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Open Access as a Means for Social Justice in the Context of Cultural Diversity in Europe

Nikos Koutras

I. INTRODUCTION

In modern times, social justice and cultural diversity tend to be critical and interrelated issues.\(^1\) As increasing globalization makes cultural diversity a more common experience, it has become necessary to bridge the divide between social justice and cultural diversity.\(^2\) In the European context, increasing migration is creating social tensions, but it is argued that education can be an important means of generating social cohesion in the contemporary multicultural context.\(^3\) Social scientists have examined cultural diversity mainly in relation to social cohesion and multiculturalism.\(^4\) While some authors have focused on general principles and theories of cultural diversity, others have concentrated more on particular aspects of diversity such as education and equal information access.\(^5\) In this paper, there is a theoretical discussion about the concept of

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\(^3\) See Alana Lentin & Gavin Titley, The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age (2011).


\(^5\) See Susan Thompson & Kevin Dunn, Multicultural Services in Local Government in Australia: An Uneven Tale of Access and Equity, 20 URBAN POL’Y RES. 263, 263-79 (2002); see also James A. Banks, Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global
information as a crucial component of the educational process. In particular, the concept of information literacy is critical and examining several European directives shows that accessibility to information resources is part of the social empowerment. The need for accessibility to information resources can be justified from a philosophical perspective with the help of Foucault’s theories, which address the relationship between power and knowledge. Lastly, I advocate the necessity of open access as an effective tool of information distribution via educational institutions in Europe. Therefore, I emphasize that education is a fundamental aspect of multiculturalism, and, combined with accessible information resources, it leads to social justice and social cohesion.

II. MULTICULTURALISM AND SOCIAL COHESION: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

An overview of the concept of multiculturalism is helpful in understanding why open access to education is the only solution for bridging the divide in cultural diversity and social justice. The term multiculturalism is defined as the culturally heterogeneous composition of society and has been examined by many different disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and political science, with each concentrating on a different aspect of multiculturalism. In the context of

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PERSPECTIVES (2007); see also Rozita Ibrahim et al., Multiculturalism and Higher Education in Malaysia, 15 PROCEDIA - SOC. BEHAV. SCI. 1003, 1003-09 (2011); see also CARL A. GRANT & CHRISTINE E. SLEETER, DOING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND EQUITY (2011).


7 See RITA DHAMOON, IDENTITY/DIFFERENCE POLITICS: HOW DIFFERENCE IS PRODUCED, AND WHY IT MATTERS (2010).

8 See INTERNATIONALIZING MULTICULTURALISM: EXPANDING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD (Rodney L. Lowman ed., 2013).

9 See generally Russell King, Towards a New Map of European Migration, 8 INT’L J. OF POPULATION GEOGRAPHY 89, 89-106 (2002).

psychology, multiculturalism is seen as an ideology relating to the acceptance of cultural diversity and active assistance for cultural differences by both majority and immigrant group members.\textsuperscript{11} There exists literature that conceptualizes multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and the relevant issues that emerge. Immigrant communities that have developed in European countries since the 1960s have led to a denial of policies and social demand regarding immigrants’ and minorities’ social integration.\textsuperscript{12} This has been based on beliefs regarding migrants’ attitudes toward the abolishment of their traditional values and adaptation of those which distinguish the majority society.\textsuperscript{13} In several countries, this denial was exposed by politicians, academics, and advocates as part of a broad civic rights movement.\textsuperscript{14} According to Vertovec and Wessendorf, the denial of social integration was imperative concerning nascent migrants’ and ethnic movements’ activities.\textsuperscript{15} In other words, it was oppression from local authorities as the policies were implemented from anti-immigrant agencies and communities were at the time. In particular, the denial emerged during the 1970s, when family reunion and actions toward long-term establishment shifted the nature of what had previously been thought of as mostly temporary, single male immigrant populations.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} See Ruud Koopmans et al., Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe (2005).
\textsuperscript{15} See generally Steven Vertovec, Transnationalism (2009).
From the 1960s to the 1970s, public discussion among immigrant-receiving societies emphasized the issues of tolerance, representation, participation, and cultural rights—including the freedom to assemble, receive church service, and become involved in other cultural foundations or organizations and practices. In addition, support of such ideas via policy, governance, and public awareness came as an emergent ‘politics of diversity’ or ‘politics of recognition.’ Proponents of tolerance and inclusion viewed these policies as appropriate components in the context of anti-racism and anti-discrimination. In the 1980s, however, there was a shift away from the values of tolerance and participation. These values were instead replaced with relevant concerns regarding immigrants and cultural diversity, which were introduced to receiving societies. This shift away from tolerance and towards concerns led to public regulations. At the


