

Justice, Equality, and Social Change: Revisiting Political Philosophy in the 21st Century

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Justice and equality are central concepts of political philosophy, but the way these ideas have been interpreted has changed in the twenty-first century. Economic inequality, disability-based exclusion, technological revolution, migration, cultural pluralism, gender inequality, and educational gap are some of the problems that shape new perceptions of justice in society. This article re-examines the main theories of distributive justice, explores their limitations in addressing current trends, and discusses their potential to contribute to social change. It focuses on philosophical foundations of Rawls's theory, the capability approach by Sen and Nussbaum, recognition and representation approaches, relational equality, and modern approaches to disability justice. A critical analysis of the literature was made to understand the contribution of each concept to the development of a new paradigm of justice. The analysis was applied to the practice of special and inclusive education as education is the place where abstract ideas of justice and equality can be actualized. The study findings indicate that equality should not be construed as "treating everyone the same." Justice and equality in learning would be achieved if students' different capabilities, education needs, social and institutional barriers, and opportunities for active and empowered participation were considered. For persons living with disabilities, justice would be manifested in reasonable accommodations, opportunities, access to education, and participation, as well as voice, belonging, and extension of their capabilities. The article argues that a multidimensional approach to achieving educational justice and equality is more relevant to promote social change than any single theoretical position. It provides a framework for action in education based on five interlocking areas: redistribution, recognition, participation, capabilities, and institutional change. The study concludes that political philosophy should interpret justice in a broad sense and address various dimensions of equality to respond to the complexity of twenty-first-century challenges.

Keywords: justice, equality, social change, political philosophy, disability justice, inclusive education, special education, capability approach, social inclusion

Introduction

Justice has always been a central concern in political philosophy since political institutions can hardly be evaluated only in terms of efficiency or stability. Their

outcomes need to be assessed in terms of distributive justice. It refers to the distribution of resources, rights, opportunities, social recognition, and responsibility. To

what extent should we strive for equal outcomes or at least equal starting points? Who gets what, who decides, who is recognized or denied recognition, and who is excluded from the system? These questions are of immense importance in modern societies since people often compete for limited resources and power. Therefore, John Rawls (1999) argued that justice is the first virtue that social institutions must possess, on which other values are based.

However, the concept of justice is currently complicated in the context of the twenty-first century. In this century, the characteristics of social justice are manifested in the context of growing economic inequalities, globalization, migration, disability-based exclusion, gender inequality, cultural differences, technology, artificial intelligence, and disparities in the availability of education and public services. All these challenges need to be considered more broadly than treating justice as equal distribution of resources.

Equality itself can be said to present similar challenges. Treating everyone equally can be seen as good, but sometimes treating them equally can leave one group more disadvantaged than others as they may not have the same level of starting point or face different barriers to achieving the same goal. For instance, a disabled person may have the same right to education as everyone else but may not be able to exercise that right if there are no special provisions for them to enter and study in a classroom. Equality, in this case, is formal but not substantive.

The CRPD improved the situation by acknowledging that persons with disabilities have a right to education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. Article 24 demands states to take measures to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and to emphasize accessibility, reasonable accommodation, appropriate support and effective participation (United Nations, 2006). Thus, equality should not be interpreted as only establishing legal entitlements. The situation in which the rights are exercised should also be taken into consideration.

Political Philosophy thus is in need of ongoing reinterpretation. Although Rawlsian justice still has its following, the approach developed by Sen (2009), Nussbaum (2006), Young (1990), Fraser (2008), Anderson (1999), Kittay (1999) and contemporary disability scholars shows that Justice comprises several interconnected issues: What resources do people have? What are they actually able to do with these resources? Are they regarded as equal members of society? Can they influence decisions concerning their life? Do social institutions reproduce disadvantage? Are human differences accommodated without stigma?

These questions are particularly important within education. Educational institutions simultaneously distribute knowledge, credentials, social opportunities, status, and future economic possibilities. They can reduce inequality, but they can also reproduce it. Special and

inclusive education therefore provide an important context in which philosophical theories of justice can be tested against practical questions of participation, accessibility, differentiation, support, dignity, and belonging.

