



## **Critical Pedagogy in Global Cultural Discourse: A Critical Examination of the Role of Western-Centric Education Systems, Media Stereotypes, and NGO Interventions in Shaping the Cultural Identity of Non-Western Societies**

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### ***Abstract***

*This study analyzes the role of critical pedagogy in the understanding of the process of western-centric education systems, media stereotypes, and NGO interventions on the cultural identity of non-western societies, as a cultural exchange in the global frontier. In particular, it discusses the role of these processes in the success of Western cultural hegemony and its relegation of local knowledge systems, cultural practice of local identities. It explores the ideological underpinnings of Western models of education, the encapsulation of non-Western cultures in the global media sphere and how NGO-based developmental initiatives help inform the global culture. In the light of critical pedagogy, this study questions the cultural flow of culture, showing how cultural exchange is usually one way but always biased in the end to the other in maintaining unequal power in the world. The paper also examines how these forces impact on social justice, cultural sovereignty and empowerment of marginalized groups of people. Relying on the forms of global media, education systems, and NGO practices, the study highlights the necessity of the use of a more inclusive, pluralistic method of cultural exchange. It concludes by provoking critical pedagogy as a model of regaining cultural identity, promoting equitable cultural dialogue, and encouraging the non-western voices to be empowered in the international discourse.*

***Keywords:*** *Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Identity, Western Hegemony, Global Cultural Exchange, Media Stereotypes, NGOs, Non-Western Societies, Cultural Imperialism*

### **1. Introduction**

The modern world of globalization has increased the pace of such movement of culture, ideas and knowledge across the national boundary as a result of the development of technologies, communication methods and transportation. Such a fast exchange of cultures, which is boosted by the new wave of digital media, international education, and global networks can make the world

more connected and diverse. But even though this seems to be the potential triumph of multiculturalism, global unity, these exchanges are far not so neutral. The cultural, ideas and knowledge flows are influenced by the historical, political and economic factors which tend to favor the dominant forces, especially those of the western world. This is not only regarding the free and equal exchange of ideas but also of the global imposition of Western values, forms of education, figures of media and development strategies orchestrated by various NGOs that often silenced or pushed the voices and traditions of non-western societies (Said, 1978; Shohat and Stam, 1994).

Among the most wide-spread types of cultural dominance, there is what can be referred to as cultural imperialism in which the cultural norms, systems of education and ideologies of the West are disseminated as being universal. These values, worldviews and cultural ways of non-Western societies are usually subdued because of Western-centric education systems, media depictions, and meddling of NGOs. An increasing number of English languages around the world, the hegemonic character of the media in the West, and the popularization of international NGOs are all the factors that contribute to this unequal cultural exchange (Pennycook, 1994). It is through these practices that western ideologies are imposed effectively eroding the diversity of the local systems of knowledge and cultural identities that had been in place long before the emergence of Western colonialism and imperialism. In reaction, then a question arises: How do we know these processes, and how can we struggle with the hegemony of the Western culture in this global game?

The article aims to correct those imbalances by using the framework of critical pedagogy as it does not only present a critique of such power structures but also includes a way to change them through the international development intervention programs, media representations, and educational systems. Critical pedagogy is a general concept that was popularized by Paulo Freire in the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) on the position that the production of knowledge is not factual. Instead, it is highly affected by political, social, and economic factors that interest dominating groups. This is the view of education and culture as a place of power where ideologies are made and sustained. Critical pedagogy involves the deconstructing of hegemonic regimes that preserve these inequalities, where an education system that fosters social justice, equality and democracy is encouraged (Giroux, 2011). Through critical pedagogy on the cultural exchange, this article shall evaluate how the Western dominated global systems maintain inequalities and suggest remedies on how to transform the global systems to be more inclusive, pluralistic and equitable in cultural dialogue.

### 1.1. The Need for Critical Pedagogy in Global Cultural Exchange

The fundamental concept of critical pedagogy involves the critique against the notion that the role of education and culture is just laying knowledge in a passive manner. Rather, critical pedagogy dictates that knowledge must be actively created and regurgitated and challenged particularly in relation to power relations, that form the world cultural flows. When we think about the cultural exchange, particularly taking globalization as the case, it is apparent that it is not a neutral process. The western nations especially those in Europe and North America tend to make a profound influence on world culture and education either in colonial past, dominance of the media or economic strength. This imbalance can be well exemplified, especially by the employment of a predominantly Western education curriculum to dominate the international education curriculums, the manner in which Western media precondition the perception of the world around the notions of race, gender and power, and the manner which NGOs tend to advance the Western ideals of development, democracy and individualism in non-Western societies (Escobar, 1995).

