



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

An Analysis of the Inter-American Development Bank

TOMÁS BRUSCO

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P R E F A C E

Buenos Aires, May 2, 2025

This book was written as a thesis for the Master's in Education at the National University of La Plata and was supervised by Dr. Pedro Fiorucci between 2024 and 2025. Its original title was "Educational Policy Through International Cooperation: An Analysis of Two IDB Programs for Educational Development in Argentina (2019-2024)." A few changes, and only a few, were made to adapt it to the present format.

One footnote, placed toward the end of the work, seems to me worth singling out today. It cites a study (Dailey 1964) that finds a positive correlation between education and the reduction of poverty. That correlation may be taken as one of the strong links between education, public policy, and economics, the three concepts that circulate throughout this research.

Tomás Brusco

“For the mind does not require filling up like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only needs kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently (...).”

Plutarch, *On Listening*

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To all those who work day after day to build a society that is more equitable, more prosperous, and more capable of overcoming its own technical, scientific, and cultural limits.

To my family.

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A B S T R A C T

This thesis analyzes the design of two educational programs of the Inter-American Development Bank (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, IDB) for Argentina in the period from 2019 to 2024, “Habilidades Digitales” (Digital Skills) and “SilverTech.” The research proceeded from a two-track method of data collection, combining documentary research and the construction of a corpus with semi-structured interviews. The inquiry focused on how initiatives that seek to build digital skills across different sectors of the Argentine population are structured, negotiated, and promoted.

The analysis of the IDB’s educational designs is situated within the historical and political dynamics of international education financing, with particular attention to the possibilities opened by international cooperation and by the processes of globalization in Argentina. Both programs belong to the wider field of international education policy design.

The data analysis presented here seeks to develop a considered account of the strategies, opportunities, and limitations of those designs. One significant qualitative conclusion is that the IDB formulates education policy autonomously, and that Argentina may or may not take that policy up. From a perspective that brings together historical, political, and technological considerations, one purpose of this work is to contribute evidence to the ongoing debate over the intervention of international financing institutions in education policy.

Keywords: design of international educational programs; educational development financing; international education financing; international education policy.

INTRODUCTION

International public policy has substantially altered the way human beings relate to one another over the past several decades, and education, far from having been left aside by those changes, has been affected by them directly. The technological disruptions we live with from day to day, moreover, allow information to be obtained and produced at a speed that has no precedent. At the beginning of the last century few people could have imagined that, in less than a hundred years, it would be possible to hold video calls almost without delay, wirelessly, and with distance and cost reduced to almost nothing. This has become an ordinary feature of daily life in states throughout the world.

The social change just described, offered here only as an illustration, marks the divergence between certain recent social practices and current ones, and it raises a question. If policymaking and information have changed so much, in what respects has education changed? The answer is not a simple one, although in broad terms we can establish a useful starting point from which to think the matter through and to understand more precisely what impact technology has had on education. The subject of this thesis is introduced in this way with the contemporary and international character proper to the question that concerns us, which is education policy pursued through international cooperation and, in particular, through the role of the Inter-American Development Bank (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, IDB).

That useful starting point is the place of young people in relation to learning practices and the way technology addresses them. According to a study by Tierney (2009), the early years are decisive in the development of cognition. In a period of sudden social and environmental change this adds a further ingredient to the transformation of social relations, given that the basic norms of coexistence and the content available to a young public can be modified openly and on a massive scale by the influence of mobile devices.

In educational terms, this underscores the importance of educational leadership and of education policy at the level of society as a whole, since

hierarchical structures are, broadly speaking, respected, and knowledge disseminated centrally by ministries or by university leadership will be reproduced. Today, however, public institutions compete with private ones for educational influence, even where teachers exercise that influence unintentionally.¹ One of the concepts debated in local scholarship is that of educational sovereignty. Varela and Bilyk (2022) argue that the concept brings into relief a confrontation between the state, as the agent that drives educational content, and the agendas advanced by private firms. That confrontation reveals certain social contradictions, although at times it may lead us to set aside the debate over educational content itself by placing the emphasis on the medium.²

With that in mind, and returning to the initial example, young people as a group allow us to ask, picturing a university student using a cell phone during class, about the considerable change that the present context imprints not only on formal modes of education but also on informal ones, such as learning about personal or health matters through online searches. New technologies, unlike the wheel, the bridge, gunpowder, the railway, or any comparable invention, transmit information directly, whether as images or as video, while at the same time producing it and storing it. They do not merely transmit content, then, but are also a mechanism for producing it, even involuntarily from the user's point of view, and the internet stores data that, measured as digital files, amounts to far more than entire libraries, which hold only text and images in much smaller quantities. According to Ritzer (2015), the term "prosumer" was coined by Alvin Toffler, a futurist who, combining "producer" and "consumer" in the 1980s, anticipated in academic terms the impact of new technologies on the way we produce and consume electronic information.

¹ If 100 percent of enrollment were voluntarily assigned to public institutions, private education companies without philanthropic funding would go bankrupt and would therefore cease to perform their role. Public and private education thus compete with one another, except where philanthropy or donations from those who wish to sustain a private system come into play.

² The defense of the state as a provider of education can also be qualified with historical examples such as Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum (the peripatetic school), both of which were private institutions. Equally, the defense of private institutions can be qualified with examples of public university systems, such as the German one or the Argentine one.

So great is the sudden and massive accumulation of electronic information that a new interdisciplinary field has recently emerged, knowledge management, which draws its concepts from information science and library science. The field proposes to systematize the ways in which information is created, transmitted, used, and managed within particular organizations, through the analysis of communities and of their social, informational, and educational practices. On the management side of that field, attention is given to the concept of intellectual capital, which carries deep educational and economic implications and which becomes more relevant as globalization mediates the present context.³

In order to understand some of these questions more fully, we will analyze in depth two IDB programs for Argentina in the period running from 2019 to 2024. The analysis will therefore concern how the IDB designs education policy, on the basis of whatever evidence can be gathered on the matters described above. At the national level as much as at the international one, curricula will need to be considered in light of recent changes, whether the aim is to promote those changes or to modify them. A degree of restraint may prove useful in order to keep society, in certain respects, unaffected by change, while in other respects it may be advisable to move quickly with the advances that the twenty-first century proposes. A study of these designs could give some indication of the state of the art and of the concrete possibilities available to decision-makers, both national and international. It will then fall to those who make education policy to decide.

³ Intellectual capital can be divided, in economic terms, into human capital, structural capital, and relational capital. In Argentina, the most recent firms to have developed internationally and to have acquired a significant presence in the Latin American capital landscape have worked from intellectual capital rather than from traditional machinery or manual labor, as was the case with the extraction of raw materials that formed the basis of the Argentine agro-export model of the late nineteenth century, which contributed to building a regional economic, cultural, and intellectual power of its time. Today's large firms work with information, software, and what is called intellectual capital, and they have taken advantage of the current context of technological diffusion, remaining at the forefront of uses of technology that allow new approaches to activities such as commerce or tourism, with workers born and educated in Argentina.

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Statement of the problem

In contemporary societies the internationalization of social relations is taken for granted, given how thoroughly technology now mediates the ties among people. The process by which technology has been incorporated into education has been shaped not only by private actors but also by public ones, and among the public actors there are national institutions as well as international ones. International institutions are entities constituted by the will, in agreement, of two or more states. States, as subjects of public international law, are able to agree on the creation of these third persons, which are also called multilateral organizations. In the formation of those organizations, a process that scholarship calls multilateralism, new bureaucracies emerge along with new social patterns of influence over the national administrations that make up such institutions through their active or passive participation.

Within the concert of multilateral organizations there is a particular type known as development financing institutions, of which the World Bank and the IDB are examples. The IDB, from which the object of study selected here proceeds, is a significant institution for the formulation of education policy, since it influences directly not only how such policy is drafted but also how it is financed. The proposal is to investigate how far the IDB is able to define its policies autonomously, and at the same time to establish which guidelines this institution has maintained for Argentina in the recent past. The programs selected, a necessary narrowing of the field in order to move the research forward, stand out because they bear specifically on educational matters and because, as such, they have a direct impact on the national public landscape in education, whether or not the national government intervenes expressly as the program's principal actor.

This thesis proposes a field of exploration cut through by an approach that scholarship has not traveled at length, which is the search for information, reflection, and conclusions about education policy design using the tools of international studies, political theory, and law. The proposal, accordingly, is to contribute to the question of what education policies have been designed in Argentina, from an international perspective that may lead to new questions and to new conclusions proper to that perspective. Investigating these questions through an international rather than a merely local lens, in terms of policy production, can produce reflection that adds to the literature a body of work with a global and decentralized character, free of the local particularities that may at times cost the results of a thesis their capacity for abstraction.

Scope of the study

As noted above, this work sets out to investigate the design of the education policy of the Inter-American Development Bank (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, IDB) for Argentina over the past five years (2019-2024) through two specific programs. In the twentieth century the advisory role of international institutions and supranational bureaucracies in policy formulation acquired greater weight, and that tendency has held through the twenty-first century. From this premise, the study will seek to establish which designs the IDB has recently sustained for Argentina within its sector framework for education policy, a framework that is regional in scope, since the institution produces programs for Latin America as a whole.

As also noted, the study will work with two concrete programs the IDB has run for Argentina, “Habilidades Digitales, Programación y Robótica en la Educación” (Digital Skills, Programming and Robotics in Education), approved in 2019, and “SilverTech: Apalancando el Talento y la Experiencia de los Adultos Mayores mediante el Uso de Tecnología” (SilverTech: Leveraging the Talent and Experience of Older Adults Through the Use of Technology), approved in 2021. The programs will be investigated through documentary research and through semi-structured interviews with IDB officials and staff able to speak to the design

of education policy. Those resources will be used to study qualitatively what the IDB, as an international institution, proposes in education for Argentina. The study will also seek to establish how members of the IDB themselves reflect on these programs and on the Bank's education policy for Argentina. It will not address the implementation of the programs, nor will it investigate how these designs are applied by local actors, since the thesis confines itself to the study of education policy design.

Habilidades Digitales

“Habilidades Digitales” is an IDB program centered on strengthening the Argentine state's capacity to teach computing, programming, and robotics from preschool through secondary school. The design of the program proceeds from a double premise, namely that Argentina faces the challenge of improving its students' performance and that it must prepare them to function in an increasingly digitalized world. It also takes into account the role of technology in teaching and learning, on the understanding that twenty-first-century society demands new skills of individuals, among them creativity, collaboration, logical reasoning, and problem solving. According to the program, the development of those skills has considerable room for improvement in Argentine teaching.

In 2018 Argentina launched the Aprender Conectados plan, which sought to develop digital literacy and to integrate information and communication technologies into education, and through which Argentina became the first country in Latin America to include programming and robotics in the compulsory national curriculum. That integration took shape through the Priority Learning Cores (Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios, NAP) for Digital Education, Programming and Robotics (Educación Digital, Programación y Robótica, EDPR) at every compulsory level of schooling, from preschool through secondary, covering ages four to seventeen. The NAP establish the coordination of teacher-training policy between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura, Ciencia y Tecnología, MECCT) and the provinces, together with the preparation of support materials for the implementation of the EDPR.

In implementing this program the IDB supported the MECCT through a technical cooperation operation that monitors the EDPR component of the NAP. The operation has two structuring components. The first is to survey information on the teaching of the EDPR in Argentina, including diagnostic curricular studies of the perceptions and aptitudes of teachers and students. The second is to provide support for the implementation of the EDPR component of the NAP in the provinces through curricular review, teacher training, the development of digital resources, and the establishment of a monitoring plan.

The objectives of the technical cooperation operation therefore centered on supporting the MECCT in implementing the EDPR component of the NAP in the provinces, improving student performance in public schools through the implementation of the new EDPR curriculum, identifying the different contexts and the different levels of support required for implementation of the NAP, contributing to the preparation of materials in support of curricular development, and finally monitoring the implementation of the NAP, drafting recommendations, and disseminating the results.

According to the program itself, integrating the EDPR into the curriculum serves to give students the skills they need in order to thrive at work and in society in the twenty-first century. The technical cooperation preparation document for “Habilidades Digitales” accordingly states: “(...) twenty-first-century society demands that they command transversal skills such as creativity, collaboration, logical reasoning, problem solving” (2019, 1).

The documents for “Habilidades Digitales” show, *prima facie*, a certain interest on Argentina’s part in integrating the EDPR into its education system. The national government has indeed maintained the importance of IDB cooperation in achieving that goal, since the Bank’s advice appears necessary or at least relevant in view of the relative weakness of certain Argentine and regional indicators when set against foreign education systems. “Habilidades Digitales” seeks, then, to prepare young students for the social and occupational challenges of the near future and to improve their performance in a world that increasingly demands the efficient handling of digital tools.

SilverTech

The second program to be analyzed is “SilverTech: Apalancando el Talento y la Experiencia de los Adultos Mayores mediante el Uso de Tecnología,” which came after “Habilidades Digitales.” It seeks to provide distance education for older adults through a new platform run by a nongovernmental organization, with a view to their social and occupational adaptation and as a possible route back into the labor market. The program’s original documents explain:

They are people generally characterized by low self-esteem regarding their digital skills; they feel frustrated because their occupational competencies are out of date; and they find themselves within an employer ecosystem in which they perceive age discrimination (ageism) and a low valuation of socioemotional skills relative to technical ones. (2021, ii)

Three fundamental differences from “Habilidades Digitales” can be identified. First, “SilverTech” is directed at the opposite segment of the population. Second, it is structured for the private sector rather than the public one. Third, it is oriented toward online educational technology rather than in-person technology education. That contrast will help, in the analysis, to weigh the different possibilities available within the national education system and within the design and management of education policy, at the national level as much as at the international one. The program proposes: “In parallel, scalability and replication of the model in other countries will be pursued, with priority given to countries in the region where the donor firms are active, such as Paraguay” (p. 7).

The general objective of the “SilverTech” project is to train adults over fifty in digital skills in order to improve their employability in Argentina’s technology sector, with a target of training 2,000 people and achieving an employment rate of 30 percent, that is 600 people, within six months of completing the training. To that end the program works with several participating entities. The Fundación Estudiantes Internacionales Debatendo por el Saber (EIDOS) acts as executing agency; Fundación Diagonal, which specializes in training and job placement for

people over forty-five, contributes its expertise; and IDB Lab acts as the primary funding partner with 50 percent, while the remaining financing is distributed among various firms in the technology sector known as the tech giants.⁴

The project consists of three main components or stages. The first is digital training. At the outset this involves surveying the existing training on offer and designing a new online pedagogical proposal. Participants who meet the specified requirements are then recruited and selected in order to be given online courses, with synchronous and asynchronous content, over a period of three to six months. Training sessions provided by firms in the sector are also offered, along with emotional and motivational support for participants, and the program relies on a training platform capable of assessing and tracking the process. This section of the program additionally develops a sustainable organizational model intended to secure its continuity in the future.

The second component is job placement. The program works on the co-creation of training content with potential employers, chiefly technology firms, and proposes to map job vacancies in the technology sector in order to promote a community of employers committed to hiring from the program's target population, fostering those ties with appropriate support for the placement of graduates.

The third component centers on awareness and evaluation. It aims to encourage a change in perceptions about the employability of people over fifty and to disseminate its results in order to raise awareness about a segment of the population that has been left behind and remains outside the labor market in the technology sector, which is today the fastest growing sector worldwide and the undisputed leader in areas such as venture capital. "SilverTech" is designed for repeated monitoring and evaluation of the training it provides, with a view to the subsequent analysis of the sustainability and scalability of the organizational model.

In pursuit of that scalability, a plan is said to have been developed that includes alliances with municipalities in order to build ties to the territory, together with the participation of social media figures and collaboration with nongovernmental organizations that would benefit

⁴ Salesforce, SAP, Microsoft, Accenture, Globant, Mercado Libre, Everis, Google, and Oracle.

the implementation of “SilverTech.” This, then, is a program that seeks to promote education and employability in the lives of older adults in Argentina, although not necessarily of people of retirement age, by promoting the opportunity to acquire digital skills and to gain access to new work.

Contextualization

Academic context

This research is situated within the field of education policy and, more specifically, within international education policy. As an academic discipline, the study of international education policy emerged out of comparative education, in which education professionals carried out comparative analyses of the national systems of different states. One of its precursors was Horace Mann, considered the father of public education in the United States, who traveled to Europe in the 1840s in order to study the best European practices and adapt them. In this region Domingo F. Sarmiento was a precursor in the same vein, having traveled to the United States in 1860 to bring the normal-school teachers to Argentina, an initiative foundational to Argentine public education. Michael Sadler later became a theoretical pioneer of comparative education, publishing early work on the comparative study of the education systems of different states (Higginson 1961). Other examples include Isaac Kandel and Philip Coombs, who stood out as the first head of UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning.

Among the leaders of the field of international education policy today are Gita Steiner-Khamsi, professor of comparative education policy at Columbia University and at the Geneva Graduate Institute; Andreas Schleicher, adviser to the Secretary-General of the OECD on international education policy; Martin Carnoy, professor of education at Stanford University, adviser to the IDB, and a specialist in the economics of education; Carlos Alberto Torres, a sociologist of education devoted to international educational development and a professor at UCLA; and Karen Mundy, director of IIEP-UNESCO and professor of education at the University of Toronto. The research of these authors holds a potential that

widens the field of international education policy in political, economic, statistical, and sociological terms. They are also exponents of practical experience in the design and management of public policy at the international level, having held positions in institutions such as the World Bank, the IDB, the OECD, and the university systems of their respective countries.

Historical context

International education policy

Historically, international education policy arises with the formation of international organizations by national states, a process that began in the nineteenth century. In antiquity we find examples connected to private tutors, as in the Roman Empire, where such tutors could travel and teach in the provinces Rome had conquered. Later we find examples connected to specific institutions that provided education across different cultures, among them the University of Bologna, the University of Paris, and the University of Cambridge in medieval Europe. Those institutions were not international in the contemporary sense of the term, however, since present-day nations postdate the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which imposed the concept of sovereignty in Europe. The principal difference from the feudalism that preceded it lay in the territorial integrity that Westphalia imposed, which altered the concept of the inheritance of lands and peoples that had prevailed in the feudal era. Only from Westphalia onward, in consequence, could we speak of international education policy in the modern sense, although several centuries would pass before education became a prominent subject in international diplomacy.

The International Bureau of Education (IBE), the precursor of UNESCO, founded in Geneva in 1925, was a pioneering nongovernmental organization devoted specifically to educational matters. In 1969 the IBE became part of UNESCO, and its present remit covers advice on curriculum and educational content. It was not, however, an international organization properly speaking at its inception, so that, while it is a significant antecedent, it cannot be described as a first act of international

education policy. Three years earlier, in 1922, the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) had been founded within the framework of the League of Nations. Its members included Henri Bergson, who chaired it, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, and Robert Andrews Millikan, and its purpose was international intellectual exchange. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was subsequently founded in 1945, and the assets of the ICIC were transferred to it. We might therefore say that the founding of UNESCO constitutes the first act of international education policy in the modern sense in the history of humanity as we understand it today, with the current paradigms of nation, international, and treaty.⁵

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the first institution of the World Bank Group, was created in 1944. It was the first international development bank, intended for the reconstruction of Europe and Japan from 1945 onward. Its principal focus at the time was transport and energy infrastructure, so that education was not yet a central concern. The IDB was later created within the framework of the Organization of American States. As this thesis proposes, international education policy today also forms part of the agenda of the international development banks.

Private industry finances activities that are profitable for it according to its own schemes of risk and credit. The international development banks (the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and others) differ in that they are public entities able to finance activities that are not strictly profitable but that advance development in particular areas, education among them. In the Argentine case the World Bank was highly influential in the education policies of the 1990s, being one of the principal lenders:

Of the approximately \$15 billion in education commitments made by the World Bank from 1991 to 1998, nearly two thirds were extended by the hard loan window, the IBRD. The biggest borrowers for education

⁵ Having said this, it is worth mentioning that other work could inquire into the history of ancient educational policies, in Asia and Africa for example, and find a fruitful political and educational exchange among those peoples. For the analytical reasons set out above, however, we will confine ourselves to international education policy as we understand it today, under current standards of international law.

are IBRD or blend (both IBRD and IDA) countries: Mexico, India, Brazil, Indonesia, China, Pakistan, Argentina, Korea, and the Philippines. (Alexander 2001)

The transparency characteristic of these international institutions makes the task easier, since their records can be consulted directly, unlike private financing, which is generally not available for detailed analysis.

In these arenas of international decision-making, where the effective capacity of states to mobilize people, resources, and projects is at stake, decisional tensions come into play. One tension that is basic to understanding education within the international development institutions is the one that arises between education understood as a right, or as the exercise of rights, and education understood as a factor of productive development. The UNESCO consultant Alexandra Draxler (2014) suggested that this tension should be resolved in favor of rights, precisely because of the function that public institutions serve, and because only states, within the limits of their possibilities and their fallibility, would be capable of acting as arbiters of rights for the maintenance of education as such. That does not mean, however, that education ceases at the same time to be an engine of economic development.

The paradigm of the interventionist state

Public investment in health and education developed rapidly over the second half of the twentieth century through the application of the paradigm of the interventionist state, also called the welfare state. The international macroeconomic context, dominated by the Bretton Woods agreement, had made plain that industrial and urban development, meaning the growth of manufacturing networks in the large cities, did not of itself bring a corresponding development in social terms. Even so, the financing of education at the international level remains a challenge, particularly in developing countries. In some cases, and despite the progress achieved, literacy rates remain at alarming levels, particularly in Africa. It has also been observed that international education programs play a political role through their impact on society. The imprint of a global culture and the mechanisms of international policy diffusion

have been criticized for producing meager results concentrated for the most part in the very groups that shape that culture and therefore have access to it, while education policy would be shaped, in the main, by economics and politics.

On the general role of the state in education in the twenty-first century, María Montesinos (2005), a researcher at what was then Argentina's national Ministry of Education, wrote:

The crisis of the welfare state is both the product and an integral part of profound changes marked by the deepening transnationalization of the economy, accompanied by a great concentration of financial, commercial, and technological power in the hands of multinational corporations; the development of the media; and the scientific and technological revolution, all of which lead to an ever-increasing globalization that generates, among other things, greater interdependence in the market and a redefinition of the national settings as they had been designed since the period in which nation-states were formed. (Montesinos 2005, 54)

A link is thereby established between educational technology, effective education, and the public capacity to meet these challenges through financing. In the same vein, the CONICET researchers Carina Kaplan and Elisa Sulca write, in their article "Racismo y pueblos indígenas en Argentina":

The suspension of in-person classes at every level of the education system as a consequence of mandatory preventive social isolation (...) entailed a forced virtualization of schooling intended to sustain pedagogical continuity. This required a "technological or computing capital" (...) consisting in the possession of technological resources and in the command of certain knowledge for their use (...). Bourdieu (2001) stresses that the acquisition of material goods requires economic capital and that, at the same time, making use of such goods requires "cultural capacities, which are nothing other than embodied cultural capital" (...). That is to say that, just as material goods are distributed unequally in our societies and individuals do not have the same opportunities to obtain and appropriate them, an analogous logic and dynamic is evident in the market of symbolic goods, in which the school is included. (2022, 165)

The same work notes that the preliminary report of the household surveys on pedagogical continuity, prepared jointly by the Secretariat for Educational Evaluation and Information and UNICEF, shows a 59 per cent shortfall in computer equipment in households with children and young people of primary and secondary school age in the provinces of Jujuy, Salta, Tucumán, Catamarca, La Rioja, and Santiago del Estero (Kaplan and Sulca 2022, 165).

These passages illustrate the growing importance of investment in meeting the present context, in which financial initiatives for educational development bear on inclusion, equity, and technology.

Education is also today a factor of considerable weight in the development of public policy, given the multidimensional character that the concept of poverty has acquired in technical terms. As Pablo Basz writes:

The criteria for defining poverty may vary, from strictly economic indices to other, multidimensional approaches. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), multidimensional poverty is understood as a concept that goes beyond the lack of income for the satisfaction of needs, and consists in “the set of deprivations in the dimensions of education, health, work, social security, housing, and standard of living in general.” This redefinition makes it possible to approach the concept through the different elements that make up the condition of poverty and therefore of people’s vulnerability, which markedly increases the number of people who must be taken into account. (2023, 55)

The 1990s in Argentina: economic liberalism and the retreat of the national government from education policy

The most widely held academic view is that the 1990s were dominated by contemporary economic liberalism, sometimes called neoliberalism, exemplified by the Washington Consensus and its application in Latin America. That scholarly agreement rests conceptually, at the global level, on the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the apparent success of global capitalism, as illustrated by thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama, who wrongly foretold the end of history through the triumph of the West in “The End of History?” (1989). Those consensuses

have since been called into question by numerous events, among them the rise of European nationalisms, Brexit, and the political and economic growth of China, India, and Brazil.

It is nonetheless useful to understand the beginning of the 1990s as a deepening of liberal economic precepts in Argentina, precepts that have little to do with liberal political ones. In 1989 Argentina saw a change of presidential administration that coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall and with the alteration of the global paradigm of a first, second, and third world. The national executive thus positioned itself politically in favor of the reforms that liberalism considered necessary in economic matters in order to promote the prosperity announced for Argentine institutions and firms. Part of the ethos of that decade's economic liberalism involved the assertion of a supposed inefficiency of the state in carrying out productive and even administrative tasks. This included the liberalization of import tariffs, dismissals and voluntary retirements of personnel from public agencies, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises in water, electricity, oil, airlines, and shipyards, among others. The process ended in an unprecedented economic crisis in 2001.

Even so, the liberalization of the economy, itself the product of worldwide tendencies, implies neither a definitive break with earlier tendencies nor a hundred-and-eighty-degree turn in the policy of the IDB. The Bank already had working groups and programs in health and education, as Robert Cox illustrates in "Education for Development" (1968). That said, it is worth noting that the IDB, like the World Bank, strategically shifted its engagement in international relations once the Soviet Union as the twentieth century knew it ceased to exist. Previously it had been an element of international policy for the IDB's largest shareholder, the United States, to protect its interests in Latin America, particularly after the Cuban Revolution and Cuba's alignment with the Soviet Union. The development institutions, which in part did the work of sustaining capitalism in countries at risk of turning toward the socialist model of production and politics, took on an expansionist character in the new context, adding new tasks to their classic functions, with a wider field of action and more staff. The motivation of the democratic leaders of the 1990s, aligned in Latin America with the United States, was to demon-

strate a liberalization of their markets and a synergy with the financial system promoted from Washington. The IDB played a significant role in this context as well, promoting policies of economic stabilization for economies that had suffered severe crises, as in the case of Argentina and Mexico.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB): history and context

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was founded in 1959 to encourage regional economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The first mention of the IDB, according to Villaseñor (1941), had come at the first Pan-American Conference of 1890. It was later promoted at a meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) held in Buenos Aires in 1957, and in 1958 it was driven forward organically in the United States by Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon, with the Chilean lawyer and economist Felipe Herrera Lane as its first president. The member states are its shareholders, and they are divided into borrowing and non-borrowing member countries, only the former being able to take on debt with the IDB. Its headquarters are in Washington, as are those of the World Bank, and the United States is the country with the greatest voting power on the board, holding approximately 30 per cent of the voting rights.

Unlike the World Bank, the IDB is exclusively regional. That is, while the World Bank has worldwide competence, the IDB's area of intervention is limited to the countries of Latin America, twenty-six in all, including the whole of South America, Central America, and Mexico, with the exception of French Guiana. Only those twenty-six countries are able to receive IDB financing, while other lending countries also belong to the organization as counterparts. The IDB's Board of Governors is composed of the economy ministers, or their equivalents, of each country, together with an alternate governor, generally a finance secretary, deputy minister, or equivalent. The Board of Executive Directors, meanwhile, is composed of operational members who answer to the guidelines set by the Board of Governors. These actors bear ultimate responsibility for the decisions the IDB takes, since they control the administrative and decisional structure of the institution as a whole.

It was in the 1990s that the IDB increased its influence and took on a more active role, chiefly on account of political and economic crises in Latin America that made countries such as Argentina more dependent on external credit. The end of the Cold War likewise increased the influence of the United States in the region. According to the historian Roger Trask (1977), US foreign policy from 1945 onward was marked by the containment of communism, which is to say that what American leaders sought was to limit the influence of Soviet strategies and ideologies, particularly during the Stalin era. This meant intervening actively in the domestic politics of every non-socialist country. Latin American policy was no exception in this respect, as the conduct of Spruille Braden in Argentina during the 1946 elections shows. The taking of positions by the United States in Latin American internal affairs meant the end of the Good Neighbor policy, which had prevailed between 1933 and 1938 under the Roosevelt administration. According to the historian Earl Beck (1939), the Monroe Doctrine had until then been in part an excuse allowing only the United States to intervene politically in Latin American territory.

According to Asinelli (2018):

With the end of the Second World War, the attention of the United States returned to the region, which from 1950 onward sustained itself on the growth of an industrial sector dependent on the external market, through its traditional support for American corporations. As the hegemony of the United States consolidated, the internationalization of production became the principal source of regional development, with foreign direct investment (FDI) as the main source of financing. (Vivares 2013)

In this way, at the start of the 1950s, the expansion of FDI in most industrialized countries allowed the consolidation of American hegemonic power in the region. That hegemony was organizationally sustained by the already existing Pan-American Union, an institution dependent on the United States Department of State since 1920. (2018, 55)

This, then, was the context in which the IDB was created in 1959. The creation of the OAS in 1948, the regional institution that served as the

framework for the creation of the IDB, was itself bound up with these interests and conflicts. According to Robin Rosenberg (2001), the OAS has been the umbrella under which the inter-American system was promoted and legally established, a system that includes the IDB alongside bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. That system, which still shows neither full integration nor unity of action, is nonetheless the principal multilateral system operating in the Americas and the one that receives initiatives such as the Summit of the Americas. It has served to reinforce the region's multilateral ties, to widen the practical importance of human rights in the Americas, and to strengthen financing ties among OAS member states through development finance.

Education at the IDB

Historically the focus of IDB financing was directed toward infrastructure and energy, as had been the case with its predecessor, the World Bank. From its founding, however, it was already financing educational projects. The IDB's first educational projects were tied more strictly to the financing of infrastructure for universities and tertiary institutes, and the Bank did not intervene in curricular matters.

The negotiation processes have been tied to the national executive and, in particular, to the Ministry of Economy, so that they have involved little participation in terms of the federal division of structures, meaning consultation with the provinces, or the republican one, meaning consultation with the other national branches. The national executive, that is, has concentrated the powers of negotiation over multilateral credit, since the Minister of Economy has been and remains the official charged with directing the national interest at the IDB.⁶

A search of the IDB's project database filtered by the education sector returns 1,476 projects (IDB 2025).⁷ The oldest educational project is one

⁶ Given the importance of negotiations with the IDB for the public finances, the apparent absence of the National Congress from matters of credit sounds a republican alarm about the Argentine institutional structure.

⁷ Search of the Bank's project finder (<https://www.iadb.org/es/project-search>) with the sector filter set to "Educación." The Bank's own public sources do not agree with one another: a free-text search for the word "educación" on the same site returned 1,427 results on April 14, 2025,

for Argentina called “National University Teams” (project number AR0110), developed in 1962.⁸ The variety of projects of this kind shows significant variance in the character of the IDB’s operations and also in how the institution understands what education requires in terms of financing.

In July 2014 the IDB published “The IDB and Technology in Education: How to Promote Effective Programs?”, a technical note affirming the relevance of education and its positive correlation with the economic growth of countries. Here again the IDB links education to productivity, with a developmentalist emphasis that matches both the economic training of its internal actors and the ideological imprint from which the institution was designed.

Education and technology at the IDB: contemporary challenges

As for the projects specifically tied to educational technology, thirty-one of those mentioned have the word “technology” in the title, which indicates that they are devoted to that area, although not all of them are active and only some strictly finance the development of technology, while others are devoted to technology education. One project approved on June 26, 2024, for example, is called “Improving Educational Outcomes Through Effective Applications of Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI)” and focuses on improving educational quality through artificial intelligence in Chile and Peru. A Chilean nongovernmental organization called Elige Educar collaborates on that project.

Another, called “Escuela: Harnessing Learning Technology for Front-line Workers,” seeks to develop a continuous learning system for workers in Peru and was approved on October 23, 2023. The project is carried out through a partnership with a mobile educational technology com-

and the database available for download at <https://www.iadb.org/es/proyectos/informacion-del-proyecto> lists 1,499 projects catalogued as belonging to the education sector. The three figures count different things, since a keyword search retrieves any project that mentions the word in any field, while the sector filter and the downloadable database each apply their own classification criteria.

⁸ In January 2025, thanks to an information request prompted by this research, the implementation documents for this project were published by the IDB on its official site and are publicly accessible as of today.

pany called Excuela. A further example, “Letrus: Using Technology and AI to Improve Literacy,” finances Letrus, a Brazilian educational technology company whose purpose is to improve literacy among children and adolescents in Brazil.

In recent years the educational technology sector has become significant for IDB analysts, as it has for those of the World Bank. The summary of the IDB report “Education Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean” states:

Educational technology has the potential to be a powerful engine of transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), yet the scale of the challenge is enormous. The region faces the worst socioeconomic crisis in more than a century, has one of the lowest-performing education systems in the world, and carries a chronic skills gap. New solutions, new approaches, and new ideas are needed now more than ever. The region’s principal actors see enormous potential in the EdTech sector to promote broader access to education, better learning experiences and outcomes for students, and greater efficiency. Interest and investment in EdTech are rising, with more than 1,500 new EdTech companies in LAC and private capital investment that multiplied sixfold in the last year alone. (2021, 3)

The Bank has also stated:

This report combines the strengths of the IDB Group and HolonIQ, two organizations passionate about the future of Latin America and the Caribbean that believe in the power of education to change the future. It is in that spirit of collaboration that this project set out to map the EdTech market in the region, to show the innovations and the impact EdTech is having, and to identify the challenges it faces and the opportunities for greater impact. The key recommendations of this report are designed to offer policymakers, education leaders, EdTech entrepreneurs, investors, and other actors information and inspiration in support of their initiatives to improve and accelerate educational technology for the region, so as to have a materially positive impact on educational outcomes there. (p. 3)

A joint World Bank and IDB initiative: “Connected Schools for All”

In August 2023 the presidencies of the World Bank and the IDB announced a four-year program of joint work to reduce deforestation, particularly in Brazil, to mitigate the effects of disasters caused by geographic or climatic events, particularly in the Caribbean, and to reduce the digital divide in Latin America. For this last purpose a specific program was presented under the name “Connected Schools for All.” The World Bank defines it as follows in its “Digital Education” entry:

In August 2023, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) announced an innovative four-year partnership for driving better results for persons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Both organizations committed to working together to promote digital development in the region. The action plan proposes that, through this collaboration, digital infrastructure and connectivity can be effectively expanded to help accelerate socioeconomic development. Through the Connected Schools for All initiative, the World Bank and the IDB will develop plans to bridge the digital divide in education, ensuring that young people have the skills needed for the economy of the future. An innovative pilot program will bring connectivity to underserved areas of the region, helping more people gain access to the Internet and opening up new opportunities. (2023, para. 1)

A regional connectivity project for educational institutions in Latin America will therefore be launched, with the aim of resolving basic problems tied to access to educational opportunity.