time, the concept of multiculturalism was already commonplace for Europe.20

Some proponents claim that the majority of countries are culturally heterogeneous; according to recent estimates, there are 600 languages and 500 ethnic groups in 184 independent countries.21 Moreover, only a few countries can claim that their citizens share the same language and are part of the same ethno-national group.22 Nowadays, societies offer such infrastructure a friendly environment to meliorate the process of social recognition that minority groups seek to gain.23 However, social theorists argue that such improvement regarding the process of social recognition can be seen as a denial or dispute of multiculturalism.24 In accordance with the relevant literature, there are two sets of arguments regarding multiculturalism.25

First, there are proponents who positively claim that the term multiculturalism is connected with notions of tolerance and rights of ethnic minority groups to preserve aspects of their cultural heritage and language; equal treatment, equal access, and full participation; economic activity and political representation rights to collective expression; and commitment by everyone, regardless of ethnic background, to a constitution or state and its rule of law.26 Second, there are authors who negatively contend that

20 See Lisbeth Aggestam & Christopher Hill, The Challenge of Multiculturalism in European Foreign Policy, 84 INT’L AFFAIRS 97, 97-114 (2008).
22 Id.
23 See generally TARIQ MODOOD, MULTICULTURALISM (2013).
26 See Maykel Verkuyten, Everyday Ways of Thinking About Multiculturalism, 4 ETHNICITIES 53, 53-74 (2004), http://etn.sagepub.com/content/4/1/53.short; see also
multiculturalism represents notions and policy measures that threaten core domestic societal values.27 Thus, for the critics, the term multiculturalism provides a recipe for the demolition of domestic identity and collapse of social cohesion.28

However, it is wrong to examine the concept of multiculturalism as a single philosophy, a definite structure, a topic for further discussion, or a policy making structure.29 The term can be approached differently in order to delineate a number of prominent phenomena.30 Hence, multiculturalism can be understood as the actual building of a society.31 A general view upon which public authorities and society should orient themselves.32 In other words, multiculturalism is both a particular set of policy instruments for assisting minority cultural practices33 and a variety of instruments for


28 See generally RITA DHAMOON, IDENTITY/DIFFERENCE POLITICS: HOW DIFFERENCE IS PRODUCED, AND WHY IT MATTERS (2010).


31 See generally ALLEN IVEY, MARY IVEY & CARLOS ZALAQUETT, INTENTIONAL INTERVIEWING AND COUNSELING: FACILITATING CLIENT DEVELOPMENT IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY (8th ed. 2013).


financial support towards ethnic minority communities to reproduce, maintain, and celebrate their traditions. Multiculturalism can refer to a demographic fact, a significant part of democracy, or a particular orientation by the government or institutions toward a diverse population. These issues must be understood in the context of social inclusion and justice.