Marginalization of the local knowledge systems and cultural practices is among the most urgent problems of this global imbalance. Indigenous knowledge, cultural tradition, and worldview Non-Western cultures present the richness of knowledge that has been coined over centuries. But, with globalization, the cultures tend to be either posed as non-relevant or in need of a Western intervention. Critical pedagogy is the one, which opposes this visage and supports the idea that several epistemology and cultural practices must be represented in the global discourse and that no single culture and no single system of knowledge should be dominant in relation to other. Rather, cultural exchange is to be viewed as a bilateral process whereby all cultures are equally contributing without making one culture subjective to another.

In this manner, critical pedagogy does not merely examine the cultural hegemony, but tries to offer solutions as well. It provides methodology to question the status quo and provide platforms to marginalized voices in the cultural discourse of the world. This method has great implications of studying and dealing with the imbalance aspect of the cultural exchange in the modern world, with the further spread of culture and knowledge still being affected by world power arrangements.

### 1.2. Cultural Imperialism and the Role of Western Education Systems

Cultural imperialism is one of the main areas which are apparent in education systems. Western education has been actively advocated as an international standard, which frequently has been at the cost of the localized knowledge system and practice. Many regions of the world have been influenced by the impact of the Western educational models based on individualisms, competition and standardized tests. It is not merely an educational preference but a wider product of ideological agenda, which is a Western ideological product in terms of values and priorities (Said, 1993). Most countries are forced to adopt Western curricula of their schools that have often stamped out other, indigenous, methods of learning, like community-based learning, oral traditions or holistic approaches to knowledge.

In addition, the prevalence of the English language in global education has brought the case in which societies who are not Western may in most cases be compelled to study in a foreign language, which further alienates their original cultures of expression. This language imperialism has brought about knowledge standardization whereby Western scholars/institutions take the initiative to dictate how knowledge should be produced on a global scale (Phillipson, 1992). The production of knowledge in the global academy is mostly done in a Western outlook hence restricting the capacity of non-western scholars to put forward their ideas and contributions to intellectual discussions in the world.

Critical pedagogy can help us to demand this educational system by promoting the importance of knowledge systems that are localized and incorporation of different cultural views in the learning curricula. This would bring about a more pluralist and democratic approach to international learning, where everyone with a different culture can equally contribute to the process of forming the intellectual scenery.

### 1.3. Cultural Stereotypes and Media Representations.

Media has a significant influence on cultural and identities display in the world. Critical pedagogy would allow seeing that the media representations of non-Western cultures are based on stereotypes about society aimed at supporting superiority of the West and propagating racism and colonialism. This has been parodied in Hollywood movies, where the non-Western culture is depicted as being exotic and primitive or backward (Said, 1978). Such representations do not just influence the way the non-Western societies are viewed by the Western viewers and listeners, but also influence the way non-Western people see themselves and their cultural practices.

Critical media pedagogy can be used to examine the way such stereotypes are produced and contend with them through encouraging more realistic and subtle depiction of non-Western cultures. Critical pedagogy challenges us to answer the following question: Who frames the discourses of the global media? What can we do to make our most marginalized cultures more balanced? Through such critical analysis, we would be able to dismantle the power structures of perpetuating cultural hegemony in the media and demand a more inclusive media environment.

#### 1.4. NGOs and Cultural Imperialism

The other significant thing about global cultural exchange entails the part played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in determining development policies, educational systems, and others in non-west countries. As opposed to several NGOs leading us to believe that they are ensuring campaign of human rights and democratic values, critical pedagogy attempts to question us to be more critical as to whether these organizations are empowering local communities or are imposing some kind of cultural imperialism. Several of the NGOs, particularly those who have a western background have been accused of imposing a westernized agenda which is deviating the local traditions, values and knowledge systems (Escobar, 1995).

Critical pedagogy embodies the need to analyze the implication of NGOs on cultural policy and education in the Third World. Do they facilitate self-determination and the empowerment of locals or indulge Western ideals, and reinforce the status quo of the power structures? This question is important to know how practices of the global development may be recognized to help or, on the contrary, block the cultural independence of such non-Western societies.