The president of the IDB, Ilan Goldfajn, described the program in these terms in a lecture titled “Investment in Human Capital: The Path for Brazil, Latin America, and the Caribbean” (2023):

Also, just a few weeks ago, the IDB announced a historic alliance with the World Bank to work on digital education. Through our Connected Schools for All program, we will support efforts to close the digital gap in schools by improving connectivity and teachers’ digital competencies through innovative pedagogical practices and hybrid training. We will also identify and map disconnected schools and teachers’ skills gaps, which will help us develop better investment plans to close gaps. (para. 46)

Turning to Argentina, Goldfajn wrote in an article: “Of course, the region has seen other banking crises—for example, Argentina in 2001–02 and Ecuador in 1998—but it is difficult to connect those to the Washington Consensus; rather, they were part of macroeconomic experiments that went wrong” (Goldfajn 2021). In contrast to the approach advanced by Puiggrós (2017), Goldfajn takes a position that is at least neutral with respect to the policies applied under the Washington Consensus, in some cases praising the results obtained by countries that, unlike Argentina, have not withdrawn their fiscal or macroeconomic policies from what was proposed in the 1990s, as in the cases of Chile and Colombia (Goldfajn 2021). It could therefore be said that the analysis of the Latin American cases is not unanimous as to the results obtained by policies of open markets, deregulation, privatization, and fiscal discipline. That absence of consensus carries over to education policy, which derives in part from the economic policies promoted by development institutions such as the IDB.

Contemporary context (2019-2024)

The international development banks are novel institutions in the public sphere generally and in the financial sphere in particular. They have great potential to affect educational development, as they are showing through the financing of public and public-private projects for the development of educational technology. Exploration and investment in this sector have only recently begun, however, so that the educational results produced by these investments remain to be examined. During the design stage a useful task would be to carry out educational impact evaluations in order to verify the validity of these modalities for achieving the objectives the programs pursue.

The rapid transformation of global society over recent decades means that the twentieth-century debate, focused on the public policies to be adopted at the national level with respect to macroeconomics in relation to these institutions, is in a certain conceptual respect skewed, particularly given the other areas in which the World Bank and the IDB intervened in 2024, since these institutions are investing in other kinds of programs beyond education. The intervention of these banks in contem-

porary aspects of society, technological ones for instance, neither fore-closes nor dates the debate over the role that international public financing plays in education generally, given that such financing both encourages and excludes public policy projects, and that the approaches adopted by international bureaucracies influence national ones.

Object of study

Central question

The following question has been established as the point of departure and the guiding axis of the thesis research. How were the Inter-American Development Bank's educational programs "Habilidades Digitales, Programación y Robótica en la Educación" (approved in 2019) and "SilverTech: Apalancando el Talento y la Experiencia de los Adultos Mayores mediante el Uso de Tecnología" (approved in 2021) designed?

Complementary questions

- 1) How do these programs fit within the last five years of international education policy?
- 2) What is the IDB's implicit or explicit education policy position with respect to the Argentine programs?
- 3) How do IDB staff interpret the institution's role in terms of policy design?
- 4) How do the designs of the two programs compare?
- 5) What does the comparison of those designs tell us about the role the IDB plays as a policy designer?
- 6) What lessons can be drawn from the design of these programs in order to propose better education policy?
- 7) What might be changed for the IDB's next educational programs?

General objective

To describe and analyze the IDB's design of international education policy for Argentina through two specific educational programs.

Specific objectives

- 1) To generate a general qualitative conceptual framework for analyzing the IDB's educational initiatives (2019-2024) through the analysis of the documentation the institution provides in relation to the programs.
- 2) To describe the problems that run through these international educational programs for Argentina, analyzing their theoretical foundations, general objectives, specific objectives, target populations, proposed strategies, participating actors, timeframe, and financing.
- 3) To analyze each of the selected programs in depth and to carry out a comparative analysis of the two, with the aim of identifying similarities and differences in their approaches, strategies, and scope.
- 4) To contribute to the field of education policy through the production of original knowledge that articulates international education policy with approaches drawn from public international law, the history of international institutions, and the theory of international relations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature review

The IDB, governments, and educational recommendations

In his doctoral thesis “La Banca multilateral en América Latina: ¿Patrón o socio del desarrollo regional?” (2018), Christian Asinelli investigated policy design within the region’s development banks. The thesis is at once general and specific, since it deals broadly with the relationship between Latin American politics and multilateral credit while also supplying concrete data on the IDB and on how the Bank has interacted with the governments of the region. Asinelli will therefore serve as a source of reference for this thesis and as a theoretical basis on which the present work will draw in order to think through certain concepts bound up with educational development.

One key distinction Asinelli draws with respect to the credit extended by multilateral institutions is the categorization between credit taken on by pro-state governments and credit taken on by pro-market governments, both of which may be found at any of the banks. In the author’s words:

That is, countries with pro-state governments will tend to take investment loans, while those of a pro-market tendency will prefer adjustment loans. In turn, the greater the territorial aggregation of the banks, the greater their inclination to grant adjustment loans over investment loans. (2018, iii)

A dissimilarity among Latin American governments is thereby identified, one that scholarship has taken up. That dissimilarity rests on a difference in how the role of credit provided by the region’s development banks is understood. Latin American governments that take the state to

have a role in the allocation of resources will tend to use the development banks as tools for carrying it out, in areas such as public works, education, and health. According to Asinelli:

So-called adjustment loans are the loans that the multilaterals grant to countries and that may be applied to fiscal matters or to reforms aimed at reducing fiscal spending. They generally come accompanied by a series of conditions or agreements between the two actors in exchange for the money received, and they are freely disposable. Investment loans, by contrast, are granted within the framework of a specific project that is broadly associated with public works, education, social development, and other such matters. Typically there are no fiscal or structural conditions attached; rather, the money is disbursed according to a work plan whose progress can be observed in concrete undertakings. This distinction is highly useful for comparing the behavior of the multilateral banks and of the countries across the period under study. (p. 21)

Adjustment loans, in this terminology, are those tied to fiscal reforms aimed at reducing public spending or public investment, while investment loans are those that arise in connection with a concrete public policy proposal financed internationally. It is useful for this thesis to grasp the broad role the development banks can play and the absence of unity, or of monochrome uniformity, within the multilateral system, which is characteristic of an arena in which different governments with different ideologies and preferences take part.

Asinelli further observes:

The research shows the development banks, in their relationship with the countries of South America, to be a set of actors with important differences among them: although all of them are potential partners for development, some show more of a vocation than others for being patrons in the region. (p. iii)

It may be inferred, in consequence, that an international official from Argentina attached to a particular international institution holds a qualified view.

For the IDB, Asinelli records in his research the loan types the institution itself presents:

In the case of the IDB, seven distinct loan types were found, namely: 1. Investment; 2. Global credit; 3. Multiple phase; 4. CCLIP (investment projects); 5. Innovation; 6. Emergency; 7. Policy reform. Loans 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 fall within the category of investment loans, while loans 6 and 7 fall within the category of adjustment loans. (p. 23)

Asinelli also distinguishes two types of government:

Pro-market governments are understood to be those with more liberal dispositions, open to the workings of the market as the element that regulates and orders their countries' economies, while pro-state governments are those that use planning and regulatory tools to steer their countries' economies through state-owned enterprises, regulations, and legislation that accentuate the role of the state as the primary axis of their action. (p. 23)

Bearing in mind the education policies to be analyzed, these categories will serve to establish where the loans in question sit in technical and in political terms, and how the behavior of national governments may vary according to ideological tendency, sociocultural preference, or party imprint. On this author's account it can be glimpsed that loans tied to education policy might, at first sight, be associated in discursive terms with pro-state governments, since these would be the governments that promote multilateral policy in educational matters. At this stage of the thesis, however, it is best to leave that claim pending, or under review, since the IDB can also finance education policies focused on private rather than state initiative.

This tendency of pro-market governments to move social, educational, and health policy toward the market is a growing political and cultural tendency that has become more pronounced since the 1980s. In Lesley Bartlett's "The Marketization of Education: Public Schools for Private Ends":

Marketization takes many forms, discursive and structural. Primary among those is the unqualified celebration of "choice" in schooling, whether as vouchers, charters (also known as "public school choice"), or magnet schools. The rhetoric of choice positions parents and students as consumers of schooling; it implies that all parents are equally informed, politically connected, and capable of securing for their own

children the best education. Yet early studies caution that such policies easily result in increased race and class stratification. (2002, 6)

The passage cited illustrates the effects of the marketization of education, toward which the multilateral institutions may incline, or from which they may withdraw, according to the loan types Asinelli (2018) describes. That critical view contrasts, however, with certain possible benefits that might be associated with the liberalization of national education regulation, as Geoff Whitty (1999) argues, among them the possibility of raising one's children autonomously by choosing a school, competition among schools over educational quality, and the diversity associated with the capacity to promote private educational initiatives. The World Bank, for example, has maintained a position on education policy that seeks to align itself virtuously with the market's own incentives. In the words of Patrinos: "The market in education can lead to important improvements in school quality by encouraging innovation and promoting efficiency. Competition in the school system has led to some significant achievements in a number of countries" (2000, 76).

Together with technological development, pro-market reforms have been one of the bases of the globalization of the second half of the twentieth century and of the twenty-first. The marketization of education systems has led some of them to adapt to the preferences set by the power of the market, which is bound up with the demand for labor on the part of firms. The educational risk of training for the market is that it overlooks different or complementary forms of training, since what would be promoted, as policy, is the direct adaptation of the person to the market, in the service of a preference that is external, monetary, depersonalized, and not controlled by any democratic agency. We must nonetheless also consider the possibility of pro-market investment loans and pro-state adjustment loans, since these terms, while not necessarily complementary, can be analyzed under certain plausible or feasible scenarios. This also invites reflection, in properly educational terms, on the concrete rules issued by the national bureaucracy and on the discourse of the multilateral institutions.

According to Gorostiaga and Tello (2011), the relationship between globalization and the education reforms promoted by the multilateral

institutions from 1980 to the present cannot be separated from the construction of consensus that have sought to impose themselves as a new orthodoxy linking education, employment, and the national economy. Among the seven perspectives the authors identify, they situate institutions such as the IDB at the combination of two, the economic perspective and the imperative of insertion. In its discursive imprint, that is, the IDB oscillates, when it comes to thinking about education policy, between the weight of the argument from economics and productivity and the preservation of the regional, of a cultural identity specific and proper to each local context. Tensions and negative effects of globalization are therefore acknowledged, while the need for Latin American countries to insert themselves into the global economy is insisted upon, education being a key factor in meeting the demands of the changing economic conditions that obstruct development. In their words:

(...) a text of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (2005) states that the concern to reform and improve the region's education systems is based on "closing the gap between them (the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean) and their competitors" (p. 21), within what is taken to be a context of increasing international competition and of knowledge-centered skill requirements for the development of national economies: "The demands of the knowledge economy require investment at every level and in every kind of education and training" (p. 22, emphasis ours), along with regulations and incentives that secure the quality of educational provision, and attention to neglected curricular matters such as the teaching of science and mathematics. (2011, 371)

The temporal reference point of the 1980s that the authors set is not a minor one, since they note that these policies have been both a response to the social effects of globalization and a means of confronting them, within processes of neoliberal restructuring of the state, the opening to international trade, and the encouragement of foreign investment in Latin America. If in 1980 the discourse of these institutions carried a call for efficiency and quality in education with a view to generating human capital for economic development, by 1990 there is a turn toward the pursuit of administrative decentralization and greater school autonomy,

as Asinelli (2018) also observed. Even with the establishment of quality measurement systems tracking student performance and of information systems, along with curricular modernization, teacher development, and the targeting of the most disadvantaged social groups that ran through the decade, as Gajardo (1999) notes, some research emphasizes that the subsequent analysis of results revealed no improvement in learning and that, worse still, the deep social inequalities in the region persisted or even worsened (Tenti Fanfani 2010; Poggi 2014).

The design of education policy by multilateral institutions such as the IDB has also been analyzed in pointed and critical terms, showing that their diagnoses and their implementation of various education reforms suffer from a failure to question the dominant model of economic development (Krawczyk 2002; Oreja Cerruti and Vior 2016). Krawczyk (2002) analyzes three dimensions of the sustainability of education reform from the perspective of the multilateral institutions, the political, the financial, and the technical. Although her analysis refers specifically to the education reforms of the 1990s, these three components can be useful for dissecting the analysis this thesis seeks to carry out on the two educational programs selected.

The political dimension, in the first place, centers on the recommendation these institutions make regarding the building of alliances, above all with the private sphere and with some sectors of civil society. What prevails, however, is a cost-benefit logic which means, for instance, that more rigid labor legislation is promoted for teachers and their organizations, unions among them, without accounting for matters such as the intensification of their work and the greater demands placed on teacher training once a more heterogeneous and inclusive education is envisaged. The technical dimension, in the second place, refers to these institutions' concern with something other authors have already noted, namely the management of the new school through decentralization and school autonomy. This has persisted, and in the author's words:

The ever-greater freedom of schools, financial and administrative alike, is the central variable used in the studies of the World Bank, PREAL, ECLAC, and the IDB to identify the efficiency and effectiveness of decentralization processes and of the reform as a whole. Indeed, the

liberalization of school institutions becomes the panacea for the success of the reform. At the same time, the systemic conception announced at the outset of the process has as its aim the radical change of the school institution alone. (Krawczyk 2002, 635)

The point emphasized, then, is that the business model is held to be the most efficient one for thinking about the school, and that decentralization is no longer merely administrative but pedagogical as well, since what is sought is the creation of a new profile of leader, the education manager. Faced with this, Krawczyk (2002) asks:

Might the increased segmentation and fragmentation of the system, detected by many researchers and acknowledged, if very timidly, by the international institutions, be resolved in the coming years by educational management? Or are those characteristics intrinsic to the institutional reform the reform installed and that the international institutions praise? (p. 642)

Financial sustainability, finally, is identified by Krawczyk as the dimension of greatest concern to these institutions, which in view of it recommend, while continuing to require, the redefinition of the criteria of the public budget, with two objectives in view, optimizing the efficiency of resources and maximizing school performance.

In the historical account Oreja Cerruti and Vior (2016) give of educational projects financed by the World Bank and the IDB in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico from 2000 onward, a certain standardization of education reform is exposed, along with the application of uniform measures across diverse contexts, following the perspective of human capital theory. In the authors' words:

The IDB maintains that the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean are unequal and show low levels of productivity. While it acknowledges that there are numerous reasons that explain this situation, it asserts that the determining factor for economic growth is "human capital." Paraphrasing the economist Paul Romer, it holds that "poor countries lack ideas, not objects" (IDB, 2011). (2016, 21)

The authors offer a critical analysis of certain tendencies promoted as standardized technical responses to persistent problems of the past as

well as to current and recent ones in education. Their argument is at times extrapolated, however. Reforms, programs, and mechanisms promoted by these institutions are considered solely in terms of their productive interest, through the construction of what the authors call an updated neoliberalism:

(...) in recent years both the World Bank and the IDB declare themselves concerned with the political and institutional dimensions of reform, with inclusion, young people, and social cohesion, as the expression of an updated neoliberalism that seeks, principally, the maintenance of social order in strongly unequal societies. (p. 31)

Even so, the questions they open up are relevant for thinking about what still remains to be studied, concerning matters such as the relationships established among each bank's employees, intellectuals, and each country's public officials. As Araújo Mello (2016) notes, in the Brazilian case it is essential to identify the role of the intellectuals and experts who operate both in public agencies and within the institutions themselves, whether through consultancies or as direct employees. This makes plain the need to go beyond approaches that interpret the influence of these institutions solely in terms of imposition from supranational levels onto national contexts (Pronko 2014).

Supranational education policy

Another work of interest for the present thesis is that of Marcela Alejandra Pronko, who in numerous books and articles takes up not only the involvement of international institutions in the design of particular education policies, in her case those of Brazil, but also the treatment of the role of technology in education from 2011 up to the onset of the pandemic, along with its first effects on education. Although she does not take the IDB in particular, research such as Pronko's is therefore illustrative for approaching the relationship between technology and the promotion of a particular educational model by international institutions such as UNESCO and the World Bank. In the work titled "Educación y pandemia: organismos internacionales y organizaciones empresariales delineando la 'nueva normalidad'" (2022), she maintains a criti-

cal perspective on the multilateral institutions. The hypothesis that runs through it holds that the incorporation of technological mediation promoted by these institutions would be a fundamental piece articulating the business proposal for education while forming part of a global project for the periphery of capitalism, which is to say for middle- and low-income countries. From there, concepts and guidelines similar to those found in the research on the IDB already mentioned become evident, and it is from these that the institutions make their diagnoses of the state of education, among them the Human Capital Index, the association of education with improved productivity in countries whose productivity is structurally low, and the role of private actors, global technology firms in particular, in promoting a more inclusive education. The objective, in the end, holds steady, which is to create more inclusive and more efficient education systems. In a pandemic and recent post-pandemic scenario, however, the documents of these institutions add the qualifier resilient, since the distortion in learning caused by school closures in this recent period is treated as a problem.

The author's account of these guidelines is also of interest, taking the case of the World Bank. She thus establishes that:

(...) it is important to highlight the trajectory begun in 2011 with the publication of its Strategy 2020: Learning for All, which “substantively redefines the forms and functions of national education systems, relativizing the centrality of the school as a social institution” (Pronko, 2019, 64). From that inflection onward, successive policy documents contributed to delineating more specifically the new educational agenda for the periphery of capitalism, from the new behaviorism advocated for social policy and tested in the World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior, through to the renewal of a Human Capital Index proposed by the World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work. (Pronko, 2022, 90)

The idea of building more resilient education systems is bound up with the creation of learning networks that seek to optimize the transmission and circulation of knowledge. This reinforces a traditional view of education in which knowledge is asymmetrical and unidirectional between teacher and student, similar to the banking education Paulo Freire de-

scribed. The creation of these networks proposes a redefinition of the teacher and student pair of roles, since if the teacher's part is confined ever more narrowly to the mere transmission of content, teacher training can become more instrumental and more limited. If the teacher's function is restricted to the reproduction of information, moreover, that work can be partly or wholly replaced by technological tools, which promotes hybrid education as the preferred model for the future.

The inflection the author identifies is the one that would later accelerate with the Covid-19 crisis, out of which came the Global Education Coalition, which combined the work of international institutions and large global technology firms and was launched in March 2020. UNESCO defined it as "a platform for collaboration and exchange to protect the right to education during this unprecedented disruption and beyond" (2022, 7). In naming what lies beyond, the idea is fully enunciated of moving past attention to the pandemic emergency in order, in some manner, to take advantage of that situation to generate once again, in Gorostiaga's phrase (2020), the necessary macro consensuses that lay the groundwork for possible transformations of education systems. What is glimpsed in some passages of the Global Education Coalition would later be stated directly by the World Bank Group. What is at stake, then, is turning the crisis into an opportunity:

(...) turning the crisis into an opportunity means (re)building more solid and equitable education systems, with the emphasis on learning, with effective use of technology, and on the basis of a redefinition of the scope of the teacher's work. In the words of the document: The innovations produced during the periods in which the situation is confronted and continuity is managed will have shown what can be done when countries use the most effective and equitable approaches to reduce the differences in learning for all children. (World Bank Group, 2020: 8). (Pronko, 2022, 79-80)

That same perspective is expressed in numerous documents from a variety of institutions. To cite one example, UNESCO asks as much in the document titled "La plataformización de la educación: un marco para definir las nuevas orientaciones de los sistemas educativos híbridos" (2021), in its treatment of the convergence between education and the

new technology platforms. The point and the objective is this: “How can structural social inequalities be reduced through the enormous power that technology offers to reform education?” (Rivas 2021). On UNESCO’s view the development of platforms is strictly and exclusively positive, and the outlook it presents is optimistic. That document asserts:

The advent of platforms gives rise to the birth of a dual education system that combines virtual and in-person teaching in an institutionalized, uniform, and mass form. The in-person school system, for its part, retains its homogeneous and national character, as well as its function of socialization and of consolidating cultural, civic, and moral ties. Those attributes require teachers with moral authority and high doses of daily interaction in order to guide conduct and learning. In parallel, digital platforms facilitate greater personalization through artificial intelligence, reinforce penetration into a global market, and can be oriented more clearly toward professional competencies. (2021, 17)

Pronko (2022) qualifies that view, which is present as well in the World Bank documents she reviews. Her analysis establishes that learning platforms, driven by the innovation and dynamism of the private sector, have become key pieces within the new educational networks. These platforms offer different actors, among them parents, students, and workers, access to flexible training opportunities adapted to their needs, breaking with the rigid structure of the national education systems formed in the nineteenth century. It is in this context that a new market sphere emerges within the education industry, one the author considers significant. Although these tools were initially intended to support higher education institutions, platform-based learning has grown exponentially and has consolidated itself as a strategic business that already had the backing of the World Bank, MIT, and Harvard, but that reached its greatest legitimacy and expansion with the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2023). In line with the World Bank’s view, which conceives education systems as a set of learning opportunities, these platforms for training and self-training present themselves as a new setting for the configuration of human sociabilities. Their purpose is to model skills and behaviors in keeping with the demands of a working world in sudden change

and of a structurally unequal society. What is reinforced in this way is the utopia of an education without schools, resting on a technologization that appears to move ever further from human decisions.⁹

When inquiring into the guidelines that multilateral institutions promote in the design of education policy, then, it is worth attending both to the optimistic views, usually those of the institutions' own officials, and to the pessimistic and critical ones, so as to obtain a complete picture.

Post-bureaucratic regulation and the discourse of the multilateral institutions

Another prior work that deals with the multilateral institutions and their impact on education systems is Jorge M. Gorostiaga's "¿Hacia la regulación postburocrática de los sistemas educativos latinoamericanos? Un análisis del discurso de los organismos multilaterales de la región en el período 2012-2018" (2020). The article centers its analysis on how dominant discourses can legitimate and enable policy options on the agendas of national states. It works specifically with the Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (OREALC/UNESCO), the IDB, and the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI).

The author posits the operation of regulation within the transnational system as follows:

Transnational regulation in particular tends to be produced diffusely, through "rules, discourses, and instruments that are produced in and circulate through international forums of decision and consultation" and that are taken up at the national level, and, one might add, at the subnational level, in order to adopt or propose decisions affecting the workings of the education system. (Gorostiaga, 2020, 4)

⁹ H. S. Benítez Larghi discusses technologicism in "Más allá del tecnologicismo, más acá del miserabilismo digital: Procesos de co-construcción de las desigualdades sociales y digitales en la Argentina contemporánea" (2014), an article published in *Ensamble*. The concept is bound up with people's capacity to appropriate information and communication technologies in their everyday lives.

In this passage Gorostiaga notes the capacity of the multilateral institutions to influence national decisions. He highlights in particular an influence of a diffuse kind, that is, one without a single instrument and without a specific manner of developing hierarchical ties. The multilateral institutions tend toward high-level advice at the ministerial level. One of the ways they exert influence is by drawing on their large budgets to hire highly qualified professionals from prestigious universities and institutions. This is a way of establishing technical ascendancy over national bureaucracies and even over officials themselves. The economic primacy of the salaries of multilateral technical advisers over national ones generates a second inequality. These supranational bureaucracies are generally better paid than national ones, and the development institutions tend to hire people with careers in senior national agencies. These factors affect the multilateral relationship, producing an implicit or explicit hierarchical relationship of technical control by the officials of the multilateral institutions over national officials. This strategic positioning of the international bureaucracies does not necessarily prevent national states from exercising oversight of them, although it would require regulation (Jankauskas 2019).

Gorostiaga also works the text from the premise of the theory of post-bureaucratic regulation of education, marking out two currents, a quasi-market model of the education system, in which schools compete among themselves for funding, student numbers, and the like, and an evaluative state model, in which central evaluation mechanisms are established that schools are expected to meet.

In general the IDB, according to the various documents it produces, maintains in its educational advice an approach tied to social welfare and economic development. That general orientation, in Gorostiaga's account, may well stem from the academic training in economics and development of many of the institution's members, given its banking and financial character. The IDB aims for national education systems to be capable of responding to the demands of the labor market locally, and for states to insert themselves into the global economy generally. This last aspect is an enduring factor within the general objectives of the development banks, since they are, in a certain sense, charged with pro-

moting, in the multilateral interest, the entry of developing countries into markets.

The IDB, for its part, celebrates in its Sector Framework (IDB, 2016) the growing visibility of civil society organizations at the national level and of regional networks, formed or financed for the most part by private firms, that drive reform and share good practices for the improvement of education. It concludes that “the private sector and civil society can play a significant role in prioritizing education and its strategies, as part of the public agenda” (p. 13).

Alongside the dissemination strategies of these supranational institutions, diagnostic reports and proposals are produced in various arenas, among them international forums of decision and consultation, and in this way their discourse gains weight and reach with national states as a means of introducing their programs. Gorostiaga distinguishes several types of discursive current among these institutions. Focusing on the IDB, he argues that its reports orient their educational proposals toward the economic development and social welfare of states. The purpose pursued is that educational establishments should respond better to the demands of the labor market and that education systems should be able to insert themselves into the global economy. He also advocates the involvement of civil society in government decisions and in the management of resources, and the association of the state with the private sector:

The effects of these policies go well beyond producing an adjustment of education systems to a new socioeconomic order. Considerations of equality and sociocultural diversity tend to be deferred, under forms of state control that reduce the complexity inherent in educational processes and that discipline schools and teachers through the granting of a supposed autonomy (Monarca, 2015; Rizvi and Lingard, 2013). Moreover, as Maroy (2012) notes, they entail a turn toward an individualist ethos that calls into question the public and collective character of education. (p. 6)

Gorostiaga notes in this passage how the implementation of pro-market reform in education can contribute to an erosion of the sense of community, promoting an individualist ethos associated with the possibility of

building an alternative path that only a few can travel, whether for reasons of economic resources, available places, or purchasing power.¹⁰ Education reforms tied to economic liberalization generally promote practices associated with business management or with the sphere of private production. This may lead us to consider how close to the market educational practices ought to be in general terms and, ultimately, whether it is desirable for education policy to build bridges between educational institutions and firms. Or, on the contrary, which bridges do we want to build? What philosophy of education, if any, does the discourse of the IDB allow us to glimpse?

The text does not specify programs proposed by the multilateral institutions, focusing instead on the modes of legitimation of discourse and, above all, on the ever-growing opening of the design and execution of national public policy to social, economic, and political actors outside state management in the strict sense.

At the close of the analysis, the text ends with the following reflection:

In a scenario characterized, at the global level, by the dominance of the narrative of the knowledge society and, at the regional level, by the deepening of education policy proposals proper to post-bureaucratic regulation, the construction of meaning carried out by the regional multilateral institutions may also be an instance that contributes to proposing alternative agendas. (p. 16)

Gorostiaga mentions in this paragraph a supposed dominance of the narrative of a knowledge society, in which information becomes ever more valuable in economic terms. In a society where information is valuable for business, as big data, but where an immeasurable quantity of information is also produced daily, the capacity to discern between relevant and irrelevant information becomes increasingly important. That discernment is bound up in part with capacities that formal education provides in the region today. Education, that is, has often perceived

¹⁰ The social and political debate over the manufacture of selective opportunities is, one might say, deep and even philosophical. Should a society build options that, as we know, will be available only to those who perform best by standardized academic measures, knowing that the starting point is unequal?

itself as a tool that forms critical attitudes capable of fostering such discernment.

In this respect the multilateral institutions, on Gorostiaga's account, also construct educational discourses that national bureaucracies will have to accept, qualify, or reject, according to the interests they pursue. It is possible in this way to consider that the multilateral institutions likewise form part of the construction of education policy, in discursive terms as much as in practical ones. That proposition is relevant to the development of this thesis, since the documentary analysis will examine the IDB's design of education policy on the following basis: the multilateral institutions generate their proposals for public policy, explicitly or implicitly, through ad hoc working groups made up of professionals who are generally qualified in technical terms. This is done within a framework of respect for the sovereignty of each state, which is ultimately the party that executes the policy internally. In the case of development institutions such as the IDB, they promote credit in connection with national governments, which approve or reject it, but which may bring with it a particular education policy within the alignment of the program.

Policy design and the agents of education policy

In "Opportunities for Future IDB Involvement in Latin America and the Caribbean" (2018), a study of future opportunities in policy design, Juan J. Daboub and Daniel F. Runde note:

(...) the IDB's efforts to improve educational outcomes benefitted more than 2 million students in 2016. The IDB has a unique role in the region that no other agency can match, and it enjoys a high level of trust and cooperation among many LAC countries. (2018, 1)

The authors consider, that is, that the IDB has a great capacity for cooperation and management on behalf of the states of Latin America, given that it enjoys a high level of trust, higher than that of any other institution. In line with the IDB, the authors also note the relevance of education in macroeconomic terms: "If nations seek to overcome the middle-income trap, they must first prioritize policy actions to improve the rule

of law, the taxation system, access and quality of education, and access to finance and economic diversification” (p. 2).

The passage refers to the middle-income trap, meaning the economic stagnation of states that fail to escape a condition of middling development, as is the case with Argentina. Among the factors identified as relevant to escaping that trap is education, alongside government according to law and access to international finance. At the end of the text Daboub and Runde note the relevance of innovation to the IDB’s role in the years ahead, which positions them, in educational terms, in favor of investment in educational technology with the private sector as catalyst.

The IDB’s concern with education has historically been persistent, beginning with its first president, Felipe Herrera Lane. According to Cox (1968):

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) also stresses loans for higher education, linking this with its aim to promote Latin American integration by advocating a “common market of knowledge and talent.” See a speech by Felipe Herrera, President of IDB, at Bank headquarters, Washington, D.C., September 12, 1966. (1968, 314)

This emphasis of the IDB on combining educational practice with market practice has been a constant throughout the institution’s activity, since its approach is that of development through economic growth, and in particular growth driven by the private sector. The IDB’s education policy is in this way subordinated, to a certain degree, to a capacity for adaptation to the dynamics of supply and demand, although not necessarily in a direct manner.

Dewitt (1980), decades ago, put on the table the conflicts that arise from the contest of interests present in the design of programs within the IDB:

Some projects serve U.S. economic interest, while others are to the advantage of Costa Rica. IDB projects in education and sanitation, for instance, are of little advantage to U.S. economic interests and provide some positive social benefit to Costa Rica. On the other hand, projects in livestock development, energy, preinvestment, roads, and industrial credit are very much in the national economic interest of the United States. (1980, 75)

Within this scheme of competing interests the author places education policy among the policies that tend to favor the borrowing state, in the case of Costa Rica in particular. He notes, however, that the failure of undeveloped countries to adapt to the changes required for the implementation of sustainable development policy increases their dependence on external economies, even with the IDB's help. Given the IDB's institutional structure, we might affirm that these tensions remain in force in the design of general policy, although it is harder to affirm that each particular program is colored by that general dynamic of internal negotiation.

Analyzing the IDB's activity in Brazilian teacher education, Aranha and Oliveira (2023) wrote:

The implications of the public-private partnership system directly influence the educational policy for public education in Manaus, specifically continuing education, which brings in the core, mercantilist strategies shaped by subservience to financial capital, establishing its profitable ground in the educational field and integrating the process of commodification of continuing teacher training, which strongly threatens the process of democratization of public education. (2023)

The authors hold that the IDB proposes a marketization¹¹ of education through the predominant inclusion of the financial sector in support for educational initiatives. In our society, however, the inclusion of finance in the equation of development is an ordinary part of the regular operations of organizations, since it is financial resources that mobilize, as a medium of exchange, the non-financial ones. Analysis of this kind therefore appears to subsume education and its social objectives as one more item within a conflict of an ideological character, one that transcends education and that ultimately contends conceptually over notions of a general order, such as social models of law and economics. The deficiency of such usages in the analysis of education policy consists in the incapacity to separate educational concepts from political and economic

¹¹ Rather than marketization, the appropriate concept would be commoditization, since what the authors refer to is not the mere placing of the education system into commerce but its transformation into a commodity, something comparable and homogeneous where there had been distinct varieties, which in economic terms means conversion into a raw material.

ones, because, although these practices are intertwined, the capacity to discern among them is essential to the improvement of public policy. The teaching of chess, for example, may be no different for being financed by a public or a private entity, and its approach need not be imbricated with the logic of the capital that sustains that learning practice. Subsuming educational analysis to a strictly political approach is therefore skewed and potentially reductive, since it omits the relevance of other kinds of evidence and qualifies the data excessively before analyzing them.

As a multilateral institution the IDB adapts to the state frameworks of its member countries, since it is they that agree on the possibilities of each particular program. In the case of Brazil, for instance, the Brazilian national government is responsible for financing ties with the IDB and for the content of the programs, which is agreed jointly. The IDB, for its part, is a development institution that uses finance as a means, so that financial instrumentation is a necessary condition, within that structure, for providing resources to the states that so agree. That said, the work of Aranha and Oliveira makes it possible to consider tangentially the relevance of political systems generally to the formation of education policy in particular. It also allows us to grasp the weight that economic matters carry on the education agenda and in the design of policy of this kind, since education is not only a practice of cultural transmission but also forms the people who will make up the institutions of the future.

Theoretical framework

The state

This thesis sets out from a classical definition of the state in conceptual terms, not in order to remain there statically but in order to build a concept that converses with the current paradigms of public international law and with the academic standards on statehood accepted in international relations. This will help to establish where international institutions come from, since they are a direct result of agreement among the organizational leaders of state structures. Put another way, the IDB is a result of international agreements carried forward by the political officeholders capable of binding a state as a whole.

Historically, the classical definition of a state as a political organization included territory, population, and the monopoly of violence.¹² In the nineteenth century the nation-state also took charge of the formal distribution of educational content, as it did in Argentina until the middle of the twentieth century, privately run higher education being more recent there. Max Weber, one of the classical theorists of politics and the founder of modern sociology, defined the state as a political organization of an institutional and continuous character whose administrative apparatus successfully claims the monopoly of legitimate force for the enforcement of the prevailing order (Weber 1977). Weber posits the state, then, as a political entity intrinsically bound to the legitimate monopoly

¹² According to Karl Duszka, this classical concept of the state was partly superseded by the behavioral political science that emerged in the universities of the United States and Europe in the 1950s, in what is known as the behavioral revolution. Duszka argues that the concept persists only in Marxism. Non-Marxist Latin American literature nevertheless sustains Weber's concept, mostly in theoretical writing along lines we might call nationalist or republican depending on the context, and particularly in law, political science, and sociology, which have been less influenced by the advances of that twentieth-century discipline and are heirs to the classical tradition of political analysis (Weber) as related to political philosophy, law, economics, and history. This partly tangential methodological differentiation of a political science split between classical and contemporary matters today for the analysis of technology and politics as applied to education, because Argentine scholarship has a traditionally Latin Americanist emphasis. Our training in the humanities, that is, sometimes limits access, through unfamiliarity, to the forms of knowledge production strongly inaugurated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which rest no longer on manuals, treatises, memorization, and long professional rotations but on specialized publications, journals, and ad hoc practical clinics.

of violence, so that wherever there is control over population and territory, of whatever kind, there would be sufficient condition for statehood to arise. For this thesis, however, it will be necessary to add to that definition a legal aspect that approaches the international ethical standards bound up with human rights and democracy. The conceptual paradigm for purposes of analysis will therefore be a contemporary one and will include democracy and human rights as a presupposition of coexistence among the states of the Americas, which will be the focus of the analysis of the IDB's work.

