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	programme.		of the Presidency (Bolivia).		
Felipe Ortíz (Peru)	-Ex-ambassador of Peru in the US. -Coauthor of different works with Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.	-Winner of the Jerusalem Award of Journalism 1998.	-Member of CEAL, CREDICOR P, Banco de Crédito, etc.	-Industrial engineer. -Master University Rochester, NY. -Rector of the Universidad del Pacífico (Private).	-Board of 'Enseña Perú'
Salvador Paiz (Guatemala)			-Co-President Grupo PDC - Vicepresidente Walmart Centroamérica.	-Bachelor's degree, Wharton School, the University of Pennsylvania + MBA	-President of the Fundación Sergio Paiz Andrade (FUNSEPA), dedicated to the improvement of the quality of education in Guatemala through technology.
Viviane Senna (Brazil)			-Board of Directors, Banco Santander. -Editorial board. Ed. Confederación Nacional de Industrias.	-Psychologist. Pontificia Universidad Católica de São Paulo.	-President of the Ayrton Senna Institute. -Member of the Adult Friends group. -Founders' Council - Todos pela Educação.
Emiliana Vegas (Venezuela)	-Chief executive Division of Education) IDB. -Worked at World Bank			-PhD in Education. Harvard University.	
Elena Viyella (Dominican Republic)			President of Inter-Química	-APEC University	President of EDUCA, non-profit organization dedicated to the improvement of the quality of education.
José Weinstein	-Manager Centro de			-PhD in Sociology.	-Manager Centro de Innovación en Educación, Fundación Chile (2006-

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(Chile)	Innovación en Educación, Fundación Chile (2006-2013). -Minister of Culture (2003-2006) -Subsecretary of Education (2000-2003).			Universidad Católica Lovaina. -Doctorate supervisor. doctorado Educación Universidad Diego Portales. -Consultant World Bank, IDB, UNESCO, ECLAC.	2013). -Fundación Andes, Manager of educational projects.
Ariel Fiszbein (Argentina)	-Worked at the World Bank.			-PhD in Economics (Berkeley).	
Ricardo Lagos (Chile)	-President of Chile (2000-2006) - UN envoy for climate change. -Ambassador of Chile in the USSR. -Minister of Education (1990-1994).			-PhD in Economics Duke University -Director of Political Sciences. Univ. Chile. -General Secretary FLACSO. -Professor Brown University.	-President of Fundación Democracia y Desarrollo.
Ernesto Zedillo (Mexico)	-President of Mexico (1994-2000) -United Nations High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs		-Board of directors PRISA Group. -Executive director P&G, Alcoa, Union Pacific	-PhD Yale University -Dir. Yale Center for Study Globalization -Member of the American Philosophical Society	-Chair Rockefeller Foundation Economic Council on Planetary Health. -Member of 'Grupo de los 30'.

As can be seen in the table, the members of the Education Commission, are political actors linked to the hemispheric elites in the political arena (Campbell, Costin, Ortiz, Weinstein, Lagos, Zedillo and Fajardo), to the world of international organizations (Gray, Campbell, Costin, Vegas and

Fiszbein), to large regional capital (Costin, Fajardo, González, Villeya, Senna), civil society organizations with a strong presence in their countries of origin (González, Ortíz, Senna, Villeya, Costin), important foundations (Paíz, Della Paolera, González, Weinsten, Lagos), as well as the media and other think tanks and private institutes (Jarquín, 2022). The above makes it possible to clearly see the condition of this organization as a crystallization of regional elites. A space in which educational reforms and policies aimed at maximizing the investments of regional capital have been promoted, as well as policies of control over teachers, a mobilized sector that has historically represented a counterweight to the oligarchic policies of the region.

### **The role of The Inter-American Dialogue**

In this second part, the results of the analysis are advanced so as to understand the implications that the think tank has generated with respect to education policy in Latin America throughout its history. To this end, it is essential to delve into its intervention strategies in the education systems of the region. These can be obtained from a critical reading of its documents and policy positions in the field of education. We can find three major strategic bets of the organization: a) networking, which has allowed it to establish useful links within the different regional elites; b) agenda setting, with which it has built a dominant narrative of educational reform in the region; and c) heterarchy in education, which refers to the promotion of a form of government that incorporates members of the private sector in the decision-making processes.