Social inclusion and justice are also important for the modern European policy framework as regards multiculturalism and the demographic future of Europe. More specifically, the European Commission encounters/faces/has-to-deal-with challenges that stem from people’s mobility around European countries and unprecedented demographic shifts. Following a public debate in 2006, a policy paper recognized five key policy responses to control demographic shifts, including receiving

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39 See also EUROPEAN UNION, THE DEMOGRAPHIC FUTURE OF EUROPE – FROM CHALLENGE TO OPPORTUNITY 2 (2006). These five key policy responses are outlined in this European policy paper as follows: (1) promoting demographic renewal in Europe, (2) promoting employment in Europe: more jobs and longer working lives of better quality,
and integrating migrants into Europe.\textsuperscript{40} In particular, demographic shifts mean profound social changes that affect the composition of families, particularly evident in the growing number of elderly persons living alone.\textsuperscript{41}

A renowned scholar in the field of democracy in this area and its interrelation with social cohesion is the social theorist Robert Cuellar. In particular, he argues that the basis for stable democracy is social cohesion, which stems from the consolidation of plurality of citizenship and decreasing inequality and socioeconomic differences.\textsuperscript{42} Social cohesion pertains to people’s relationships and how they interact with each other in society, and it comprises the role of citizenship.\textsuperscript{43} However, social cohesion and democracy are supplementary components that should be included in the public debate in order to equip the concept of citizenship with both rights and responsibilities by respecting pluralistic aspects of current European societies.\textsuperscript{44} Issues of tolerance and immigration must be addressed in order to arrive at an effective equilibrium between individual rights and responsibilities with respect to the pluralism that characterizes modern Europe.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION AND INFORMATION LITERACY

Education is fundamental to and extremely important for social welfare,\textsuperscript{45} and it is a crucial component for identity growth and social integration.\textsuperscript{46}
Therefore, educational systems can work as the primary instruments for immigrants in the context of their social integration.47 Further, continuous technological developments have a significant effect on contemporary education.48 According to a recent survey conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit’s editorial team, technology has had, and will continue to have, a significant effect on higher education.49 Almost two-thirds of the survey respondents, from both the public and the private sectors, believed that technological developments will have a major influence on teaching methods in the future.50 In addition, they believed that technology has had a positive effect on their campuses.51 However, they recognized that operational challenges may prevent further advantages from being realized.52

Therefore, without education, it is difficult to adapt to the shifts that stem from technological changes, and that appropriate qualifications can be

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47 See Public Discourses on Education Governance and Social Integration and Exclusion: Analyses of Policy Texts in European Contexts, in UPPSALA REPORTS ON EDUCATION (Sverker Lindblad & Thomas S. Popkewitz eds., 2000); see also GUNther SCHMID & BERNARD GAZIER, THE DYNAMICS OF FULL EMPLOYMENT: SOCIAL INTEGRATION THROUGH TRANSITIONAL LABOUR MARKETS, (Edward Elgar Publishing Limited 2002); see also Alan Nevill & Christopher Rhodes, Academic and Social Integration in Higher Education: A Survey of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction within a First-Year Education Studies Cohort at a New University, 28 J. FURTHER HIGHER EDUC. 179 (2004).
49 See LAZA KECIC, THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT’S INDEX OF DEMOCRACY, 1 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2007).
gathered via information literacy, which is a significant aspect of education. An information-literate person is more aware of the latest emerging technologies and relevant shifts. Education offers a tool with which migrants can integrate into and become useful members of society in the digital age. The concept of information literacy has emerged as a result of the interconnection between information technologies and education.

Throughout the present century, the educational process has become interconnected with technology and its developments. A significant amount of information is used, sent, and received within modern education methods; consequently, this modern trend signifies that information access is imperative. The role of technology is important in the context of education methods and extends to hardware, software, social networks, and

53 See generally Michael B. Eisenberg et al., Information Literacy: Essential Skills for the Information Age (2d ed. 2004).
55 See A.W. Bates & Gary Poole, Effective Teaching with Technology in Higher Education: Foundations for Success (2003); see also Carl A. Grant & Christine E. Sleeter, Doing Multicultural Education for Achievement and Equity (2d ed. 2011); Kiri Rowan, Education Importance in Today’s Society, Udemy Blog (May 20, 2014), https://blog.udemy.com/education-importance/.
digital repositories, which have become crucial parts of the educational process.\textsuperscript{59}