Recent work in inclusive education increasingly interprets educational inclusion through a rights-based rather than purely charitable or welfare-oriented perspective. This development shifts the question from whether educational institutions should assist learners with disabilities to whether institutions themselves are structured justly (Nguyen Thi Thanh Phuc & Vo Van Dung, 2026). Likewise, research which connects special education with gender justice shows how disability can intersect with other forms of social disadvantage to produce inequalities which cannot be understood through a single category alone (Chaudhary, 2026).

The present study thus returns to the discourse of political philosophy, considering the concepts of justice, equality, and social change. It is argued that modern approaches should regard achieving distributive, capability, recognition, participatory, and institutional justice. Particular attention is paid to disability and inclusive education, which can serve as an illustration of why equality does not equal uniformity.

The study is guided by three research questions:

1. How have modern political theories developed the conception of justice beyond the idea of distributive justice?
2. How should the concept of equality be adjusted in the case of people's unequal access to social, educational, professional opportunities and physical disabilities?
3. How can the multifactorial theory of justice promote social changes and the development of more inclusive education?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The paper utilizes the approach of critical conceptual review and normative philosophical analysis. It aims to avoid evaluating any specific intervention or population and, instead, attempt to investigate different interpretations of justice and equality, and their possible application in the modern social and educational environment.

The analysis will involve the works of such philosophers as Rawls, Sen, Nussbaum, Young, Fraser, Anderson, Kittay, and some other contemporary theorists. Besides, in the article, there is a range of references to various literature on political philosophy, disability, and education. Therefore, the principal aim is to investigate the conceptual foundations of citizenship, dignity, and justice from the perspective of different political theories. The idea is that particular attention should be paid to the international human rights instruments, namely the UN

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to explore the ways how these values can be operationalized in society.

The study is interpretative rather than systematically meta-analytical in approach. The literature was clustered around five conceptual dimensions, including distribution, capabilities, recognition, participation, and structural transformation, which are used to explore their relevance to current notions of justice and to special and inclusive education more generally.

2.2 Analytical Approach

The analysis was carried out in three different steps. In the first step, the main theories of justice have been analyzed in terms of their view on equality and disadvantage. Second, different perspectives were evaluated against the backdrop of current problems such as disabilities, educational exclusion, intersectionality, technological inequality, and structural discrimination. Finally, the concept was integrated into a competency-based understanding of how political philosophy can drive institutional and societal change.

This study allows for the examination of the importance and limitations associated with the theories under the consideration. It should be noted that instead of focusing on how one theory can replace the other, it is of greater importance to analyze the ways one approach can complement another to form contemporary understanding of justice.

3. Justice in Political Philosophy

3.1 Justice as Fair Distribution

Modern debates on justice have been profoundly shaped by John Rawls who, in *A Theory of Justice*, advanced the perspective of justice as fairness. Of particular importance are his conceptualization of the original position and veil of ignorance that can enable mutually advantageous agreements by rational agents who are unaware of their place in society.

Rawls's first principle requires the protection of equal basic liberties and the second one establishes the criterion for social and economic inequality. Particularly, the difference principle allows inequalities only if they work to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged group in society.

The continuing relevance of Rawls stems from his opposition to the view that social results are necessarily just by virtue of being outcomes of a market society. Instead, social institutions have to be structured in a way that secures that advantage and disadvantage are conferred upon individuals justly.

The implications of this thesis are profound for education. By providing education, we can influence incomes, occupations, participation in politics, and social status. Thus, if there are inequalities in education, they have direct bearing on equalization of the basic structure of society,

and education is not a private good but directly related to equality of opportunity.

Nevertheless, disability reveals some challenges to resource-based approaches to justice. Two persons may be provided by equal resources but may have unequal opportunities for using them. A person with a disability may need additional resources, accessible infrastructure, equipment, or help in order to have opportunities like other people.

Consequently, equality in resources does not automatically produce equality in freedom.