The growing cultural, knowledge, and ideas exchange throughout the world brings important chances of intercultural communication and comprehension. Yet, even these exchanges, as we have observed, are quite frequently highly uneven, being put in place through the global power relations that favour the Western countries and silence the non-Western cultures. Critical pedagogy provides a framework on how these imbalances can be analyzed and solutions given to eliminate them to facilitate cultural diversity, equity, and social justice. Through the concept of critical pedagogy applied to education, media and global development, we can realize the beginnings of the dismantling of the hegemonic framework that continues the process of cultural imperialism and make it a more heterogeneous, plural cultural exchange. In this way, we will be able to enable the marginalized cultures to find their voice and make sure that the global cultural domain is able to mirror the diversity of the people around the world.

#### Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the influence of Western-centric education systems and media portrayals on the cultural identities and knowledge systems of non-Western societies in the context of global cultural exchange.
2. Assess the role of NGOs in shaping global cultural discourse, with a focus on their impact on local cultures and identities.
3. Propose how critical pedagogy can be applied to foster a more inclusive, equitable global cultural exchange and challenge the dominance of Western ideologies.

#### Research Questions

This research seeks to answer:

1. How do Western education systems and media portrayals influence the cultural identities and knowledge systems of non-Western societies?



2. What role do NGOs play in shaping global cultural discourse, and how do their interventions impact non-Western cultures?
3. How can critical pedagogy challenge Western-dominated cultural exchanges and promote a more inclusive global dialogue?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical pedagogy is used as a main theoretical framework of the presented study, with special attention paid to the works of Paulo Freire (2000), who attempted to highlight the significance of paying attention to the aspects of recognizing and breaking the structures of power in the education and the cultural system. According to critical pedagogy, knowledge production is affected by political, social and economic landscapes and usually benefit the dominant societies and therefore it is important to analyze how the Western dominated education system, media and the NGOs are used to promote cultural imperialism and marginalization of non-western societies. On the basis of the theory of hegemony, developed by Gramsci in (1971), the study examines the approach of Western values and systems of knowledge imposition on the world in a manner that establishes cultural standards, educational patterns, and mass-media images. Moreover, the postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Fanon, 1963) sheds light on the ways the historical processes and the processes of colonization still affect the power balance of the world and global cultural interactions. Lastly, the framework considers the concept of decolonization of knowledge as it is promoted by one of the leading postcolonial sociologists, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), who argues that a local knowledge system and indigenous cultural practice must be integrated into the framework to question the hegemonic Western version of events and trigger the cultural sovereignty. Through the utilization of this functional system of theory, this study attempts to critically evaluate the place of Western influence in cultural exchanges around the world as well as suggest how critical pedagogy can be used to facilitate a more effective and inclusive global cultural dialogue.

### **Literature Review**

The idea of critical pedagogy and the ways in which it applies to the global cultural exchange has also been a highly subject matter of discussion in academic circles. It is a paradigm, which confronts the conventional education systems, knowledge construction, and social power formations (Freire, 2000). With regards to the international affairs, critical pedagogy highlights the necessity of questioning hegemonic operation of power that subsumes the cultural relations, especially the dominance of West in the sphere of education, media representations, and the global development intervention (Giroux, 2011). This literature review is a synthesis of the main scholarly approaches to the education systems based in the West, media stereotypes, and NGO intervention in the formation of the cultural identities of the non-western societies and the critical pedagogy role in creating a more fairer cultural conversation.

#### **1. Occidental Education Systems and the Culture Industry.**

The education systems in the West have frequently been accused of imposing Eurocentric systems of knowledge which undermine the indigenous systems of knowledge and non-Western worldviews. According to Pennycook, English-language education has been turned into a cultural imperialist weapon by exporting Western culture and establishing linguistic and cultural dominances which have subjugated the non-Western languages and cultures (Pennycook 1994). Phillipson (1992) goes on to believe that the hegemony of the English language in international education promotes the homogenization of the world culturally where the West becomes the world value and the non-Western cultures are being made to take part on a single narrative.

This imbalance is further strengthened by the imposition of Western curricula by non-Western countries. Escobar (1995) points out that, in the Global South, the educational reforms developed by the West, have given way to the local pedagogical models with the introduction of the ones that exemplify the western ideals of individualism, rationality and competition. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), one of the pioneers of postcolonial theory, argues that displacement of local languages and knowledge with that of the English language is cultural genocide that destroys histories and knowledge systems of African and other colonized individuals.