It will also be necessary to give the legal aspect its reference. According to Mónica Pinto (2012):

The idea of international law is contemporaneous with, and a function of, the idea of the state. It is a historical product that arises from the need of states to relate to one another, and its force is secured by that same need. The state as an entity thus precedes international law. Hence the consensus that the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648, after the Thirty Years' War, closes the medieval stage and gives way to a system of political units, states, in some fashion embryonic of the present one. In that context, international law arises as the set of standards of conduct mutually accepted by states to govern their relations. (p. 4)

Law, that is, is bound to the state and to the historical emergence of the modern state in Weber's terms. Public international law will be one of the elements that help us understand the social characteristics of the phenomena of international agreement and how these can bear directly on international or national education policy. Concretely, the focus of analysis in this thesis passes through agreements reached within the framework of an international consensus, namely the existence of the IDB. This development financing institution proceeds from legal presuppositions, which is to say from the signing of a treaty or international agreement in which the participating states defined their legal, political, and financial participation within a framework of cooperation.

The two agreements between Argentina and the IDB for the financing of the educational programs to be analyzed were made within the legal framework of public international law. As should be stressed, the full active subjects of public international law are states, as the parties

with the greatest capacity, in scholarly terms, to make agreements or treaties. Within that emergence of the state, the programs to be analyzed are subsumed under these categories of state, and it is from there that they will be analyzed. It must be noted, however, that our sociological conceptual framework of the state, supplied by Weber and Pinto, has to be complemented with a human rights framework that proposes as its elementary basis respect for the individual dignity of each member of the human species. According to Nikken (1994):

The notion of human rights corresponds to the affirmation of the dignity of the person before the state. Public power must be exercised in the service of the human being; it cannot lawfully be used to offend attributes inherent in the person and must be a vehicle through which the person can live in society under conditions consonant with the very dignity that is intrinsic to her. (1994, 1)

The conceptual basis the author provides is fundamental for understanding the role of the state, and of Argentina in particular, since Argentina's own Constitution has granted constitutional rank to various human rights treaties, positivizing these concepts at the highest level of national legal hierarchy. Falk, in turn, names human rights as a fundamental notion: "The concept of human rights is the mother's milk of the international community" (Falk 2004). It could be affirmed that the cornerstone on which the current agreements of the international community rest is human rights. In other words, human rights are an integral part not only of public international law, inseparable from the very concepts of the state in legal terms, but also a foundation of international relations and international politics. It is emphasized in consequence that, for this thesis, the objectives of the IDB will be considered within this framework of the state as bound to human rights.

Public policy

Public policy, as an object of study, is a central notion for the study of state action and of the crucible of social, economic, and political actors with which the state interacts. The analysis will take up the account Guillaume Fontaine gives in *El análisis de las políticas públicas* (2015)

together with the contributions Laura Rovelli makes in *Instrumentos para el análisis de las políticas públicas* (2018), a work that draws continually on Fontaine. In keeping with the objectives set out, the approach will maintain the growing importance and agency of a plurality of institutions and actors in the construction of public policy, and specifically of education policy. Drawing on these source texts, it also proposes to incorporate into the analysis the dimension of international institutions and their capacity to intervene in states, in Argentina particularly.

The starting point for thinking about public policy is therefore context. Both authors begin by noting the climate of the times, in that, in an increasingly globalized world, the influences on state policy come from diverse actors, state and non-state alike (Fontaine 2015, 5). Power, that is, would no longer be centralized in a single authority, the nation-state of classical theory. This condition obliges governments to rearticulate the exercise of power and obliges the social sciences, further, to explore this terrain. Rovelli (2018) defines that decentralization as a triple movement, downward, upward, and outward. In the upward displacement, supranational actors intervene with policy proposals or guidelines that circulate at the national level thanks to the actions of activists and technocrats and to the search for new educational models internationally. Downward decentralization distributes authority among local organizations and sectional agencies, thereby reallocating resources and redistributing power. Outward displacement, finally, is bound up with non-governmental organizations, private firms, and others. This reorganization does not entail a weakening of the national state, then, but rather shows a disposition and a state capacity to manage resources in the territory as optimally as possible.

If context is fundamental to understanding how public policies arise or operate, they cannot in consequence be seen as variables independent of society. Other theoretical approaches propose the analysis of public policy as a response to some more general problem. What is sought to be emphasized here, however, is that “a policy is the product of an existing institutional system, of an equilibrium among social, economic, and political actors, of previous policies, and of the financial capacity of the state” (Fontaine 2015, 28). Analyzing them, that is, and choosing them as

an object of study, means taking them as dependent variables affected by the social, political, and economic events that run through a specific state at a specific moment of its history. This conception implies a change of epistemological paradigm in the field of policy analysis, since it recognizes that political decisions are the result of complex interactions among multiple actors and not simply of the will of governments. The object of study is a reflexive, changing object. Policies are not in themselves efficient or inefficient, but are the product of a history (Fontaine 2015). There is no linear relationship between the measures proposed and the results obtained, and the author concludes:

On the contrary, a policy generates perverse effects, or effects that were not anticipated or desired by those who took the decision, and one can then ask whether those results are part of the policy or whether they are systemic elements altered by a policy but not forming part of it. (2015, 30)

In a second respect, the role of social, political, and economic actors and of institutions in the configuration of a public policy is emphasized. There is no single executing agent; rather, the state comes to have a role within the multiplicity of possible actors that may contribute to or obstruct the policies proposed. Rovelli sketches a list of possible actors that may be individual or collective, state bodies or social organizations, multilateral organizations, and unorganized actors closer to the territory such as school principals, supervisors, and families. Among the potential institutions the terrain is vast, since they may be formal or informal, the latter including custom, traditions, and values. The space is heterogeneous and its interests are in contention, which generates intricate relations of power both within policy design and outside it.

The involvement of institutions may take various styles. In keeping with the object of study of the present work, however, the network style of institutionality with respect to the role of the state (Rovelli 2018) is the fitting one. In that style the market has a strong presence, and the spheres of interest of the IDB and the World Bank come into play together with their proposals for educational programs. It is between multiplicity and network that a fertile, hybrid terrain develops, in which the participation of different methods and styles of doing politics emerges.

The state form, with all its components, takes on a transversal character (Oszlak 2001).

Both texts work with complementary perspectives that enrich our understanding of the dynamic nature of public policy, above all by focusing on the displacement of the state's power of action and on the recognition that multiple roles exist, national and international alike. In this co-production, the interaction among the state, civil society, the private sector, and other groups influences the design, implementation, and evaluation stages of education policy. What is sought is a mixed approach to analysis, one that includes quantitative and qualitative methods, because it is in the very hybridity of the discipline that the seed for studying policy is to be found. It is reaffirmed, in turn, that decentralized power implies the opposite of the popular belief in weakening. The role is resignified: "The state actor, whether of the executive or the legislative branch, receives those actors separately; that actor is an interlocutor of all these groups and receives pressure from them to place problems on the agenda" (p. 34). What matters, in consequence, would be to carry out that role of coordination as optimally as possible, since it assumes other risks, perhaps greater ones, in the face of that new setting for political action.¹³

¹³ According to a study conducted by Milgram (1963), obedience corresponds more closely to the social norm than it does to the exception. It was thereby verified empirically that resistance to authority is scarce, possibly because it means fighting against the gregarious instinct of human beings. The documentary *Le Jeu de la Mort* puts Milgram's experiment into television format, in which, on a false set, a participant is given the possibility of winning a million euros in exchange for electrocuting to death, without seeing him, a competitor in the same question-and-answer game. On answering incorrectly, the competitor receives electric shocks administered by the participant, each of greater intensity than the last. The producers of the documentary state that more than 80 percent of the participants completed and won the game, murdering the other participant out of obedience with (false) electric shocks of more than 400 volts. The United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) advises the American public that any shock from 50 volts upward is dangerous to human health. We can thereby verify a case in which the person studied interprets the conduct proposed by the institutional setting as the appropriate one, since it is reinforced by an individual social system of rewards and punishments, winning the prize as against losing the game. The implications of these studies for education will not be dealt with in this thesis, but the subject is a relevant one to bear in mind for future research.

Education policy

Proceeding from the definition given for public policy, education policies are those public policies that deal with matters bearing directly or indirectly on the substance of education within each state, or for states as a whole as an international community. Education policy, that is, is a specific type of public policy. Within that group, education policies are defined by dealing specifically with matters of learning, structural or particular, bound up with learning practices. Those matters may concern primary, secondary, tertiary, or university education, continuing education, or vocational training. In other terms, education policies are the legal or governance practices applied from or for educational settings.

According to Ogunode, “Educational policies are policies designed and formulated by the government for the administration and management of education in the local government, states and country. Educational policy is the policies approved by the government for directing the affairs of education” (Ogunode and Samuel 2024). This definition is apt for understanding the link between public policy and education policy since, as noted, the second is subsumed within the first. The nexus between education policy and policy in general is fundamental, moreover, because it is what finally ties education policy to public administration, which is the sum of the bureaucracy and the political decision-makers.

Public administration, understood as the body of people who work in the public sphere and particularly within the executive branch, will be what executes and shapes education policy in general terms, even though in specific terms the practice of learning in the classroom may finally be defined with different nuances according to the region, the school, the particular timetable, and so on. Education policies are understood, that is, as a generality applied to sets of institutions but also as concrete results issuing from those general practices. The outcome of education policy will depend on its design as much as on its implementation. Within the framework of this thesis, however, and for methodological reasons, we will focus exclusively on policy design. That focus does not dismiss the claim that the implementation of what policymakers

design is important; on the contrary, it is necessary to stress the importance of a correct application of what has been designed.

International institutions and international cooperation

International institutions are supranational legal and political entities formed by states. They lack sovereignty, though not necessarily legal personality. They may be persons of public international law or belong to the orbit of international persons, as the United Nations does. In some cases they are able to oblige states to comply with supranational rules, as the international courts do. These institutions are formed by states and are subject to their will, since states make them up and finance them. Recent scholarship has also considered, however, that natural persons, as part of public international law, might play a leading role within international institutions.

The IDB is an international financial institution devoted to development, which is to say to the financing of proposals for states with the institutional capacity to request loans. One characteristic of development financing, as distinct from commercial banking, is that the loan is made in conjunction with a specific program and its disbursement is contingent upon that program. International credit tends to be released as states meet the requirements established in the programs, so that these programs generally have defined and quantifiable objectives.

The criteria for making loans are potentially bound up with the fulfillment of rights. The development banks, that is, in forming part of the public agenda, are agencies with a public policy approach. Within their operations they have programs devoted specifically to education policy. It is in the definition of education policy that the nexus between development financing institutions and education policy will be found, which is one of the fundamental presuppositions of this work and a principal motive for the research.

These institutions may establish mechanisms of cooperation, which is considered international cooperation. Such cooperation is characterized by the fact that at least two of its actors do not belong to the interior of a single state, at least one being an international organization or a state different from the first with which it collaborates. More specifi-

cally, it consists in the union of two or more persons of public international law in order to address global problems such as the attainment of peace, humanitarian assistance, or collaboration for social and economic development.

Educational technology

The concept of educational technology encompasses digital and non-digital technologies that may be used to improve or to modify educational practice. Those technologies may consist in theories and practices of learning, communication tools, content management systems, programming languages, and others. Although tools bound up with the uses of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education have recently become widespread, these concepts should not be taken as synonymous, since educational technology includes more devices than the first concept encompasses when applied to education.

As a mode of learning, educational technology has aroused positive and negative concerns, in the pedagogical plane as much as in the political one, since developed countries tend to have greater control over and initiative in technology than developing ones. Two studies have reflected both positive and negative results from the use of laptops by young people. A study at National Taiwan Normal University showed that the use of new mobile technologies could improve certain educational processes bound up with student creativity (Yeh, Chang, Ting, and Chen 2020). A study in South Korea, on the other hand, showed that increased exposure to the use of mobile computers produces greater dependence and that greater dependence in turn produces greater associated anxiety as a harmful health effect (Lee, Kim, Yoo, Han, Jung, and Jang 2016).¹⁴

This picture presents a challenge, which is that of incorporating mobile educational technology appropriately into everyday use, not only for students but for teachers as well. That effort will be more fruitful if we have adequate frameworks for the entry of technologies into educa-

¹⁴ The effects will in any case have to be qualified, striking a healthy balance between educational potential and dependence on the use of mobile telephony, which is also a tool that can harm students through excessive use. One of the difficulties of asynchronous mobile content is the possibility of overloading the student.

tional settings, at the conceptual level as much as at the level of education policy. This current has been called mobile education, mobile learning, or m-learning, a concept that places the emphasis on the educational and on mobility (DePietro 2016). It may nonetheless be a deficiency of appreciation to defer the technological aspect that modifies educational practice, because mobile education is not simply a matter of transferring traditional practices to a different context, since that context also modifies the teaching itself.¹⁵ The context has been given by the convergence between the educational technologies emerging from the 1970s onward, on one side, and mobile communication technologies on the other, the mobile, cellular, or cordless telephone in particular, though also the pager.¹⁶

Mobile technology has also proved useful for learning languages, and its use correlates with assessment scores. It has likewise been maintained that promoting media literacy is a relevant practice for making the most of the educational uses of these technologies. The effective and virtuous incorporation of mobile technologies as hardware, integrated with different kinds of formal or informal educational software, will be a challenge of the twenty-first century. Among the formal applications we find online university campuses, accessible through browsers or dedicated applications, while among the informal ones are the platforms offered by firms seeking to attract broad or mass audiences, generally in

¹⁵ A study carried out in Turkey and published in the journal *Educational Technology & Society* showed that a potential user's successful anticipation of controlling the technology, known as perceived behavioral control, is an effective predictor of a teacher's inclination to make effective use of mobile technology (Sungur-Gül and Ateş 2021). Before using a technology, that is, the teacher would carry out an evaluation of her own capacities with respect to it. If she considers those capacities to be scarce, or perhaps inferior to those of her students, it will be more likely that she is not inclined to use it. We might conclude in this way that training in technological matters is also required for teachers whenever the promotion of a specific technology is sought. Even where the teacher does not decide on the inclusion of the technology, her reluctance would provide a counterproductive framework for the effectiveness of her classroom work. In terms of that effectiveness, mobile learning has proved successful in the case of primary school students in Taiwan (Ju-Ling Shih, Chien-Wen Chuang, and Gwo-Jen Hwang 2010).

¹⁶ One of the most notable modifications introduced by the mobile is that a stable or formal setting around the student is no longer required, since many possibilities open up within what have been called informal settings.

exchange for the delivery of advertising and the automatic collection of data.

A distinction is also commonly drawn between educational science and educational technology, the first seeking to study phenomena disinterestedly while the second would be colored by certain political, bureaucratic, or business interests.¹⁷ Such distinctions produce a distancing of new educational technology practices from strictly academic settings, since many innovations today occur within private business settings, Duolingo among them, which by 2014 had 30 million users. The depth of this new kind of education must nonetheless be considered, along with the effects it may have on society, which could be far more limited than those of traditional education.

Within the framework of this thesis the concept of educational technology will be relevant because the two IDB programs to be analyzed include technological aspects. “SilverTech” proposes the use of digital platforms for the education of adults, while “Habilidades Digitales” proposes improving students’ capacity to use the programs available in primary and secondary education, focusing chiefly on ICT. In the programmatic design of education policy the IDB has been giving priority to initiatives bound up with educational technology. That trajectory will have its specific destination, which will depend on the design of the programs as much as on their implementation. Evaluating the results of the intervention of educational technology in contemporary society will likewise depend on where the intervention is meant to lead, as policy or as ethics, so that the analyst’s theoretical framework will quite possibly alter the results of any potential analysis.

As can be seen, then, one matter of relevance in global society today is the use of technologies in education and, in consequence, the development of educational technologies. To that technological trajectory is added a complex and unstable political and cultural context in which classical institutions such as political representation, and even the value

¹⁷ Although science claims to be free of social conditioning, it is a social phenomenon and, as such, is immersed in cultural, economic, and political contexts. This has a correlate in Thomas Kuhn’s concepts of normal science and revolutionary science. The subject nonetheless exceeds the framework of this thesis.

of academic training in university fields such as the humanities, have been called into question.

It is therefore important to ask today what content we need for a general educational framework, but also for specific ones, given that the disruptions mentioned affect general curricular matters as well as particular ones. The use of digital encyclopedias, for example, has had an impact on undergraduate university work, which is general, but it has also had an impact on specific graduate research, which is particular, given the breadth of information drawn from academic articles on which such sources can rest.

The subject therefore has two faces. On one side, what technology exists and what possible uses we have for it; on the other, what technologies still have to be developed in order to improve educational quality. This could be viewed in a critical but inventive spirit. It would be useful to understand these phenomena clearly in order to design the technologies needed for a better education, while at the same time using the resources we have more efficiently and raising awareness that tools may be harmful or beneficial depending on how they are used. On the side of technological development, it is relevant to consider for whom and with what objectives one develops, so that a synergy is produced between the interests of research and development and the interests of teachers.

Education has long rested on modes of disseminating information. Teachers today therefore compete with many other sources from which the population obtains information. The state is no longer the principal source of access to knowledge, and neither are the classical private educational institutions such as clubs, scientific societies, or private libraries. As for the teacher's loss of authority, inside or outside the classroom, the teacher cannot be expected to know more than the internet does. What can be done is to provide tools for a better understanding of the various elements that may be appropriated in online navigation, while also providing direct access to quality educational resources, so as to improve education generally and to achieve a positive synergy with the formal and traditional content of managed education.¹⁸ The counter-

¹⁸ According to the Oxford professor Viktor Mayer-Schönberger (2013), for every person alive today there is information equivalent to more than three hundred Libraries of Alexandria,

part of the mass generation of data by internet users is data analysis, the science of massive data or big data, which is a set of tools used by firms and governments to fulfill their institutional purposes. Firms, for example, could use these tools to learn what trends are occurring in the demand for learning, whether new or classical. Governments, by contrast, could use them to measure school performance daily, evaluating schools or universities indirectly through a survey of the virtual campuses of public institutions. These are only two examples of possible uses of current developments that are having an impact on our lives.

The difference between education and data is the difference between formation and information, a distinction that dates back at least to the nineteenth century in academic publications on education. Education aims not only at information as such but at giving data an order, a value, and a meaning, by way of the construction of objectives and reflection on which objectives are worthwhile and which are not. It is within this scheme that an analysis of educational technology can work, bearing in mind the fascinating new tools the twenty-first century provides while not forgetting what that technology can help us to do.

It will also be worthwhile to analyze the state of the art in educational technology, which platforms are available for learning and what knowledge or information is distributed en masse through their operation. Understanding this is a key part of the debate over curriculum and teaching in the twenty-first century, in which the traditional practices of transmitting information have been altered. Put another way, what is the situation of online learning as distributed through the platforms that educational technology made possible? Which platforms, moreover, are in use? What innovations have been made in curricular matters and what can we expect? According to Jorge Larreamendy-Joerns, it is not only that education has changed in appearance with the internet, but that the very concept of education is in dispute. According to Roger Schank (2004), traditional education was formed out of the social, cultural, and economic interests of the social elites of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and technology has called those classical concepts of learning into question through the mismatch between curricula and

which amounts to approximately 1,200 exabytes.

contemporary practices of production. The process thereby enters into the specific modifications that have already occurred.¹⁹

When, then, and how should educational technology be used? Clif Kussmaul (1996) proposed as a criterion that it be used when the task to be carried out proves more effective when mediated by technology than in other, traditional forms. According to Insung Jung (2000), one study finds that virtual teaching practices have been more effective than in-person ones for training people in technology, with some possibility that it is a more efficient method than in-person teaching generally. Another study, by Hakan Ulum (2022), showed that the educational impact is moderate but that this impact holds across several countries regardless of economic background, and it holds that these new modalities will increase.

Despite making the practices of transmitting information more efficient, however, distance education has also shown its deficient side, in failing to form feelings of community and in reinforcing social isolation, the latter factor being particularly present in large cities. The sociologist Philippe Perrenoud, in *La construcción del éxito y del fracaso escolar* (1996), cites John Eggleston, an educator at the University of Warwick, in support of the claim that there are hidden or negotiated curricula in in-person programs, given that the outcome of a class is a more or less tacit negotiation between teachers and students. That dynamic is strongly altered in distance education by the reduced grouping of students before the teacher in the synchronous case and by the absence of direct interaction in the asynchronous one. By this criterion, then, the curriculum in

¹⁹ As early as 1997, 22 percent of American universities offered a distance option. In 2016 John Vivolo was still speaking of a certain resistance to online education. Today most prestigious universities offer online training. During the first two decades of the internet it was difficult to convince students, teachers, and administrators to carry out virtual educational practices, and that has changed markedly, particularly since the pandemic of 2020. Between roughly February and March of 2020, schools around the world began to close and remained closed practically until 2021. This led to the popularity of new tools for learning, among them Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, in a surge of sudden innovation or improvised educational revolution. Since then, technology firms, students, and administrations have promoted these alternatives to traditional education, considering them more efficient or more satisfactory for those ends.

distance education would be less negotiated, or more in keeping with what educational administrators decide.²⁰

According to Younhee Kim (2004), virtual teaching practices are not confined to educational establishments or universities but extend as well to firms and to public administrations. What unifies virtual teaching, in general, is the use of the internet. It has been said that obtaining a picture of the impact of technology on education through an academic article is like taking a photograph of a cyclone, because the impact is not only on the ways information is apprehended but on the ways people relate to one another. There is also a great modification of content owing to the very dynamic of the social changes the internet fosters.

As the article “Preguntas educativas para la tecnología digital” (2020), published in EDUTEC, proposes, it is necessary to speak of educational development and not merely of technological consumption. These tools will be useful, that is, given adequate frameworks for adapting their uses to fruitful educational forms in which the person is provided with a setting for personal and social development. Technologies make possible greater opportunities for educational equalization at the global level, while at the same time presenting challenges in terms of inequalities of access and of inclusion in linguistic terms and in terms of formal practices. This occurs in a society whose economy depends ever more on technology in general.

Technology education

It is simple but necessary to distinguish educational technology from technology education. The first, already defined, is a set of tools available for reaching one or more educational ends. Technology education, on the other hand, is the educational act itself, the one that prepares a person for her relationship with technology, whether that technology is educational or not. Although the two concepts are related, they must therefore be distinguished so as not to fall into methodological error in conceptual or documentary analysis.

²⁰ Distance education promoted on a mass scale could also generate a negative impact by stimulating internet use excessively, promoting problematic uses that would in turn harm educational quality and the integral formation of the person.

Technological knowledge becomes crucial in a society in which social and economic relations are ever more mediated by technology, and in particular by the mobile technology that has strongly shaped relationships over the last ten years. Some authors, Guillermina Tiramonti among them, have argued for the need to redefine concepts and practices in light of the changing use of technology in society. In her words:

A redefinition of school knowledge on the basis of a technological matrix therefore demands an epistemological change and a new didactic transposition that includes, as part of teaching, the process of producing knowledge, in which the student must be the protagonist and the teacher her guide and mentor, with the internet as the technology that must function as mediation between the two. What is at stake is a change in favor of a cultural reference in keeping with the youthful subjectivities shaped by their interaction with the new technologies, one capable of generating a student with the autonomy to take in information and produce knowledge. (2015, 34)

In this context, to educate in technology means not only informing or adapting people for successful development in a society mediated by technologies, but also addressing them through teaching so that the student can participate and be a protagonist in the production of knowledge and the author of her own critical reasoning, in a context in which the diffusion of false information or disinformation on a wide variety of topics is an influential and perhaps lucrative tool.²¹

Given the extent of ICT use in our currently schooled societies, technology education must also take into account key concepts such as the one Fernández Pais and Justianovich (2022) propose regarding the potential for constructing pedagogical sovereignty. The challenge is bound up with the distribution, appropriation, and generation of knowledge in a global context, a challenge cut through, moreover, by processes of

²¹ This problem leads to the old debate over information versus formation, in which education has tended to lean toward the second concept as an ethical compass. Today, however, the debate over information versus disinformation is open, and it is not easy to untangle without clear concepts and pedagogical tools that help resolve such problems. In technology education, moreover, another relevant subject to consider is the inappropriate use of these technologies in terms of health, since various tools used by firms have the capacity to become addictive or to expose students to harmful advertising that might encourage damaging behavior, online gambling among it.

selecting and ranking knowledge and practices, as well as by the definition of teaching content and of training within education systems, which are influenced by the guidelines of various international institutions through standardized testing and accreditation systems. For that reason, in the authors' account, it is important to build the educational agenda at every level and in every modality out of socially validated knowledge, whose configuration arises from debate and community participation. What is at stake in this sense is the consideration that the production of knowledge "presupposes the commitment to do it collectively and to think it in the service of common social problems, of their territories and realities, as a public good" (Fernández Pais and Justianovich 2022, p. 168).

Collective knowledge also entails taking into account the experience and the work of teachers as the protagonists of the exercise of teaching, and as those who, through their organizations, might have greater say in matters such as the curriculum. In order to begin transforming those structures, taking advantage of the democratizing capacity that technology introduces, the knowledge produced might also be knowledge about and from teaching and training. Analysis of and reflection on these matters from the standpoint of teachers' experience and work therefore constitute a subject that can be addressed, and one in which the teacher occupies a prominent role. The teacher is conceived within this framework as a subject who bears and constructs knowledge out of her own practice, but also as an actor with the capacity for deliberation and action in order to intervene socially. What is underlined, then, is that the construction of such pedagogical sovereignty requires generating knowledge about one's own teaching practices, with the aim of reviewing them, reflecting on them, and, where possible, transforming them. In the authors' words:

At the intersection between the contexts of training, teaching and instructional practices as central forms in the processes of initial and continuing training, and the subjects who configure and constitute them, we think pedagogical sovereignty as discourse and as transformative action, of permanent interpellation, in order to discuss the world we intend to teach, with whom, and in the service of which

projects and horizons in the key of our Latin American pedagogy.
(p. 170)

Educational sovereignty

The intersection between education and sovereignty is also relevant, from the attempt to place at the center the knowledge transmitted in schools as socially productive knowledge, connected to local territories and communities, “which stands opposed to the competencies or capacities that neoliberal discourse imposes in the world of work and in education” (p. 171). In the analysis of the IDB’s educational programs we will consider how much opposition there is between this view and that of the multilateral institutions, or whether, instead, they can be thought of as complementary perspectives with a common interest.

Following Bourdieu (1967), the frameworks that structure the thought of an epoch are taken to be understandable in greater detail in relation to the education system, since it is the education system that legitimates and consolidates them, turning them into habits of thought shared by an entire generation. In *La construcción del éxito y del fracaso escolar*, Perrenoud (1996) takes up that very notion of habit in order to define the hidden curriculum, insofar as it:

(...) designates an action of the school that, without being unknown or inevitable, is often presented outwardly in idealist or sweetened forms, although more pedestrian intentions could be discovered: contributing to the socialization of new generations, having them internalize the moral and social order, the existence and legitimacy of inequalities and hierarchies, the necessity of working and making an effort, respect for authority and institutions. (p. 12)

Perrenoud (1996) thus points to two interconnected aspects. On one side, he attends to the ambiguity of the adjective hidden as applied to the curriculum, a term widespread within the sociology of education generally. It is ambiguous because, from its formation as such, the modern school has declared its object, vague and general but an object nonetheless, to be that of forming citizens and future workers, or at least of integrating people through the socialization corresponding to certain norms and values backed by the National Constitution. On the other side, there

is the relation between what lies hidden and what emerges between the realistic representation of the real curriculum and the prescribed one. In order to achieve a more precise representation, that is, it may be more useful to avoid a strict dichotomy between an explicit curriculum and a hidden one. It would be better instead to consider a continuum within the real curriculum, running from the most visible aspects to the least evident ones. While some learning coincides fully with what the formal curriculum stipulates, other learning passes almost unnoticed, unrecorded in any normative document and occurring unconsciously for teachers and students alike. It is this knowledge that is categorized as habits rather than values, insofar as the author moves away from the ideological analysis of the knowledge transmitted and understands the school, from an anthropological standpoint, as a “place of life and learning through practice” (p. 14). Now, if schooled life, as noted above, cannot today be thought without the virtual and digital world, what becomes of the concept of the hidden curriculum, and which forms of learning are bound to what is strictly curricular within the digital?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

General methodology

Two research techniques were used for this thesis, documentary research and the semi-structured interview. The purpose was likewise twofold. On one side, it was to generate a textual corpus of documents provided by the IDB in which the design of the “Habilidades Digitales” (Digital Skills) and “SilverTech” policies is evidenced specifically. On the other, it was to analyze that corpus in order to find relevant patterns and meanings among the documents.²² The semi-structured interviews conducted also serve as documentary material for cross-checking data and generating a detailed, contextualized analysis of the material. The methodology adopted is principally qualitative, moreover, proceeding through documentary, historical, and normative analysis of IDB documents.²³ This research is framed within international education policy.

The collection of documents was carried out by consulting the following databases:

- 1) Publications of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB Open Data LAC).
- 2) Journal Storage (JSTOR).
- 3) Intellectual Production Repository of the National University of La Plata (Servicio de Difusión de la Creación Intelectual, SEDICI, UNLP).
- 4) Social Science Research Network (SSRN).

²² These two programs were chosen for the thesis on the basis of their thematic relevance, in that they connect, implicitly, international education policy, international education financing, and educational technology. They are also recent programs and focused on Argentina, the country for which the most research resources are available here.

²³ According to Flick (2004): “qualitative research works above all with texts. The methods for gathering information, such as interviews or observations, produce data that are transformed into texts through recording and transcription. Methods of interpretation are initiated on the basis of these texts. Different routes lead toward the texts at the center of the research and away from them. Put very briefly, the qualitative research process can be represented as a path from theory to text and another back from text to theory. The intersection of the two paths is the collection of verbal or visual data and their interpretation within a specific research design” (p. 25).

Search strategies using direct terminology were applied in those search engines, which is to say that the search proceeded principally by subject and by concept rather than by author. For documentary research within the IDB specifically, the following subdomains were used:

Projects: <https://www.iadb.org/es/project-search> Publications: <https://publications.iadb.org/es>

Academic research in the field of education is understood here as a tool for inquiring into specific, localized subjects from which general conclusions may be drawn, with the purpose of increasing the available information and organizing it. This research consists of searches and inquiries into delimited portions of our objects of study, which narrows the researcher's field of vision while also allowing a theoretical framework to be applied to the data collected in greater depth.

Documentary research does not make it possible to produce documentary information that is strictly first-hand; rather, that possible information is strengthened by contrasting these texts with other information, whether articles, scholarship, opinions, or data. Through documentary search or collection, then, what is proposed is inquiry into the object of study and the subsequent use of that information in order to turn it into data.

According to Gabriela Gómez Rojas:

Through the process of measurement, whether quantitative or qualitative in approach, observables are transformed into data on the basis of the procedure of operationalization, a methodological resource that allows a variable to obtain records of reality through the construction of indicators. In the methodological literature indicators have been defined in various ways, the definitions clustering around the passage from the latent to the manifest. The theory-method unit thus transforms information, the observables, into data through the process of measurement. (p. 1)

This passage is useful for distinguishing among concepts, indicators, data, and observables. The observables gathered through documentary research will be converted into data in this thesis. In the data analysis, the theoretical framework provided will be applied to them in order to

organize them and to produce knowledge that serves their interpretation.

Concepts

Concepts are abstract entities, or ideas, used to apprehend, understand, develop, and deepen a subject. For this thesis, the concept under investigation is the public policy the IDB maintains with respect to education in Argentina from 2019 to 2024, if it maintains any. Concepts are not directly observable but arise from the study of the literature and are represented by words or numbers. They have accordingly been treated in the theoretical framework, each with its own line of research. Other sources were also used for new concepts, as the development of the data analysis required.

Data and observables

The data in this thesis resulted from the systematization of what was collected through documentary research and of what was found through the interviews. The observables, correspondingly, were the documents collected and the people interviewed.

Interviews as a data collection technique

The interview was used to gather the information relevant to the thesis because, as Hernández Carrera (2014) holds, it makes it feasible to analyze “(...) the experiences of individuals, relating them to everyday or professional practices, with particular emphasis on gaining access to practices and interactions in their natural context, without the alterations that an artificial environment might introduce” (2014, 188). The format adopted is the semi-structured interview, in which a series of general questions was used to seek out an internal view of the design of international education policy and, in particular, of the educational programs taken as the axis of the study, “Habilidades Digitales” and “SilverTech.” The working environment cannot be recreated exactly at a

distance, but remote work is ordinary at the IDB, so that this methodology does not produce a particularly artificial setting.

Dimensions and categories of analysis

The interviewees are members of the IDB. The interviews were conducted remotely over Zoom. The anonymity of each interviewee was maintained in order to guarantee the transparency of the information and the freedom to mention any situation that might arise inside or outside the institution.

The following dimensions were accordingly established to guide the course of the interview, and were not disclosed to the interviewees. There was a personal and institutional dimension, in which personal information was sought about the interviewee's academic trajectory and consequent entry into the IDB. The questions were: "Could you briefly describe your academic trajectory up to the point of joining the IDB?" and "When did you begin working at the IDB? In which area? What were the responsibilities of the role?" The aim was to understand where the person had come from on joining the organization, what training she had, and what kinds of task her role involved. The interviewees were thereby able to give an account of the working environment and of the processes of training acquired during their tenure in the position.

Questions were then put about policy design at the IDB and about the institution's history in educational matters. This was pursued in greater depth through the following questions: "With respect to the 'Habilidades Digitales' and 'SilverTech' programs, did you have any connection to those projects? If so, what was your area responsible for? What did your role require?", "If you had no connection to them, what information circulated within the institution?", "Do you know any colleague who worked on the projects and told you about them?" and "Was there a process of training within the institution about these programs?"

The interviews closed, finally, with questions inviting participants to add to or expand on any of the subjects covered. They were also given the opportunity to set out their opinions about the object of study and about how it was designed, developed, or implemented. By guaranteeing

anonymity, the aim was to make a sharper or more critical view possible, of the institution as much as of the educational programs.

Population and sample

Purposive sampling was chosen for this research, since these were qualitative interviews with a sample that is difficult to access, namely IDB consultants and officials. Two criteria governed selection, accessibility and relevance to the research. Accessibility meant being able to make contact through social networks; relevance meant being, at the time of the interview, in a contractual or employment relationship with the IDB, whether as a consultant or as an employee. Once completed, the interviews were classified as 1, 2, 3, and 4, following the chronological order in which they were conducted.

Limitations of the research

This study has been limited by two kinds of factor, methodological ones and those of the author. The methodological ones correspond to the methodology chosen, which was one possible methodology given the resources available. Those of the author correspond to possible biases bearing on data collection and analysis.