3.2 From Resources to Capabilities

Amartya Sen's capability approach substantially advanced the discourse on equality by focusing on what individuals are able to be and do rather than on the distribution of goods. Sen (2009) argued that people differ in their ability to convert resources into valuable ways of living.

The importance of this distinction is especially evident in relation to disability. An equal financial or educational resource may be associated with significantly different opportunities depending on the level of physical accessibility, communication requirements, social attitudes, health state, organizational structure, and the availability of resources.

The capability approach therefore moves discussion from equality of resources toward equality of meaningful opportunity.

Nussbaum (2006) expanded upon the capability perspective by postulating that a just society should have central human capabilities secured at an adequate level. Her account is particularly important for disability because it problematizes accounts that construct political citizenship around independence, productivity, rational reciprocity or conventional forms of social cooperation.

People who require substantial assistance remain equal citizens. Dependency does not remove dignity or political entitlement.

This consideration is of immediate interest to special education. When considering the fairness of education, students should not be judged solely on whether they are provided the same textbook, hours of instruction, examination, or seat in the classroom. Instead, justice is likely to be achieved by taking into account whether each learner is provided with meaningful opportunity for communication, education, participation, relationships, agency, and outcomes.

4. Equality: From Sameness to Substantive Justice

The idea of equality is often summarised in the principle that like cases must be treated alike. While this formulation retains a certain relevance for curbing wanton discrimination, its very success provokes the reverse temptation to discriminate in the name of equality itself.

Certain individuals have different statuses in society.

Factors such as poverty, disability, gender, race, caste, language, place of residence, migration status, and many other characteristics may be considered discriminatory. It is therefore unsuitable to apply identical rules to everyone if they face unequal challenges in overcoming difficulties.

Substantive equality acknowledges that it might be necessary to provide different levels of support to achieve overall equality. Inclusive education is one such area in which reasonable accommodation is provided to students with disabilities. Giving every student the same exam conditions would represent formal equality, whereas providing extra support, such as more time, access to appropriate technology, sign language interpreters, Braille papers, alternative communication methods or other accommodations would reflect substantive equality.

Such differentiation should not be regarded as preferential treatment. It is intended to prevent social and environmental barriers from turning human differences into unnecessary disadvantages.

Anderson (1999) presents a significant contribution concerning the concept of democratic equality. For this source, the goal of equality is not related to providing every person with an equal amount of something. Instead, it is aimed at establishing social interactions in which individuals treat each other as equals instead of being dominated, humiliated, marginalized, or dependent upon one another on the basis of social hierarchy.

This relational approach provides an additional valuable perspective to the idea of inclusive education. Thus, if a learner is present in the ordinary school setting, yet socially isolated, stigmatized, excluded from academics, or treated as inferior, he or she is placed into an environment that includes but does not accommodate. Educational justice therefore requires more than presence. It requires membership.

5. Recognition, Identity, and Structural Inequality

5.1 Justice Beyond Distribution

Young (1990) challenged the approaches which seek to reduce justice to a matter of distribution. She argued that oppression takes place through social structures, cultural norms, institutional practices, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural domination.

This has important implications for disability. While

offering additional educational provisions is valuable, provision of resources cannot be the panacea for discrimination unless the underlying conceptualization of disability as inferiority, deficiency, dependency, and incapacity is challenged.

The social model of disability also shifted the emphasis from impairment to the environmental factors that cause disability. While recent disability scholarship seeks to address the complicated relationships between impairment and the environment, the social model made a critical political point by indicating that many of the disadvantages associated with disabilities are generated or exacerbated by inaccessible societies (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2014).

Justice then demands examining not only the distribution of social goods but also institutional definitions of normality and modes of participation.

5.2 Redistribution, Recognition, and Representation

Fraser (2008) proposes a theoretical framework that is especially relevant to the issue of justice today. Social injustice is produced by economic, cultural, and political resources.

These resources are inextricably linked in the context of education.

When it comes to redistribution, it refers to such resources as financial, qualified, technological, physical, and transport resources, and the provision of individualized educational support.