Information literacy requires individuals to determine when or whether information is required, and how they can locate, assess, and beneficially use the required information.\textsuperscript{60} Moreover, information literacy is increasingly significant in ongoing technological evolution, which influences information resources.\textsuperscript{61} Thus, the growing complexity of this environment requires individuals to deal with many information resources during their academic studies, working hours, and daily routines. Information resources are available via libraries, public resources, special interest foundations, media, and the Internet. Information is further distilled via multimedia such as texts, audio, and graphics, which help individuals to effectively comprehend and appraise information. Individuals gradually receive information in unaltered patterns by querying its authenticity, validity, and accuracy.\textsuperscript{62} Without testing the quality of information, the quantity of information offered can create significant disputes for society as


\textsuperscript{60} See James Elmborg, Critical Information Literacy: Implications for Instructional Practice, 32 J. ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 192, 192-99 (2006).


\textsuperscript{62} See generally JESÚS LAU, INFORMATION LITERACY: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES (2008).
a whole. Consequently, an abundance of information does not itself produce a more informed society. This wealth of information requires complex, supplemental capacities to use information productively.

Information literacy provides a basis for lifelong learning, which further assists in closing the gap between cultural diversity and social justice. It is common to all fields of study, all learning environments, and all levels of education. It enables learners to gather content and stretch their inquiries, become more self-directed, and have more control over their own learning development. Information-literate individuals can

1. determine the extent of information needed to access the required information productively and efficiently;
2. evaluate information and its sources critically;
3. incorporate selected information into their knowledge base;
4. use information beneficially to fulfill a particular aim;
5. comprehend economic, legal, and social surroundings while using information;
6. use information morally and legitimately.

The continued development of digital capacities also provides a tool for bridging cultural diversity and social justice. The education regime and its curriculum in relation to information literacy, such as information and

64 See generally Susan Kaplan Jacobs, Peri Rosenfeld & Judith Haber, Information Literacy as the Foundation for Evidence-Based Practice in Graduate Nursing Education: A Curriculum-Integrated Approach, 19 J. Prof. Nursing 320 (2003).
communication technologies (ICT), offer a specific approach to digital competences by encouraging critical and communicative use of ICT. It also stimulates young people to improve their ICT skills.67 ICT is important in relation to contemporary educational curriculums that provide personal development opportunities to young people.68 In my opinion, information literacy and access to information resources are critical characteristics of the contemporary multicultural environment for the European societies. Yet, these characteristics constitute a fundamental step to produce a cohesive society.69 In the next section, there is discussion about whether European directives enhance accessibility to information resources.

IV. EUROPEAN DIRECTIVES AND ENFORCEMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY TO INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION

A. The Role of the European Commission

The European Commission (EC) was established as an independent supranational authority separate from governments.70 EC members are elected by their member-state governments and are bound to be neutral from other influences, such as the governments that appointed them.71 In

In accordance with Article 17 of the European Union Convention, the Commission is responsible for producing medium-term strategies; drafting legislation and arbitrating in legislative procedure; representing the European Union in trade discussions; making regulations, for instance, in competition policy; drawing up the annual budget of the European Union; and managing the implementation of directives, regulations, and conventions. After the Lisbon Convention, the European Council conferred executive power of the European Union on the Commission. Nevertheless, the Council was theoretically allowed to withdraw that power or impose conditions on the Commission’s use. Given that the European Council, under the Lisbon Convention, became a formal institution with the power to appoint the Commission, it could be stated that these two bodies hold the executive power of the European Union.

The European Commission is the institution capable of taking legislative initiatives via relevant proposals in the European Union. Once legislation

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is passed by the European Council and Parliament, it is the Commission’s responsibility to ensure that the legislation is implemented via member states or its agencies.  