Methodological limitations

Limitations of subject, of sample, of geography, and of time can be identified. The compilation of documents consisted principally of searching for files corresponding to only two designed programs, so that extrapolating the results to the IDB as a whole may be skewed. As qualitative research, moreover, four interviewees are a scant sample from which to render a general view of IDB officials on the subjects addressed. Since the results obtained are geographically confined to Argentina, furthermore, it is possible that they are not directly transferable to international education policies the IDB implements in other countries.

Limitations of the author

No human researcher is entirely free of biases and preferences. The possible introduction of assorted biases into the analysis is therefore a possible limitation. Biases might also be found in the collection of data and in the choice of the specific programs from which to collect them.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Documentary analysis

Within the framework of the present thesis, documents have been collected that will serve as the basis of the research. These are the documents the Inter-American Development Bank itself provides for its own programs. They will be divided by program and then by date, from oldest to most recent. From them we will analyze the manner in which the IDB designs education policy together with national actors.

Before those specific documents, historical and general documents have also been included that will help in understanding the approach the IDB takes to education generally, and not only in Argentina.

General documents

IDB Group Country Strategy with Argentina 2021-2023 (May 2021)

This document sets out the IDB's general, geographic strategy for Argentina and is the frame of reference for all Argentine programs, whatever their type or field. It opens as follows:

The Argentine economy finds itself in the midst of a complex and fragile macroeconomic and social context, which was aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis. Economic activity has been in recession for three years. (...)

The IDB Group Country Strategy 2016-2019 set out three strategic axes to guide operational actions with and without sovereign guarantee: (i) improving the business environment; (ii) strengthening the integration and insertion of the private sector into value chains; and (iii) reducing poverty and inequality with a territorial focus on the Norte Grande and the Buenos Aires conurbation. During that period 40 sovereign-guaranteed loan operations were approved for a total of

US\$7,230.9 million, IDB Invest approved operations for US\$1,767.3 million, and IDB Lab for an amount of US\$14.9 million.

The IDB Group remains Argentina's principal multilateral partner. As of March 31, 2021, the active portfolio of sovereign-guaranteed operations in Argentina was approximately US\$10.05 billion, made up of 57 loans. IDB Invest's active portfolio at that same date consisted of 25 operations for an approximate amount of US\$591.1 million, while IDB Lab's active portfolio comprised 18 operations worth US\$17.9 million.

The priorities of the Country Strategy for the period 2021-2023 center on assisting the most vulnerable sectors affected by the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, on contributing to macroeconomic stabilization, and on advancing an agenda of economic recovery and sustained poverty reduction. To that end, work is proposed along four strategic axes that will guide operational actions with and without sovereign guarantee, technical cooperation operations, and knowledge products: (i) poverty reduction and social protection for the most vulnerable; (ii) economic recovery and productive development 4.0; (iii) macroeconomic stability and the effectiveness of public policy; and (iv) digital transformation as a cross-cutting axis of development. Each axis also incorporates contributions in favor of diversity and gender and of environmental sustainability. (p. iv)

The IDB thus identifies a context of crisis in which it shows that the institution's priorities for the 2016-2019 period were to improve the business environment, strengthen the private sector, and reduce poverty and inequality. For 2020-2023 the priorities shifted toward improving the general context of economic growth, stabilizing the macroeconomy and the effectiveness of public policy, and digital transformation, with poverty reduction remaining as an objective. Education, then, does not appear as a priority in the opening paragraphs of the strategy.

Education is situated as an appendix to the reduction of poverty and inequality:

In the foregoing context, the reduction of poverty and social protection in all their dimensions, together with economic recovery and productive development, are the country's great development challenges. As described in detail in Chapter 3, this requires progress in closing gaps in social coverage and human development. There are significant

challenges in matters of health, education, employment, and access to housing, basic services, and household financing. (p. 3)

Education is thereby placed on the same level as access to housing and access to employment. It is also positioned as an objective mediated by digital transformation:

Greater digital inclusion and digital literacy can in turn contribute to greater equality of opportunity, through access to financing via fin-tech, better health and education services, and more tools and opportunities for today's labor market. (p. 4)

The IDB links digital literacy to financial inclusion and to access to health, which is to say that it interweaves educational content with financial and health capacities. This approach is characteristic of development institutions, which direct their efforts at several areas at once in seeking to maximize the impact of their resources. When it treats education in particular, the general document holds the following:

Argentina shows mixed indicators in education. Problems of attendance, quality, regional equity, and high dropout rates persist in particular, which limits the development of personal skills and affects productivity levels (...). Problems of educational quality are strongly related to deficiencies in initial teacher training and to the relevance and quality of continuing training courses. With mandatory isolation and the closure of schools, the need to guarantee educational continuity at a distance exposed the lack of digital tools and capacities in educational centers, especially those attended by lower-income sectors, deepening the learning gaps of the education system still further. This is evident in Argentina's low results in the International Computer and Information Literacy Study. An increase in school dropout is also expected as a consequence of the crisis. (p. 17)

The document, that is, diagnoses problems of quality, equity, and dropout for Argentina and links them to difficulties in levels of economic productivity. The IDB, which is a political and financial institution, links social development objectives to economic growth objectives, imbricating the two and producing a cohesive product in which human, economic, and social growth appear to take on a single approach or at least

a single analytical imprint. As to general objectives for education, finally, the IDB states:

In the context of the challenges described, the Country Strategy 2021-2023 will focus on poverty reduction and social protection through multisectoral actions that include: (i) supporting initiatives directed at early childhood with an emphasis on expanding the coverage and quality of care and preschool education services; (...) (iii) securing successful educational trajectories across the life course through policies directed at the inclusion and retention of students in the system, at improving the quality and relevance of learning, and at teacher training in the use of new teaching methodologies and technologies; (iv) strengthening the employability and working conditions of the population, with particular support for efforts to improve the participation of women and vulnerable groups in the labor market and the inclusion of digital talent and other twenty-first-century skills that support sustainable development and low-emission economies. (p. 21)

Skills Development Sector Framework Document (August 2020)

This document is the IDB's thematic framework for education in general. Unlike the previous one, which set out a strategy for a particular state, this sector framework cuts across all member countries and is prepared by a technical team with a view to having its content unfold across every program bearing on educational matters. In carrying out that task, the IDB establishes that its principal focus will be the development of qualitative and quantitative skills by children during early childhood, which is when, on the IDB's account, people have the greatest capacity for adaptation and for absorbing academic content:

Skills are developed throughout life, as specific skills are developed at different degrees of intensity and in different places at each phase of the life cycle. While people can learn at any stage of life, they do not learn the same things in the same way. Cognitive and socioemotional skills start developing early. Thus, investing in early childhood development can have a major impact on skills development and on preparing young children to enter school ready to learn. Developing academic skills in foundational subjects such as math and language is the focus

during childhood, and mastering these basics is of paramount importance to ensure successful school trajectories. (p. 1)

As a general guideline, then, the IDB proposes the inclusion of programs that develop formal and informal educational content for early childhood in Latin America. It supports this on curricular grounds as well as on grounds of human resources and infrastructure.

Design of the “Habilidades Digitales” program: technical cooperation preparation (November 2021)

Documentary context

This program was framed within what the IDB calls a technical cooperation operation, or TC, and is classified under the code AR-T1224. This document will be the basis for the analysis of the design, since it is where the program’s guidelines are established and where the IDB prepares for subsequent implementation. The document names the IDB team charged with working on the program. The recipient was Argentina, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, and the supervising area was the Education unit within the IDB.

In its development the document highlights an earlier Argentine program:

In Argentina, the Aprender Conectados plan, created in 2018, has the objective of developing digital literacy content that systematizes and integrates the different competencies and forms of knowledge related to the handling of the new languages produced by information and communication technologies. The plan integrates pedagogical and technological innovation, through the development of content and teacher training, as well as the provision of equipment and connectivity, with the objective of developing digital education competencies in students in basic education. In 2018 the country became the first in Latin America to include programming and robotics in the compulsory national curriculum. (2021, 1)

That plan was a public digital literacy program carried out by what was then the National Directorate of Educational Innovation. Certain antecedents that the IDB itself identifies for Argentina are thereby estab-

lished. It is worth noting, then, that the IDB conducts its own analyses, in contact with the state, in order to prepare a specific framework for the program as a further consideration following the Country Strategy. As we have seen, the Country Strategy is a framework document the IDB prepares in order to encompass the programs it undertakes for a given state between two dates. The document continues:

That integration was realized with the approval of the Priority Learning Cores (NAP) for Digital Education, Programming and Robotics (EDPR) for the compulsory levels of education, which run from preschool through secondary school (ages four to seventeen). The approval of the NAP establishes that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MECCT) and the provinces will coordinate training policy and will prepare materials to support curricular development, in order to favor the teaching and learning of the approved Cores. The provinces will carry out the implementation of the NAP and their inclusion in their curricular documents within a period of two years, adopting different strategies and taking into account the particularities of their contexts, needs, realities, and education policies. The adaptation of curricular documents and the carrying out of training activities will be directed at the educational community with a view to promoting the learning of digital education, programming, and robotics. (p. 2)

This IDB document allows us to glimpse, that is, that the design of education policy for Argentina is indeed tied to prior national policy, and in particular to the *Aprender Conectados* program. There is a back-and-forth of feedback between the interests of the international institution's officials and the interests of the Argentine authorities in matters of education policy.

Theoretical and conceptual foundations

In its discourse the IDB maintains the need for primary and middle schools in Latin America to promote early engagement with technology. What can be glimpsed, fundamentally, is a concern on the part of the institution's agents with early technological adoption, given the social and economic consequences it carries for people in developing countries

and for their economies. The principal consideration is that the state has a responsibility to educate people for the present, which is to say for the first half of the twenty-first century. According to what the IDB has written, as cited in the previous section, states are at least partly responsible for providing minimum compulsory education for the citizens within their borders, and must do so with the labor market and the global social system they belong to in view.

Through this design the IDB supports the programmatic effort of the former Ministry of Education to promote early education in digital skills, programming, and robotics through the implementation of the NAP. A public policy tending to promote technological inclusion by the public sector is thereby financed internationally. It can be said, then, that political and financial support is found from an international institution for a national education policy. It is difficult to know, from the analysis of documents alone, whether the initiative would have taken place independently of the IDB's participation. It is possible to venture, in light of Argentina's past initiatives such as the Conectar Igualdad plan, that local authorities are concerned with the adoption of technologies. An international institution thus adds its effort to national education policy, an effort that is not only economic but also technical and symbolic. It is relevant to consider the symbolic possibilities of an international institution's support for a local policy in a state whose political agents are discredited, to a greater or lesser degree, by prolonged failures of national policy on development.²⁴

The IDB does not appear to be a particularly popular institution with the Argentine voter, and its opinion would carry more weight in specialized sectors. Beyond the possibility of international opinion or consultancy, moreover, the IDB's financial power could impose within Argentine national ministries a certain ranking of the programs carried out by national directorates, undersecretariats, secretariats, or decentralized agencies. It is not possible to affirm *per se* that the IDB is an institution of particular symbolic weight, however; that would have to be considered subsequently in other, *ad hoc* research determining the influence of

²⁴ This is borne out by the high poverty rate Argentina has had and continues to have in the twenty-first century (INDEC).

international discourse and symbols on local policy design. Such a claim, that is, would require further research focused on that subject.

In terms of educational technology and technology education, which are complementary but distinct concepts, the program refers to the EDPR as a crucial or central element in the preparation of an education policy that fosters digital literacy. It can be said, then, that for Argentina the IDB holds that digital literacy can be achieved, in the sectors mentioned, by increasing the presence and the quality of programming and robotics content in the curriculum. Programming and robotics are two recently developed branches that have had an accelerating impact on the adoption of new technologies. The problem is a double one. On one side, technology education provides skills for understanding these technologies and, through them, other classical concerns of education such as language or mathematics. On the other, educational technology is a problem in itself, since technology education is required in order to understand educational technology and the possibilities of its uses. It is also difficult to hold that technology can be understood through education without the uses of educational technology, since one may ask how programming is to be taught without a tool for programming.

General and specific objectives, target population, and proposed strategies

The document sets out the objectives to which the program is tied, social inclusion and equality on one side and productivity and innovation on the other. These objectives belong to the IDB's institutional strategy for 2010-2020.

The program's objective is defined as follows under "Objective and Justification," section 2:

The objective of this CT is to support the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology of Argentina to improve students performance in public schools by implementing a new curricula on digital education, coding and robotics, from Preschool to Secondary education. (2021, 1)

The objective of "Habilidades Digitales" is thus to provide support to that Ministry in implementing digital education, programming, and robotics

from preschool through secondary school. From this starting point it can be affirmed that the program's explicit objective is to sustain a national education policy by supporting the implementation of a new EDPR curriculum from early childhood through secondary education. What is sought, that is, is support for a local policy configured by a national ministry during a specific administration.

The IDB justifies the preparation of the program in these terms:

Despite the progress of recent decades, the low learning levels of students in Latin America and the Caribbean still represent a challenge for the region's education systems. Technology, moreover, has been changing the way teachers teach and students learn, and twenty-first-century society demands that they command transversal skills such as creativity, collaboration, logical reasoning, problem solving. When digital transformation reaches the school, the opportunity arises to develop digital culture from an early age, strengthening the development of capacities that later translate into access to better work opportunities. (p. 1)

The institution's team thus reflects on the status quo of education in the region, diagnosing certain advances but holding that learning levels are low and represent a challenge for education systems. It also gives technology a leading role in contemporary society, associating the need for learning with a demand made by twenty-first-century society. Those demands would be bound up, according to the document, with creativity, collaboration, logical reasoning, and problem solving. The IDB's education specialists thus detect, together with the Argentine authorities, a need to update the curriculum of educational institutions across the board in line with certain current social demands. That curricular critique is aligned, in turn, with the IDB's strategy of placing its focus on childhood, with states providing support through secondary school. The evaluation the IDB's technical team carries out in this case, together with the Argentine team, can be categorized as an appraisal of a social and educational kind, since it makes a diagnosis of the Latin American education system and then promotes a concrete solution.

Within the general objective, the program contains two components or specific objectives. These are the survey of information on the EDPR

in Argentina, which is a diagnosis, and support for the implementation of the NAP, particularly in the most economically disadvantaged areas. The first component is described as follows:

Component I. Component 1. Survey of information on the teaching of Digital Education, Programming and Robotics (EDPR) in Argentina. The objective of this component is to implement diagnostic actions to give evidence of the progress made in EDPR teaching and teaching practice in the provinces and in the City of Buenos Aires, identifying the different contexts and levels of support needed for the implementation of the NAP. (p. 2)

This component, or specific objective, shows the institution's interest in learning the state of the art of teaching in digital matters in Argentina. The component's explicit objective is to produce a diagnosis, and in this way it seeks to identify the different contexts and the levels of support needed for the implementation of the NAP. The IDB seeks, in its own phrasing, to learn what Argentina is like in order to discern how the program's resources should be used. As one interviewee for this thesis observed, the states that finance the IDB sometimes have their own interest in obtaining statistics from borrowing states. In the relevant part, the interviewee said:

I don't know, Korea, for example, when Korea joined the Bank they were very interested in questions of statistics and in questions of capacity to generate data and statistics on the countries. So they would give countries financing to improve the capacity of censuses to function, of data generation, administrative capacity, and so on. Each of the countries tends to have its own areas of interest and they try to bring them to bear. Even so, the structure of the Bank, the way the Bank is structured, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean hold 51 percent of the shares, while the extraregional countries hold 49 percent. So there's no capacity to impose things, in a way, okay? It's not that a country can come along now, I don't know, Spain, to give a name, any name, and impose something today and say "No, no, now everything in Latin America has to do such and such." Because at the end of the day Latin America holds the majority of the shares, so... it doesn't quite... I'd say that, in that sense, there's no... of course not, right? (Interviewee 4, January 24, 2025)

It would be possible in this way to consider that a specific objective of this kind within a technical cooperation program may be required or sought by some lending state in order to obtain more information about a population or about the state of education in particular countries. The program then describes its second component:

Component II. Component 2: Support for the Implementation of the Priority Learning Cores for Digital Education, Programming and Robotics (EDPR) in the provinces. The objective of this component is to support the implementation of the EDPR component of the NAP in the provinces that lag furthest behind in this area, and it may finance: (i) the development of new curricular designs; (ii) virtual or in-person training sessions for teachers and provincial teams in EDPR; and (iii) the production of digital EDPR resources; (v) a monitoring plan with progress indicators to accompany the implementation of the EDPR component of the NAP in the provinces. (2021, 3)²⁵

This component is operational in character, since what is supported is no longer the diagnosis but directly the implementation of the NAP on the basis of the diagnosis produced by the previous component. The specific objective is divided into four possible activities for financing, namely curricular development, training sessions for teachers or provincial teams, the production of digital resources, and a monitoring plan with indicators to accompany the implementation of the EDPR component of the NAP.

The program's final target population is children and adolescents, from the first level of education through the end of secondary school. The program thus engages with the preschool, primary, and middle sectors of Argentine education. The NAP cut across publicly and privately managed institutions alike, so that even institutions not subsidized by the national government or by a province must, as a matter of rule, include their content in the curriculum.

In the strategic section, finally, the following is stated regarding the program's strategic risk:

²⁵ It is worth noting that at this point the drafters of the document confused item IV with item V, a drafting error that might be considered minor if it is a typing mistake, or a sign of general carelessness about the program on the part of the IDB's technical agents.

The risks associated with this operation are low. The principal risk is associated with the necessary coordination with the MECCT and with the provinces benefiting from the support activities to be implemented. (p. 3)

The IDB does not consider, that is, that this program represents significant risks of any kind. The principal risk identified is possible lack of coordination with the Argentine ministry, which could result in the eventual failure of implementation through lack of interest or expertise on the part of national actors. That risk could increase in the event of political instability. In Argentina a change of political sign usually entails a change of the entire body of officials, and that national practice could produce instability in the IDB's programs for the country.²⁶

Actors involved

Beyond the IDB, the fundamental actor in this program is the national Ministry of Education for the 2015 to 2019 administration. At the time the program was approved the national minister was Alejandro Finocchiaro. Argentina's official website describes as follows an international congress held in Buenos Aires, "Aprender para el futuro en la era de la inteligencia artificial," on August 26 and 27, 2019, at which the central actors in the negotiation of the program presented their positions on the NAP:

Alejandro Finocchiaro, then national Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, opened the event together with the head of operations of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Viviana Alva Hart. Also present were the secretary of Educational Innovation and Quality, Mercedes Miguel, and the director of Educational Innovation, Florencia Ripani.

"In 2018, with the approval of the Priority Learning Cores (NAP) for Digital Education, Programming and Robotics, Argentina joined the

²⁶ Programs are agreed with the government authorities in office while the IDB is designing them. The design the IDB produces is the result of a consensus between the national authorities and those of the multilateral institution. Sudden changes in the political ranks of the Argentine state, from one government to another of a different sign, could therefore produce a modification of the education policies promoted internationally. As we shall see, however, this has not particularly been the case in Argentina.

countries pioneering the integration of this knowledge into the curriculum, with the formal start of digital literacy in the four-year-old classroom,” said Finocchiaro, who stressed the importance of the Aprender Conectados program because “it reaches every level of education and guarantees digital literacy in preschool, primary and secondary education and for teacher training institutes, reaching more than 8 million people.” (Finocchiaro 2019)

The alliance between the IDB and the Ministry of Education mentioned above constitutes the fundamental relationship in the preparation of the program. It is evident that the IDB’s support was significant enough for the Ministry at the time to organize a congress that placed the focus on the Aprender Conectados program. That program, which the former minister identifies as a pioneering one, placed the EDPR component of the NAP at its center, as noted above. In its design it reached every level of education and established as a matter of law a mass digital literacy effort for the entire Argentine population within the education system. The intervention of the minister at the time demonstrates the importance the national government assigned to its relationship with the IDB, whether for the technical, economic, or symbolic value attributed to that support. National officials tend to operate on the basis of interests that are particularly political, owing to their role as sectoral representatives of a government. In this respect it must be considered that officials of that ministry may have judged the IDB’s public participation in an open congress to be at least neutral for the government’s public image in educational matters. The Argentine government considered, that is, that appearing as an ally of a multilateral institution such as the IDB was quite possibly beneficial to it, whether in symbolic, political, psychological, or economic terms. For her part, the IDB’s head of operations, Viviana Alva Hart, said that:

The digital transformation of this twenty-first century has presented us with a series of challenges, and education systems must adapt to those changes,” and she stressed: “The fact that Argentina has taken the decision to incorporate digital education, programming and robotics into the curriculum across the whole country is a great step and we want to congratulate them for it. The education sector in the digital age allows us to review content, above all in methodologies, so as to

make better use of our students' learning, so that they learn and develop competencies and skills that let them better face life in society. (2024, para. 6)

According to this official news item, the IDB official Viviana Alva Hart enthusiastically supported the modification of the curriculum in Argentina. It can be affirmed in this way that the IDB was publicly at the disposal not only of the Argentine government on this matter but also willing to display joint initiatives, in a sign of strong symbolic and political rapprochement and of support for the local administration. In a certain sense, although the IDB's independence is not in question, its officials also depend on the support of states, so that they must maintain a relationship of distance and at the same time of friendship with the states that finance them. It is not possible to affirm which of two factors, conviction or convenience, prevailed in the decision of IDB officials to promote the launch of Aprender Conectados jointly.

The national government launched the Aprender Conectados program through Decree 386/2018, whose recitals state:

That it is the will of the NATIONAL EXECUTIVE to create the APRENDER CONECTADOS PLAN, to be developed in schools as a core of digital literacy, with clear learning objectives, endowed with content, training, technology and an integral pedagogical proposal that assists both the development of digital education competencies and that of fundamental capacities and knowledge.

That the implementation of the APRENDER CONECTADOS PLAN will require infrastructure and technological equipment far more powerful than that currently provided by the "CONECTAR IGUALDAD.COM.AR PROGRAM." (Decree No. 386, 2018)

We see in this way how the Conectar Igualdad program was decisive for a line of national public policy that was subsequently supported by the IDB during an administration of a different political party. This fact reveals multilateral support for a line of international education policy that is independent, at least, of Argentine partisan circumstance. Policy of this kind has also been fostered by UNESCO and not only by the IDB, since the Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education (2019) is an international education policy instrument signed by fifty

ministers and deputy ministers from various states. The Beijing Consensus was also supported by nongovernmental organizations and private firms. The text states explicitly:

We reaffirm the commitment made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and its targets, and we have analyzed the challenges facing education and training systems in achieving SDG 4. We are determined to promote the appropriate policy responses to achieve the systematic integration of artificial intelligence and education, in order to innovate education, teaching and learning, and so that artificial intelligence helps accelerate the attainment of open and flexible education systems that allow equitable, relevant and quality lifelong learning opportunities for all, which will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and to the shared future of humanity. (2019, 29)

This document, which serves as a global framework for local action, allows us to glimpse the support of UNESCO and of the government of China for policies of this kind, leading the initiative in the formulation of international education policy in 2019. That year was also the year in which the international congress in Buenos Aires mentioned above was held. The Beijing Consensus was signed by Argentina. Local and international actors are interwoven in macropolitical initiatives of this kind, with the international corresponding generally to the programmatic while the specific is left to national agencies, as in the case of the NAP. During the international congress mentioned, the framework given to the IDB's participation in the event and to the implementation of the EDPR component of the NAP was the Beijing Consensus.

Timeframe and financing

According to the document, the implementation period was two years and had to take in the particularities of each provincial context:

The provinces will carry out the implementation of the NAP and their inclusion in their curricular documents within a period of two years, adopting different strategies and taking into account the particularities of their contexts, needs, realities, and education policies. The adaptation of curricular documents and the carrying out of training activi-

ties will be directed at the educational community with a view to promoting the learning of digital education, programming, and robotics. (2021, 2)

As to amounts, the IDB disbursed two hundred thousand US dollars to Argentina, seventy-five thousand to finance component 1 and one hundred twenty-five thousand to finance component 2. As regards national financing, Argentina did not commit capital directly as part of this program.

Design of the “SilverTech” program: donors memorandum (October 2021)

Documentary context

This program was framed within what the IDB calls a technical cooperation operation, or TC, and is classified under the code AR-T1262. This document will be the basis for the analysis of the design, since it is where the program’s guidelines are established and where the IDB prepares for subsequent implementation. The document names the IDB team charged with working on the program. The recipient was Argentina, through the executing agencies Eidos and Diagonal, both non-governmental organizations, and the supervising area was the IDB Lab unit within the IDB.

The document opens with the following observation:

Population aging has advanced in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Argentina being one of the four countries in the region where people over 60 exceed 15.7 percent of the total population, equivalent to almost 7.1 million people. That proportion is expected to reach 22 percent by 2050, which is to say some 12.5 million people. The great challenges that aging entails bring with them opportunities for economic development through the generation of new work opportunities, given a more productive longevity. (2021, ii)

This program deals with a different problem from “Habilidades Digitales,” then, since its focus is on education for older people, with the added possibility of return to the labor market. Faced with the retirement age of a human being, in social terms, a question naturally arises, which is why an older adult should return to work. There are several possible answers, which may be drawn from a critical analysis of our society, the society within which the design of the program under analysis is framed.

The program’s title, “SilverTech,” comes from the term silver economy. Ortuño Cámara defines the economy of older adults, or silver economy, in these terms:

The OECD has coined the term Silver Economy to refer to the set of opportunities deriving from the economic and social impact of the activities carried out and demanded by the population over 55; today

(early 2022) it already represents 25 percent of Europe's GDP, and in 2025 it will account for 37.8 percent of its jobs. (2022, 38)

In other words, this program rests conceptually on a definition supplied by another multilateral institution, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Unlike the IDB, the OECD is not a development financing institution but one of commercial cooperation, and Argentina is not among its members. At its founding the only non-Western member of the treaty was Turkey. From Latin America, Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile currently belong to it. Argentina is negotiating its accession to the OECD as of this writing (March 2025). In agreement with Henderson, this institution can also be considered a source of national public policy (Henderson 1981).

The concept of the silver economy, or economy of older adults, carries severe edges both beneficial and problematic for the health and wellbeing of older people, since the possibility of returning to work could be used as a justification for eliminating retirement benefits.

Even so, it should be borne in mind that retirement benefits make up an ever larger portion of the Argentine national budget. In 2024, 49.34 percent of the budget went to social security, which includes retirement pensions, other pensions, family allowances, and benefits for the security forces, according to public databases of the Argentine government. Despite representing the largest expenditure in the national budget, moreover, retirement pensions fall below the poverty line, or below respect for human dignity in terms of subsistence for older adults. This brief mention of the problem illustrates where the debate over the silver economy is situated, namely in a changing Western society with growing political difficulty in defining how and by whom responsibility for sustaining this part of the national budget will be borne.

In this direction, the document shows that the financing of pensions and COVID-19 alike were factors of significance in its design:

Aging is often understood as an additional burden on society. It entails the triple challenge of responding to the growing demand for pensions, health services, and long-term care services, which constitutes the first problem identified in this operation. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, moreover, have again brought to light the physical and social

vulnerability of older generations. Ensuring that society has sufficient capacities and resources to meet those growing demands has become a fundamental challenge if a problem of exponential dimensions is to be avoided. The great challenges that aging entails nonetheless bring with them opportunities for economic development, with the generation of new ventures and work opportunities, as well as a greater economic contribution from older adults, given that improvements in health conditions allow a more productive longevity. [...] It is worth noting that in Argentina and throughout the LAC region, many older adults find themselves without sufficient pensions or savings and are therefore obliged to seek work options that allow them to strengthen their flow of income. (2021, 1)

The fact that the program was designed after COVID-19 is significant because of the emergence of new technologies in education worldwide during that period, Zoom among them. This approach also differs from the IDB's previous program for Argentina, which was designed on the basis of a national program from 2018. In comparative terms it will allow certain specific differences to be established in international education policy that emerged with the 2020 pandemic. This could mark a break, not in the focus of policies that were already directed at technology education, but in the strict use of new technologies for that same technology education, or for a more advanced version of it. We can also glimpse in this new program that the IDB considers it necessary for older adults to receive technology education.

This IDB document makes it possible to see that the design of this education policy for Argentina is indeed tied to prior international concepts, in particular to the OECD's educational guidelines and to the new educational technology that emerged after the COVID-19 pandemic, which modified society's educational expectations as regards the possibilities of distance education. It is also tied to the problem of sustaining the economy of older adults. Unlike the previous program, "SilverTech" shows no explicit back-and-forth of feedback between the interests of the international institution's officials and the interests of the Argentine authorities in matters of education policy; rather, the principal actors are private institutions.

Theoretical and conceptual foundations

In its guidelines the IDB holds that education for older adults is desirable, in connection with the silver economy, a concept coined by the OECD. Cooperation among multilateral institutions is frequent, given the similarity of their interests and the rotation of diplomatic and technical personnel among institutions of that kind, so that one institution's adaptation of another's concepts is not surprising, particularly since both are economic multilaterals. The OECD has a wide range of public policies in which it intervenes by way of international advice and recommendations, generating guidelines to be absorbed diplomatically by its member states or by that institution's observers. On education, the OECD states on its official site:

Education is the foundation for better jobs and better lives and the cornerstone for more inclusive and resilient economies and societies. The OECD's comparative data and analysis help governments anticipate the knowledge and skills required in tomorrow's world and to design and manage their education and skills systems in response. (OECD 2025, para. 1)

The OECD holds, that is, that education is the foundation of work and that work is the foundation of a better life. This analysis is extremely simplistic in a certain sense, though it should be borne in mind that it is only a programmatic presentation. The following questions might be raised: which education, which jobs, which lives? The OECD then clarifies that part of its work is to help governments select and anticipate which skills will be needed in tomorrow's labor market. As an economic multilateral institution the OECD has the inclination, the program, or the bias to tilt public policy toward economic considerations and their possible implications, as the IDB and the World Bank do, though to a greater degree from what can be seen.

Ravetz (1994) has written about how, from an epistemological point of view, economics as a discourse is used by elites to justify policies that arise, quite possibly, more from ideology than from science. He thereby classifies economics, and the economic discourse in particular, as an elite folk science. This apparent contradiction reveals the mechanism

through which multilateral institutions with an economic emphasis might operate, namely by extracting from economic science whatever discourse suits the policies to be promoted, possibly combined with policies that the state of the art might genuinely support. This use of economic discourse as a wardrobe of possible outfits for public policy proves decidedly discretionary, since promoting specific policies through specific scientific findings is, as a logical operation, an act of deduction. A positive demonstration of the belonging of economic discourse to the global elite is its subsequent inclusion among the disciplines honored by Alfred Nobel, as Lindbeck (1985) shows.

Unlike “Habilidades Digitales,” this program presents a more clearly defined conceptual framework, with descriptions of what the IDB’s specialists understand to be happening, or to need to happen, in Argentina. In the section “Description of the Problem,” the document under analysis states:

Although Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) continues to be a relatively young region compared with other parts of the world, in some countries aging is advanced, Argentina among them, being one of the four countries in the region where people over 60 exceed 15.7 percent of the total population, equivalent to almost 7.1 million people. That proportion is projected to keep increasing until it reaches 22 percent by 2050, which is to say some 12.5 million people. It is known, moreover, that aging will reach the region at a speed that did not occur in other parts of the world such as Europe or Asia. It is estimated that in 2050 more than one in four people (27.5 percent) will be over 60. The transition from 10 percent to 20 percent will take only 28 years, against 30 years in Asia and more than 60 in Europe and North America. This rapid advance makes it urgent for the countries of this region to begin preparing for a more aged society. (2021, 1)

The problem the program is to solve is a double one, social on one side, in the form of aging, and economic on the other, in the form of an economy made divergent by a population with an aged composition. These two factors are the program’s engines. Education, and the educational problem to be solved, might therefore be considered in this case an epiphenomenon, albeit a major one, of the general social and demographic situation. Education, that is, is a tool, quite possibly the most

influential one, for resolving the problems of social development that the IDB says the region will face within a few decades. The faster rate of population aging, compared with the old continent, shows that in a few decades Latin America may no longer be the young beacon it is today for the world.

Presenting the problem described in this way at the opening of the program produces, by transitivity, a tacit assignment of responsibility to the state in the matter. The IDB suggests, since it cannot say so openly, this being no document of national political theory, that states are responsible for fostering the public policies needed to address the problem of aging. In this particular case the IDB takes the initiative through IDB Lab and advances its education policy agenda through two Argentine nongovernmental organizations in order to mobilize a solution to the economic and social problem of increasing aging. The solution proposed, as we shall see, consists in the implementation of an online education platform for adults.

The first alarm raised by a reading of the document is that no ministry or national secretariat is mentioned, since the program would apparently take place independently of the national government and its financing does not appear to be channeled through any public agency. There does not seem, that is, to be a clear connection between the guidelines of the IDB's program and national guidelines, which is another notable difference found *prima facie*. Almost immediately, the document mentions a second problem:

This proposal also seeks to address the second problem, which is the shortage of talent in the region to meet the growing demand of the information and communication technology (ICT) industry with the digitalization accelerated by the pandemic. SAP, for example, stated that 64 percent of companies consider that their workers do not have the skills needed to face digital transformation. The Skills Development Sector Framework (2020) indicates that 40 percent of adults in LAC have no digital experience. The World Economic Forum determines that, with the speed of disruption, "the need for perpetual learning is already a new norm." It likewise indicates that, on average, workers will have to undergo a training process of at least 101 days

before 2022 so as not to be an obstacle in the transformation of their organizations. (p. 1)

This passage mentions the Skills Development Sector Framework, which is the IDB's flagship document for education and which was treated in the general documents section of this thesis together with the strategy for Argentina. The mention is significant, since it evidences an alignment of the IDB's program with its own general strategy on the subject. This second problem is not of an educational kind either; rather, education is again used as a powerful tool for modifying an economic situation, namely the shortage of the population's working capacity with respect to a particular qualified sector.

Given that the ICT sector is strategic, it is difficult to affirm that this IDB measure lacks a firm and valid social or theoretical basis. The approach taken by the program, however, proceeding from the sectoral need of ICT entrepreneurs, does not appear to correspond to the IDB's Impact+ mission. That mission has a general public policy approach, since its central focus is the integral growth of the human being, independently of her social position. This humanist point, which can be found in the general guidelines, appears to blur in the design of this program, which situates its own interest in the specific, circumstantial development of a business sector that is strategic but narrow. This criticism, as noted, may be qualified by the strategic emphasis the ICT industry carries today. The citation of the World Economic Forum, a think tank financed by multinational corporations that serves as a business congress, nonetheless reinforces the point, in that the approach adopted by the program's design proceeds from the needs of Latin American businesses, or of firms operating in Latin America, and not from the needs of Latin American society. It also characterizes the lack of worker training as an obstacle in the transformation of their organizations, which promotes an exclusionary view of the role, apparently marginal in the eyes of whoever drafted this document, that workers hold within business structures. It is relevant to recall at this point that the IDB is

financed by those very workers, who probably do not wish to be excluded for lack of training.²⁷

General and specific objectives, target population, and proposed strategies

The program's objective is to develop a solution, in the IDB's classic terminology, for training two thousand people over fifty in digital skills. It also seeks to have those who are not employed at the time of the training be employed by the end of the program. According to the document:

This project proposes an innovative model of digital training for adults over 50, called SilverTech, with a view to improving their employability and their labor market insertion in jobs based on or connected with digital technology. It also seeks to address a second problem, which is the shortage of talent in the region to meet the growing demand for talent in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry. In view of those problems, a project is proposed whose objective is to develop a comprehensive solution allowing the training in digital skills of 2,000 people over 50, and the employment of at least 30 percent of them six months after completing the training. Efforts will be made to favor people who are in a process of occupational reinvention (re-skilling), whether because they are looking for work or because they need to acquire or improve their competencies in order to remain in the labor market, and priority will be given to people from middle and lower social segments. They are people generally characterized by low self-esteem regarding their digital skills; they feel frustrated because their occupational competencies are out of date; and they find themselves within an employer ecosystem in which they perceive age discrimination (ageism) and a low valuation of socioemotional skills relative to technical ones. (p. ii)

²⁷ There is a certain contradiction between workers' desire to train and the transformative approach that promotes their exclusion. Although the academic elaboration of that contradiction exceeds both the theoretical framework of this thesis and the analysis proper to whoever designs the IDB's program, it is worth marking here. On one side, the training of workers in digital matters is promoted so that they are not displaced from their jobs; on the other, that same drive to digitalize workers is what generates the reduction of jobs through their automation. Defenders of these practices tend to remark that technological advance is unstoppable, though before that we might ask ourselves whether it can be regulated and managed so that no person is excluded from the labor system in any Latin American state, something that in 2025 still appears remote.