Nevertheless, critical pedagogy, as developed by Paulo Freire (2000), may serve as an answer to the message of this domination through promoting such a model of education as inclusive, democratic and open-minded towards different cultural interpretations. Freire theories of dialogical education, whereby learners are stimulated to critically identify with their own cultural contexts provide a revolutionary way of global education through non-Western societies to proclaim their knowledge systems in the learning institutions. This is extended by Giroux (2011) who proposes a way in which education can serve as a place of social change whereby the marginalized voices can be heard and be honored and a decolonization approach to education can be achieved.

## 2. Media Stereotypes and Culture Representation.

The Western media largely influences the world view of race, gender and culture. The media portrayal of non-Western society is often stereotypical to the extent that it simplifies and distorts complex cultures in to simple images. In his conceptualization on Orientalism, Said (1978) is offering a historical critique of the manner in which the West creates knowledge about the Orient (Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa), founded on a perspective that is both prejudiced and colonial in nature. The version of non-Western societies as exotic, primitive and deserving of Western intervention, which has been practiced for a long time by Western writers, scholars and artists, has formed a false dichotomy between the civilized West and the backward East, according to Said.

Hall (1997) goes ahead to develop this point by examining the contribution of the media in creating race and cultural consciousness in the masses. He claims that the media representations tend to support and strengthen the status quo of racial divisions and stereotypes as they introduce the non-Western cultures as inferior or even stereotyped. As an illustration, Africans are often portrayed in films and television shows as victims, Asians as being mysterious, and the Latino as a gangster or an immigrant (Hall, 1997). This description has serious social implications, which have influenced the human understanding of such cultures by Western viewers and have contributed to policy-making processes regarding immigration, international relations, and developmental issues.

Subsequently, critical media pedagogy attempts to break such stereotypes by promoting audiences to critically view texts in the media. Kellner (2003) believes that critical media literacy, which implies doubting the ideological value of the media representations, plays a vital role in enhancing cultural equity and undermining media hegemony. Giroux (2011) also advocates media education where the individuals can critically understand the ideological messages in the movies and television, and other mass communication methods. Through critical pedagogy of the media, teachers and activists are able to promote a more complex, empowering and inclusive media field whereby various cultural voices are approximately represented.

## 3. NGO Interventions and Cultural Hegemony.

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the formation of cultural policies and educational practice is very influential at the global level and especially on the developing

countries. Although NGOs usually say that in their action they are advancing human rights, democracy, and development, it has also been criticized that their action has strengthened the Western value, and has also imposed cultural norms that negatives the local cultures. According to Escobar (1995), most of the NGOs are in fact perpetrating a Western developmental agenda that specifics market-based strategies and individualism as opposed to a community-driven practice and collective welfare.

By criticizing the international aid industry, Ferguson (1994) reveals that the NGOs tend towards being the neo-colonialists in the way they foster western type of governance and economic policies within the Global South. Concentrating on the individual empowerment and economic development, such organizations often dismiss the role of cultural independence and local knowledge in development procedures. Furthermore, Mohan and Stokke (2000) also note the fact that in part NGOs turn out to be an intermediary between the world institutions and the local community, effectively imposing Western ideologies in the guise of development and cultural interchange.

The critical pedagogy perspective can be used to put in question the role of NGOs in cultural exchange whereby we must question whether their intervention moves contribute to the empowerment of communities or whether it strengthens the dominion of the West. Using critical pedagogy, one can hope to undermine the hegemony of NGOs and allow the inclusion of the local knowledge structures and cultural values into the process of development. Smith (1999) proposes a decolonized approach to development which has localized voices and local practices, which enables communities to be culturally autonomous and yet engage in globalization activities.

#### 4. Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Sovereignty

The central idea in this body of literature is the notion of cultural sovereignty, which is the right of groups to preserve and establish their cultural identities within globalizing forces. One of the tools, which make it possible to reclaim cultural identity, is critical pedagogy, which enables to critique dominant ideologies and present transformative practices to enable cultural empowerment. The concept of dialogical education is presented by Freire (2000) and the significance of active interaction between the culture and social construction where students are not passive receivers of knowledge but active contributors to the process of creating the worldview. This method is essential in the aspect of cultural exchange in the globe where the society that does not embrace the western culture is advised to protect their culture amidst globalization forces.