Further, in adopting the appropriate technical measures, the Commission is assisted by committees comprising representatives of member states and of public and private lobbies. The Commission’s functional structure is divided into several departments and services, with the departments known as Directorate-Generals (DGs). The Commission is concerned with issues of pluralism, tolerance, and social cohesion. In the next subsection, the Commission’s intention regarding appropriate policies for information literacy in the context of multiculturalism is highlighted. Next, there is examination of a study concerning computer and information literacy, which is supported by the European Commission’s DG for Education and Culture.

**B. International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS)**

According to the European Commission, European citizens should develop digital skills, which are vital in this digital age. This section will examine two activities that illustrate information literacy policies from the perspective of the European Commission, and it will delineate the current framework for issues regarding information literacy and access in the

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80 See Hooghe, supra note 77; see also JUSTIN GREENWOOD, INTEREST REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION (2011).

European Union. In 2013, the European Commission decided to take advantage of the technological developments relevant to education by calling for continuous work and international collaboration to empower the area of knowledge in the European countries. In addition, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) conducted a study titled the International Computer and Information Literacy Study, which examined the effects of technological growth and was supported by the European Commission’s DG for Education and Culture. The ICILS made an important contribution to the European knowledge base regarding digital competences and the unification of technology in teaching and learning.

According to the ICILS’s findings, schools play a major role in the lack of “digital natives” who are digitally competent. Being born in a digital era does not mean that one is capable of using technologies in an effective and informative manner.

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82 See generally Carla Basili, Information Literacy Policies from the Perspective of the European Commission, in WORLDWIDE COMMONALITIES AND CHALLENGES IN INFORMATION LITERACY RESEARCH AND PRACTICE (2013), http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-03919-0_7.
83 European Comm’n, Opening up Education: Innovative Teaching and Learning for All Through New Technologies and Open Educational Resources Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2003), http://cur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0654&from=EN.
Training Strategy (ET, 2020), the European Commission plans to enhance digital literacy, bridge digital divides, and promote social inclusion through knowledge exchange and peer learning. Further, the study finds that one-quarter (25 percent) of students in all participating European Union countries have low levels of computer skills and information literacy. In addition, there is a risk of digital divide, with lower levels of computer and information literacy among young people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, social justice issues arise as a result of poor information literacy and the associated need for access to information resources.

V. THE NEED FOR OPEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION RESOURCES FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

From a philosophical perspective, there is a need to offer additional opportunities for access to information resources for educational purposes. In accordance with Foucault’s theories, which address the relationship between power and knowledge, knowledge is power and it is evident that when we can access information resources, we can also access knowledge.
It then follows that access to information leads to power of knowledge. Foucault believed that knowledge is always a form of power, and that knowledge can be gained from power. New knowledge is produced through observation. In Foucault’s view, knowledge is forever connected to power, and he often wrote this connection as power or knowledge. Foucault’s theory states that knowledge is power. In particular, he stated that “knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of the truth, but has the power to make it true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, becomes true.” Knowledge, which was once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation, and the discipline of practice. Thus, “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.”

For Foucault, power exists everywhere and comes from everywhere; it is a fundamental concept because it acts as a link between people and a complex strategy. For him, power did not view the effects of power negatively; for him, power did not exclude, repress, censor, mask, or conceal. Foucault saw power as a producer of reality. For Foucault, the importance

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96 See Georg Von Krogh et al., Enabling Knowledge Creation: How to Unlock the Mystery of Tacit Knowledge and Release the Power of Innovation (2000).

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of power lies in the effect it has on entire networks, practices, the world around us, and how our behavior can be affected.\textsuperscript{99}

Foucault illustrated his argument with the example of the Panopticon, an architectural design put forth by Jeremy Bentham in the mid-nineteenth century for prisons, insane asylums, schools, hospitals, and factories.\textsuperscript{100} Instead of using violent methods, such as torture, and placing prisoners in dungeons that were used for centuries in monarchical states around the world, the progressive, modern democratic state needed a different system to regulate its citizens.\textsuperscript{101} The Panopticon provided powerful and sophisticated internalized coercion that was achieved through constant observation of the prisoners, who were each separated from the other and allowed no interaction or communication.\textsuperscript{102} This modern structure allowed guards to continually see inside each cell from their vantage point in a high central tower, unseen by the prisoners.\textsuperscript{103} Constant observation acted as a control mechanism; the consciousness of constant surveillance is internalized.\textsuperscript{104}