Recognition assumes that people with disabilities and other marginalized groups do not recognize stereotypical, stigmatizing, and deficit representations of themselves.

Representation presumes the inclusion of learners, families, and disability organizations in decision-making roles and processes. Teachers should also take social justice issues into consideration.

A school may therefore possess adequate resources while staying unjust if learners have no meaningful voice. Respectful language cannot replace inaccessible buildings or inadequate educational support. Justice requires interaction between material, cultural, and political dimensions.

Table 1. Major Approaches to Justice and Their Educational Implications

Approach	Central Concern	Meaning of Equality	Implication for Inclusive and Special Education
Rawlsian justice	Fair basic institutions and distribution	Fair opportunity and benefit to the least advantaged	Educational institutions should prevent social disadvantage from determining opportunity

Approach	Central Concern	Meaning of Equality	Implication for Inclusive and Special Education
Capability approach	What individuals are genuinely able to do and be	Effective freedom rather than equal resources alone	Support must enable meaningful learning, communication, participation, and development
Relational equality	Social relations without hierarchy or domination	Equal social standing	Students should experience dignity, belonging, and non-stigmatizing relationships
Recognition theory	Respect for identity and difference	Equality with recognition of difference	Disability and diversity should not be represented through deficit and inferiority
Participatory justice	Voice and political representation	Equal capacity to influence collective decisions	Students, families, and disability communities should participate in educational decisions
Disability justice	Interaction of impairment, environment, institutions, and entitlement	Removal of disabling and exclusionary barriers	Systems should be redesigned rather than requiring learners to adapt to inaccessible structures

6. Disability as a Test of Political Justice

Disability raises unique questions in theories of justice in that it reveals the limitations of assumptions regarding independence, productivity, reciprocity, and equal resource conversion.

Some classical contractual models begin with citizens who possess roughly similar capacities in terms of participating in social cooperation under roughly symmetrical conditions. Disability challenges such an assumption. Humans experience different abilities at different life stages, and most people experience some level of dependency at certain ages or due to certain conditions, such as childhood, illness, ageing, injury, and so on.

Kittay (1999) illustrates how dependency should not be seen as an aberration from the prevalent human condition. Care and interdependence are core social phenomena.

Nussbaum (2006) takes a similar view, arguing that theories of justice must have consideration for people with physical and cognitive disabilities from the very onset rather than treating such a consideration as a special case.

Contemporary disability philosophy builds upon this idea, connecting disability to justice by highlighting restrictions in opportunities and capabilities to which individuals should be entitled. This approach highlights why social arrangements unjustly restrict crucial domains of life rather than focusing on whether there is something wrong with one's body and mind in comparison to an ideal.

This approach has significant implications for education. The shift from posing the deficit question "What is wrong

with this learner?" to "what opportunities are being restricted, what produces those restrictions, and what changes are required?" asks not only what is lacking in an individual but also requires an assessment of how institutions may need to change in order to meet the needs of diverse students. In other words, such a model shifts the educational policy from one based on deficit to one based on responsibility

7. Inclusive Education as a Question of Justice

Inclusive education is sometimes viewed primarily as a pedagogical strategy or administrative reform. Political Philosophy shows that it is also a justice issue.

Article 24 of the CRPD acknowledges the inclusive education of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity (United Nations, 2006). The framework calls for not only physical inclusion but also for reasonable accommodations and supports necessary for effective learning and participation.

UNESCO (2020) similarly points out that educational inclusion calls for responses to learner diversity rather than treating diversity as an issue.

The difference is significant. Integration often involves the learner adjusting to the established system. Inclusion requires the system to consider what barriers prevent participation and remove them.

The justice-informed view of inclusive education can be summarized as follows:

Access → Accommodation → Participation → Recognition → Capability → Belonging

Accessibility is necessary but not enough. A person who enters a school, but cannot access learning materials is educationally disadvantaged. Accommodation takes care of a person's needs, while participation provides the opportunity to participate in academic and social activities. Recognition deals with recognition and stigma. Capability addresses substantive opportunities for study and development. Belongingness is about complete membership of the educational community.