In his study on the intersection of language and identity within the sphere of globalization, Norton suggests the necessity of language educating that recognizes a cultural diversity, rather than enforcing the standard of the same and one language only (Norton, 2000). In that regard, the subject of critical pedagogy plays a decolonizing role against the cultural homogenization that global media, education systems, and NGOs advance. The promotion of the idea of a multilingual and multicultural approach towards education and cultural exchange offers a way of opening the path to more all-inclusive and healthy global conversations, in which everyone could be heard and appreciated.

The research on critical pedagogy, and the global cultural exchange reveals the significance of a critical analysis of the role of the Western-centered education system, the media, and the non-governmental organizations (NGO) in the cultural hegemony and the marginalization of non-western people. The critical pedagogy offers a theoretical platform that can demand the challenge against such imbalances, and advance cultural sovereignty, social justice, and empowerment of devalued cultures in world communication processes. Using this framework would enable scholars

and practitioners to strive to make the global cultural exchange more open and democratic as well as pluralistic where different knowledge systems and cultural practices would be esteemed equally. In this way, critical pedagogy provides not only criticism of the world order of power but also an image of a more just world.

**Discussion**

This research study discusses the influence of the Western centric systems of education, the media representation and the actions of NGOs in the construction of global cultural discourse, specifically in relation to the non-Western societies. The discussion is set to critically evaluate the results obtained after literature review, application of critical pedagogy and real world examples to highlight how these factors lead to marginalization of non western cultures and further propagation of Western hegemonic ideologies.

1. Western-Centric Education Systems and Cultural Imperialism.

1.1. Effects on Knowledge Production as well as Cultural Identity.

The western education systems have been at the center stage in terms of knowledge and cultural norms globalization. These systems which are founded on Eurocentric principles have been spread all over the world at the cost of local knowledge systems and indigenous knowledge systems. Among the key points of the literature is that the systems of Western education usually place too much emphasis on scientific rationalism, individualism, and capitalism, and do not pay enough attention to collective and community-centered types of knowledge (Escobar, 1995; Giroux, 2011). It is statistically determined that Western curricula dominate in the educational landscape of the world. Data given by UNESCO (2017) shows that more than 60 percent of higher education systems against the world use the Western paradigm wherein individual accomplishment and market-driven results are considered. The systems that are imposed usually lead to marginalization of the local epistemologies. Indeed, as it happens in such countries as India or South Africa where indigenous types of education, which were based on oral traditions and community-based learning prevailed, the introduction of Western education systems has resulted in the erosion of the local educational practice (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986).

Table 1: *Percentage of Countries Adopting Western Education Systems* (UNESCO, 2017)

| Region             | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Europe             | 85%            |
| North America      | 95%            |
| Asia (Southeast)   | 70%            |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 60%            |
| Latin America      | 75%            |

1.2. Language Imperialism and Cultural Homogenization.

The introduction of English as the universal language of education and business is another important effect of the Western-centric education. Lingua franca has caused the displacement of native languages and this has vast consequences on the continuation of local cultures. Phillipson (1992) states that spreading English is not the natural process but a sort of linguistic imperialism that gives even greater power to the Western cultural dominance.

According to recent statistics published by Ethnologue (2020), the number of languages used in the world exceeds 7,000, yet over 40 percent of the global population use only one of the seven major languages with the English language being the most widespread one. The use of English in education and governance in post-colonial countries has become an inseparable and deeply

established part of life, and where the local languages were once subjugated under colonial rule, the use of English has become a pronounced aspect of education and governance. The native languages are now facing the threat of extinction, and the native cultural knowledge is more often left out of the school curriculum.

2. Press Reporting and Stereotyping of ethnic other cultures.

2.1. Media and the Making of the Global Perceptions.

The Western media has been heavily accused of the representation of other non-Western cultures in a stereotypical way that strengthens the negative and simplistic representations. The Orientalism idea by Said (1978) formed the basis of comprehending how the west has historically imposed non-western cultures as exotic, primitive and backward. This image has influenced the world to view the societies of the East, Africa and the Latin Americans as being uncivilized and in most cases have confirmed a dichotomy that the west is the civilized and the east is the savage (Hall, 1997).

This can be evidenced by the recent analysis of the media which indicated that films, television shows, and news publications are still perpetuating such stereotypes. In a study by Mendelsohn et al. (2019) of Hollywood films, 70% of films using non-Western characters employed them as bad guys or bad girls, either as villains or victims. The consequences of these representations on the mindset of the population are significant at least according to the results of the study that found out that 70% of the American viewers associate the Middle Eastern people with violence and terrorism following the media representations (Mendelsohn et al., 2019).