The design of the program makes an assertion of a psychological kind, namely that the labor market situation marked by ageism produces low self-esteem in digital skills, that these are people frustrated by the obsolescence of their occupational skills, and that they find themselves within a discriminatory system. The document also promises support to employers in working on the problem of ageism, presumably with their human resources departments. The design is radically different from that of the previous program, since it appears to bear the strong influence of the business sector, as noted, given that the approach to possible solutions to social problems is offered from that sector, with a perspective that is practically that of an employer. As to target population, the document states:

Characteristics of the target population: The project's activities will be directed at people over 50. Efforts will be made to favor people who are in a process of occupational reinvention (re-skilling), whether because they are looking for work or because they need to acquire or improve their competencies in order to remain in the labor market, whether in employment or through some venture of their own. Priority will be given to people from middle and lower social segments who: (i) have completed secondary school; (ii) have basic command of computing (email, videoconferencing, and basic office programs); (iii) have had prior work experience, paid or unpaid in the case of those who have devoted themselves to care work; and (iv) have access to the internet and to a computer. (p. 2)

This passage sets out the characteristics of the target population and gives a picture of whom the program addresses, namely people over fifty who are seeking to return to the labor market through re-skilling. This applies to people looking for work as much as to employees seeking to improve their competencies. It also adds entrepreneurs to the category, through the term venture. That term is currently used to refer to small firms controlled and worked by their owner. In large firms or capital structures the owners are generally the shareholders and do not participate in the administration of the company, whereas in this type the owner of the operation is the principal labor force.

It is not trivial to ask at this point about the role education policy can play. Is it a role of accompanying the market, or a role of expanding rights? Draxler (2014) defended the position of rights over market relations. The market, like the state, is a doing, a collective social practice that sustains the reproduction of certain social mechanisms. Those mechanisms can be ignored, defended, fought, or adopted. In the case of education policy, the IDB's role is to ask itself which social mechanisms it wishes to favor through its recommendations to states.

As to specific objectives, this design is divided into three components, digital training, job placement, and awareness and evaluation. For the first component the document states:

The objective of this component is to strengthen the competencies and employability of people over 50 in order to gain access to jobs based on or containing digital technology. The training will be fundamentally online, offered through a platform that will combine courses with synchronous and asynchronous content, training provided directly by employers, and other generic or leveling courses developed specially within the framework of the program. Emotional and motivational accompaniment and support will be provided to trainees through technical trainers and facilitators. This platform will also have the capacity to generate assessment for learning, allowing the progress of program participants to be tracked.

To achieve these objectives, the principal activities of this component include: (i) surveying the existing training on offer; (ii) designing and assembling the pedagogical proposal; (iii) recruiting and selecting participants; and (iv) delivering training with emotional and motivational accompaniment. (p. 3)

This is the program's central component, consisting in the training of older adults properly speaking. It includes a survey of existing training with a view to the subsequent assembly of a pedagogical proposal and the recruitment of participants to undertake it. The design then proposes to deliver training with emotional and motivational accompaniment. This component is probably the most complex in the program, since it represents the core of the educational proposal as a whole. The design faces the challenge of training people who are already trained,

people over fifty who have lived much of their lives without the training it seeks to promote. The motivational aspect is therefore key, since these are not people immersed in educational settings or at ages for which such settings are socially expected. Socially, as Cuenca observes, artistic representations tend to match heroism and adventure with youth:

The story of Peter Pan has shown a capacity to seduce and adapt that very few fictional constructions can rival. Since James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937) conceived it at the beginning of the twentieth century, the story of the boy who does not grow up has always resisted definitive crystallization, winning over new audiences with each new version. At the root of its success lies, perhaps, its peculiar capacity to thematize again and again the fantasies and anxieties surrounding the passage of time and its effects. (Cuenca 2018)

The program's second component deals directly with this problem of aging and the consequent ageism produced by socially widespread prejudices, which lead, according to the program's design, to favoring young candidates over older ones despite the credentials and experience the older candidate may have. The job placement component is described as follows:

The placement component takes in activities with employers, from the co-creation of training content through to specific actions accompanying those who decide to employ people who have completed the program. (...) Addressing ageism biases means generating a longer-term strategy that is reflected in the immediate term in activities and evidence of their results, with a view to disseminating the benefits of employing older people among different key actors within firms. To that end, the leadership of certain firms is fundamental in generating positive ideas on the subject within the rest of the business ecosystem. It is therefore proposed to create a community of employers with whom the lines of action are discussed and designed in detail.

The principal activities include: (i) a survey of demand (mapping of job vacancies in the technology sector); (ii) collaboration with large employers to identify the talent needs of their firms and ecosystems in order to guide the curriculum-generating process; (iii) the promotion of a Community of Employers with periodic activities; (iv) the creation and implementation of an Employer Accompaniment Program to

support the insertion of course graduates within firms; and (v) the creation of a tool linking employers and course graduates. (2021, 4)

Although with a perhaps excessively optimistic imprint, the program proposes the development of joint strategies with firms in order to address ageism biases in their hiring departments. This means assuming that firms have not already analyzed the problem and decided to hire young people, or not to hire older ones, for arbitrary reasons or primarily out of ageism bias rather than out of some other human resources strategy. Such strategies may include the reduction of legal costs, long-term training, technological adaptation, or legal concerns surrounding pensions. Some evidence nonetheless supports the ageism hypothesis. A study by the Deutsche Post Foundation on the United Kingdom, for example, states:

The results of this study indicate that older White British men and women, as well as older Black British men and women, experience occupational access constraints and are sorted into lower-paid jobs than younger White British men. The level of age discrimination is found to be higher for Black British men and women. In addition, Black British women experience the highest level of age discrimination. These patterns may well be in-line with prejudices against racial minority groups and stereotypical sexist beliefs that the physical strengths and job performance of women decline earlier than they do for men. If prejudices against older individuals are present, then anti-discrimination legislation may be the appropriate response, especially for racial minorities and women. Eliminating age discrimination in selection requires firms to adopt inclusive HR policies at the earliest stages of the recruitment process. (Drydakis 2022, 1)

According to Dennis (2007), moreover, ageism is a persistent problem in the American economy. In agreement with the IDB, then, it can be affirmed that this is an international phenomenon requiring public policy in the hiring process if it is to be solved. The program's last component deals with awareness and evaluation, in line with this problem:

The objective of the component is to foster a change in perceptions and prejudices about the employability of people over 50. To that end, awareness actions will be carried out and the program's actions and

results will be disseminated. Monitoring of the program and of the training will also be carried out, in order to analyze the results of the training and of the placement work, with a view to establishing a sustainable and replicable business model for the future.

The principal actions of this component are: (i) the generation, application, and maintenance of an age diversity diagnostic tool for employers; (ii) the organization of events open to the general public with the aim of promoting the program; (iii) the organization of events for employers with a focus on their Human Resources teams; (iv) the release of periodic reports with information showing the benefits of hiring people over 50; and (v) the design and implementation of a system for monitoring and evaluating the results of the training. (2021, 5)

This component complements the previous one and completes the outline of the program's specific objectives. Although this is a strictly educational program, its objectives exceed what could strictly be considered international education policy. Within this scheme, international social policy, economic development policy, and pension system sustainability policy all enter. Concretely, one can observe the way in which these apparently divergent policies are interwoven, and the key role that international education and its regulation play in affecting, over the long term and sustainably, many other aspects of society, among them the structure of firms, the sustainability of pensions, and the composition of the labor market in Argentina.

Actors involved

Beyond the IDB, the principal actors belong to the private sector. The program's main executing agency is a foundation based in Argentina called Fundación Estudiantes Internacionales Debatendo por el Saber (EIDOS). According to the IDB, this organization has extensive experience in developing educational solutions with impact. An alliance is also established with Fundación Diagonal, a nongovernmental organization devoted to training and job placement for older adults, and technology corporations are named that may finance and support the project:

The project's executing agency is the Fundación Estudiantes Internacionales Debatiendo por el Saber (EIDOS), with extensive experience in the development of educational solutions with impact for governments, firms and international institutions seeking to strengthen people with the skills and knowledge essential for work, so as to allow them to thrive in a constantly changing world. Eidos will work in alliance with Fundación Diagonal, an organization specializing in training and job placement for people over 45. The support of several technology corporations known as Tech Giants, among them Salesforce, SAP, Microsoft and Accenture, is especially important in this project, and will bring advantages both in designing the training and job placement model and in disseminating the efforts and making them visible. (p. ii)

One of the principal problems, if not the greatest, in addressing education through nongovernmental organizations and private firms is the absence of general curricular and academic oversight. Informal education provided by nonuniversity legal persons of this kind is not accredited by CONEAU, Argentina's national commission for university evaluation and accreditation. This concern would be a lesser one were it not that no other body appears to accredit EIDOS, beyond the strategic organizations with which it has woven alliances that function as a guarantee of a certain quality. The mechanism for producing content and for training teachers would in this case fall outside the criteria of educational sovereignty. Nor does it appear to be oriented toward any specific multinational criterion, however, but rather toward general criteria of training in technology, supported by the IDB and by private organizations such as the World Economic Forum. What prevails in this program, that is, is not a criterion specifically designed by the IDB; rather, the IDB appears to have delegated the educational criterion in its design to corporations and nongovernmental organizations. According to Quintero:

Research on quality indicators in higher education provides benefits for administrators, students and teachers, since from it one can propose a system of indicators crucial for evaluating and improving the quality of Colombian undergraduate programs and for optimizing the existing indicators as well. That system in turn makes it possible to identify the degree of quality attained by academic programs through

the assessment of qualitative and quantitative indicators. (Quintero 2020, 41)

The indicators Quintero mentions serve the proposal of improvements to educational quality at every level. The difficulty in programs of this kind, for want of oversight, lies in the absence of the information required for state or academic agents to carry out an effective verification of the standards or the practices the nongovernmental organization employs. Otherwise, a strong presence of corporate interests could subsume the pedagogical interests of the teachers working in these programs. The traditional danger is that of turning education into an instrument of training designed exclusively, and with growing capacity, for insertion into specific business sectors. That risk might not arise if the institution complies with rigorous internal mechanisms of self-oversight. In any case, dependence on institutional self-oversight is not usually a virtuous mechanism in the design of education policy. It is worth noting that the IDB's program in no way ensures the suitability of the participants in the executing agency, whether as regards its corporate administration or as regards the teaching appointments it makes.

Another risk associated with a design of this kind is the possibility of failing to comply with one of the mandates programmed by the IDB's general structure, which is aligned toward maximizing the impact of public finances in general and, in this particular case, on the educational result. It is possible that the absence of concrete incentives from state actors will cause the actors in a program of these characteristics to deviate from public guidelines, which come in the first instance from those who not only finance the IDB but are also its clients. This modality of financing, structured through IDB Lab, is called blended finance, and it involves the strategic use of public funds to mobilize private funds that complement their use. According to Attridge:

The need to mobilise private finance is at the heart of international discussions on how to finance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and move the needle from 'billions' of dollars in development aid to 'trillions' of dollars in investment (World Bank, 2015). With an estimated SDG financing gap of \$2.5 trillion a year in developing countries alone (UNCTAD, 2014), the international development commu-

nity is placing an increasing emphasis on blended finance. (Attridge 2019, 10)

The use of private funds through their mobilization by public ones necessarily entails a public-private partnership. For that mixed participation to be operative and successful, the interests would also have to be mixed. This could lead us to an innovation in which workers successfully adapt their strategies and skills in order to achieve lives lived in fullness, keeping pace with technological advances through their own knowledge. On the other hand, there is a risk that an educational privatization fostered by the IDB will end in a dilution of the strategic and general content of curricula in favor of a simplification and technical adaptation of potential corporate personnel, masked with terms such as re-skilling or innovation. These objectives are aligned with those the IDB proposes over the long term:

The project is also aligned with the IDB Group's Vision 2025, in working toward sustainable and inclusive economic growth, contributing to strengthening the workforce for the digital economy, and strengthening countries' capacity in the face of the transformative effects of that technology. This project will therefore provide knowledge about how to provide better and more equitable opportunities for citizens, especially older adults. As for IDB Lab, since 2019 it has been pushing the subject of the Silver Economy as one of its medium- and long-term strategic pillars, working principally with SPH and extending to other parts of the IDB Group such as LMK or IDB Invest. This proposed project would be IDB Lab's third project in the field of the Silver Economy, following two projects approved in 2020: "Upskilling and Reskilling of Adults Aged 50-65 Through Online Education" (PE-T1454) and "The Future Is 'Silver': Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem" (UR-T1246). (2021, 6)

This passage evidences the line of continuity between this project and others the IDB has previously sustained, "Upskilling and Reskilling of Adults Aged 50-65 Through Online Education" (Peru, approved October 30, 2020) and "The Future Is 'Silver': Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem" (Uruguay, approved December 9, 2020). This partially demonstrates the hypothesis proposed at the beginning of this thesis,

namely the persistence of an international education policy across Latin America, unified by the IDB as an agent for the promotion of regional policy.²⁸

Timeframe and financing

The program does not state a concrete period for its implementation, but rather notes:

Project disbursements will be determined in accordance with the project's liquidity needs as agreed between IDB Lab and the Executing Agency and will be conditional on verification of compliance with the milestones, activities and costs programmed in the annual planning exercise. Compliance with the milestones does not exempt the executing agency from responsibility for meeting the agreed results. (p. 10)

The timeframe is thus made contingent on the executing agency's fulfillment of the objectives. Financing was arranged as follows: "The project has a total cost of US\$960,000, of which US\$480,000 (50 percent) will be contributed by IDB Lab and US\$480,000 (50 percent) by the counterpart" (p. 8). The program was financed by the IDB and by the private counterparts. Argentina did not commit capital directly.

²⁸ This claim will be dealt with in depth in the conclusion of the thesis.

Analysis of interviews

Research through interviews constitutes the second part of the information gathering for this thesis. The previous part, the documentary one, centered on the collection of primary data from the IDB. This section will analyze the transcripts obtained from interviews conducted over Zoom with current IDB officials or consultants. The body of interviewees consists of four people currently, in January and February of 2025, engaged in work within the orbit of the IDB. The central objective of these interviews was to find information, opinion, and discourse from people involved in the institution about the IDB's design of educational programs.

Given the IDB's own function, not all of its officials work on specifically educational matters. An attempt was made to get around this problem by keeping it in view and by putting additional questions that yielded information equally relevant to understanding the institution's policy design. As a type of credit institution devoted to financing specific projects, the IDB has different kinds of specialist, in research, in operations, and by area. One of each of those kinds of specialist within the IDB was interviewed, with their anonymity protected specifically for the dissemination and publication of this thesis. The interview protocol can be found in the annex at the end of these pages.

The role of specialists in policy design

It should be stressed in the first place that all four interviewees held positions within the IDB, in different roles, at the date of each interview. This adds necessary weight to the authority of the quotations, since those who speak are competent authorities who, while they do not strictly represent the IDB, do know its operations. In this context specialists play a key role in the IDB's design of policy, since they are both those who draft it and those who oversee it:

I'm a fiscal specialist, that's what the title is called, that is... within the Bank's organization there's a management tier of managers and division chiefs and so on, and below the management tier there are the thematic professionals, usually known as specialists, and below them,

or assisting the specialists, there tends to be a category of analysts or support staff. So the specialist is a figure, a job, that typically has a double responsibility: one is to lead or manage operations with clients, the Bank's clients typically being states; and there's another large area which is knowledge and policy formation. (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

In this passage the specialist describes the role his function plays within the IDB. He stresses its double character, since on one side he leads operations with states and on the other he drafts public policy. This passage lets us understand, that is, that the actors who draft policy and those who advise states are the same people. Within the IDB, then, specialists perform this double function, and the authors of policies are those who recommend them and see to their execution. They are not committed to or immersed in the IDB's programs in general, however, but are area specialists. This means that they do not know each program specifically, because the programs are highly diverse and of different characteristics. Asked about the two programs studied in this thesis, one specialist said:

No, I don't know them and... I heard about them for the first time when you asked me or sent me some of the questions... I don't know them because I don't work on education matters and we haven't had the opportunity in the Innovation division to work on anything jointly with the division that handles education matters. And, on the other hand, because I understand they're from Argentina and I don't work for Argentina, I haven't worked for Argentina so far, I don't work for the Argentina country office. So no, I'm completely unfamiliar with them. And I don't know anyone who worked on the programs so I can't help you much there. (Interviewee 2, January 21, 2025)

This demonstrates the specificity of each program and its adaptation to the environment of the country in question. It is understandable that each specialist does not go into every program in depth, but the bureaucratic situation results in area specialists effectively not knowing what happens in an area outside their strict competence.

Guiding documents for policy design

When a specialist begins to develop a program, he does not do so in isolation, nor on the basis of his own research or that of an IDB researcher. Programs are grounded in two essential documents, the sector framework document (SFD), according to the area in question, and the country strategy, according to the country in question. On the first of these, an interviewee said:

(The IDB) prepares a technical note for each sector, uh... well, technical and policy, I mean, a note on the sector, it's called a sector framework document in English or in Spanish "sector knowledge framework" or "sector technical framework." If you look it up, this is public information, you'll be able to find it for education, for example, you'll find that document, which is updated periodically, I think every four or five cycles. And that document typically does a scan, does a review of everything there is in policy matters: areas, problems, knowledge of instruments... (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

The SFD is a type of document, or technical note, that promotes guidelines on a specific subject for the IDB as a whole. The most recent one prepared for education consists of approximately one hundred pages detailing what the IDB considers relevant as lines of action in education. As the interviewee notes, this document is extremely relevant to the design of programs, since it will determine the theoretical, conceptual, and practical framework of the particular designs. It was covered in the general documents section of this thesis, before the documents of the particular programs. There is also another kind of guiding document:

There's also a country document, a country action program, also periodically updated, multiyear and periodic, where you can consult, for Argentina, what the challenges in education in Argentina are, in Chile or Paraguay or wherever... In any of the countries of the region there is one of these documents. So that between the vertical part of policies and the horizontal part of territories, there's a... I mean, a kind of grid, a Cartesian grid, where we specialists can be fairly certain that we're pursuing priorities that are well structured, well defined. (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

The document mentioned previously, the SFD, was thematic. This one, the country strategy, is a political and geographic document that establishes a strategy for each country. Every borrowing member state has a country strategy at the IDB establishing the guidelines that program designs are to follow. This document was also analyzed in the general documents part of this same chapter of the thesis.

Governance and organizational structure

Beyond being a group of highly certified Latin American specialists, the IDB is a corporate organization with interests of its own that also reflects the interests of the states that finance its operations. Like any multilateral institution, that is, the IDB is a place where the influences and interests of different national actors converge. The design of programs therefore takes place in an environment affected by national interests that vary in scale, area, and purpose. Some interests are international in character, or humanist, as an interest in global development may be. Not all the interests found within the IDB can be catalogued as such, however, since there are too many actors involved to affirm that global interests predominate without investigating the matter in detail, taking global interests here as those unconnected to exclusively national ones. What one actor considers global, moreover, may be considered national by another, given the variety of approaches at play. It is therefore relevant to consider the specificity of the concrete context.

Historically the international approach has been that of developed countries of the north cooperating with underdeveloped ones of the south. Díaz Alejandro was one of the builders of this cooperative approach (Díaz Alejandro 1977). The transfer of financial, academic, and technological resources is key to such cooperation. This was the approach adopted when the IDB was formed in the Americas, according to one interviewee:

The Bank's design, the Inter-American Bank, responds in its design to an idea of transferring knowledge and resources north-south, which is the classic scheme of international cooperation. And it has its historical moment in the year, I think... I'm speaking from memory, but I think it's the year... 1959, and the United States Secretary makes a tour

of Latin America and says “Wow, this really needs a lot of development, so it would be good to have a mechanism to structure knowledge and financial cooperation.” And that’s how it’s born. And a few years later it stops being Inter-American in order to widen, uh... above all the northern part, right? I mean, the United States and Canada part, since other countries of the European Union come in there, and later Korea, Japan, and China. (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

This quotation lets us understand the IDB’s historical origin while also showing an evolution in its development. As noted, the scheme was one of north-south cooperation. It is an important fact today, at the operational level as much as in the discourse of IDB operators, that Asian countries are within the corporate structure, since Korea, Japan, and China are lending countries. This new configuration reflects the importance Asia has acquired in the global landscape. In Segal’s words: “(...) we all have to become familiar with the East Asian region” (Segal 1997). It is in this context that the figure of the IDB board appears:

All documents of strategic importance are approved by the board of directors. The lending and borrowing countries all designate a country representative and those sit on a council, on a board, and the documents have to be approved by the board. (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

Here the interviewee shows the importance of the IDB’s Board of Executive Directors. Each director represents one or more member states, lending and borrowing alike. The Board of Executive Directors answers to the Board of Governors, which is composed of the ministers or deputy ministers of economy or finance of each member state.

Given the breadth of each minister’s duties, the Board of Governors delegates its powers to the Board of Executive Directors, which is composed of direct representatives trusted by each state’s minister or deputy minister. The Board of Executive Directors is charged, according to the interviewee, with approving or rejecting all IDB documents, so that its members are directly or indirectly responsible for the programs the IDB designs.

The IDB also has an office that evaluates program design according to a vertical logic, in the interviewee’s words. That office makes sure there

are no problems without solutions and no solutions without problems, since the IDB operates with this logic in establishing programs. One interviewee describes it thus:

(...) you'll find it easy to locate these "country development challenges" documents which, I insist, are an evaluation based on data, and it's out of that... out of that diagnosis of failings that a policy action plan comes. Uh... The Bank even has an office called OVE (Oversight Evaluation)... Ah, the acronym in English escapes me now,²⁹ but... that office reviews the coherence between the defects detected and the action plans, and it evaluates with a technique called "vertical logic," which consists in "one problem, one solution." So if you've detected a problem and quantified it and proposed a solution, what's the result: was it resolved, was that development gap eased or not. (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

This passage describes how the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE) operates in evaluating programs and their implementation. According to the IDB's own website, this serves as a guarantor of the effectiveness of new programs, including at the design stage. The IDB site states, under the entry "Office of Evaluation and Oversight":

The Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE) evaluates the performance and development effectiveness of the IDB Group's activities. Through its evaluation work, OVE seeks to strengthen the IDB Group through learning, accountability, and transparency. OVE's evaluations are made public in order to share the lessons learned with the region and with the development community in general. (2025, para. 1)

OVE thus presents itself as an office that evaluates the IDB's performance, an independent internal audit. According to the interviewee, this office's role is relevant to understanding the internal modification of designs, since the institution evaluates the effectiveness of programs in obtaining the desired results. This vertical logic has another custodian office as well:

(...) "vertical logic," which consists in "one solution for each problem"; but you need to size the problem. First to know why it's a problem, second what its importance is, and third how you can act to solve it.

²⁹ He is referring to the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE).

And what the... the measure of your success is going to be. Those are the indicators. Well then, that methodology we call “vertical logic” has a custodian in the Bank which is a Department called SPD,³⁰ and that Department is the one that makes sure there are no objectives without a measure or problems without a solution, or solutions without problems... or things like that. (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

An organizational framework is thereby given to the programs the IDB designs. These offices are charged with the oversight of designs.

The IDB as a “bank of ideas” or think tank

One relevant item to consider was whether the interviewees did in fact regard the IDB as operating like a think tank or, on the contrary, as a technical body. This subject entered into the interviews, and the interviewees gave a general picture of how they themselves understand their role within the institution. One of them offered a clear account of how competences are distributed between states and the IDB:

So... in the world of public policy the principal actors are states, we have no doubt about that, right? And within states, political parties. What are international institutions? An instrument. An instrument of execution, but at the same time also a bank of ideas. If they call the IDB, or the World Bank, or the Andean Development Corporation or any other international institution, the Monetary Fund, whichever they call, and they say “Listen, what do you think about this problem, do you have any idea what we can do here,” well, the specialist or the Bank office is going to do a review of all the documentation and tell the country “Look, these are, these are the international standards, these are the good practices identified, here’s the bibliography. And this is what we could do in this country.” (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025)

In this summary the interviewee gives a pristine description, since states formulate policy and, within them, political parties are the primary actors. That said, international institutions also contribute policy as a bank of ideas. This concept means that the IDB operates not only as a technical consultant but also as a producer of general and specific public policy for states. A bank of ideas is an institution situated conceptually

³⁰ He is referring to the Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness.

in an area between a university and a government: "Institutionally speaking, the think tank stands between the university and government" (Gray 1977). One crucial difference, however, is that some banks of ideas are partisan, whereas international institutions could not be, since they belong to states and therefore do not even belong to a single state, much less to a single government, and still less to a single political party. The process of designing public policy today appears not to answer to state logics alone, even for states: "More than before, solutions for pressing problems transgress the sovereignty of specific polities" (Hajer 2003).

One problem with the state's elaboration of public policy consists in the closeness of Latin American officials to political parties. Parties, by their very activity, seek to prevail electorally, because that is their mode of subsistence and their mode of success in installing their members among those responsible for a government. That partisan objective can come into tension with public objectives, however, given that persuading the population at large about one or more candidates is a different mission from virtuous management. The virtuous management of public affairs is, moreover, an intermediate step between such an electoral campaign and the elaboration of a public policy. That last process, policy design, lies at the opposite end of the axis in terms of neutrality and the pursuit of efficiency. If what is most partisan lies at one end of a line, the final vertex of that line would be the autonomous, nonpartisan design of public policy. That last case would promote policies seeking efficient solutions to problems, which is, in a certain way, what the IDB attempts to do.

The defense of the IDB as a nonpartisan institution might reside conceptually in the capacity of its officials to direct and develop their activities without the intervention of partisan interests, with only the interests of resolving the problems themselves, following academic criteria agreed internationally by competent authorities. In Blinder's words:

So the question before us is not one of feasibility. Policymaking can be made less political, and several contemporary examples illustrate the principle in action. It even seems to work tolerably well. The real issue is desirability. Do we want to take more policy decisions out of the

realm of politics and put them in the realm of technocracy? (Blinder 1997, 126)

According to Blinder, standing apart from the electoral contest and from obtaining public office by winning a political fight could promote officials' capacity to reflect and investigate autonomously, without dependence on a political leader. That dynamic could in turn favor the proliferation of designs suited to the state of the art on one side and to the horizontality of a population's needs on the other. The IDB's hiring of professionals with academic or professional credentials is an element, intentional or not, that sustains this rhetoric.

Asked to place the IDB's role on a scale running from technical agency (0) to independent institution acting as a think tank for Argentina (10), the interviewees gave the IDB a score of 7.25.³¹ They considered, that is, that the IDB more closely resembles, qualitatively, a think tank than a technical body advising the Argentine presidency.

Relations between the IDB and states: political priorities

As we have seen, states have a double function at the IDB, since on one side they administer the institution and on the other they receive public policy recommendations. States are at once shareholders and clients, that is, which produces a particular back-and-forth dynamic. The shareholders of commercial banks are not usually also the recipients of credit. The IDB has the particularity that borrowers hold a majority shareholding in the corporate structure. The priorities of states are thereby interwoven with the priorities of the IDB, although they do not coincide in every case and tensions may arise. One interviewee remarked: "(...) that's where what you're interested in at the moment comes in, which is how to marry the country's priorities with the Bank's priorities. That usually happens naturally through dialogue" (Interviewee 1, January 17, 2025).

According to the interviewees, consensus prevails in the design of programs. The state must reach a consensus with the IDB for both parties to sign the project. Even so, in this back-and-forth in search of con-

³¹ This score is an average of those given by the four interviewees (4, 6, 9, and 10).

sensus it must be borne in mind that not all states have the same negotiating capacity. Some, as in the case of Brazil, can do without IDB financing thanks to the power of their economies. Others, as in the case of the Caribbean countries, may be far more dependent on IDB financing to carry out their public policy. One interviewee put it this way:

I think the Bank is going to come in as far as you let it come in. So there you have a very different gradient across countries, as I was saying, at the Caribbean level, at the Central American level, with... countries with less tradition and strength in public policy, the Bank has a very predominant position... and it has influence, clearly, it can design public policy for you... almost autonomously. In other countries, no. For example..., to give you a graphic example, and this is something people from the IDB have told me: here the Bank's representative is the Bank's representative and has to wait for an economy minister to see him, when the economy minister can, and so on. Whereas in a Central American country the economy minister has to wait for the IDB representative to deign to see him. So there's a balance of power that's going to have quite an effect on that. (Interviewee 2, January 21, 2025)

This brief account of who waits for whom illustrates the relational dynamic between national officials and IDB officials. That dynamic clearly diverges according to which country we are dealing with. The agents may also diverge in their agendas, since the IDB may wish to finance certain kinds of policy while a state aspires to move in another direction. One of the interviewees spoke of corporate commitments, meaning certain guidelines that states have decided to respect within the IDB in general. As in most international institutions, the general guidelines imposed by the necessary majority according to each member's shareholding prevail at the IDB. The guidelines that area officials are to follow will therefore be those imposed by the board or by the governors, who are the national ministers. Certain guidelines are mentioned, namely combating climate change, protecting diversity, care for people with disabilities, and the defense of indigenous populations. According to the interviewee:

To give you one example, in the new early literacy operation there are going to be contents in indigenous languages as well. So there the Bank makes sure that all diverse groups are included in the design of the operation. And this, uh... with different governments it has different permeability, right? So these things which, besides being super important for the design of an operation and for it to have everything it has to have in the good sense of attending to each group, also have to answer to corporate commitments of the Bank, where the countries agreed to say, well, look, climate change is important, so we have to have mitigation and adaptation actions; gender and diversity is important, so we have to have positive actions in that direction, disability too and, if there are indigenous populations, we also have to attend to this within the design of the program. This clashes with the political will of governments many times, saying these subjects don't interest me (...). So there the Bank keeps pushing within the margins it has available to influence the new programs to have these things. But generally it happens as a kind of dialogue under the radar, so as not to try to escalate this and have it be so visible in the design, (...) it can generate noise, you know, and be a dealbreaker in the progress of the operation. (Interviewee 2, January 21, 2025)

The search for consensus is defined here as a dialogue under the radar, a series of private conversations among public agents. This contradiction illustrates the dynamic of state operations. On many occasions public matters are settled privately or at least in reserve, so as not to alert the population, on the view that alerting the public might harm the interests of both parties. It is certainly questionable that a non-transparent dynamic should prevail in a multilateral institution's design of public policy, when the institution itself promotes transparency. This detail, which appears incidental, does not pass unnoticed, since it amounts in some measure to justifying conduct that would run counter to the republican principle of government if public decisions were taken on the basis of private information that had not been aired. Negotiations may have a discreet or private character at the diplomatic stage in order to protect the actors on both sides, but having an effect on the population in decisional matters, they would have to be published if the republican principle of government is to be respected. In the Argentine case the scant or nonexistent oversight the National Congress appears to have in matters

of external credit with multilateral institutions is particularly problematic. That situation could hamper the state's capacity to negotiate with a multilateral institution. The case of the loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) resonates locally. According to Stiles:

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently published a pamphlet on the question of whether the IMF, as an institution, imposes austerity on debtors. The response focused on the second half of the question and argued that IMF adjustment programs were, in fact, not systematically austere. However, from a political perspective, the first half of the question is much more provocative. Does the IMF "impose" its will on member states, and, if so, how? Many have argued that, by virtue of its political connections with the financial centers of the world and its intellectual sophistication, the so-called "negotiations" which debtor nations conduct with Fund staff, prior to the drafting of an agreement on lending conditions, is little more than an exercise in coercion on the part of the Fund. (Stiles 1987, 55)

This supposed capacity of multilateral institutions to impose refers to the capacity to suggest public policy with far greater emphasis than a mere suggestion carries. Against this background, the role of multilateral institutions and their priorities takes on greater relevance for national politics. Although the IMF is not the IDB in its corporate structure, we might ask whether the IDB analogously reproduces any of the practices Stiles (1987) mentions. If there were an analogous case, even a minor one, the institution's priorities would become relevant in some measure. On the IDB's priorities, one interviewee said:

(...) our mission is to improve lives in Latin America and the Caribbean. That's the mission we have. And we carry that mission forward through financial support and knowledge support. And this is something we try to, and for that, we try to bring, to generate the greatest evidence or the best evidence to allow countries to generate the best public policies, right? And in that sense, we work both on support in design and on the execution of public policy and we try to increase the capacities countries have to ensure that public policies have the greatest impact, the greatest sustainability. That's a little bit the way we work. (Interviewee 4, January 24, 2025)

This part of the discourse might be defined as a formal statement of the IDB's programmatic line, known as Impact+. This IDB agent maintains that the institution's role is to increase state capacities so as to ensure that public policies have the greatest impact and the greatest sustainability. Although he appears to give an institutional and qualified answer, it enters into a determining factor in the IDB's institutional proposal for Latin American development, which is the sustainability of programs.

Sustainability in program design

Sustainability is considered a key subject in the IDB's everyday operations. It is a conceptual factor to bear in mind in the analysis of design. It corresponds to the role the IDB assigns itself, in that it is an agency that designs and helps implement public policy but is not the financier of states. The IDB sees itself, that is, as a development institution that assists that purpose and not as a mere facilitator of credit. Credit is an instrument for mobilizing development that makes it easier for states to meet their objectives. Sustainability in public finances is therefore a key factor, since in its absence the IDB would have no interest, conceptually at least, in taking part in a particular operation. A state's incapacity to sustain a public policy without IDB help would be seen as an obstacle to the implementation of that help, and quite possibly as an eventual determining factor at the design stage. One interviewee defined it this way:

The question of the sustainability of investments is key, I mean, you're going to take on an operation with, for example, a ticket of 100, 200 million dollars, to address a problem of early literacy. One of the key questions, and it's great that you've raised it because it's the question they ask you at the Bank, well, the Bank is going to have an influence over these 4 years spending these resources that belong to all the countries, and then what? How is it sustained? No, at the level of impact it's no use for them to be... like sporadic, isolated investments by the Bank and then for there to be no continuity policy from the government with its own resources. (Interviewee 2, January 21, 2025)

In saying that the sustainability of investments is key, what he means to convey is that for the IDB investments are a political tool for building

development. As a corporate mission they do not seek sporadic investments but lines of credit that serve to mobilize sustainable policies. In other terms, it was put this way:

The Bank's involvement is expected to be complementary to what the government's proposal is. That is, that it shouldn't depend 100 percent on the Bank for this to happen, but that the Bank supports with technical capacity and with financial resources something that is a priority of the government. (Interviewee 2, January 21, 2025)

What is sought, that is, is to foster the government's priorities, albeit qualified by the IDB's capacities for inventing public policy.