Recent research published within special education has similarly emphasized the distinction between welfare-oriented inclusion and rights-based inclusion. Nguyen Thi Thanh Phuc and Vo Van Dung (2026) argue that inclusive education must be operationalized through enforceable rights, accessibility, reasonable accommodation, support, monitoring, and participation.

Thus, the philosophical discussion of justice has direct institutional implications.

8. Intersectionality and Unequal Educational Experiences

Contemporary political philosophy is no longer at liberty to consider disadvantage along one dimension only. Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality provides an illustration of the way by which social categories could intersect to generate experiences which could not be predicted by examining each category individually.

Disability could intersect with gender, poverty, ethnicity, geographical location, language, or other social conditions. A girl with a disability from a low-income rural household could face educational barriers of a kind and magnitude that would differ from those faced by either non-disabled girls or economically advantaged learners with disabilities.

This has profound implications for equality. Policies considered universally applicable could perpetuate exclusion if they were developed on the basis of an imaginary average citizen or average learner.

Recent work on gender justice and special education addresses this problem directly. Chaudhary (2026) stresses the interaction between disability and gender in terms of educational participation and opportunity.

A twenty-first century theory of justice should therefore eschew the temptation to consider categories like disability, gender, class, or race in isolation. Institutions tasked with the responsibility for addressing these issues should instead focus their attention on examining the ways in which structures combine to compound disadvantages.

9. Technology, Artificial Intelligence, and New Questions of Justice

The technological progress has brought a new dimension to modern political philosophy. Such means as digital technologies, artificial intelligence, data analytics, assistive technologies, and automated systems increasingly shape

education, labor, welfare, health care, and political communication.

Technology can dramatically improve inclusion; text-to-speech systems, speech recognition, adaptable learning environments, alternate communication technologies, captioning, automated translation, and digital accessibility can create more opportunities for persons with disabilities. But, technological advances do not automatically lead to justice.

Digital inequalities could occur if technologies to aid the functioning of people with disabilities (assistive technologies) are unaffordable or inaccessible, Internet access is unequal, online platforms are inaccessible, algorithms have been fed with unrepresentative data, or existing social biases are reinforced through an automated process.

The capability approach is one of the useful approaches to the problem. Having a digital device does not ensure that an individual has digital capability; they also require accessible interfaces, connections, relevant skills, appropriate support, and freedom to use technology to pursue their objectives.

Political philosophy in the twenty-first century has to contemplate both the distribution of traditional social goods and the availability of digital capabilities, as well as algorithmic governance. In the context of special education, technology needs to be assessed in terms of expanding opportunities for learners to participate and act rather than focusing on whether it utilizes advanced technical solutions.

10. Education and Social Change

Education takes a distinctive position in theories of justice since it is both a social good and an institution that shapes the distribution of many other goods.

Educational achievement impacts employment, income, political participation, health knowledge, social status, personal autonomy, and further education; therefore, education inequality can reproduce inequality across generations.

At the same time, education can be a lever for social change by encouraging critical perspectives, democratic participation, diversity, and social interactions between diverse groups.

Ainscow (2020) emphasizes that inclusion and equity require education systems to identify and remove barriers to learners' presence, participation, and achievement, which resonates with modern approaches to structural justice.

Social change, therefore, requires transformation in institutions beyond helping disadvantaged groups succeed within existing policies, which may mean rethinking these institutions' existence and operations.

For special education, it means that the focus should shift from asking what children with special needs can do to

adapt to regular education from asking what changes should be made in education to adapt to children with special needs.

This approach is distinctly different in philosophy as it reverses the responsibility: the first question asks what persons with special needs should give up to fit in with society, while the second one focuses on what society should change to embrace persons with special needs.

11. An Integrated Framework for Justice in the Twenty-First Century

The analysis indicates that one dimension is not enough to account for present-day justice. Therefore, an aggregated approach is introduced comprising five dimensions which are interdependent.