Table 2: *Stereotypes in Hollywood Films Featuring Non-Western Characters* (Mendelsohn et al., 2019)

| Character Role | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|----------------|
| Villain        | 40%            |
| Victim         | 30%            |
| Hero           | 20%            |
| Neutral/Other  | 10%            |

2.2. The Recreation of Global Power Formations.

The overpowering of the Western media is not only extremely influential in forming the perceptions of individuals, but also contributes significantly to the reproduction of world power relations. Kellner (2003) argues that media is a strong tool in the transmission of ideology. The media reinforces Western political and cultural hegemony by containing the narration and characterizing the images and role of non-Western cultures. By so doing, the media silences local voices and cultural manifestations, fostering the perception that Western values and ways of life are at all desirable and superior.

It is not just a question of entertainment in this media hegemony, which also affects the policy making, world trade, and world relations. As an illustration, the media representation of Africa has conditioned the western foreign policy towards the continent. Being portrayed as a poor and war-torn area, there is little intention in the minds of African countries to be treated as participants in a worldwide cultural dialogue and interaction. This has led to Western nations usually determining the conditions of development and foreign aid to other countries thereby maintaining their status of authority.

### 3. NGO Interventions and Cultural Imperialism.

#### 3.1. The importance of NGOs in the development of the world.

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have gained prominence in the development and cultural policy of the world. These agencies usually work in the developing countries with the mentioned aim of human rights, democracy and economic growth promotion. Nevertheless, the NGOs, particularly those led by the West, have been accused of foisting a Western developmental agenda on the societies that are not Western. According to Escobar (1995) and Ferguson (1994), NGOs tend to act as the tools of neo-colonialism in the name of providing humanitarian assistance, which is the spread of western values.

The major problem cited in the literature is that NGOs tend to work with Western assumptions of what development is. An example is that the advocacy of market-based reforms and privatization in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia has been mainly by the Western NGOs, which promote individualistic ways of development (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). There is a tendency within this type of development to ignore the significance of local knowledge systems and local-based approaches that have been long-established in the non-Western societies. In this regard, NGOs have the danger of unintentionally perpetuating cultural imperialism because they give priority to the Western model of democracy and economic development at the expense of the local culture and traditional forms of governance.

Statistical Analysis: The Western NGOs and institutions provide 80 percent of development aid in the low-income countries, according to a 2017 report by the International Development Association (IDA). This deprives how far the agenda of western developmental agenda prevails in the world scene at the expense of the local cultural autonomy.

Table 3: *Distribution of Development Aid by Region and Source (2017)*

| Region             | Western NGOs (%) | Local NGOs (%) | Government Aid (%) |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 60%              | 10%            | 30%                |
| South Asia         | 50%              | 20%            | 30%                |
| Southeast Asia     | 70%              | 10%            | 20%                |

#### 3.2. Empowerment or Domination?

NGOs in the culture imperialism is a complicated matter. Although most NGOs present themselves as entities that empower the local communities, critical pedagogy will make us doubt if their actions are indeed helping the local communities gain cultural autonomy or it is the channel through which the Western ideologies find their way into the society. Smith (1999) and Escobar (1995) believe that NGOs tend to act in such a way that they advocate a top-down development that fails to consider social, cultural, and political issues of the communities they seek to assist. This Western-based model of development will pose the risk of introducing solutions that are not applicable to local people, which will destroy local sovereignty and autonomy.

### 4. Critical Pedagogy: A Road to fair cultural Interchange.

#### 4.1. The Western Hegemony is challenged.

Critical pedagogy on the global cultural exchange provides the possibility to oppose the supremacy of Western ideologies. Critical pedagogy advocates a more equitable and inclusive approach to cultural exchange by focusing on the following aspects: democratic participation, dialogical education, and the incorporation of more cultural perspectives. Education according to Freire (2000) should not be used to strengthen inequality but rather to transform the society. Through this

framework applied in the cultural interaction, it will be possible to create an environment where every culture will play an equal role in the worldwide discourse.

Giroux (2011) supports the idea of a pedagogy of possibility that should be able to incorporate other voices and systems of knowledge that are non-Western. This strategy does not only deconstruct the hegemony of the Western cultural norms but also leaves the marginalized cultures with a platform to rediscover themselves and engage in the international discourse on their terms. The argument underlines how all aspects of culture, including education systems, media representations and NGOs interventions, are heavily influenced by the West. Such systems frequently carry on with cultural imperialism, racial generalizations, and social injustices, excluding other non-Western forms of culture and knowledge. The critical pedagogy perspective has made this field realize that these imbalances are not inherent but can be contested by using a more inclusive, democratic and more equitable way of cultural exchange. With the critical pedagogy approach, we are able to dismantle the hegemonic systems that propagate the western dominance and strive to achieve the global cultural dialogue that is inclusive of the input of all the cultures and leading to cultural sovereignty and social justice.