Comparative table

	Habilidades Digitales	SilverTech
Target population	Students from preschool through secondary school in public schools.	Adults over 50 seeking to improve their digital skills in order to enter or remain in the labor market.
Modality	Implementation of a national curriculum (NAP) in digital education, programming and robotics.	100 percent online.
Financing	IDB.	IDB in collaboration with technology firms such as Microsoft, Salesforce, Accenture and SAP.
Principal objective	To support Argentina's Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology in improving student learning through the implementation of a national EDPR curriculum.	To develop and test models of ICT and digitalization training for adults over 50, adding digital skills to their occupational abilities in order to achieve their entry into or retention in the labor market.
Implementation	Coordination between the IDB and Argentina's Ministry of Education,	Implemented by the Eidos Global foundation in association with IDB Lab

	Habilidades Digitales	SilverTech
	Culture, Science and Technology.	and technology firms.
Project duration	Two years.	More than one year, contingent on the fulfillment of objectives.
Principal elements	1. Development and implementation of a national curriculum in digital education, programming and robotics. 2. Teacher training. 3. Monitoring and evaluation of implementation.	1. Online training in areas such as entrepreneurship in the age of artificial intelligence and introduction to UX design. 2. Job placement with technology firms. 3. Awareness raising about employment among older adults.
Teaching methodology	Integration of digital education, programming and robotics content into the school curriculum from preschool through secondary school.	Online training on a platform combining synchronous and asynchronous content, with sessions delivered by employers and with emotional and motivational support from trainers and facilitators.
Scope of application	Public schools throughout Argentina.	Argentine national, with the possibility of expansion to other countries.
Risks identified	1. Effective coordination among the different educational jurisdictions. 2. Adequate training and preparation of teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum.	1. Low take-up by older adults. 2. Lack of adequate job opportunities after the training.
Expected results	Improved student learning in the areas of digital education, programming and robotics.	To train more than 2,000 people over 50 and to have at least 600 improve their employment situation after completing the training.
Approval date	September 4, 2019.	September 30, 2021.

	Habilidades Digitales	SilverTech
Total project cost	USD 200,000.	USD 960,000, with country counterpart financing of USD 480,000.
Environmental and Social Impact Category	Category C: likely to cause minimal or no negative environmental and social impact.	Category C: likely to cause minimal or no negative environmental and social impact.

Comparison of the two programs

Both programs proposed and analyzed here constitute designs that diverge in different respects as regards the IDB's relationship to the possibilities of education policy for Argentina. This section will analyze them with those differences in view, but also their similarities, with a critical and comparative emphasis, in order to understand how the IDB designs education policy. It should be borne in mind that these designs do not proceed in isolation from an international institution but are, as the interviews showed, the results of complex processes of negotiation involving the whole range of IDB actors, from its directors to the technical staff who carry out the work of drafting the programs. The relevance of ICT immersed in a specific cultural context for technology education is also revealed (Tiramonti 2015).

At the educational level, although the IDB has education specialists, the comparison of the programs shows that the criteria by which they were drafted are not entirely unified. On one side, "Habilidades Digitales" presents a public approach to education, since the IDB collaborates fundamentally with a national ministry charged with designing education policy in Argentina. On the other, in "SilverTech" the IDB sets its objectives outside the state's orbit and defines the policies so as to implement them with a set of multinational firms and nongovernmental organizations. This disparity reflects different criteria and priorities in the internal departments that designed the two programs. In the first case the state was chosen as the interlocutor; in the second, the IDB established no relationship with any other person of public international law but drafted international education policy for the private

sector. Asinelli (2018) noted the presence of pro-state and pro-market factors within the possibilities of action of international development institutions. In these two examples we see how the IDB's efforts diverge across the two educational programs, since the design of "Habilidades Digitales" shows a pro-state tendency while that of "SilverTech" shows a pro-market one.

The actors in the programs are accordingly constituted differently. In "Habilidades Digitales" the state predominates, since its actors are practically all state actors in its design as a whole. One may reflect conceptually on how human persons retain their individuality, so that teachers would not be public persons, but they are not a central part of the design, even though the design presupposes them. In "SilverTech," by contrast, the private sector takes the leading role and becomes the maker of education, in that it provides both the content and the educational medium. According to Fontaine (2015), social, political, and economic actors determine the possibilities of public policy. It can be considered in this way that the divergence between these programs in the matter of actors produces, from the outset, a bifurcation between the design possibilities available to each. With different actors, different tools will consequently arise. As Oszlak (2001) notes, the decentralization of state functions does not entail a weakening of those functions; in this case, however, we find an internationalization of educational functions in the second program, in which the state is not decentralized but internationalized.³²

As to target population, the programs also diverge, since the first was oriented toward the training of children and adolescents and the second toward older adults. This programmatic divergence does not necessarily present a contradiction of interests between the two programs; it might instead be interpreted as a way for the IDB to take in the general population of a state. Different parts of the population necessarily require dif-

³² The internationalization of the state entails in itself the legal formation of new functions in an outside institution, which may promote a duplication of public policy, a new course of action, or, failing that, a delegation of functions. In the educational case, the design the IDB sustains in "SilverTech" does not constitute the exercise of a delegated function; rather, by an alternative route, the international institution exercises a complementary power of continuing education with respect to what Argentina has drafted at the national level.

ferent efforts. In the educational case it is understandable that not all the groups requiring education can be assimilated into a single program design, all the more so when these are extremely specific and detailed programs with concrete action plans rather than merely programmatic ones. The programs designed are not framework agreements, that is, but present a concrete plan of action with specific objectives expressed in their various components and with financing for each. The difference in target population is therefore sensible and understandable.

The methods employed also present differences, since “Habilidades Digitales” selected the formal social structures of education in order to apply the desired modifications, while “SilverTech” chose a privately administered online platform without ministerial, international educational, or CONEAU evaluation, as would be the case for a specialization or a master’s program at an Argentine university. Here we find a more complex conceptual weave, since it is not simply the population that differs but the very structure of the society to be fostered. While one program finances the state, that is, the other finances the market, which is to say the public solution and the private solution. According to one interviewee, the IDB seeks to find, within its possibilities, problems and solutions. It seeks to have one solution per problem and to commit each problem to a specific solution, leaving no problems without solutions and drafting no solutions without problems, so as not to divert efforts and resources. The unknown lies in what the IDB considers optimal for finding solutions, whether interacting with state structures or interacting with businesspeople in a national territory. The IDB apparently finds no unified line but sustains a mixed approach, proper to an institution that houses a multiplicity of interests, actors, and proposals. This position has been defined as embedded liberalism:³³

The embedded liberalism thesis, a major component of the trade policy literature in political science, argues that governments can build support for free trade by compensating economically those hurt by trade, usually with welfare or education policies. (Ehrlich 2010)

³³ This term was coined by John Ruggie in the article “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order” (1982).

This concept allows us to understand not only a framework for the IDB but a programmatic and conceptual combination that Western society adopted for itself in the period after the Second World War, out of whose global agreement came the Bretton Woods monetary regime, which included the formation of the World Bank and the IMF and, subsequently, of the IDB within the framework of the OAS, albeit with a regional imprint. With modifications proper to the passing of decades and governments, the IDB continues to sustain a combination of practices that might be defined as an embedded liberalism, namely practices supporting market freedom in combination with practices supporting the growth of state competences, in this case in education. As Ehrlich holds, the international education policies promoted by international institutions are part of a global agreement in which capitalism finds state intervention. This liberalism takes in economic as well as political aspects, then, while providing institutional frameworks for the development of policies that control the effects of market freedom in pursuit of a greater degree of social justice, or welfare. Some of these precepts align with the two programs analyzed, insofar as they tend to mobilize general aspects of society in pursuit of objectives of equity and the distribution of opportunity.

Besides the aspect of embedded liberalism, another factor of convergence between the programs is the role of ICT in training, for children and adolescents as much as for older adults. It can be affirmed that for the IDB the elaboration of education policy in the region taking training in new technologies as an integral part is a priority. The focus has been placed on skills bound up with computing, and in particular on the use of programming languages and on training in the use of software that can give those trained a more advantageous social and occupational position in the future.³⁴ As Tiramonti (2015) notes, the internet plays a significant cultural role in this context, since it is an integrating element of education policy. Such positioning occurs not only within a strictly social or academic framework, since the IDB reflects, out of institutional predilection or bias, in terms marked by economic development and by the potential of Argentina's liberal and capitalist becoming.

³⁴ The annex contains a specific section briefly addressing the link between ICT and education.

It is also worth reflecting on the concept of educational sovereignty in connection with both designs (Fernández Pais and Justianovich 2022). Could it be affirmed that states have greater control over designs in which they will eventually take part at the implementation stage? Being part of the subsequent implementation, they may well have greater capacities for negotiation during the design. In designs where there is no active participation by the state, however, as in the case of “SilverTech,” it could be affirmed that this implicit capacity is lacking, a capacity that might be present through the executive capacity of the public administration. At the level of sovereignty, nonetheless, so long as there is a need to negotiate with the state, educational sovereignty will remain embedded as well, since the capacity to limit programs continues to rest on state authority. Internationalization entails the delegation of competences, but that delegation remains optional, without international intrusion into sovereign capacities. Pedagogical sovereignty could become more diffuse, however, this being a more specific actionable practice. If we understand it as the capacity to define pedagogy in general, then in programs left to the private sector the state would effectively lose control over teachers and over the curriculum.

Within this framework of embedded liberalism, then, the IDB takes it to be desirable, according to its research and its strategy, that Argentina adopt the policies it designs for education in the national territory, policies whose preponderant factors are the ones we have analyzed in the present chapter. It will thus fall to local politicians to interact with the IDB in order to define the consensus needed to give an adequate course to what is proposed internationally, taking into account the pertinent considerations and the possibilities available to the institution under study for the elaboration of education policy.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis set out to investigate two IDB designs of international education policy for Argentina. Using the methods described, the research and the subsequent data analysis were carried out, drawing on the theoretical framework and taking the state of the art on the subject into account. A conclusion is now offered which will be, though provisional and open to improvement, a seed so that designs of this kind may be improved should the occasion arise. Together with the documentary collection and the interviews, the data analysis served to develop a critical understanding of the programs the IDB has drafted.

At the outset of this research, one relevant unknown was whether the IDB designs education policy autonomously. On the basis of what we have seen in the elaboration of a regional programmatic line in EDPR, the elaboration of another programmatic line in the silver economy for the second program, and what the interviewees said, the IDB has ample autonomy in the elaboration of education policy, having professionals trained in the field as well as a research department devoted to evaluating policy frameworks in Latin America and how they work.

What can be understood as autonomy in the elaboration of education policy? In the first place, autonomy implies the absence of a defined chain of command or vertical relationship between a national authority and an international institution, in this case. It is evident, from the line the IDB has maintained and from the testimony gathered, that the IDB's technical members do not express or feel significant pressure from the state for which they draft a public policy; rather, they present the design process as a horizontal negotiation based on consensus. Under this conceptualization, the IDB sustains its own independence in the elaboration of education policy. It remains conditioned, however, by the need for consensus with a particular member state in order to secure that state's acceptance first and its subsequent implementation.

The concept of client that the IDB uses to refer to states constitutes a conceptual, political, and economic assimilation to the traditional banking industry, even to the commercial bank typical of Western states. A possible appraisal on the part of those who formed the IDB can therefore be discerned, in that, although it is legally a public bank oriented toward development, they decided, consciously or not, to retain in its language a terminology proper to the private financial system, quite possibly in order to facilitate the conversion of strategies and the adaptation of practices from one sector to the other. As already analyzed, however, the IDB's clients are also its shareholders, which is a substantial difference. Its only clients, moreover, are its shareholders. This dissimilarity cannot be passed over, since the commercial banking model bears no direct relation to the IDB even though both are called banks. One is a commercial company with a business model adapted to the supply and demand of the market; the other is a public international institution of development and cooperation, with lenders and borrowers and a cast of technical actors oriented toward public policy who operate as an international think tank.

The evidence of a line of continuity between “SilverTech” and other projects the IDB has previously sustained³⁵ provides firm proof of the institution's autonomous power to draft its own international education policy, independently of the country in question. The adaptation of those policies to the Argentine case shows that the country is also receptive to the proposals made by the IDB's technical teams. The evidence of educational programs being received by two governments of different political sign shows, in turn, that at the national level the reception of the IDB's policy proposals is not restricted to a single section of the political parties. Programs can be received by pro-market governments (2015-2019) as much as by pro-state ones (2019-2023), in Asinelli's terms (2018).

In this context, international development finance is neither more nor less than a complementary tool, with its social and technical component, for assembling and disassembling, an instrument that can also be a

³⁵ “Upskilling and Reskilling of Adults Aged 50-65 Through Online Education” (Peru, approved October 30, 2020) and “The Future Is ‘Silver’: Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem” (Uruguay, approved December 9, 2020).

catalyst of international policy. That catalyzing function of finance can be clouded when the financial becomes an objective in itself rather than simply a means. The dangers of macroeconomics applied to policy lie in the possibility of concealing the other social aspects that may run through the arguments advanced. Macroeconomics, that is, is not the only discipline capable of studying human beings, so that failing to complement it and isolating it would be a deficiency in a program's design, just as it would be a want of resources for the Argentine Congress to legislate considering nothing beyond law itself.

For future research, it is recommended that officials of multilateral institutions with specific competences in educational matters be examined in greater depth, including those of the World Bank, the IMF, and the OECD.³⁶ Some IDB officials who did not agree to participate in this research work specifically on education. The IDB's general educational documents also present nuances in their historicity that, for reasons of delimitation and brevity, were not analyzed in depth in this work, so that a specific and extensive data analysis of the general documents is also suggested, in order to understand more fully, at an international level, the lines the IDB sustained in education during the twentieth century.

Beyond the IDB, it would also be feasible to analyze whether current labor practices are likewise social elements that give shape to the educational. At the level of higher education, and even in extracurricular secondary education, young people are free to choose their own training. The economic context quite possibly influences educational matters by marking out patterns of conduct that appear adequate, meaning those that produce employability or employment, and inadequate, meaning those that do not. More or less directly, the market could suggest courses of action in secondary and higher education, fashioning social suggestions in this way and attempting to occupy a role of political direction. The market's role, however, is simply that of an institution that suggests

³⁶ In line with development financing, it is recommended that study be made, beyond the World Bank, of whether the IMF and the OECD have explicitly sustained defined education policies and what their influence in Latin America has been. It is also recommended that the impact of international economic policy on Latin American education be reviewed critically.

courses and, through its signals, displays options. This is qualified, deepened, or reversed by the action of public policy.³⁷

The social future, educational as much as political and economic, lies in the human capacity to define itself through dialogue, consensus, and peace. Education is one of the most beautiful tools humanity has for fashioning its future. International cooperation, within a framework of harmony among peoples, provides a setting propitious to that future. International human rights law, moreover, can contribute the legal dimension to the educational debate. It will fall to future research on the subject to continue inquiring into these possibilities.

³⁷ It would be relevant to consider the link between education and poverty, which appear to be intimately related as social indicators, in that more education goes with less poverty (Dailey 1964). This is a fundamental factor in the elaboration of public policy.

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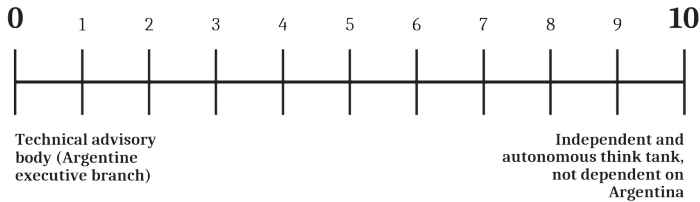
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A N N E X E S

ANNEX I: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS³⁸

In addition to being given the question guide, each interviewee was shown the following chart, on which they could record the perception of IDB officials and staff as to what role the institution occupies in the design of public policy for Argentina, whether closer to a technical advisory body (a national ministerial one answering to an executive branch) or closer to an autonomous think tank (proper to a private entity). The chart ran from 0 to 10, as follows:



Self-perception chart.

The data obtained from this self-perception chart will provide a reference for better understanding and analyzing the object of study, namely the IDB's behavior as an institutional actor with respect to education in Argentina through its general strategies and its two programs.

It was worded as follows:

- "I": Interviewer.
- "E": Interviewee.

³⁸ This annex is made up of four verbatim transcripts of interviews conducted according to the protocol. They were transcribed literally, without altering colloquial expressions, in order to preserve the freshness and transparency of spoken language.

Interview 1: area specialist at the IDB

- Date: January 17, 2025.
- Duration: 35:03.

I: There we are. Well, thank you very much for joining the interview. We're going to go through a...

E: Courtesy of my wife, who's an academic and told me "Yes, yes, do see him."

I: The first question, just to introduce the subject a bit, is whether you could briefly describe your trajectory and your academic training up to joining the IDB, when you started working at the IDB, in what area, and roughly what your responsibilities are in that role, that series of introductory questions.

E: (withheld for reasons of anonymity).

I: Great. And currently, what is your role at the Inter-American Bank? How would you define your responsibilities?

E: Right. I'm a fiscal specialist, that's what the title is called, that is... within the Bank's organization there's a management tier of managers and division chiefs and so on, and below the management tier there are the thematic professionals, usually known as specialists, and below them, or assisting the specialists, there tends to be a category of analysts or support staff. So the specialist is a figure, a job, that typically has a double responsibility: one is to lead or manage operations with clients, the Bank's clients typically being states; and there's another large area which is knowledge and policy formation.

I: Great. Uh... To move a bit more into the technical part, if that's all right with you, or into the public policy area, I'd like to ask you: what aspects of the IDB do you consider unique in relation to other multilateral organizations? We know that, uh... the IDB is a particular institution, because it's a development institution, and it's also a bank, but somehow it formulates public policy. The question would be: what distinguishes it from other international institutions in the field of public policy formulation?

E: Well, good question. Uh... the international organizations in the area, let's see, almost all international organizations have an interest in development. Because what results from international cooperation is the

exchange of experiences and knowledge. And any international organization is a kind of mechanism for transferring knowledge and good practice in policy. Then each institution answers to a historical demand and is a product of its circumstances. The Bretton Woods institutions, above all the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, have their own... they answer to a historical demand or need. And the regional development banks also have their own context that gave rise to them. And... but independently of the context in which they're born, they then go on occupying spaces. So in the end there's a kind of competition with an expansive tendency and there tends to be, I don't say competing, I say being on the same ground, sometimes competing and sometimes collaborating, but more or less treading the same area. The Bank's design, the Inter-American Bank, responds in its design to an idea of transferring knowledge and resources north-south, which is the classic scheme of international cooperation. And it has its historical moment in the year, I think... I'm speaking from memory, but I think it's the year... 1959, and the United States Secretary makes a tour of Latin America and says "Wow, this really needs a lot of development, so it would be good to have a mechanism to structure knowledge and financial cooperation." And that's how it's born. And a few years later it stops being Inter-American in order to widen, uh... above all the northern part, right? I mean, the United States and Canada part, since other countries of the European Union come in there, and later Korea, Japan, and China. So today it's... if you look at the north it's semi-global, but in the south it remains focused on the countries of Latin America, the continental countries, including Brazil, including Venezuela, and some Caribbean countries, above all the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, but also Barbados, Jamaica, and Bermuda.

I: Great, thank you very much. Let's move to a part... since you've mentioned some historical context, uh... I think it's interesting to ask you whether you think there are historical periods in the IDB's history, particularly in its internal institutional development, but also in the institutional relations the IDB has had with states. Whether it's possible to identify periods in the IDB's history, above all in relation to the development of public policy, right? For example, some historians draw a

distinction from the 1990s onward. I don't know whether there's any observation you can make in that regard within that scheme.

E: Right, look, as I said at the beginning, I've only been here 7 years, so I can't say much from my experience, but what I've seen over time in the documentation is that every time there's been a new president, a new administration, well, uh... they've responsibly looked at whether the Bank was meeting the needs it's meant to cover, and out of that review, I think all of them, Ilan Goldfajn, the latest, have done more or less the same thing, which is... Two things: strengthening the Bank's financing capacity, the bank being a financial instrument, right? An intermediary that has partners who are the donor countries, who are like the bank's shareholders, they put in a quota and also pay part of the upkeep. And it has clients, who are the countries of the region. Depending on the perceived demand for development resources from the countries of the region, the Bank periodically has to increase its capacity to provide resources, so it makes capital increases and realignments of a financial character, in order to integrate, I don't know, financial innovation, other sources, even other donors and... recently all the Regional Development Banks, of which there are many, there are ones in Asia, in Africa, two in Europe, in short, there's a series of them and others for subregions, have also come together to look at the possibility of mobilizing more resources, since that has always been a... uh, I won't say an obsession, but a subject of work. The other thing that's frequently been done is to reorganize the way the Bank is structured so as to be more effective, uh... or more efficient too, just those two things. But... I can't give you a historical overview, I think that's better, there are publications that look at that, it's easier if you take it from a more reliable book above all.

I: Great, thank you. And turning to an area more about the programs, let's say, a more practical area, uh... of the IDB's operations, how would you say the IDB ensures that the programs it drafts are relevant? That is, how does it ensure they're suited to the different contexts, particularly the educational, cultural, or technological contexts of each state?

E: Well, the Bank does that very well, because it prepares a technical note for each sector, uh... well, technical and policy, I mean, a note on the sector, it's called a sector framework document in English or in

Spanish “sector knowledge framework” or “sector technical framework.” If you look it up, this is public information, you’ll be able to find it for education, for example, you’ll find that document, which is updated periodically, I think every four or five cycles. And that document typically does a scan, does a review of everything there is in policy matters: areas, problems, knowledge of instruments... So it’s a very good view of where policy is going and what the challenges are. And it’s therefore a thematic planning instrument. That’s then crossed with geographic planning instruments, first at a regional level, and there the Bank draws up its priorities for the period. It defines which policies it wants to promote, well, climate policies, gender equity, integration of minorities and that kind of thing, and the priority actions it wants to undertake. So, for example, institutional capacity and the rule of law, infrastructure, and a series of development deficits the Bank wants to fill. And it does that, I insist, at a regional level and then at a country level. There’s also a country document, a country action program, also periodically updated, multiyear and periodic, where you can consult, for Argentina, what the challenges in education in Argentina are, in Chile or Paraguay or wherever... In any of the countries of the region there is one of these documents. So that between the vertical part of policies and the horizontal part of territories, there’s a... I mean, a kind of grid, a Cartesian grid, where we specialists can be fairly certain that we’re pursuing priorities that are well structured, well defined.

I: And is there any particular criterion used to adjust the programs to the economic or sociocultural particularities of each country? Is there any standardized criterion you can share with us?

E: There’s a process which is the identification of development gaps... This programming cycle, at country level, begins with the identification of development gaps by looking at the indices in any... well, if it’s education I imagine you look at PISA and other comparative indices, if the country takes part in those surveys, right? But there are always sources that let you estimate whether the country is keeping to the average, the regional average, the world average, or whether it’s falling behind. Those studies of each country’s development needs or challenges are the... those are purely technical studies, they’re the basis, “country develop-

ment challenges” is what that document is called, if you want to Google it. Some of these documents are confidential by their very nature, they’re a bit sensitive. If you want to be accurate in defining development challenges you can’t be politically correct, right? So some of these documents have a classification, but I think you’ll find it easy to locate these “country development challenges” documents which, I insist, are an evaluation based on data, and it’s out of that... out of that diagnosis of failings that a policy action plan comes. Uh... The Bank even has an office called OVE (Oversight Evaluation)... ah, the acronym in English escapes me now,³⁹ but... that office reviews the coherence between the defects detected and the action plans, and it evaluates with a technique called “vertical logic,” which consists in “one problem, one solution.” So if you’ve detected a problem and quantified it and proposed a solution, what’s the result: was it resolved, was that development gap eased or not. So there’s a whole cycle of knowledge and practice around that which is very well structured.

I: Great, and within... you mentioned a policy action plan which I think is interesting to go into, but I’m going to... I’ll ask you about that, how would you define this policy action plan and what does it consist of? And within, let’s say, this question, I’ll add a question about program design, about the programs in general, in general terms, what role is given to states? I mean, what role do national or even subnational states have? And also to ask you whether in any case you know of there were significant or minor disagreements among the actors involved, that is, between perhaps a subnational state, the national state, or the national state and the IDB? And if those disagreements exist, how are they resolved? It’s several questions, I don’t know if that’s all right.

E: It’s all right, let me think of a case. Let me go back to that sector framework document, which is a fairly extensive document, imagine a... a study of 50 or 60 pages, that covers everything known about education. In little pills, uh, don’t think it goes into great depth, because otherwise you’d have a treatise of several thousand pages, but... in that conceptual policy framework the attempt is to cover everything and describe the challenges and trends worldwide a bit. That’s a technical document

³⁹ He is referring to the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE).

that's like a reference work. That's complemented, as I explained, with country programming, and that's where what you're interested in at the moment comes in, which is how to marry the country's priorities with the Bank's priorities. That usually happens naturally through dialogue. Countries have many, most of them have policy planning instruments too and they also tend to publish documents. Political parties do it at the start of elections, governments do it when they begin, they say the plan of president "X"'s government for the 4 years, and there the government sets goals and priorities. Normally they coincide and, in fact, when one document or the other is being drawn up, each reads the other, if you see what I mean, so that we reach the conclusion that child malnutrition is an educational problem in the province of "X." Well, we'll probably find that in both documents and often we don't know who said it first, or both drink from the same source, which may be a study by the National Institute of Education, or by some think tank, or by a university. So what happens when the knowledge is translated into operations is that governments are selective and there's no attempt to address every problem at once; rather, a prioritization is made. If there's an operation, let me talk about finance, which is what I know best; if there's an operation being executed in the area of public revenue, for example a reform of the tax administration, well, it's likely there won't be one in public expenditure, that is, a reform of budgeting and the expenditure execution cycle. Technically it's possible, but prioritization and the limitation of resources mean you focus on one thing or the other. And that's usually the product of negotiation and it's fairly straightforward. Uh... there are difficulties, yes, there are difficulties, they tend to be problems of capacity, of turnover among officials, or even of the political cycle, because typically the politician who arrives doesn't want to carry out the road map his predecessor had and wants to do something new.

I: Great. And since you mentioned these instances, maybe, I don't know whether informal or formal, of negotiation, I think a relevant question would be whether formal instances of negotiation do exist within the IDB in which these different elements you mentioned are put on the table. And, within this question, also to add: how do the interests of the countries that finance the IDB come to bear? If they do come to

bear on public policy and on program design, in what way do they do so? Whether it's in this instance of negotiation or consensus with the national states that are going to be financed, or whether the influence of the states that finance the IDB comes through somewhere else.

E: Right, yes. Look, the question is a good one, it's pertinent, it's a nice question. All documents of strategic importance are approved by the board of directors. The lending and borrowing countries all designate a country representative and those sit on a council, on a board, and the documents have to be approved by the board. So that rests on the technique of consensus, it doesn't... it doesn't rest on majorities. If there's something strange for a country or that... it doesn't like, well, it's going to ask for the manuscript to be modified so that the policy document doesn't say something contrary to its priorities and, in short, or to its sovereignty, or any country criterion, right? So approval by the board guarantees that the objectives set by the Bank and the policy frameworks are consistent and states have a representative, the donors do, but those... those representatives..., no, they're very active, I was going to say they don't come in the end, no, actually they're very active, and in the approval of operations they are an instance of approval and act as such. But if you're going to approve, and the Board of Executive Directors approves the important operations, from 2 million dollars up, the Board of Executive Directors is the one that intervenes to approve. And when you take an operation to the board you have meetings with the directors, both from recipient countries and from donor ones, and they tend to be very incisive and... if your operation has nothing on gender, for example, well, they're going to ask you whether there isn't a possibility of introducing a gender aspect into the operation, or environment, or that kind of thing.

I: Okay. And within this Board of Executive Directors you mentioned, do you think there are certain central elements they consider in approving or rejecting a program? And within that process in general, not only within the Board of Executive Directors but generally at the IDB, what elements do you think are important in guaranteeing the sustainability and feasibility of a program? That is, how are the indicators for these

programs built? And on what criteria, if you can share something of that with us.

E: Yes. All programs, well, there's a technique of program development that's well mastered at the Bank, right? Well, well known and shared, uh... I mentioned it before, "vertical logic," which consists in "one solution for each problem"; but you need to size the problem. First to know why it's a problem, second what its importance is, and third how you can act to solve it. And what the... the measure of your success is going to be. Those are the indicators. Well then, that methodology we call "vertical logic" has a custodian in the Bank which is a Department called SPD,⁴⁰ and that Department is the one that makes sure there are no objectives without a measure or problems without a solution, or solutions without problems... or things like that. So technically they're well constructed and then politically they're aligned in the planning documents I showed at the beginning. If all that is correct, the operation exceeds the minimum quality threshold and generates confidence in the expectation that it's going to solve a problem.

I: Great. And I have to ask you about two programs in particular for the thesis. You'll tell me whether you know them or not, and if you don't know them that's no problem. The programs are, one is "Digital Skills" or habilidades digitales, and the other is on education for adults, both of them for Argentina. The question is whether you have any connection to these projects and whether you know them.

E: No, I have nothing to do with them. I can only tell you that all the relevant documentation is public and that on the Bank's website you're going to find every document, not only on the conception of the problem, all that technical part I mentioned before, but also on execution. There you'll see the contracts and it's very transparent.

I: Okay. And to start wrapping up, one last question, maybe a bit more theoretical, but it's whether you would consider the IDB as an international actor to be an independent actor in public policy, whether it generates public policy independently, or whether it performs a role, uh, whether you would categorize it more as a role of advising and guiding public policy. How would you frame it? Given that it has many pro-

⁴⁰ He is referring to the Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness.

grams and covers many subjects in different countries, right? Whether you'd say it's a more autonomous agent or whether it has more of a consultancy role.

E: Look, the institution's vocation is to solve problems and those of us who work there have a bit of the idea of doing good projects and projects with impact. So it's not doing things for the sake of doing them but... whether what you're doing, given that you're putting in time and resources, is changing people's lives or is mistaken. And it's not infrequent for projects that are unfocused, or that have ceased to be priorities, to be abandoned. It's not a problem to acknowledge that priorities changed or, like, any problem in the design. But the Bank does that out of a genuine vocation to solve problems, that's like the first vector. The second is dialogue with the government. Every time there's a change of government there's a conversation about "this is what we have in the portfolio, does this fit your needs or do you want us to do something different." And often something different is done, if a new government arrives and its priority is, I don't know, building hospitals to prevent pandemics and it has financing granted to resolve, to build train stations but which, which aren't, the geographic authorization study didn't come through. So it's taken out, the financing capacity for the train stations is taken and moved to building hospitals for pandemics. So... in the world of public policy the principal actors are states, we have no doubt about that, right? And within states, political parties. What are international institutions? An instrument. An instrument of execution, but at the same time also a bank of ideas. If they call the IDB, or the World Bank, or the Andean Development Corporation or any other international institution, the Monetary Fund, whichever they call, and they say "Listen, what do you think about this problem, do you have any idea what we can do here," well, the specialist or the Bank office is going to do a review of all the documentation and tell the country "Look, these are, these are the international standards, these are the good practices identified, here's the bibliography. And this is what we could do in this country." And out of that comes an action plan. We frequently use nonreimbursable funds to go deeper into that knowledge, we bring in a consultant to draw up something more like baselines or to define the problems, quantify them.

And on the basis of that preparatory work we then go to the country and tell it what we're doing, we do a project to reform this, or it stays as it is. That's how it works.

I: Great. Well, thank you very much for the conversation. Is there anything else you'd like to add about what we've discussed, does anything occur to you that might contribute?

E: Where do I send the invoice for my time?

I: We'll talk about that later by message.

E: No, seriously, I wish you luck, success with your work, and if you happen to need anything else specific, well, here we are.

I: Thank you, thank you very much, and at your disposal too.

E: Well, thanks Tomás, good luck to you too.

Question by message about the chart

- Question about the chart: on this chart, from 0 to 10, where would you place the IDB's policy design? The self-perception chart is shown.
- Answer: nine (9).

Interview 2: operations specialist at the IDB

- Date: January 21, 2025.
- Duration: 54:26.

I: Hello, how are you? Thank you very much for agreeing to the interview... if it's all right with you we'll start with a profile of you, with the first question, which is whether you could briefly describe your trajectory, your academic training up to joining the IDB. And how you came to work at the IDB. And currently what your area is, what your responsibilities are, and what role you're in within the Inter-American Bank.

E: (withheld for reasons of anonymity).

I: Great. So we're bound to touch on some subject connected to your work. Now let's move to more of a public policy design area, and the next question for the thesis is: what aspects would you consider unique within the IDB? In relation to the formulation or design of public policy, particularly if we compare it with other multilateral institutions, right? Other international organizations, what would you say distinguishes the IDB from other institutions?

E: Well, there are several little things... Argentina, you know, has a significant history with several multilaterals, the IDB and the World Bank, but the IDB is Argentina's principal multilateral partner in development financing, right? Leaving aside net financing institutions like the IMF, among the development ones, real development, the IDB is the principal commercial partner, so it has the largest portfolio of projects and so on. What I think is good about the IDB as a differentiator is that it has a significant track record in several areas where it has left a strong mark and where it has a technical and institutional dialogue with the different governments, education being one of them, uh..., let's say, it has a significant track record in education and in advising there. Also in social protection, in health, it has certain differentiators or vectors in development sectors where it has a very, very important historical presence. The World Bank may be fairly strong in transport, connectivity, in a few others, but the IDB has its areas, right? Where it has more of a presence and so on. I think something important the IDB has, unlike the World Bank for example, which is a comparison, is the technical assistance and the sectoral dialogue it establishes with government officials.

The Bank has its lending side, right? Sovereign loans, financing for operations, but at the same time those operations are generally, or almost always, preceded or accompanied by technical cooperation operations, which allow it to keep collaborating in that dialogue on sectoral policy. So there are a great many things that the Bank's specialists go on discussing with their government counterparts, with Secretaries of Education, National Directors who are competent in different areas, about needs they have to study this or that problem. And generally you can't do that from within the state, it's like you don't have the resources, I don't know, to do a knowledge gap analysis or to be able to do a more territorial, spatial analysis, comparing content with other countries in the region, best practices, all that kind of thing that's hard for an official to have their own resources for, let's say, the National Treasury, or having those specialists on their own staff is impossible for them. So there I think the Bank has a differentiator in supporting those analyses, studies, and recommendations, it's very present in that. I think that's key.

