Occupational Justice as Social Justice:
Towards Inclusive Societies

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Kia ora whanau!
“Human rights advocacy as a core principle across all areas of practice”

“Advance social participation, health, wellness and social inclusion globally with knowledge and practices that address the social determinants of health and occupational justice”

“Contribute to building a more peaceful, prosperous and just world”
Social justice

- Treat people equitably, share resources
- Create an inclusive society
- Injustices are created by society
- Societies can alter the social arrangements
Social Justice – John Rawls

- **Fairness** in protecting:
  - Civil liberties
  - Human rights
  - Opportunities to lead a fulfilling & healthy life

- **Inclusion**
  - Civic inclusion (health services, education, work)

- **Equity** of opportunities - not outcomes. A fair share is not an *equal* share
Social Justice – David Miller

• Advantages & disadvantages allocated according to:
  • **Need** – basic necessities to function / an adequate human life
  • What people **deserve** (based on their contribution)
  • **Equality** – uphold citizens’ rights equally

• Pluralistic view: need-deserve-equality must be in balance
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

United Nations (1948)

Specifies culturally important occupations
- Work
- Leisure
- Cultural life of the community
Overview of Social Justice

• Allocating social advantages & disadvantages commensurate with people’s needs, performance, and need for protection

• Being treated fairly & respectfully

• Protecting human rights

• Normative view – does not respect differences in people’s values, needs and ways of doing things (Iris Young, 1990)
Capabilities approach
Amartya Sen
• Rather than distribution of resources, focus on differences in ability to use resources to generate outcomes people value
  • What people are able to do & be
  • Opportunities for doing & being

Martha Nussbaum
• 10 basic capabilities all people need to do
• Food, shelter, sex, education, work, expressive works, concern for others, animals/plants, play
Social Justice & Health

Health seems implicit to leading a fulfilling & healthy life (Rawls) and basic necessities to function (Miller) but health disparities were not regarded as unnecessary, unfair, & avoidable consequences of socioeconomic differences.

Countering that, Venkatapuram (2001) argued that health is a moral concern:

- social patterns “in the production, persistence through generations, levels, distribution patterns or differential experience of impairments and death.”
Occupational Justice

• Equitable opportunities & resources to do, be, belong & become

• Environments where opportunities to engage in occupation are just, health-promoting & meaningful

• Injustice results in:
  • Retarded development, substantive health issues, shortened lifespan
  • Wasted human potential
  • Reduced social cohesion
  • A health burden that affects every member of society
Occupational Rights - WFOT

• Range of occupations to support health, development & inclusion
• Choices & share decision making power
• Experience meaning & enrichment
• Fair privileges from participation
• Being supported to participate
• Respecting different views about occupation
Relationship of social & occupational justice

- Joint aspirations towards **inclusion**
- Shared focus on **inequities** (allocation of resources / access to occupation)
- Need for **fairness** - occupational participation for all members of a community
- **Discrimination** as a social & occupational issue
- Focus on right to **work** (UN) / productive occupations (OTs)
Arguing for occupational justice by invoking social justice & human rights

- Atrocities targeting civilian population
- Asylum seekers ... fleeing persecution and denied work, education, leisure
- Undocumented Latino families ... exploited, oppressed
- Disabled people ... discrimination, exclusion, stigmatisation
- “Coloured” people ... ongoing marginalisation
- “Colonialist mentality of exploitation”
... by describing breaches of occupational rights

- Inmates – deprived of range of occupations
- Policies that disrupt, control & prevent occupations of asylum seekers
- **Choice** constrained by socio-economic and political environments
- Restricted access to **meaningful** occupation (work)
- **Lack of fair privileges** - exploitative work arrangements
... by making moral & ethical claims

- People are **worthy** of social & occupational justice
  - Inmates: Willing & insightful
  - Disabled women: Making tremendous effort
  - Youths: Channelled towards poor choices
  - Displaced women: Suffering & struggling

- Gap between what people are capable of doing & their opportunities
Discussion & Implications

• **Social justice:** Pointing to importance & legitimacy of issues

• **Occupational justice:**
  • Reveal the impact on participation & inclusion
  • Identify specific barriers
  • Describe suffering in readily understood terms – people’s everyday occupations
Reference