11.1 Redistribution

People need a sufficient amount of material and public goods. In the context of education, this includes equitable funding, access to facilities, qualified teaching staff, various technologies, transportation, and teaching tools.

11.2 Capability

Resources must be transformed into opportunities. Injustice is encountered when people are not able to take advantage of the resources available to them.

11.3 Recognition

Individuals need to be treated as persons of equal value. Institutional language, cultural representations, expectations, and relations must not perpetuate stigma or inferiority.

11.4 Participation and Representation

People affected by policies should have meaningful opportunities to influence them. Educational decision-making therefore includes learners, families, teachers, professionals, and organisations representing persons with disabilities.

11.5 Institutional Transformation

If inequality is the result of institutional structures by which citizens are governed, justice requires the transformation of these structures. Accessibility and inclusion need to be integral design criteria in systems rather than retrofit responses to charges of exclusion after the fact.

Table 2. Integrated Twenty-First-Century Justice Framework

Dimension	Key Question	Educational Application
Redistribution	Are necessary resources distributed fairly?	Equitable funding, support personnel, accessible infrastructure and technology
Capability	Can individuals convert resources into meaningful opportunities?	Actual ability to learn, communicate, participate and progress
Recognition	Are individuals respected as equal members?	Reduction of stigma, deficit assumptions and discriminatory expectations
Participation	Do affected individuals have a meaningful voice?	Student and family involvement in planning and policy decisions
Transformation	Do institutions themselves reproduce inequality?	Redesign of curricula, assessment, infrastructure and organizational practices

The framework highlights that these dimensions are interlocking. Redistribution without Recognition results in paternalistic structures. Recognition without redistribution remains symbolic without substantive change. Participation without accessibility entails exclusion of those unable to access decision-making processes and capability without institutional change implies perpetually seeking loopholes.

Hence, justice calls for a coordinated approach.

12. Discussion

The results of this conceptual analysis represent a significant development in political theory regarding justice. Compared to previous approaches, which concentrated primarily on the distribution of principles of rights, opportunities, or resources, the emphasis is now on

the inadequacy of such perspectives.

Another critical aspect of justice, therefore, is the need to consider the context of individuals and institutions.

Rawls's initial contribution is valuable because he emphasizes the necessity of just institutions for securing liberties and opportunities for individuals, rather than the latter taking it for granted. On the other hand, Sen and Nussbaum improve on his foundation by elaborating on the difference between the importance of accessing resources and their utilization for human capabilities.

Young and Fraser go even further by emphasizing the way unjust relations can be institutionalized in social structures as well as in meaning and recognition. Anderson's

relational equality emphasizes the significance of social status, while the literature on disabilities demonstrates the way social institutions can transform differences into deficits.

These perspectives are not mutually exclusive, as can be seen from the example of the wheelchair building. Distributive justice poses the question of the availability of resources for its construction. Capability theory asks if it will enable the desired life for the person. Recognition deals with whether the person is treated as an equal partner and not as an object of pity. The question of participatory justice is who designed the building, whether people with disabilities participated in its design. Structural justice focuses on whether the environment was originally organized around the person with disabilities. The same goes for education.

Giving a place in the classroom only satisfies one criterion of justice. The student may require special equipment, adapted methods of teaching and content, access to interpreters, assistants, and alternative tests, a respectful attitude from teachers and classmates, and a say in educational planning. These factors should be considered in education because they point to the fact that inclusion does not always mean integration and that equality does not mean treating everyone the same way.

The most fundamental recent change in justice philosophy is the idea that we ought to interpret equality as being equal in standing, not equal in results.

Differentiated treatment can often be an expression of equality. Conversely, differentiated treatment should not lead to a possibility of stigma or protective paternalism. People must not be placed in any protective niches in which they are prevented from taking responsibility for their own lives. Individualization and inclusion should therefore be regarded as complementary rather than contradictory principles.

13. Implications for Special and Inclusive Education

The theoretical framework proposed in this article has several implications for special and inclusive education.

Firstly, educational equality should be evaluated in terms of participation and competence, not just enrolment. Governments and educational institutions should consider whether their students are able to interact meaningfully in terms of learning, assessment, communication, school activities and friendships.