I: Since you mentioned the education part, that the IDB is strong in education in its relationship with Argentina, let me ask you a bit on the side, as an aside, whether within this same subject you consider or think there's some particular approach the IDB has within its technical teams, or even within its management or policy line for education. I mean, whether there's some particular line that's promoted, that's defended. Also in relation to, distinguishing it perhaps from some national government or distinguishing it from another development bank, for example.

E: Wow, that's a very specific question, a comparative one about the sector... What I can tell you is that the Bank collaborates in the priority areas the government sets for it. To give you an example, uh... this government administration has focused heavily on early childhood, the first thousand days on the social protection side, and on early literacy, right? It's as if the diagnosis has been that skills for the university world end up not being, uh... consolidated or... available because of earlier deficiencies. And there's a whole reading on the part of this administration that the question of early literacy, reading comprehension, and mathematical skills has to be resolved. So the Bank supported that with a loan operation approved last year which is going to be executed over the next 4

years on early literacy. Even so, the Bank saw a possibility of moving forward at further stages, right? Of having an operation that addresses higher education, I mean, secondary, to build that bridge and, at the same time, working very closely with an internal division of the Bank which is like Labor or... yes, the world of work, yes, Labor Markets it's called, so as to have education on one side but also oriented toward practical skills and... thinking above all about labor market insertion. So from that side the Bank wanted to propose some operation that would let this be closed off, right? Having both early literacy and higher education. And from that side there were recommendations, and I understand that also from the good practices it sees in other countries, about having the complete picture, but it didn't go ahead. So, what am I saying with this? Well, that from the Bank's side, from the know-how, from the possibilities of moving forward with new projects that would give the sector a certain integrality, there's then the limitation of what the national government wants to do, right? So it said for now we're not going to move ahead to another stage, we'll stay with early education and go with that, which is the focus they have. In fact, if you look at the budget and so on, the question of early literacy and protection of the first thousand days is very present in the message, and so on.

I: And in relation to this, could you identify, or perhaps describe, any period, key periods or distinctions in the historical or institutional development of the IDB in relation to these kinds of educational program, or they may also be technological ones connected to education. I say this in particular because you were just mentioning early childhood, for example, and I understand that the IDB historically, in the 1960s and 1970s for example, focused much more on financing national universities, in Argentina for instance... So the question goes in that direction: whether you think there are marked periods where one could identify a change of course in IDB policy or an acceptance of certain parameters from national governments that ask it to finance certain areas.

E: Look, I think that varies a lot depending on the country you have in front of you and this is like... how much the IDB can influence versus how much the government lets it. In countries like Argentina, let's say, it's a country with a super key trajectory in educational progress and it's

also one of the principal countries in terms of shareholding, a central player within the region, the country largely sets the field of play, right? So it relies on the IDB, on technical advice, on building programs, but the country very much sets the priorities in the sector. In other countries of the region, the IDB's role or possibility of influence is far greater. Central American countries, Caribbean countries, there the educational agenda is set far more by the institution than by the government itself. So I'd say that in those swings it depends a great deal on the country and on the region itself. There was a moment when the World Bank was very focused on supporting the Progresar scholarships, where it had a strong involvement, they continued with programs of that kind, and... but further back, I can't track for you how the swings have gone within Argentina. I know we're working with the National Government on early literacy and, for example, on an operation with the Province of Buenos Aires called "Trayectorias Educativas," support for strengthening educational trajectories, where things are seen in a more cross-cutting way, within a current of accompaniment for the educational formation of the boys and girls of the Province of Buenos Aires. There I think at some point there was a shift toward following the trajectory as something more end to end, right? Even understanding the way grading works today. In the Province of Buenos Aires they have to see whether those trajectories have been achieved, with grading different from what it used to be. But... no, I couldn't mark out for you like that... that cycle, well, before it was like this, in the 90s it was like that, I don't know.

I: Okay. Let's move on a bit, if that's all right, going back in a way to a broader picture of program design and policy design, a bit more general, and the question is, concretely, how does the IDB, the Bank, ensure that program designs are relevant and in keeping with the needs of each country, of each state, according to their different contexts, which may be different educational, cultural, technological contexts? And in case a program has to be adjusted, for example, where there's a model or something standard that has to be adjusted for some state, what criteria are used in that program design to fit the plan to the particularities of each country?

E: Right. In the programming exercise, every operation the Bank is going to finance is inscribed within a general strategy it has for the country. That is, although it's an individual operation, it has to make sense within a strategy of Bank support for the country. To frame that there's a series of instruments, let's say, they're in the Bank's policy, that have to be complied with and give it meaning. One of those matters is that it has to be framed within what is called the country strategy, which is a strategy in which the Bank and the country agree that they're going to collaborate over the next 4 years. It generally coincides with a government cycle, but not necessarily. In that country strategy different areas and strategic objectives to be supported in development matters are defined. Those strategic objectives arise from a diagnosis the Bank makes called country context challenges, in which sectoral analysis is done of, say, what transport is like, how the energy sector is doing, how the education sector is doing, and so on. So on the basis of that sectoral analysis different diagnoses of needs or development gaps arise. That's discussed with the government, it's batted back and forth, and it's defined that over the coming years work will be done on these pillars. Which is fairly flexible, right? It doesn't necessarily end up very prescriptive, but it does give you broad guidance on where things are going to be done. On that basis, annually, the Bank and the country agree on an annual programming of operations that the Bank is going to prepare and finance. So there the Bank proposes different programs, the government proposes its programs, and a common list is batted back and forth that ends up resulting in, well, these are going to be the 5, 6, 10 projects the Bank is going to finance per year, more or less, for an amount of 2 billion dollars, which is like a ticket... roughly the historical average. Among them, potentially, there may be an education operation. That's like the general framework of how it's inscribed, right? An education project doesn't come out of nowhere; rather, it has to sit within this sectoral gap analysis, within the country strategy, and within the annual programming. Then, how does that programming exercise happen? Well, generally governments have an idea of where they want to go and some general investments in what they want to do, but that has to make sense, above all in the IDB's new institutional strategy, which was approved

last year, they have to have a very strong focus on results, or impact. You'll see the Bank's strategy is called "Impact Plus" or "Impact+," so what's sought is to generate the greatest possible impact with the resources. So there's a very strong focus on delivery, on the attainment of results. On the basis of this problem the government brings, a whole context analysis is designed, a specific diagnosis, a problem tree is put together, a results chain, and on that basis the problems, the objectives, the results to be attained, the activities and outputs are defined. So everything ends up being part of this, which is nothing novel, right? But it's a results chain based on a problem tree. And that's what will structure the operation into, well, if my objectives are these three, they're going to turn into the components of the program. So if with this component I'm going to target early literacy, in this component I'll go with digital skills, in this component I'll go to improve the system of transfers from the nation to the provinces. And on that basis the activities are put together and so on. All of that is also obviously adjusted to the local context, right? So what's the Bank going to do? It's also going to do an analysis of institutional capacity, both of the competent area, for example the Seduc, the Education Secretariat, and of the jurisdictions involved in executing the program, to see whether they need to be strengthened in some way by the program; it's also analyzed whether... for example, in this early literacy there are different areas in which affirmative actions are required on gender, diversity, climate change, or indigenous peoples. To give you one example, in the new early literacy operation there are going to be contents in indigenous languages as well. So there the Bank makes sure that all diverse groups are included in the design of the operation. And this, uh... with different governments it has different permeability, right? So these things which, besides being super important for the design of an operation and for it to have everything it has to have in the good sense of attending to each group, also have to answer to corporate commitments of the Bank, where the countries agreed to say, well, look, climate change is important, so we have to have mitigation and adaptation actions; gender and diversity is important, so we have to have positive actions in that direction, disability too and, if there are indigenous populations, we also have to attend to this within the design

of the program. This clashes with the political will of governments many times, saying these subjects don't interest me, for example the current administration: "look, climate change no, indigenous population no, gender and diversity" ...; they're like... subjects that are in retreat in this administration's political agenda. So there the Bank keeps pushing within the margins it has available to influence the new programs to have these things. But generally it happens as a kind of dialogue under the radar, so as not to try to escalate this and have it be so visible in the design, because otherwise the government tells you "No, take this out, take this out," or it can generate noise, you know, and be a dealbreaker in the progress of the operation. So with this, more or less, what do I mean? That within the Bank's own corporate interests, it keeps up that dialogue and tries to include this in the operations, even where it isn't an absolute priority of the government, as in this case. Well, and the preparation happens in a cycle, right? From an identification through different missions that keep specifying these investments in as much detail as possible, right? How they're going to be carried out, how they're going to be executed, how the operation is going to be disbursed and the resources spent, the associated risks, and so on, through to negotiation, approval, and signing of the contract. And then it supervises from the launch until it closes. I mean, there's constant accompaniment, there are supervision missions, technical missions, for an operation. And then the institutional dialogue happens all the time. For example, our education specialist is in charge of maintaining links with all the provinces within the Federal Council of Education and also of carrying out outreach activities with other countries of the region. For example, recently Pettovello and Torrendell were taken to Brazil, to a kind of seminar with authorities from the region. So that dialogue is permanent quite apart from the loan itself.

I: Great, and you've already gone ahead a bit and it works out well for the next question, because it's more or less in line with what you were mentioning, talking about. The next one has to do specifically with the role of national, or even subnational, states in program design. And you had also mentioned a category, a concept, which is the country strategy, so I'll add it to this coming question: how is that table of dialogue be-

tween the national state and the institution, and the IDB, configured? And whether it's a strategy of consensus. You had mentioned that certain states, because of the capital they hold within the IDB, have more capacity to influence that decision about programs than others. Argentina, for example, would be one of the countries better positioned in that respect. And the question is whether there were disagreements, in any case you consider significant, among the actors involved during a design process, for example. And if those disagreements exist, in general, how are they usually resolved, whether there's a table, whether it's consensus, whether the state can finally cancel the program or whether it isn't in its interest to cancel it for whatever reason and it ends up accepting the IDB's conditions, or how that plays out.

E: Right. I'll go with the country strategy part, which is this document, a document that belongs to the Bank but is iterated with the government. So what the Bank does there is propose a country strategy to the government, in which the strategic objectives and the priority areas of that Bank-country relationship are reviewed and analyzed. So there's a back-and-forth there that is, uh... Bank and national government, and there are instances of public consultation on the country strategy that are held beforehand, as preparation, in which subnational governments are consulted, civil society is consulted, the private sector is also consulted. Uh... no, I mean they're like mechanisms for gathering opinion, right? It isn't mandatory. And when that country strategy document is closed the government doesn't exactly sign it either, right? Let's say, it's something they agree on informally, or it can end up being formal, but it doesn't have a countersignature from the government and the Bank publishes it. And you'll see that on the Bank's site it's there for every country. So from that side, that back-and-forth happens that way and subnational jurisdictions take part when this public consultation process is held. In fact I've had occasion to be there, when I was at Economy, in that public consultation process, in which we would say, well, from the national government, everything that's... fine, everything that's wrong, everything that should be improved, well, it happens in that dialogue. Uh... then as regards disagreements, well, in preparing an operation that back-and-forth happens all the time. There are things the

Bank wants to promote that the government isn't willing to accept, so... it's being calibrated all the time during preparation. There are cases in which the Bank says this has to be there no matter what, because otherwise the project won't get through the board, it won't, it won't have the board's approval if we don't include this, this, and this. That can create friction with the government because it isn't willing to include those things, for example, I don't know, affirmative actions on climate financing, so to speak. Well, and there are moments in which the operation, that preparation, becomes a bit more heated, but... generally they go through, there are some middle points or there are things the government even ends up accepting, because it's interested in the more general objective of the operation, right? It says "Well, all right, let's include this because otherwise it won't go through," or as a concession to the institution, which also has its corporate commitments to meet. But... those disagreements do happen in preparation, it isn't all a bed of roses in which everyone is in complete agreement; rather, there are back-and-forths and they get resolved during preparation. The problem there is, or actually the good practice is, as the preparation missions advance, it's good to resolve all these matters. There are matters having to do with disagreement over the execution scheme, over the risks of the operation, over the actions to be financed, uh... I don't know, to give you an example, we have projects called Provincial Agricultural Services, where there are investments in the agricultural sector in different provinces, a very historic IDB program. And there are some actions about which the Bank says "We can't finance these because this project uses gas, so the Bank in its strategy of transition toward clean energy can't finance this," or uh... "We can't finance this road because we have to consolidate existing roads and not create new paving, because that generates more CO₂," or the area where this road is located is very close to a protected Ramsar site, or a natural habitat. So the Bank wouldn't agree to finance that because it would be giving negative incentives for infrastructure development near a protected area. So small problems start to arise in which you end up having to define whether that goes into the operation or not. Generally, as I was saying, it's resolved within preparation, the idea is for it to be as early as possible, because otherwise all of that ends up getting

resolved at the moment of negotiating the contract and it becomes quite complex. What happens sometimes? Sometimes there are operations that one government administration negotiated and approved and the execution or the next steps pass to the following administration, which may not have the same political priorities. So there you'll see the Bank is super on board with a project and the new government comes in and says "this project isn't going to continue." So, well, that management of the problem has to be resolved and there the Bank can't oblige the government to continue anything it doesn't want, so decisions have to be made: discontinue, cancel, or not sign, or reformulate an operation. To give you an example: under the previous administration a second bridge linking Chaco and Corrientes was negotiated and approved, to modernize the whole logistics belt that runs through there at the Mercosur level and decentralize transport away from the capitals. And well, that was approved by the Bank; on our side it wasn't finally approved. With the Presidential Decree and the new administration it said "No, there's no way this 700 million dollar loan for Corrientes and Chaco is going ahead, no, it's not my priority." So there, that's it, it changes, it's cancelled, and so on, but it obviously creates its problems.

I: Right. And you had mentioned, moving to the next question, you had mentioned certain corporate interests of the... I think it's relevant, I'm going to combine that a bit with what I was going to ask earlier, which was whether these negotiations you mention exist, these back-and-forths. Are there formal instances of negotiation, of adapting the programs to countries? How do the interests of the IDB's funders come to bear in that context? I understand there are countries that finance the IDB, you'll correct me, but I understand some are perhaps European, or are from outside the continent, so what is the interest of those states in financing, for example, education in Latin America? What interest can a European state have, or Canada? Why do they do it? What are their incentives? And what are these corporate criteria you mentioned? And how do they interweave with these interests the funders may have? I understand that, at the end of the day, they're also the ones who run the Bank, right? They're the countries that also hold a certain share of the 100 percent of the shares on the board, right?

E: Yes, in the case, look, at the IDB there's a different situation from other institutions Argentina belongs to. CAF may be more similar in terms of distribution but... the IDB is made up of 48 countries divided between borrowers and non-borrowers. The borrowers are those countries that receive loans, while the non-borrowers are those that only contribute resources but don't receive loans. The borrowing countries are the Latin American countries, while the non-borrowers are generally the European countries, Japan, and so on... even China. The borrowing countries including the region and the United States, which are the regional countries, make up 50.2 percent of the Bank. So they have a majority there, as if in the Bank's institutional construction that kind of governance was reserved for the regionals, I mean, they have a little more than half. But the question you ask is a very good one, because those who request the loans are the Latin American countries that have these development gaps and so on. But at the same time, in the approval of operations they need the agreement of the non-borrowing countries that contribute resources. I was saying Argentina has a fairly strong role at the IDB because, together with Brazil, they each hold 11 percent of the share capital of the whole Bank, the United States has 30 percent, then after Argentina and Brazil comes Mexico and I think it has 7 percent. So, what happens with this? The United States with Argentina, with Brazil are 50 percent of the Bank. So how Argentina votes, or the influence it has, is much greater than it has in other institutions. For example, in the case of the World Bank, Argentina is 1 percent of the World Bank against 11 percent at the IDB, that's a lot, it has a much greater possibility of influence. In fact, during Cristina's second administration when there were World Bank approvals for Argentina, it had to do with that question, right? How new operations could be blocked within an institution where Argentina had very little weight versus an institution that kept giving Argentina credit because it was much more significant in the share capital. Now, the Bank's corporate commitments have to do with, on one side, Paris alignment. From 2023 on, all the Bank's operations have to be aligned with the Paris Agreement. What does this mean? The countries agreed that, whether at the level of mitigation or adaptation, the operation can't harm, or can't run counter to, that country's commit-

ments under the Paris Agreement. And this means that each country has presented a National Adaptation Plan and a strategy of mitigation and adaptation to climate change, which are its nationally determined commitments or contributions, whose final focus is not to increase CO2 emissions by “x” amount by such and such a date. So, what happens? Operations are always analyzed with an environmental screening in which it says “Hey, is this operation aligned with what the country committed to under the Paris Agreement? Yes or no.” If it’s aligned, great, it says 100 percent aligned, everyone’s happy, the Europeans applaud you, blah. It’s all lovely. If it isn’t aligned you have to see at what level it isn’t aligned. Because it’s one thing for it to promote emissions and another for it to have some gaps that can be corrected with the operation itself. So there a gradient comes in of what percentage aligned it is. An operation that runs entirely counter to the Paris Agreement isn’t viable, isn’t eligible. An operation that has some gaps can include actions within the financing itself to address them, right? So from there you have a corporate commitment that the Europeans watch with a very strong focus. Then, gender and diversity actions are super important, every project has to have at least one development objective that has some of these questions of how to promote actions that improve things for minority or more vulnerable populations, whether of disability, sexual diversity, or traditional gender. And in the case of projects that may affect indigenous populations, for example, we have water and sanitation projects in the Norte Grande where there are communities that are Wichí, Diaguíta, and so on. Well, if you’re going to have a project in an area where it’s been identified that there’s an indigenous population involved, you have to have some kind of action, whether outreach actions in indigenous languages, or some action of economic compensation. Well, it has to have something. So all those things have to be attended to during preparation because of the corporate requirements. But the question of energy transition, clean energy, and so on, is a very strong focus of the European countries. So they aren’t going to intervene beforehand to tell you “you can’t do this project.” There are things that can’t be done that have to do with hydrocarbons, whether at different levels of... like extraction, transport, processing, things that impact directly on CO2, that’s out. I

mean, you can no longer finance that with the Bank, it's sort of prohibited. But within operations you're going to have to attend to these corporate commitments, which the Europeans will ask you about when the operation goes for approval, which is dealt with by the Bank's board on a given date. And then you were asking me about the interest of Europeans, Canadians, developed countries in education. Well, there it makes sense within the framework of what's in the country strategy, let's say, it's a social sector, the Bank is always present. So there aren't questions that are, uh... There aren't questions of not wanting to move forward on these subjects versus subjects, I don't know, for example, of renewable energy, no. One doesn't beat the other; rather, within the list of strategic objectives for the country, it's a door that's open and the Bank has education projects throughout the region. So they're going to keep being there because the gaps are still significant.

I: So, considering a bit the next question, it was tied precisely to this matter of sustainability... What elements can be considered really central to the design of programs in connection with a certain guarantee of sustainability and feasibility of these programs? Also, thinking not only of the environmental but also of the financial. And, picking up a bit on what you mentioned, perhaps to add to this question, I don't know how connected it is, but to add the following point: picking up a bit on what you were answering, how is it possible to affirm that the states, the ones that finance, the funders, are actively interested in Latin American states moving toward certain criteria or certain indicators? What would those indicators be? What would those criteria be, for example, in environment or in education? What is the more concrete incentive they have, if there's some index that, for example, France looks at, or Japan looks at, in relation to what the IDB does?

E: Perfect, perfect. No, no, I'll go, that's perfect, it's very good. I'll start with sustainability if you like and then we'll go to the other. If I forget any part, cut me off and mention it. The question of the sustainability of investments is key, I mean, you're going to take on an operation with, for example, a ticket of 100, 200 million dollars, to address a problem of early literacy. One of the key questions, and it's great that you've raised it because it's the question they ask you at the Bank, well, the Bank is

going to have an influence over these 4 years spending these resources that belong to all the countries, and then what? How is it sustained? No, at the level of impact it's no use for them to be... like sporadic, isolated investments by the Bank and then for there to be no continuity policy from the government with its own resources. So that analysis of the sustainability of the investments is made, which is a bit... supported on government information and it's a bit take it or leave it. Why do I say this? Because, let's see, this government says "Our priority is early literacy, in the budget you'll see it appears as a priority in the message, the resources are there, we're going in this direction." The Bank's involvement is expected to be complementary to what the government's proposal is. That is, that it shouldn't depend 100 percent on the Bank for this to happen, but that the Bank supports with technical capacity and with financial resources something that is a priority of the government. So you say, I don't know, the early literacy program is 2 billion dollars in the government's approach and the Bank is going to be contributing 200. So what the Bank has there is a concept of additionality, that is, not exclusivity in the policy, in that kind of public policy. This is present, for example, in the analyses made in project preparation at the IDB and the World Bank; in fact at the World Bank they also ask you to indicate how much the government is going to do, let's say, at the level of impact, and to think about how it's going to keep being financed the day after tomorrow. For example, the new operation has support for what's called "hora más," which is the addition of an hour of class time in the jurisdictions. And that's like it gets paid. If it happens, the Bank recognizes it. And that would have, well, it's financing a result which is like the improvement in educational quality, because you're extending the hours of education. So sustainability is super key and the government has to justify it. Now I'll tell you, the government changes, the political orientation of the government changes, and that defense of what has to do with sustainability, of having said "yes, our plan for the next 4 years is going to be this and that," you're left a bit defenseless as a Bank saying "hey, are you going to comply or not?" Even so, that justification is there and it has to be demonstrated that there's an idea and a decision to sustain the invest-

ments beyond. Uh... you'd said, the other question, had to do with... how it was measured?

I: Exactly, with indicators and criteria.

E: Right, alongside the operation, you know, as I'd mentioned, a problem tree is made, a results chain is made, a development objective is set, outputs, activities, result. Well, that's accompanied by a kind of matrix, a logical framework and a results matrix, where you're going to have outcome indicators, output indicators, activity indicators, for the large activities and actions to be financed within the operation. So that's negotiated, it gets structured as the preparation of the operation matures and then it's going to be what serves as this pattern of evaluation throughout the life of the program and at the close of the program. During the life of the program you're going to be seeing how you're achieving those expected results of the operation, which will range from, I don't know, the number of students enrolled, the reduction in school dropout, in corporate matters too, right? For vulnerable populations. And you have half-yearly progress reports or half-yearly reports where we monitor this, you have a mid-term report on the project where you say "Hey, have we reached the halfway point of the program's time or resources? How are we doing? Are we achieving what we wanted to do?" And at the end of the program you have a project completion report where you say "well, the project ended this way and we achieved all this, we didn't achieve that, why it wasn't achieved"; it also serves as lessons learned. So there's permanent monitoring, which I think is one of the main things multilaterals add to the relationship with government because, in fact, we're analyzing through a knowledge product what evaluation systems the country itself has. And you'll see, since you've been studying it, that you have Siempro,⁴¹ things the National Council of Social Policies does, then you have the evaluations the agencies themselves carry out. So there's like a fragmented system of public policy evaluation that... isn't consolidated. And in some, some ministries or even units within a ministry have super strong evaluation areas and in others they're nonexistent. So what's good about the institutions is that they oblige you in a certain

⁴¹ He is referring to the Information, Monitoring and Evaluation System for Social Programs, which belongs to the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies (CNCPS).

way to think about projects with an orientation toward results and with permanent evaluation. So, right, this is going to be financed in order to achieve such a result, and the Bank is even moving toward this idea of impact, that is, well, it doesn't matter so much how much is approved, how much is executed, how much is disbursed, but what results you achieve with those resources, what you committed to, right? Because, at the end of the day, what are you taking on the operations for? To solve a development problem, to reduce a gap you have and that you identified at country level. So, all right, dollars come in with the operations but the focus is on solving the initial problem you had, so it's monitored and that's tracked and projects are rated satisfactory, moderately satisfactory, on alert when they start getting complicated, or problem. And that rating, besides hitting the Bank internally, I mean, it harms it if it's bad for new things, has conditions like, well, if you're in trouble you're going to have much stricter follow-up missions or ex ante reviews of a great many processes, whereas if everything's going well the Bank gives you more rope, right? So that you operate more independently, because you're really doing great and it's progressing well, but, well, permanent.

I: Great, moving on now...

E: Ah, and I forgot to tell you one little thing. Because that's evaluated project by project, right? How do you evaluate? With outcome indicators and so on. But then, just as you have a country strategy, which I was telling you about as "well, we're going to address these problems over a period of 4 years," the Bank evaluates the implementation of that country strategy. So then it ends up evaluating how that country strategy turned out against the objectives you'd set yourself and, in that case, sectorally, if there were objectives associated with educational inclusion and so on there's going to be an analysis the Bank makes ex post, a year later, for example, after that period ended, of how things went in that sector. That's neat. So if you're interested in seeing that trajectory a bit, you can get into the evaluations of the country strategies and see, "control F," and see how education is doing. And there it'll tell you: it worked wonderfully, or the Bank didn't achieve the objectives it set for itself in that sector.

I: Great. That's great information. To move to the final stretch of the interview, the last questions. One is about two programs that are the specific ones in this thesis project, one called Habilidades Digitales or Digital Skills and another called SilverTech, which is distance education for adults, both of them for Argentina. The question is whether you have any connection to these projects or whether you've ever heard them mentioned within the institution.

E: I've heard of them but only tangentially, like in some list of projects, because I understand they have to do with IDB Lab, I think with IDB Lab, which is the Bank's innovation laboratory. But... firsthand I'd say no, I don't know them. I understand SilverTech is aimed at the older population, right? Like silver economy, it's a subject the Bank is paying quite a bit of attention to, the populations previously described as aged or elderly, being able to capitalize on that, but... no, those projects themselves, no, I don't know them, beyond the name.

I: Right. And almost to close, let me ask you whether, in light of what we've been discussing, what we've talked about, you could also state, according to your training in public policy, in international relations, whether the IDB designs public policy autonomously. I mean, whether that's a statement one can make or whether, on the contrary, you'd say it functions more as a body advising on public policy designed nationally. What's your view on that?

E: I think the Bank is going to come in as far as you let it come in. So there you have a very different gradient across countries, as I was saying, at the Caribbean level, at the Central American level, with... countries with less tradition and strength in public policy, the Bank has a very predominant position... and it has influence, clearly, it can design public policy for you... almost autonomously. In other countries, no. For example..., to give you a graphic example, and this is something people from the IDB have told me: here the Bank's representative is the Bank's representative and has to wait for an economy minister to see him, when the economy minister can, and so on. Whereas in a Central American country the economy minister has to wait for the IDB representative to design to see him. So there's a balance of power that's going to have quite an effect on that.

I: Where is that, sorry? What did you mention? I didn't catch it, in Argentina?

E: In Argentina, Brazil, let's say, the large countries of the region, the balance of power is inversely proportional and, in other countries, the Bank's representative has much more influence. Now, it depends, on one side, on what that country-Bank balance of power is like, large countries, small countries of the region... But on the other side it also has to do with installed capacities. For example, the new government administration, in what has been social protection and education, the Bank, and this is very much off the record too, uh..., has collaborated but very actively on public policy recommendations and even on the composition of government teams and on the definition of public policy. Why? Well, there out of an explicit need, in that the executing agency, the government counterpart, asked the Bank for it. So there was a need there and the Bank was able to have greater influence versus other historical moments when it has had less influence. I don't know, to give you an example, it has now had greater influence in Social Protection and in Education than it had under the previous government, where there were also Social Protection and Education operations. Why? Well, because the government needed a hand there in how to think about it. It also has to do with the people involved, for example, the Secretary of Education was a Bank consultant, he understands the Bank's system very well, he knows it well, he trusts the Bank a lot. So he leaned decidedly on the Bank to think through sectoral policy. There they let the Bank in more than in other sectors, like Energy, for example, or Transport, where they sort of said "No, no, don't get so involved."

I: Okay, understood, great. That was the last one, I don't know if you have anything else to add, or anything left unsaid, so to speak, but that would be the last question if not.

E: No, no... I think we covered things, my apologies that on those two individual operations I don't... I don't have info. I'd say that if you need any pointers about Bank education specialists who'd be interesting, for me to point you to them, I can tell you and, well, every success...

I: Well, thank you very much.

E: (...) in what comes next.

I: Sure, thank you very much. See you soon.

E: Take care, my friend.

Question by message about the chart

- Question about the chart: on this chart, from 0 to 10, where would you place the IDB's policy design? The self-perception chart is shown.
- Answer: six (6).

Interview 3: external area consultant at the IDB

- Date: January 23, 2025.
- Duration: 34:35.

I: There we are. Hello, well, thank you very much for agreeing to the interview. And... if it's all right with you we'll start with an introductory question about your profile, whether you could briefly describe your academic trajectory up to joining the IDB, where you work today, and whether you could also tell us a bit about what area of the IDB you work in, what your responsibilities are, and your current role.

E: (withheld for reasons of anonymity).

I: Great, great, you answered perfectly. Now I wanted to know whether, on the basis of that training but also of your practical experience... what would you consider, within the IDB, and also comparatively with other international institutions, the aspects or particularities it has as regards the formulation of public policy? Or, if you like, the design of these projects you mentioned, in connection with the research you mentioned, which is part of your work, if you'd like to go into that in more depth, so as to know a bit more about how the IDB designs public policy, and whether it designs it. And also to go deeper into these aspects that differentiate it from others, from other institutions.

E: Okay. One clarification on this is that as an external consultant many of the... of the IDB's internal processes, of how programs and projects are formulated, are unknown to me or... I've only had the chance to know them very indirectly, through the implementation of projects. In most cases I come in at the execution stage, with the exception of a technical cooperation operation or two that I've helped design. The IDB is a development bank that works for its clients, right? States are its clients, so the formulation of projects is very much determined by the demands and needs of the countries that require the IDB's assistance. And since it's a development bank and not a private bank, it has the component that the contribution it makes is... not only financial but comes accompanied by technical assistance in the various programs it works on. What I know is about the area I've worked in, which is the area of State Reform. At one time it was called "state modernization," today it's called "innovation," but it's the improvement of the public

sector, the efficiency of the public sector, transparency... and accountability of the public sector. So it's a sector that has its particularities... which also have an impact on the way the Bank's programs and actions are projected. As you know, the Bank's assistance has to be requested by the state, so that goes through the ministries of finance, which are the Bank's interlocutor for requesting either the opening of negotiations for a loan or a nonreimbursable technical cooperation operation, which tend to be smaller... and which are sometimes the gateway to a future loan that is larger, with more capacity for action and impact. Comparatively, sorry, this means that in my area in particular, which has to do with anticorruption policy, the state's interests have to be aligned with strengthening that area, whether by requesting technical assistance or by taking on debt, in order to strengthen an area that is often uncomfortable for whoever has to make that decision, which is the executive. That is, strengthening the area so that it can oversee the executive itself, or its officials. But sometimes, yes, they are aligned, countries understand that improving transparency and anticorruption standards has an impact on many other areas of interest to them, or even on the government's public image and citizens' confidence in the government. So when that's aligned, cooperation of this kind is triggered, with conditions that obviously have to do with the needs of the country or the government, it's what the government asks for. The IDB obviously has a certain margin of influence, whether recommending policies or suggesting specialists to work on the projects. And... sometimes also conditions on the financing, if it's a technical cooperation operation, it has a funder, normally other states, that has its interests, often of... soft power, right? Of, well, making its own policies serve as an example for public policy in Latin America. So displaying that assistance or exchanging technical assistance with that country, which is the donor. So when a project is put together all those factors come into play. Uh... comparatively with others I don't have much to compare with. I also worked for a time at the World Bank, my experience, which doesn't mean it can be generalized, is that at the IDB what I see is much more closeness to and knowledge of the reality of the countries compared with the World Bank, which works at a global level and doesn't have that regional focus and knowledge. I mean,

it obviously has specialists in regions and offices in regions, but in my experience I feel the IDB is much more anchored in the local context, from what I had occasion to work on with countries from different regions. I worked with some in Africa, in Asia, for the World Bank.

(Fragment withheld for reasons of anonymity.)

I: Then, continuing with the interview and to go a bit deeper into this differentiation of the IDB from, for example, the World Bank, and also differentiating it even from bodies of national states, which might be the Ministry of Education. What aspects do you consider unique or particular to the IDB in the area of education specifically? And, within that, since your expertise is bound up with transparency and open government, whether you think the IDB's contribution in promoting open government and transparency affects any educational area. Or how you think that touches on educational matters that may be connected to the IDB, right?

E: I have zero experience in the area of education and in my work with the Innovation Division we haven't had any interaction with the division that handles education matters. Uh... which could have been the case, I mean, there are cases where projects are worked on across different divisions. I've never had occasion to work on education matters, so I'm completely unfamiliar with that. Potentially some of the policies that... or of the areas we work on in the Innovation division could be related, or could have an impact on areas of education, I mean intersections between transparency, integrity, and education, or open government policies, which have more to do with encouraging the participation of the various actors involved in a given public policy, as education might be, in the formulation of the policy or in the oversight or monitoring of how a given educational policy or program is working, uh... It could be, but no, I haven't had occasion to work on anything like that, as I have in some other areas, so I can't tell you anything in particular about that.

I: Okay. Going back a bit, the general picture for this thesis, one aspect that stands out in the literature on the IDB is certain changes that have occurred, right? For example, from the moment the Bank was created, through the 1970s, the 1980s, then the 1990s, the Berlin Wall com-

ing down, up to today. Each period has its nuances, and the IDB's direction has also varied slightly in the way it approaches projects. So the question is whether you could identify some key periods in the IDB's institutional historical development, in relation to your programs, or even in relation to some educational programs that occur to you. But the question is directed generally at the Bank's historical background.

E: It would be more of an academic speculation on the matter and not... not about my experience there, because it's very short. I mean, the historical period of the IDB I've lived through is the last few years and... I know of some changes in the division I work for, but they haven't necessarily been tied to what one might think of as broader frameworks for... for defining those historical periods in the IDB's orientation. This because the area works on a subject or... yes, a fairly specific, particular sector. So the changes that have taken place over the course of its history have had to do with how the approach to anticorruption in the world and to the fight against corruption has evolved. So ways of speaking about the matter have kept changing, the approaches and the tools with which one works have kept changing, the name of the area has kept changing, which I mentioned to you a moment ago. At one time speaking of State Reform was the norm... it stopped being called that, state modernization afterward... then that too, and then fashions in names, I mean, open government, innovation, everything to do with the digital... Obviously the digital was a big change, I mean, today there can't be an area of practice where technology and, particularly in the last two years, artificial intelligence doesn't intersect with any area of public policy, so that has also had an impact on the IDB, and in fact I started and am working on digital subjects crossed with anticorruption or integrity. So the changes have had more to do with this than with something we can frame in paradigms or historical shifts at different moments in the Bank's life.

I: So you could say that the changes, I don't know whether perhaps the paradigm or the focus of certain bodies of scholarship, of certain areas, have an impact on the IDB, I mean the academic changes taking place in the different disciplines have an impact on how the IDB formu...

