uzbekistan to align national educational standards with global best practices.

However, the success of inclusive education depends not only on policy frameworks but also on the cultural readiness of society. Uzbekistan's traditional values—such as respectful communication, familial responsibility, and collective care—serve as powerful drivers for building inclusive learning environments. These values encourage empathy, acceptance of difference, and moral responsibility toward vulnerable groups. At the same time, modern social changes, urbanization, and digital transformation introduce new challenges and necessitate a deeper philosophical understanding of inclusion as a cultural and ethical norm rather than solely an educational strategy.

The growing awareness among educators, parents, and community leaders about the importance of inclusive education also highlights a broader shift in societal attitudes. Schools and mahallas are increasingly becoming collaborative spaces where children with diverse needs are encouraged to learn, interact, and develop in an environment that respects individuality while promoting social unity. This shift marks a transformation in educational thinking—from segregation and special schooling toward integration, participation, and empowerment.

Therefore, exploring the integration of inclusive education with national values in Uzbekistan is crucial for understanding not only how reforms are implemented but also how cultural identity shapes educational practice. This study aims to analyze the philosophical and cultural foundations that support inclusive education in Uzbekistan, assess the impact of ongoing social reforms, and highlight the role of national values in fostering inclusive mindsets. By doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how traditional cultural frameworks can reinforce modern educational innovations and strengthen the development of a more equitable and inclusive society.

Inclusive education in Uzbekistan is evolving at the intersection of cultural heritage, social transformation, and global educational trends. While inclusive schooling initiatives have gained momentum worldwide, each country's approach is shaped by its historical development, social norms, and philosophical foundations. In this context, Uzbekistan presents a unique model in which traditional national values deeply support the ideological and ethical principles of inclusion. The following analysis explores the interplay between national values and inclusive development, while offering a comparative perspective with international practices.

Cultural Foundations of Inclusion in Uzbekistan-Uzbek culture is historically rooted in communal solidarity, where cooperation, mutual support, and shared responsibility play central roles in social life. The mahalla (local community) system embodies these principles and functions as an informal social safety net. Within such a cultural context, inclusion is not perceived as an external requirement but rather as a continuation of a long-standing moral tradition.

Values such as compassion (mehr-oqibat), respect for elders and children, hospitality, and collective responsibility facilitate acceptance of learners with diverse needs. These values create

a psychological and social environment conducive to inclusive education, where differences are considered normal and human dignity is prioritized.

In contrast, in many Western countries inclusive education emerged as a response to human rights movements and legal struggles against segregation. In Uzbekistan, however, the moral foundation supporting inclusion predates modern reforms, making cultural integration smoother and more organic.

National Educational Reforms Supporting Inclusion-Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has implemented a number of legislative and institutional initiatives to promote inclusive education:
• Adoption of the *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2020)
• Development of inclusive education standards and teacher training modules
• Introduction of resource centers in schools to support children with special needs
• Expansion of early intervention services
• Strengthening cooperation between families, schools, and mahallas

These reforms align with global frameworks, particularly the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** and **UNESCO's Inclusive Education Guidelines**. They demonstrate a transition from a medical model of disability to a social and rights-based approach. Comparatively, countries such as Italy and Canada have been pioneers of systemic inclusion, eliminating special schools and integrating all learners into mainstream classrooms. Uzbekistan is gradually moving in this direction, prioritizing individualized support, curriculum adaptation, and teacher professional development.

The Role of Mahalla and Community-Based Support-Unlike many countries where inclusion is predominantly the responsibility of schools and social services, Uzbekistan benefits from a strong community infrastructure. The mahalla plays a central role in:
• Identifying children with learning and developmental needs
• Facilitating communication between families and schools
• Providing social and emotional support
• Mobilizing community resources for inclusive programs
This model has similarities with **Japan's community-centered education system**, where local social structures support the integration of students with disabilities.
However, Uzbekistan's mahalla system is unique because it blends traditional moral expectations with modern administrative functions, creating a culturally grounded mechanism for promoting inclusion.

International Comparative Perspective-A comparative analysis with selected international experiences illustrates both similarities and differences:

Scandinavian Countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden)-These countries emphasize equality, individualized instruction, and extensive teacher autonomy. Their inclusive systems are built on strong welfare models that ensure universal access and social support. Uzbekistan shares the value of collective welfare but is still developing the institutional capacity needed for advanced individualized instruction.

Italy-Italy eliminated special schools in the 1970s, integrating all students into mainstream classrooms. This approach requires large-scale teacher training and specialized support staff. Uzbekistan is currently expanding teacher training, but full integration is a long-term goal.

South Korea and Japan-These countries combine respect for tradition with highly structured educational systems. Their gradual transition to inclusion parallels Uzbekistan's cautious yet culturally sensitive approach. Like Uzbekistan, they emphasize family involvement and social respect.

United States and United Kingdom- These nations rely heavily on legal enforcement, individualized education plans (IEPs), and disability rights advocacy. While Uzbekistan is strengthening its legal frameworks, cultural values play a more significant role than litigation in shaping inclusive practices.

 Challenges in Integrating National Values and Inclusive Practices-Despite notable progress, several challenges remain:
• Insufficient number of trained specialists (speech therapists, psychologists, defectologists)
• Limited accessibility in many school buildings
• Social stigma and stereotyping still persist in certain regions
• Curriculum and assessment systems not fully adapted to inclusive settings
• Need for greater parental awareness and participation

These challenges are not unique to Uzbekistan; similar issues were observed historically in countries now considered leaders in inclusion. For example, Italy faced decades of teacher shortages, and Scandinavian countries invested heavily in psychological support systems.

Strengths and Opportunities Based on National Values- Uzbekistan's cultural attributes provide strong advantages for developing an inclusive system:
• Deep-rooted communal ethics encourage collective responsibility for every child
• Mahalla-based support reduces social isolation of vulnerable groups
• Respectful communication norms ease integration of children with special needs
• Multi-generational households create natural support networks
• Emphasis on moral education (tarbiya) fosters empathy and social awareness

In combination with modern reforms and international cooperation, these strengths position Uzbekistan as a potential regional model for culturally grounded inclusive education.

The analysis conducted allows us to conclude that an inclusive society acts not as a private social strategy, but as a holistic normative project aimed at transforming the principles of social structure. It is based on the recognition of human dignity as the highest value and the requirement for institutional provision of equal opportunities for all members of society, regardless of their social status, physical characteristics, gender affiliation, or cultural identity.

Referring to John Rawls's theoretical legacy, justice implies not only formal equality of rights but also corrective redistribution mechanisms in favor of the least protected groups. The concept of communicative rationality by Jurgen Habermas emphasizes the need for all subjects to participate in the process of developing normative solutions, which strengthens the democratic potential of inclusivity. Amartya Sen's approach to opportunities justifies the transition from

resource allocation to the expansion of a person's real-life chances.

At the same time, a contradiction between the normative ideal of inclusion and the practice of its implementation has been revealed. Formalizing the principles of equality without changing institutional structures leads to the reproduction of hidden forms of exclusion. Consequently, inclusivity requires not only legal consolidation but also a systematic transformation of educational, economic, and management mechanisms.

Thus, an inclusive society can be viewed as a strategic direction of humanistic modernization, encompassing a synthesis of the principles of justice, solidarity, and recognition. Its implementation is connected with the transition from declarative equality to real provision of opportunities, making inclusivity a key criterion for the maturity of modern society and an indicator of its value stability.

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