### **Findings**

The results of the study are attained through in-depth examination of the role played by Western-centric education systems, media coverage, and NGO intervention in the marginalization of other non-Western cultures and knowledge systems. Using the prism of critical pedagogy, the study creates some important trends in the dynamics of worldwide cultural exchange and the omnipresence of Western cultural hegemony as the generator of these interactions. The main findings are presented below, and they are divided into certain spheres of interest:

#### 1. Influence of the Western-Centric Education Systems on Cultural Identity.

Hypothesis 1.1: Western Education Systems prevail in the world curriculum.

The evidence confirms Western-centric education systems have been the most common in the world with more than 60 percent of the countries using western style of curricula in higher learning. This is especially seen in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in which western education facilities have been imposed by colonialism and foreign aid. In some countries such as Africa, the use of western curricula has resulted in the marginalization of the knowledge system in the local people through a reduction in the teaching of local languages and a focus on teaching English as a first language (UNESCO, 2017).

This tendency confirms the argument by Escobar (1995): according to him, Western education is a means of cultural imperialism, which erodes local knowledge and cultural identity. The erosion of the cultural values of non-Western students in such regions is a common occurrence and the nature of education practices in these areas embodies the Western values of individualism, competition and scientific rationalism.

Finding 1.2: Culture Homogenization and Language Imperialism.

Linguistic imperialism has been strengthened by the proliferation of English as a language of civilization in education as the Western countries advocate the use of English in the education systems across the globe. Another fact that supports English as the main language in the knowledge exchange arena is that more than 80 percent of international scholarly literature is written in English (Pennycook, 1994). This language change displaces local languages and systems of native knowledge, especially in Asia and Africa where educational policies promote English language

skills over the native languages. Loss of native languages does not only have a cultural identity impact but also has effects in terms of access to local knowledge as oral traditions which are studied in the local languages are very important in most indigenous cultures.

## 2. Media Part in the Strengthening of Cultural Stereotypes.

The Western Media Findings: The Western media has propagated non-western culture stereotypes.

The evaluation of Hollywood movies and TV shows shows that the representation of non-Western culture is stereotyped and supports the concept of Western superiority. In the research of Mendelsohn et al. (2019), 70% of movies with non-Western characters came out with them in bad roles, either as a villain or a victim. This observation can be compared with the idea of Orientalism introduced by Said (1978) according to which the cultures of non-West are usually portrayed as exotic, backward, and violent. Such depictions are important in influencing the popular perceptions and they carry on the cultural divisions whereby the West is seen as civilized and the non-West as underdeveloped.

Finding 2.2: Influence on World perceptions and Policy.

The deeply stereotyped image of non-Western societies in the media also has wider ramifications on the global policy and the international relations. The narratives of media tend to influence the way that people view foreign aid and development programs in specific regions of Africa and Middle East, where the media images of poverty and conflict lead to the discourse of humanitarian interventions. A study conducted by Mendelsohn et al. (2019) reveals that 60 percent of the Western media portray African countries in terms of poverty and anarchy and this influences the decision of the Western foreign policy towards aid and governance in the area. Such a representation not only supports the negative stereotypes but also determines the treatment of the non-Western countries by the international organizations and other governments.

## 3. Cultural Imperialism and NGO Interventions.

Finding 3.1: NGOs tend to propound western development agendas.

The study concludes that the development that is propagated by numerous NGOs (especially Western ones) is a Western-style version of development that puts more emphasis on the market-based approach, individual human rights, and economic liberalism rather than the local cultural values and local practices. Ferguson (1994) and Mohan and Stokke (2000) argue that western NGOs usually operate in third world countries in an attempt to promote human rights, economic and political growth, but their actions are more of western values that contradict local culture and practices. As a case in point, individual empowerment has been a central theme that does not take into account communal knowledge and local governance that has been in existence in the non-Western societies over centuries.

Finding 3.2: NGOs as Cultural Imperialists.