Secondly, reasonable accommodation should be viewed as a matter of justice, not merely a possible source of support. Accommodation is required because of differences in the ways in which students convert educational resources into opportunities.

Thirdly, inclusion is likely to involve recognition. Negative assumptions about intelligence, productivity, behaviour, communication or independence may be responsible for continuing to keep people out, even after official access has been granted.

Fourthly, persons with disabilities should take part in educational decision-making processes. If policies fail to include the views of those likely to be affected, they are likely to continue old paternalistic assumptions.

Fifthly, teachers need to be educated. They will need to know both about specific pedagogical approaches to diversity and about broader issues of equality, rights, disability, dignity and social justice.

Finally, educational institutions need to be proactive about accessibility. Aiming to be accessible by design is likely to be more consistent with the principles of justice than waiting for individuals to request accommodations.

14. Social Change and the Future of Political Philosophy

Social change takes place when institutional arrangements, cultural assumptions, distributions of power, and patterns of participation are transformed. Political philosophy contributes to this process by providing criteria through which existing institutions can be criticized and alternatives imagined.

In the twenty-first century, political philosophy must respond to conditions that differ substantially from those that shaped many classical theories. Digital technology, transnational economic structures, climate change, migration, population ageing, changing understandings of disability, and increasingly diverse societies have changed the contexts in which questions of justice arise.

Nevertheless, the central philosophical problem is recognizable: how should people live together as equals?

The answer advocated by us is that equality does not require the obliteration of human difference. Instead, a just society is one that ensures that difference is not a predictable basis for exclusion, domination, humiliation, or the denial of opportunity.

This approach offers an important link between political philosophy and inclusive education. For schools are the first institutions in which individuals learn social rules, deal with issues of authority, recognition, competition, cooperation, inclusion, and exclusion. Education justice thus becomes part of a larger question of democratic justice.

An inclusive school is therefore not only an educational practice but can also be a model of the sort of political community a democratic society seeks to construct.

15. Conclusion

Justice and equality have always been paramount concepts of political philosophy, but their definitions may prove to be inadequate in light of modern challenges posed by new forms of inequality. The review presented in the article under discussion proves that justice cannot be limited to the distribution of resources and a merely formal guarantee of equal rights.

While Rawls's concept of justice is perfectly sufficient in

terms of institutional design, the capability approach better reflects the fact that people may utilize the same resources differently, while recognition theory highlights the importance of social status and prestige. Moreover, it is relational equality that emphasizes the need to consider power dynamics and social hierarchies and the way they interact with other dimensions of inequality. Finally, disability justice focuses on the interactions between various factors of social life, highlighting the way in which people with disabilities are often disadvantaged in the environment not adapted to their needs.

Overall, the five approaches covered in the article present the advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches to justice and help understand what is required in order to achieve equity in society. In particular, special and inclusive education focuses on equal opportunities, which extend beyond accepting disabled students. Indeed, a fair educational environment would value their needs, provide equal resources, recognize their differences, consider their abilities, and give the same opportunities as any other educational setting. Thus, although being confined to the mere redistribution of resources, educational justice would undergo a transformation

process that would take into account students' voices, power relations, and a set of institutional arrangements.

However, the key takeaway from the article is the definition of justice that is embraced by modern political philosophy. Indeed, the traditional approach is too simplistic and does not always deliver satisfactory results. Instead, it should be replaced by a multi-faceted perspective, which would take into consideration multiple approaches (redistributive, recognition, capabilities, participation, transformational). By doing so, philosophers would be able to reconcile different dimensions of justice and find viable solutions for each.

For the field of education, it implies that opportunities should not be distributed on a strictly redistributive basis that presupposes a particular understanding of the share that is due to each. Instead, a more fluid and adaptive approach to education would be more appropriate, which would more effectively reflect the students' abilities and consider their voices and power. Thus, equality in education is understood here not as equal treatment but rather as equal membership in the community of free people who appreciate diversity and are committed to justice, transformation, and change.

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