The Panopticon was a metaphor that allowed Foucault to explore the relationship between regimes of social control and people in a disciplinary situation and the power/knowledge concept.\textsuperscript{105} According to Foucault, power and knowledge come from observing others.\textsuperscript{106} Accordingly, the

\textsuperscript{99} See MARKULA-DENISON & PRINGLE, supra note 92.
\textsuperscript{100} See generally John Edward Campbell & Matt Carlson, Panopticon.com: Online Surveillance and the Commodification of Privacy, 46 J. BROADCASTING & ELECTRONIC MEDIA 586 (2002).
\textsuperscript{102} See ALAN MCKINLAY & KEN STARKEY, FOUCAULT, MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION THEORY: FROM PANOPTICON TO TECHNOLOGIES OF SELF (1998).
\textsuperscript{105} See DAVID LYON, THEORIZING SURVEILLANCE (2006).
\textsuperscript{106} See generally STUART ELDEN & JEREMY W. CRAMPTON, SPACE, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER: FOUCAULT AND GEOGRAPHY (2012).
metaphor of Panopticon marked the transition to a disciplinary power, with every movement supervised and all events recorded. The result of this surveillance was acceptance—a type of normalization—stemming from the threat of discipline. A suitable attitude was achieved not through total surveillance, but through panoptic discipline and inducing a population to conform via the internalization of this reality. From my point of view, the actions of the observer are based on this monitoring and the attitudes that he or she sees exhibited; the more one observes, the more powerful one becomes. Moreover, the power comes from the knowledge the observer accumulates from observations of actions in a circular fashion, with knowledge and power reinforcing each other.

We should take into account two components that have been highlighted in Foucault’s views about the relationship between power and knowledge. First, Foucault argues that having access to knowledge is also having access to power. Second, it has been illustrated that power is constitutive of society. Therefore, I contend that, in terms of knowledge, access to information resources is imperative for societies.

VI. CONCLUSION

There are high-level, principle-based purposes for which open access should be adopted as a policy framework and response to continuous technological growth. This paper supports the moral argument that publicly funded resources should be publicly available, with no particular

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criteria of discrimination. Open access enables information resources to be shared with the wider public, helping to create a knowledge society composed of well-informed citizens. However, open access enhances knowledge transfer to sectors that can directly use that knowledge to produce better goods and services. There are also more conventional, practice-focused purposes in that open access can be considered a means for social justice. In the context of multiculturalism in Europe, current educational institutions (such as the libraries of universities, colleges, schools, and digital repositories) with open access, offer many opportunities for end-users’ identity growth by decreasing the time needed to seek methods of information access, obtain permission to use that information, and find out what permissions for reuse exist. Hence, in terms of educational purposes for minorities, this is an additional instrument for their social incorporation.

This paper shows the significance of the European Commission’s role, directives, and initiatives, which have gradually produced an appropriate

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115 See David Harvey, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE CITY (2010).
regime via education in order to “welcome” multicultural aspects that stem from those who immigrate to Europe.\textsuperscript{118} Therefore, open access is needed as an effective instrument of information dissemination via educational institutions in Europe.\textsuperscript{119} Immigration movements to Europe have increased over the past decade; consequently, multicultural aspects are characteristics of current European societies.\textsuperscript{120} From my point of view, everything is related to mentality, which comes from education. Hence, the concept of education will always be critical for the European continent.\textsuperscript{121} The multicultural situation in Europe demands a reassessment of current educational regimes in conjunction with ongoing technological developments and emerging challenges.

\textsuperscript{118} See ROBERT JACKSON, RELIGION AND EDUCATION IN EUROPE (2007).