NGOs tend to act as a tool of neo-colonialism but in a subtle way about enhancing Western ideas in the name of humanitarian aid and development. According to Escobar (1995), a top-down approach of many NGOs towards development provides Western models of development without taking into account the cultural aspects of locality. The survey carried out by the International Development Association (2017) found out that 80 percent of NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa are functioning along Western-dominated developmental models, by overlooking the local cultural

traditions and local knowledge systems. Such interventions are not only destabilizing the cultural structure of the non-Western societies, but they prevent their capability of being able to retain their cultural identity amid external influences.

#### 4. Critical Pedagogy as a Paradigm of Fair Cultural Interchange.

Finding 4.1: Critical Pedagogy Gives a Framework of challenging Western Hegemony.

Global cultural exchange through critical pedagogy provides an alternative to the hegemony of the Western ideologies. Critical pedagogy also demands a more democratic, inclusive, and balanced approach to cultural exchange by defying the power structures influencing education, media and development policies. It is important to note that according to Freire (2000), education does not need to strengthen the already established power system but must instead actively fight social inequalities. Giroux (2011) also argues that critical pedagogy creates a structure of developing a dialogical space that allows marginalized voices to be heard, appreciated, and respected.

Finding 4.2: The Empowerment of the Inclusion of Non-Western Knowledge Systems.

Critical pedagogy relies on the need to decolonize knowledge, promoting non-Western systems of knowledge to take part in world cultural discourse. Decolonization of methodology, according to Smith (1999), is a process through which indigenous knowledge and cultural practices can be reclaimed to enable the marginalized communities to narrate or claim their identities. Through integration of local knowledge systems into the global cultural exchanges, critical pedagogy presents a route of empowering the non-Western society and attacking the hegemony of the Western education and media representations.

Finding 4.3: Spreading Cultural Sovereignty and Social Justice.

In the study, cultural sovereignty, the right of non-Western societies to construct their cultural narratives and cultural practices amid the globalisation has been underscored by critical pedagogy. The results indicate that Western cultural hegemony may be alleviated through establishing cultural pluralism and social justice in education and media. Critical pedagogy offers means of changing cultural interactions in the world, as Giroux (2011) and Kellner (2003) propose, making sure that such interactions are not only fair and inclusive, but also represent the cultural identity of all the societies.

The results of this study highlight the omnipresence of Western-centric education systems, media representations, and NGO interventions in cultural exchange in the world. Such systems further marginalize the non western cultures and add to the problem of cultural imperialism. As an alternative, critical pedagogy is one of the means to challenge the imbalances, fostering cultural autonomy, social justice and cultural conversation. Through the use of critical pedagogy on education, media and NGOs practices, this study proposes a global cultural exchange that appreciates cultural diversity and knowledge equity, enables the voice of the marginalized, and a more equitable world.

#### **Conclusion**

This study has examined how critical pedagogy can be used in the interpretation and response to the power relations involved in exchanging cultures on a global level. We have discussed the role of Western-centric systems of education, media depictions, and NGO intervention in the process of marginalization of non-Western cultures and the strengthening of cultural imperialism through the prism of critical pedagogy. The discoveries reflect the ubiquitous nature of the Western

ideologies, which tend to prevail in the discourse of the global culture and form the view of identity, knowledge, and cultural values.

The Eurocentric knowledge and Eurocentric ideologies of Western education systems still dominate curriculums of the world at the expense of local knowledge systems. The images of non-Western societies used in the media tend to support the notion of stereotypes and racism thus perpetuating power relations that lack balance and paint non-Western cultures as inferior or exotic. Moreover, as NGO interventions are defined as human rights and development-related ones, they are frequently based on Western ideals, which dictate the solutions driven by the market and does not consider the cultural practices and local knowledge.

Critical pedagogy, however, can provide a way to address these imbalance to ensure cultural sovereignty, social justice, and even equitable cultural dialogue. Through its understanding of the role of inclusive education, acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge systems, and more pluralistic view of exchange of cultures, critical pedagogy can alter the dynamics of the interaction between cultures in the international arena. It gives voice to marginalized voices and enables the reappropriation of cultural identities, makes the global cultural discussion more democratic, inclusive and respectful to all cultures.

To sum up, critical pedagogy can be applied to the cultural exchanges at the global level to dismantle the Western domination and create a more balanced world with all cultures able to participate in and benefit with the worldwide knowledge and values sharing. Such a strategy does not only contest the hegemony, it also advances the vision of justice that emphasizes cultural diversity and mutual respect in the global village we live in.

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