#### ***Agenda setting***

One of the common functions of think tanks is the setting of a political agenda to guide the debate towards the achievement of a series of changes considered necessary. The formulated agenda is thus recovered by government agencies as priority elements for discussion, which allows the actors who have developed it to intervene not only in the public debate but also as interlocutors of different governing bodies, a growing trend in the region. Pinilla (2012) states that a key aspect in the functioning of think tanks lies in their relationship with the media and the construction of a public image. Linked to this, these organizations have developed strategies to disseminate their research and policy proposals.

The Dialogue has been successful in this regard thanks to the continuous dissemination campaigns it has carried out with respect to its proposals on educational policy. One of the most significant of these was the year-long campaign carried out by José Octavio Bordón -former presidential candidate in Argentina, senator and then governor of Mendoza- to promote the report *The Future is at Stake*, launched in 1996. During the 1999 tour, the Argentine politician met with heads of state and business leaders from Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican

Republic, El Salvador, and Peru. The reason was to disseminate the educational reform agenda based on standardization and decentralization policies in education systems to improve the quality of education. This agenda -linked to the narrative promoted at that time by multilateral and supranational institutions such as the World Bank- became dominant within the region's education systems. This would deepen years later with the launching of the next two PREAL Reports.

PREAL's meetings spread throughout Central America, the Southern Cone of the continent and the United States, with the presence of politicians, businessmen and other civil society actors with access to the media. Their purpose was to discuss and promote the education reform agenda with representatives of national governments, business groups and other civil society actors. As a result, the think tank managed to underpin an educational reform agenda that was discussed practically throughout the continent, as the product of in-depth academic reflection and not necessarily as the expression of a political project.

In this way, The Dialogue has become and affirmed itself as an instance that has managed to intervene in a relevant way in the formulation of educational policies in the region. Its activities to establish the regional debate agenda have been significant in areas such as the design of merit-based teaching careers, early childhood care programs, or the adoption of digital technology in schools. In all of them, a managerial principle of intervention on regional education has been maintained, albeit covered by a citizen discourse, based on the imperative of using evidence for decision making. The think tank itself recognizes that for more than two decades it has been a leading voice in educational policy debates, producing influential documents and articles and convening public meetings and private briefings, with the aim of promoting educational changes in the region.

### **Networking**

The construction of collaborative networks can respond to the organization of different individuals and collectivities that seek to address a common problem. These differ from corporate relationships, as they are constituted in a more autonomous way with the capacity to go beyond the state logic itself. This presupposes greater operational flexibility, as well as a greater capacity to obtain relevant information regarding social problems and the changes needed to solve them (Caetano & Mendes, 2020).

Generally, the intervention of think tanks in political life has been linked to the generation of networks with individuals and institutions that provide useful links through which to access information and resources that are strategic for the achievement of results. Think tanks have developed operational networks in different spheres (Caetano & Mendes, 2020) which have allowed them to consolidate their position as policy-oriented knowledge-generating entities. The Dialogue is in line with this.

Networking with economic, political, academic, and media actors has been a fundamental part of

the think tank's history. Its educational project has been nurtured by this organizational commitment, which has allowed it to gain media coverage and the attention of high-level regional politicians. Its ability to build influential relationships is evident when considering the integration of its Education Commission, a 'high caliber' initiative that condenses the interest in education of different sectors of the regional, political, and economic elite.

The Commission includes representatives of large regional capital, interested in promoting an education that responds to the interests of labor markets, actors linked to the world of regional philanthropy (for which the promotion of their activities by the regional governments themselves is fundamental), politicians close to managerial administrative perspectives (these believe that the private sector has a greater capacity to solve social problems than the public sector) and, finally, strategic actors of Edu business in the region, that find in the education sector an attractive space for profit. The creation, of such instance, was recognized as a commitment to educational transformation by "political and business leaders, the media and civil society" throughout Latin America (The Dialogue, 2014, p. 19).

### ***Heterarchy***

Throughout its history, the think tank has promoted a form of government known as 'heterarchical governance' in the regional education sector. In this regard, Olmedo & Wilkins (2014, p. 108) suggest that heterarchies are made up of a "heterogeneous group of old and new actors with different backgrounds, profiles and interests, who share relationships, responsibilities and decision-making processes at different levels". This allows them to function is the development of flexible collaborative networks, which manage to develop forms of informal - and sometimes institutionalized - authority throughout the political process. In this way, the inclusion of private actors at different levels of education systems becomes an increasingly common process.

In a PREAL document (2012, p. 5), it is mentioned that

the recognition of the contribution the business sector can make in the construction of the public sector is based on the firm belief that the only way we have to build public, social, collective, private and state goods is through the articulation of the three sectors: public, private and social.

Part of this has been the systematic creation of alliances with regional business groups, as well as the recovery of an educational reform agenda linked to the U.S. corporate sphere. In line with the above mentioned, it is possible to identify two trends:

(a) positioning of different actors linked to The Dialogue in key spaces of regional education policy, either directly or through organizations created or chaired by them;

b) direct participation of the organization in the design and discussion of specific educational policies.

The first point can be illustrated by considering the examples of Gabriel Sánchez Zinny, linked to The Dialogue since the 1990s in educational issues, who recently served as Director General of Culture and Education of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina; Claudio X. González Guajardo, founder of the organization Mexicanos Primero, who would become a protagonist in the conformation and start up of the Educational Reform promoted in Mexico in 2013 (Jarquín, 2021); and Vivianne Senna, who through the Ayrton Senna Institute has managed to form strategic public-private alliances with municipal governments in Brazil (Da Silva & Dos Santos, 2022).

Regarding the second point, two episodes analyzed are significant: the first, in 2008, when the Dominican Minister of Education invited Jeffrey Puryear, co-director of The Dialogue Education Program, to launch the first of the 12 regional forums on the Ten-Year Education Plan (Inter-American Dialogue, 2009); the second, when the Mexican government recently invited Ariel Fiszbein, director of The Dialogue Education Program to the Early Childhood Forum, where fundamental elements of the Federal Government's policy on Early Childhood were discussed.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

The initial interest of this research was to analyze an organization representative of the new 'ideological elite' of think tanks created expressly to generate and influence educational policies in Latin America. The Inter-American Dialogue through its history, its documents, campaigns, and agenda... the specific functions it has sought to fulfill, the interests it has represented and the alliances it has established... have been analyzed.

Through a critical reading of its documents and organizational composition, it has been confirmed that The Dialogue is a fundamental think tank in the development of the regional educational debate. Moreover, in our opinion, it is the most important organization of its kind, considering its capacity to build an educational agenda that has covered practically all Latin America. Its network of strategic alliances has intertwined with different regional elites, something no other organization of its kind enjoys, and another factor being its capacity to intervene directly in processes of development and dissemination of educational policies in different countries. In this way, the organization has managed to underpin hybrid governance schemes (Lubienski et al., 2016) in national education, as well as to open new market niches for companies in the education business (Moschetti et al., 2020).

According to the documentation and information analyzed, the think tank The Dialogue has acted directly as a producer of educational discourses and narratives in the process of consolidation of the neoliberal project of education. This has taken the form of public policies that are determinant



through the networks of influence in which the think tank is inserted. It has been carried out through the provision of evidence-based policies, that have determined the political agenda in the education system, and the shaping of a 'public opinion', and a generalized 'common sense', about the goals and aims of education systems and the mechanisms to reach them.

In the context of new networks interwoven by the market and multiple new actors, the activity of think tanks is symptomatic of the new modes of relationship and power construction of capitalist elites, which have found in the process of developing public policies a relevant space to deploy political activities, particularly in the field of education. The influence of dominant sectors in education has found in the centers of thought an effective form of realization, due to the consensual capacity of the narrative of science, evidence, and the scientific approach as a way of solving common problems. The Dialogue has succeeded in establishing not only a broad network of collaboration in the hemisphere, but also an educational 'common sense', associated with an accumulation of technical solutions with managerial elements to complex problems.

The discussion we raise for future research is whether the interests, principles, values, and ideology of these elites are not being taken over by those who suffer them, as Gramsci (1971) thought, if the values of the ruling class are taken over by the dominated class, no occupation tanks are needed. What capitalism has realized in the neoliberal era, argues Han (2014), is that it does not need to be harsh, but seductive. There is nothing more to confirm that most of the transformations, that Latin American educational policies have undergone, coincide exactly with the approaches of the think tank studied. How the agendas of the various governments have incorporated as their own the arguments of these private corporations, becoming the spokespersons of their interests. Therefore, a future line of research is to delve into how these processes of 'ideological lobbying' are assumed 'from below' and what response and resistance is being promoted in Latin America.

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