E: Yes, obviously. There are very specialized people, very much coming from, or with a very substantial background either in academic research, or in practice, or with experience in management... which means that the changes taking place have an impact, and quite a rapid one, on the planning of the IDB's programs. If we think of the most recent... I don't know, the 2030 agenda, today contested and so on, obviously had an impact on some of the IDB's programs, uh... the IDB's latest institutional strategy, which is focused on growth and development, has a fairly notable focus on climate change, for example. I mean, yes, yes, the discussions taking place in the world obviously have an impact on the IDB's strategic institutional planning. That crossed with different factors, obviously, some more political, since the Bank is made up of political representatives of the countries... the orientation a different presidency can give to things happening in the countries in the area of anti-corruption. When the whole Odebrecht scandal happened, for example, it had a big impact on the type of projects financed afterward, on strengthening both investigations and the improvement of transparency standards in infrastructure and large investment projects.

I: Excellent. How, then, as an external consultant, would you say the IDB ensures that program design is relevant to the countries in educational, cultural, or technological terms? That is, what criteria would you say the design uses to adjust programs in light of the sociocultural or economic particularities of each country?

E: Well, there's an unfathomable factor there that triggers and shapes and largely conditions any kind of project: it's the client country or the member country. So those contextual factors are given by the country. Unlike, I don't know, other institutions that can generate their projects and then see where to implement them, at the IDB if the state doesn't ask for something, there's no project. Obviously the IDB has, within its programs, strategic lines, tools it works with and so on, which have to align with the country's demands at that moment. So, depending on how those factors interact, the result can be an... an operation more or less anchored in the cultural factors and... other contextual factors present in the country.

I: And within that design, then, with this very strong link there is between the state and the IDB, with the state being part of the program because it's the one that in some way, as you mentioned, drives it as well, what place would you say is given to the national state, even to subnational states, within the IDB? And do you think that at the time of formulating the programs there was at any point a significant disagreement in the programs you worked on, for example? And how are those disagreements resolved when designing the program?

E: The role is key, I'd say, such that if the IDB feels like doing something in a country and the country doesn't want it, no, it won't be able to, there's no way. No... no, it isn't that... To that extent. I've had occasion... this week for example, we got word from the... we're thinking, we'd discussed with a body of a country, with an agency of a Central American country, specific support for something we wanted to do and had done in other countries and... the request went to the IDB's country office and the Ministry of Finance said no. Because it wasn't interested in support for that agency in its country and preferred to direct the financing to other programs. And the conversation ended. I mean, no, there's no way to get around that. I mean, there are obviously negotiation mechanisms and factors there that can influence how the country's interests are... aligned with the IDB's country office, with the program or with the division, the division chief in Washington eventually, more formal and more informal negotiation mechanisms. I didn't see any of that in my practice, but because no, I haven't had occasion to intervene myself.

I: And within these negotiations you mentioned, negotiation mechanisms, what are those mechanisms concretely that occur to you, that you can mention, whether formal or informal? And within these negotiations, how do the interests of the IDB's funders come to bear on the prioritization of objectives or strategies within the programs, or even on the choice of programs? I don't know whether it works that way, but the question would also be: why are there states interested in financing the development of Latin America?

E: On the first part, negotiations... are multiparty and complex because there are many interests on both sides, in the state and at the IDB,

that combine to give a particular result. On the state's side there's the agency, the potential beneficiary agency, the Ministry of Economy or Finance, which is the one that holds the key, I mean, any state agency. The Ministry of Education needs financing or wants IDB support for whatever program, it needs to convince the Minister of Finance. No, there's no way for it to get financing if it doesn't pass through that filter. There it will depend on the negotiating power the Minister of Education has, the president's backing, the moment the Minister of Finance is in, I mean, a great many political factors... on the state's side. An intermediate one, which is the negotiation with the country office. Each country has an allocated quota of money, both for lending and for technical cooperation, and it has to prioritize what to devote it to. So there's another incentive factor there for the Minister of Finance or the Chief of Staff, if that's who makes the decisions on how to prioritize among the different areas of government and make use of international financing. States are obviously interested in financing from multilateral bodies because it's financing with lower interest rates than they can get in the private sector, in most cases, or, in other cases, because they value the technical assistance that comes with financial support from the IDB, which they don't get with a private bank. And on the IDB's internal side the divisions also have a certain amount of money available which depends on the funders, depends on what the IDB allocates among the different divisions and... it has to prioritize. So it also has strategic objectives and it's going to prioritize in which countries and in which area, and on which subjects, it wants to spend the money. On the other thing, no, I don't know, the incentives of the contributing countries, donors or borrowers, non-lenders, uh... there I'm in the dark. I don't know and I never operated at the IDB's political level, but rather at the technical level. And, I mean, you have the lending countries and you have other countries, even extraregional ones, that put in funds for particular areas they want. And that works more with the logic of international cooperation, right? International development cooperation, developed countries devote part of their budget to technical cooperation. And there each country has different development assistance policies. Some with more geopolitical objectives and others less so.

I: And considering that the Bank plays this double role, right? Of financial institution but also public policy institution, I think the concept of sustainability and feasibility in the programs is relevant, all the more so given the impact strategy it currently maintains. So the question is what elements does the IDB currently consider central to design, in the design of programs, in order to guarantee this sustainability and feasibility of the programs? And what indicators, what kinds of criteria can be built for measurements of this sort?

E: It's obviously financial sustainability of the project and technical sustainability over the long term and sustainability as regards other social, environmental, and other factors, it's obviously a factor taken into account in all projects. The financial one is key, because the IDB aims for its support to be circumstantial and temporary, and not for a country or an area of a country to depend on the IDB in order to function. That's considered a failure of IDB support. So that factor of, well, the IDB does..., above all with nonreimbursable technical cooperation operations, which is money the IDB allocates to supporting a country, but it's little and it's for a short time. And so, I don't know, the other time we had to design a project that had to do with developing a specific management software for an oversight agency. And the most critical point was how you get the technology area of that agency to have total control of the software so as to be able to maintain it over time, improve it and change it, and not have it depend on continuous IDB support for whatever comes up as implementation advances. So there was a very key sustainability factor there, and it was critical in that case, and it led the project to include not only the development of the software but also support for strengthening the agency's technology area in terms of resources, uh... of human capital in that agency's technology area, and making the software open. So in contracting the developer firm it was part of the terms of reference for the contract and so on. Very practical aspects of where the consideration of sustainability shows.

I: So, in light of this conversation we've had, one of the final questions now, before moving to the programs specifically, would be whether you could affirm that the IDB designs public policy autonomously. That is, if you had to place the IDB on an axis where, on one side, it's strictly a

technical advisory body and, on the other side, it's let's say a think tank, or a body that designs public policy. Where would you place it? Closer to which side?

E: No, difficult, I think I'd say it's somewhere in the middle. Obviously the IDB designs its strategic plan and has its priorities... but even that strategic plan is designed in light of the demands and needs of the member countries. If the IDB had an agenda of its own remote from that demand it wouldn't have requests, it wouldn't have clients, so it has to work for its clients. And those demands from governments are what principally, or to a greater extent, define the programs and public policies the IDB designs. Often those policies are defined by a continuous conversation between the state and the IDB, right? So, what's clear is that a project can start from a shared diagnosis of the problem and the design of the solution is a conversation between the two parties, where there can be contributions coming more from the state's initiative and others that are suggestions from the IDB, which the state may or may not take up.

I: Great, and regarding two specific programs, then, one is...

E: Obviously then there are states more, as with everything... There are states with greater negotiating power and states with less negotiating power. If it's a state that desperately needs IDB funds for its regular operations and without that money is in trouble... it's in a worse position to negotiate than larger countries of the region, uh... for which IDB financing is one more source... and they can afford not to have financing or to reject financing if it doesn't align perfectly with what they need.

I: Right. And turning specifically to two programs, one being *Habilidades Digitales* or Digital Skills and the other *SilverTech*, which is about education for older adults... The question is whether you have any connection to these projects and, if so, what area required your role and what specific area these programs come under.

E: No, I don't know them and... I heard about them for the first time when you asked me or sent me some of the questions... I don't know them because I don't work on education matters and we haven't had the opportunity in the Innovation division to work on anything jointly with the division that handles education matters. And, on the other hand,

because I understand they're from Argentina and I don't work for Argentina, I haven't worked for Argentina so far, I don't work for the Argentina country office. So no, I'm completely unfamiliar with them. And I don't know anyone who worked on the programs so I can't help you much there.

I: Thank you very much, and finally, is there anything else you'd like to add? This is the close of the interview, if anything occurs to you that you weren't asked about and that might contribute to the thesis, this is the moment to close.

E: No, I think, I think not, we've touched on the subjects that could occur to us for this topic you're researching. So... I think that's everything.

I: Great, thank you very much, then.

E: Not at all.

Question by message about the chart

- Question about the chart: on this chart, from 0 to 10, where would you place the IDB's policy design? The self-perception chart is shown.
- Answer: four (4).

Interview 4: research coordinator at the IDB

- Date: January 24, 2025.
- Duration: 47:11.

I: There we are. Thank you very much for joining the interview, it's very kind of you, so I'm very grateful. If it's all right with you we'll start with a brief description you could give us of your trajectory, that is, if you could describe your academic training up to joining the IDB, when you began working at the IDB, in what area, and what your role currently is, what responsibilities that role entails.

E: (withheld for reasons of anonymity).

I: Great. And what you mentioned at the end, the research question, connects a bit with the next question, which is: what aspects would you consider unique to the IDB, in relation to other multilateral organizations, in the field of policy design or formulation? And there you might perhaps add your experience: what does research in these areas, for example knowledge economics, behavioral economics, sorry, add to the formulation of public policy, or to program design?

E: With respect to the other multilaterals, I don't think we're very different from the World Bank. I think the difference with the World Bank comes perhaps from... well, from a geographic focus, of course. The World Bank is much broader in its geographic focus, the Bank's is focused on the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. And that, at the same time, lets us be much closer, right? To the countries, to the governments, and to be able to support them more directly on the public policy issues that are pressing in each of the countries. Clearly there isn't, nobody has all the answers, right? And there are many things we still don't know, so research, the creation of knowledge, is fundamental in order to understand what the best public policy responses are to different... to different situations, right? Uh... what behavioral economics adds is trying to understand a bit more why sometimes policies that one would think are very well designed have no impact. They don't generate changes in people's behavior. So understanding a bit more that sometimes it's a bit harder to change behavior, to get citizens to do certain things just because I published a law in the official gazette and thinking "Well, that's it, I publish a law in the official gazette, from the next day

on everyone read it, understood it, knows how it applies to them, and so on, right?” Whereas no, whereas it isn’t like that, so behavioral economics explains to you that, well, there are a lot of... there are a lot of biases we all have, which mean that... well, that we procrastinate, that we don’t do certain things, that we don’t go to the doctor, that we eat more sugar than we should, uh... that we sleep less because we stay up at night on social media, or whatever, right? So... that starts to give us indications that in order to improve public policy, to change behaviors, you have to understand how people make decisions. And from there design the policies, the systems, and so on, in such a way that they really do change behaviors, right? So...

I: And there, on behavioral economics, it takes me directly, without being a specialist in the subject, it takes me directly to the work of Kahneman and Amos Tversky, the book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* being the most popular. But... would that be the state of the art at the IDB today? Or is there a lot of later research, after Kahneman’s work, that you could mention to us and that has been used for public policy design at the IDB? Because what I understand, from what I’ve been researching for the thesis, is that within the IDB research, academic research, has a big impact on decision-making for design.

E: No, I mean clearly all the work of Kahneman and Tversky is fundamental, right? It’s the foundational work, right? I mean, that book is more of a popularizing one, later on. But they started working in the 70s, well, that’s why Kahneman won the Nobel Prize in 2001. Besides Kahneman and Tversky, I mean, Richard Thaler, Cass Sunstein, have been part of that first wave. That’s also why Richard Thaler won the Nobel Prize in 2017, and the book *Nudge* by Thaler and Sunstein is one, is another, along with the one you named by Kahneman and Tversky, another of the great classics of the literature. I mean, what those books give you is a general framework for understanding a bit of how one thinks, right? But then, well, there’s a lot, there’s a lot of frontier research still being done every day. To understand a bit better what the biases are, but above all to understand a bit better what public policy tools are needed to change that kind of... that kind of... or to lessen those biases, right? And I think what they set out, a bit, were the biases, they gave examples of the bi-

ases, of how that affects decision-making. But today we're still advancing on how this directly affects public policy. So that's why we have, for example, vaccination programs. So how do we get people to vaccinate more. So that's something they hadn't done, okay? And that... wasn't clear. And not only that, but now the technologies keep improving and so now, for example, we're designing interactive chatbots with artificial intelligence, okay? So that in that way not only... before, let's say, in the experiments we used to do, I would give you the information I thought you needed. So I'd say "well, here I'd make a diagnosis and say, well, I think Tomás isn't getting vaccinated because of 'x,' because he doesn't know where he has to get vaccinated, or because he doesn't trust the vaccine, okay." So on the basis of the diagnosis I'd then tell you "Tomás, look, it's good for you to get vaccinated, look at the vaccine, this one is very safe, let's say, it's good... in Spanish it's... safe, es segura. And, well, look, you have to go and get vaccinated at the clinic three blocks from your house." But of course, you maybe weren't getting vaccinated for another reason, okay? So now, with the chats, with the interactive chatbots, now you're going to be the one asking the question about what interests you. So we're looking at that, for example, that's something new. The whole subject of using these things in tax collection had never been done and that's something we pioneered, right? With work in Argentina that had never been done.

I: And let me ask you about that, to go a bit deeper into the thesis subject: the programs I'm studying specifically are educational programs... So the question goes toward whether what you mention had any impact in relation to programs in the field of education, or even educational technology, right? Also, since you mentioned technology.

E: Absolutely, absolutely. I mean here, here there's... in education it's interesting. In education, basically, what do you need in order to have results in education? What you need for there to be results in education is, on one side, for the kids to go to school, okay? So... and on that there are experiments on how to get kids to go to school. One, for example, of the cases, of the most interesting experiments, was one where parents received an immediate alert when the child hadn't gone to school, okay? And that had two effects, right? It had an effect having to do with infor-

mation, there were times when the parent didn't know, if the parent goes off to work, say, the child stays home alone, let's imagine adolescents perhaps, the child stays home alone and the parent assumes the child went to school. And maybe the child didn't go to school and the parent didn't find out. Well, sending the parent an immediate text message so they know the child didn't go already has value. But at the same time it has value in that parents often don't keep count of how many times their children are absent. So making it more vivid, let's say, the fact that the child isn't at school and telling them "He isn't there, it's the third time the child hasn't gone, or whatever, what's going on..." And at the same time giving parents resources, in case the child is ill, telling them "Look, by the way, if the child is ill, you can go to this hospital, you can go to this other one..." Or if something is going on at home and you need support, "Look, there's the school psychologist," and so on. So, I mean, that one for example, the first thing was for the child to go to school. The second thing was for the teachers to go to school, that's another problem, in many, above all in our countries, teachers don't go to school. So the question was, well, how do we reduce absenteeism, okay? So there was... something that exists, for example, in Argentina there was the... the prize for non-absenteeism, I don't know what it was called but... if you do go to work they pay you more than if you don't go to work, so to speak... presentismo, it would be presentismo. (Forgive me, I don't live in Argentina so the words escape me.) And... right, so it turned out that they weren't, those programs weren't very effective, okay? So something else was done, above all this was done in Peru for the first time, sponsored by the Bank. There's this thing which is loss aversion, right? That people, people put more value on what they have and can lose than on what they don't have yet, right? So there are all these experiments, for example, that show that, I don't know, if I say to you, Tomás, "how much would you pay for this mate?" and you tell me "Well, I don't know, 5 dollars. I reckon, I don't know, if it costs more than 5, I don't buy it, if it costs less than 5, I buy it." However, if now this mate is yours and I ask you "Hey Tomás, what would you sell me the mate for?" "Well, no, for less than 15 I won't sell it to you, okay?" Because it's something you already have, you already have it, it's... it's your property. So when

you have it you put a much higher value on it, okay? than when you don't, than when you don't have it. So the experiment that was done was to prepay the teachers, give them the bonus in advance, and then they lost it if they were absent, okay? And that was much more effective. Of course, once you've collected the money, if you're then absent, having to give it back is much more costly even mentally, let alone if you've already spent it. Uh... so, for example, there are lessons for getting the kids to go, lessons for getting the teachers to go. Then the question was that we know that education, there's a saying, right? that exists in Argentina which says "education begins at home," right? And so it was a question of... it being clear that one can do a lot at school, but if the child doesn't have, isn't encouraged from home, doesn't have a lot of complementary activities, it isn't, it isn't going to work. So, for example, the research we did from here was on how to get, for example, parents to read to their children: how to do it, how to encourage them so that parents... So programs were done to encourage parents, right? They were given the material... Sorry...

I: No, if you could perhaps mention some specific program there's been in Argentina that stands out in any of these respects, out of everything you mentioned, one you remember.

E: Uh... yes, not in Argentina, in Argentina no... no, I'm not sure. In Chile, Costa Rica, yes. If you look at the papers by, for example, the papers by Samuel Berlinski, who is Argentine but works here with me, he has several of these that you can... that you can check. If you go to the website of the Behavioral Economics group, behavioural.iadb.org, you go in there, you type education, and you'll see all the education research.

I: Great, thank you.

E: But well, so, again, for the kids to read, right? So then, and this way I can go on, well, how to get the kids to do their homework, how to get the teachers to introduce, for example, to use computers, I mean, there are... so, there are experiments that have looked at the whole chain of what is needed to improve education, up to the point of how to encourage boys or girls to go to university. So by showing them the returns university brings in terms of future, of future salaries, future income, and so on. So, I mean, you do, there are interventions ranging from, as I

say, from children reading at home, to going to university and making good decisions about what to study and at which universities to study. So experiments have been done across the whole chain.

E: Yes, honestly no, no, education is precisely not the area I know best, right? But, I mean, basically what I'd tell you is, look, historically the Bank was a bank that did much more infrastructure than anything else. So when it did, when it did education, say, what it did was build schools, but it didn't get into content and so on. I'd say that's very, it's a much more modern thing, of the last 30 years, uh...

I: Is there a point, let's say, an inflection point, of when the IDB had, from this...

E: No, I wouldn't know, I couldn't give you a moment, one would have to look in the history, right? I mean, I think the founding, just last year, the Research Department turned 30, okay? I think the fact of having created the Research Department 30 years ago was a milestone in that it opened, okay? It opened the Bank to a lot of new things. And to understanding a lot of phenomena a bit better. So I think that was fundamental. And then, I think there have been things that didn't start there but... when we did the, we have a flagship, right? a book, which is the book, a book that comes out every year and takes up a fundamental subject. So, for example, which one was it, I don't remember if it was 2015, the one on Early Childhood Education came out, right? And I think that book was very important in putting the importance of early education in perspective. Although it was something the Bank was already working on, it isn't that it started with that book, that book in a way put everything together. But I think it clearly set the agenda in a very important way in saying "Look, here the age, the most important thing is to work with children between 2 and 5." And I think that changed the paradigm a bit, in that before the Bank perhaps devoted a bit more to older children, right? from primary school on. Whereas this says "no, look, here the key is in pre-primary." I think that book was very important. Then there was another flagship book, one on Skills, which took a somewhat fuller view of the whole trajectory from pre-primary through on-the-job training, and I think that one was also very important. I think

that perhaps looking at those two books can also give you a somewhat fuller idea of the history and of key moments.

I: Great, excellent information. And... you mentioned the year 95 as a moment when the Bank began to do research, right? About 30 years ago...

E: 1994.

I: 1994 and... do you think the global political context helped the Bank develop those aspects? Do you think that decade in particular, the nineties, was a moment of many changes at the level of relations among states? And also of development financing, right? Was it a moment when development financing took on a different relevance, at least at a regional level?

E: I think at a regional level, let's say, the 1980s are called the lost decade. Uh... I think we were coming out of a decade of many crises, right? All the debt crises in Latin America, I mean, the eighties were a disastrous decade, to put it one way, in economic terms, although it was a decade in which many rights were won, right? I mean, most countries returned to democracy. So I think the 90s were a moment of saying "Hey, look, we all thought that with the return to democracy all the problems would be solved and we hit a wall, right?" Because suddenly now we have democracy but the economy is so, I mean, it isn't that it was democracy's fault that the economy wasn't doing badly, it was something that was carried over, but the expectations were that, let's say, if you think of Raúl Alfonsín's speeches when in the presidential campaign he said "with democracy you eat, you are educated, you are healed," right? So there was... there was a conception that democracy was going to solve all the problems and clearly that wasn't achieved. For a lot of internal and external reasons. I think the 90s were a moment of much reflection and of trying to understand what had gone wrong. Uh... and at that moment, moreover, well, a lot of things came together, right? There was, uh... there was a technological explosion, there was an alignment, as you were saying in a way, of the multilateral world with the fall of the Berlin Wall... it was a moment when it seemed to be the "end of history," as Fukuyama said, right? And a new world order was coming in which capitalism, in a way, market economies, had demonstrated their superi-

ority, and so on. So, I mean, it's as if a lot of things happened at the same time, uh... And... that made room for thinking a bit more, for starting to think a bit more about, well, what it is that has to be done better. And that opened the door to knowledge. I think there was also a moment when a certain revaluation began, in a way, there was a capacity to revalue universities, uh... a lot of people who were outside the country, outside the countries, right? Argentina, Chile, and so on. With the return to democracy a lot of people exiled in top-level universities come back to Latin America, so the universities recover much of the vigor they had lost. In Argentina's case private universities are created or suddenly grow, right? Di Tella, San Andrés, and so on, suddenly it's as if they start to flourish, a lot of things happened at the same time that allowed more time to be devoted to thinking and to developing ideas, to breaking some paradigms we had from before, some in a good direction, others in another. I think the education sector, for example, was a place where an important break was attempted, right? Where an important break was attempted, in some things well, others badly, but it was as if the education sector was a sector where, in a way, the dictatorships and so on had left a very strong imprint. And so it's as if there was an attempt to, well, an attempt to change there and some things were done well, others were done badly.

I: Also perhaps adding to what you say, it's an impression, I haven't studied it, but let me ask you: perhaps there was a bit more academic mobility in the 90s too, for example in Argentina, compared with studying for a degree in the 80s in Argentina, when maybe going to another country to study was considerably more complicated, right? In that decade.

E: Absolutely, no, markets opened up, possibilities opened up, uh... And, well, in a way, the peso was relatively strong, so the relative cost of going abroad wasn't that high. I mean, in the 90s studying at a private university in Argentina and studying at a university abroad didn't differ much in cost. So opportunities opened up and besides, again, I mean, there's no getting around it, the arrival of the internet and the capacity to have far more information opened a lot of, a lot of doors, right? Now you could look up study programs abroad on the internet from your, not

from your home because most people didn't have it at home, but you had access. Whereas before you had to... look for a book, I don't know, a book about universities. It was much more remote.

I: Right. And picking up the subject of the IDB again in terms of program design, in light of what we've been mentioning, and also in light of your work there in your area, obviously, what could you tell us about the design of the programs? What criteria are used to make programs relevant to each state's context? Obviously each state also has its agenda, right? And also mobilizes its own imprint, its public policy, but exclusively from the IDB's side, what autonomous criteria are used in each program design in order to adjust the programs in light of the particularities of each state and also in light of the IDB's interests?

E: I mean, when you say programs, are we talking about the loan programs and that kind of thing?

I: Exactly, yes, yes.

E: No, again, it isn't the area I work in most, right? I work more in research, but basically what's done is: there's a prioritization in terms of the countries' needs and the Bank's capacity and, on the basis of that prioritization, it's determined where the Bank is going to support countries financially. Here we have, the Bank doesn't have an infinite amount of money, it has a finite amount. And at the same time there's also a finite amount of what a country can borrow, right? So an envelope is made, let's say, of how much the Bank can lend each country and, from there, a process of prioritization is carried out regarding the areas in which the government is most interested in having the Bank's support. Whereas there are other areas each government may be more interested in financing internally or financing with other resources from elsewhere, and so on.

I: And within that program design, what role would you say is given to national or even subnational states? And do you have any experience of significant disagreements between the IDB and other actors when designing or even when doing research? And, if those disagreements exist, how are they resolved? Because maybe you go to research something and they tell you, the state tells you "I don't want you to research that," I don't know how that works.

E: No, in terms of project programming that, as I say, is something where there's an agreement between the country and the Bank, a process of dialogue where there's an agreement, that isn't... I'd say there isn't much disagreement in that sense, it isn't that the Bank says, is going to tell a country "No, look, you have to invest in education" and the state, and the country is going to say "No, no, I don't want to invest in education." Or that the country says "Look, I want to invest in such and such" and the Bank tells it "No, you mustn't invest in that." That doesn't happen. Again, because at the end of the day, as I say, the Bank is a relatively small actor in what is... in what a country is, right? Suppose Argentina, suppose the Bank lends Argentina, let's say 1.5 billion a year or 2 billion a year. For what Argentina spends, that's low. So there's always capacity to adjust from one side to the other. I mean, suppose the Bank makes a loan for health of 50 million dollars. Argentina, I don't have the numbers in front of me, but Argentina in health must spend 2 billion, or 1 billion, so 50 million doesn't, doesn't make much difference. So no, I'd say there isn't much disagreement. In terms of research, I'd say there isn't either, in terms of the big subjects. It may be that there are some areas where there's more interest from a government and less, right? Or areas where there's less interest and areas where it's easier to have, to do, uh... to have... access to the data and in others it's harder to have access to the data. For various reasons, whether because the country isn't so interested or because the people who handle that data happen not to be so interested. But I'd say that, in general, there's little disagreement, there's little conflict compared with what it can be, uh... with the Fund, right? Where the IMF, there it is more, it's a bit more complicated because the IMF does get directly into stronger public policy matters, in terms of economic policy. We don't have that influence.

I: Okay. And... moving to an area perhaps more about the Bank's leadership, if you can tell us a bit about that, whether there are particular instances of negotiation at that level where subjects connected to public policy design come up at the leadership level. And how the interests of the states that finance the IDB come to bear in this context; what their interests are with respect to the IDB's objectives, right? How could we define, in your view, what interest a European state, an Asian state,

has in development, for example, in education or health in Latin America? What are those interests they have?

E: No, I mean, agreed, I mean, each country of course has the things that interest it more and... they have two ways of influencing. There's one way of influencing which is having their opinion in terms of the Bank's strategic guidelines. Every 4 or 5 years the Bank has a new strategy that establishes what the Bank, what the Bank is going to work toward more. In the latest strategy, basically, the three pillars are: growth, poverty, and climate change. And you can find that, you can find the strategy, you can find the different strategies on the Bank's website, so you can see a bit how the path goes. Even so, I'd say it's a fairly linear path, right? That is, increasing growth, which is one of the great problems Latin America has, a region that doesn't grow; reducing poverty, which is one of the great subjects Latin America has, uh... has basically been the historical pillar of everything the Bank has done, everything the Bank has done, right? I mean... perhaps what you'll find is that at some historical moment more emphasis is placed on it. When one thinks about growth, perhaps at some point more emphasis is put on infrastructure, at another moment more emphasis is put on education, at another moment more is put... that's a bit what changes. And perhaps the newest thing there's been, not now, in the last 2 years, but in the last 10 years, is a somewhat stronger focus on climate change matters, which of course 15 or 20 years ago perhaps wasn't there. But, as I say, so then each of the countries has its interests and it affects things in two ways: one is through saying "Look, I think more should be devoted to this subject" and the other is through financing, right? That is, each of the countries puts in money or gives grants, and so on, and often that money is focused on certain subjects. So, for example, I don't know, the Dutch, or rather the Netherlands, they always cared a lot about the water question. So they're more inclined to want to finance projects that improve access to water, say. Uh... and so on. Now there are many European countries that are very interested in climate change matters, so they may be more interested in financing climate change matters than another country might be, right? I don't know, Korea, for example, when Korea joined the Bank they were very interested in questions of statistics

and in questions of capacity to generate data and statistics on the countries. So they would give countries financing to improve the capacity of censuses to function, of data generation, administrative capacity, and so on. Each of the countries tends to have its own areas of interest and they try to bring them to bear. Even so, the structure of the Bank, the way the Bank is structured, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean hold 51 percent of the shares, while the extraregional countries hold 49 percent. So there's no capacity to impose things, in a way, okay? It's not that a country can come along now, I don't know, Spain, to give a name, any name, and impose something today and say "No, no, now everything in Latin America has to do such and such." Because at the end of the day Latin America holds the majority of the shares, so... it doesn't quite... I'd say that, in that sense, there's no... of course not, right? If there's something, if all of Europe is going in one direction and all of Europe, I don't know, Korea, China, the United States are going in one direction, well, generally the countries of Latin America are also going to want to go in the same direction. But there's one thing about the Bank, which is that, again, it's not very conflictual, consensus is very much sought, right? In that sense large coalitions are built on subjects that are more or less common to everyone.

I: Great, I think that's very positive. And moving perhaps to an even more economic, more financial area, but one that's also strongly connected to climate matters today. The question is: what elements would you consider central at the IDB in the design of programs in order to guarantee the sustainability and feasibility of each of them? And how are the indicators built at the IDB? On the basis of what criteria? Which is part of the same subject, that is, what criteria are used at the IDB to guarantee that a program is going to be sustainable and feasible? Because what I understand is that when the IDB finances a given program what it seeks is for it to be sustainable after that specific financing, right?

E: Yes, again, this isn't the area I work in most directly, but, and you can look for the material, basically what's attempted, in terms of sustainability, well, first to make a good diagnosis, and so on. But then, in general, the projects come with the building of local capacities, right? So

it isn't that the Bank goes and builds a road in the middle of nowhere and leaves, and that road stays there and nobody uses it and it falls apart, right? The idea is that the road is built but, at the same time, capacity is generated for the National Highway Directorate, say, so that it can then maintain it and so on. So it's worked that way to ensure sustainability.

I: Great. And turning to two particular programs that are subjects of this thesis, I have to ask you about them as a matter of protocol, whether you know these programs, one is called Digital Skills in English or Habilidades Digitales; and the other is SilverTech, both programs for Argentina. One is aimed mainly at middle schools and the other at older adults. The question is whether you have any connection to these projects, or whether you've heard of them.

E: No, no, honestly no.

I: Okay. And... finally, to start wrapping up, in light of what we've discussed, a more general, even theoretical question. It's whether you could affirm that the IDB designs public policy autonomously or whether you'd see it, place it more as a body advising on national policy. What's your view?

E: No, absolutely, I mean, there's nothing the Bank does that's independent of the countries. I mean, the Bank can't design a public policy and impose on Argentina that it introduce it, right? I mean, so, all the work the Bank does is another... it's work done collectively with the country, right? And what the Bank tries to do is give countries either the information, or the evidence, or to help countries generate that evidence, or to bring countries the experts who can give them that evidence. And then to be available for anything the country may need. But all public policy in the end is always generated internally, right?

I: Great. And finally, to finish, the last question: whether you'd have anything to add to what we've discussed that you think might contribute, if anything occurs to you that I haven't asked about that you think might add to these subjects we've talked about.

E: No, no, I think we've covered a fair amount, I mean, I think here, again, our mission is to improve lives in Latin America and the Caribbean. That's the mission we have. And we carry that mission forward

through financial support and knowledge support. And this is something we try to, and for that, we try to bring, to generate the greatest evidence or the best evidence to allow countries to generate the best public policies, right? And in that sense, we work both on support in design and on the execution of public policy and we try to increase the capacities countries have to ensure that public policies have the greatest impact, the greatest sustainability. That's a little bit the way we work. And I think the fact of being so close to the countries, the fact of having offices in all the countries we work in, with competent people in every area, allows us to be there, right? It allows us to be alongside the countries when they need it. Because the truth is that most countries have very competent people in leadership positions, but the policymaker, let's say, the minister, the adviser, have a thousand problems, you know? I mean, the capacity they have to say "No, you know what, today I'm going to devote myself to thinking, okay, and today I'm going to devote, I'm going to spend two days thinking about what the best public policy is," that doesn't happen, right? So being able to give them answers that policymakers can use pretty much immediately is fundamental for them, right? Because otherwise in the day to day it's impossible, uh... really.

I: Right, it's a question of capacity, isn't it? And sometimes also that not all ministries, for example in Argentina, I haven't noticed that there's, let's say, an active area, at least where I worked, developing public policy, right? I saw them more as management areas, several of them programmatic even, but not so similar to a think tank, as the IDB might be, right? That's my own impression, in any case...

E: No, no, it's true, it's true that some countries have more, others have less... And some countries have more stability among public officials than others. I think much of what we're talking about needs stability, I mean, no, no... Public policy, the creation of good public policy is a process that involves implementing programs that take time to evaluate, to adjust, and that isn't something you do in a year. They're things done through processes, right? And besides, for public policy to work you need sustained processes. And unfortunately, in many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, not in all, there's a lot of turnover, right? Because there's, well, with every change of government there's turnover

and that turnover makes it very difficult to learn what works, what doesn't work, to adjust public policy, to sustain it over time. So I think that's one of the, that's one of the keys in addition to what you say, that in many areas we don't invest enough. And unfortunately in some countries, although not enough is invested inside, enough is invested outside, so to speak, in the sense that you have many think tanks, or institutions or universities to rely on. In other countries that's a bit less so as well. Not only are they not inside, they're not outside either. And that I think is, well, a question of economic stability, of possibilities... I mean, one thing they had in the 90s and in a way also the early 2000s in Argentina, for example, was that a bit of stability, a certain economic stability, allowed there to be more development of think tanks, for example, right? And on the basis of that, more discussion about public policy. But well, for that, for that to happen, for think tanks to open, for people to devote themselves to those things, you have to have an environment conducive to doing it, and macroeconomic instability isn't the right one for that because you don't have financing, you don't have anything.

I: Right, and besides perhaps a certain electoral instability, proper to a system, I don't know whether I'd say presidentialism strictly, but in Argentina, as you say, officials rotate a great deal, the official knows that perhaps 100 percent depends on the electoral result, so it's a volatile context.

E: Absolutely, and not only, let's say, not only the... it's interesting, one thing in Argentina is that there's a lot of instability not only between governments but within, right? Not across but within. I mean, you see that a single government can have five Ministers for one subject, right? That also generates instability. I don't know, if you think about... the current government, for example, the current government isn't two years old and in many areas the Ministers have changed once or twice... or Secretaries, now that there are more Secretaries than Ministers. But I mean, there are many areas where the Secretaries or the Ministers have already changed a couple of times, right? So I mean that also gives it... all right, sometimes you get it wrong, you don't know the people, you don't have... But what I'm saying is that there's a kind of natural tendency in some of our countries toward very high turnover and that isn't good for

ensuring that public policy is the best it can be. So, well, thank you very much, Tomás.

I: No, thank you very much for taking part and for taking the time to connect today. So, very, very much appreciated.

E: All the best to you.

I: And good night, thank you.

Question by message about the chart

- Question about the chart: on this chart, from 0 to 10, where would you place the IDB's policy design? The self-perception chart is shown.
- Answer: ten (10).

ANNEX II: THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON EDUCATION⁴²

Introduction

As we have seen, the IDB's international education policies tend to finance, to a greater or lesser degree, programs bound up with technological subjects, since the general consideration is that education performs the role of inserting people into a technical socialization necessary for work in the twenty-first century. In this context it is necessary to consider how information technologies, which have been part of the rise of the principal firms active worldwide today, have had an impact on education. The operation of educational technologies that depend on hardware and software, moreover, rests on earlier technologies. In 1962 the businessman and engineer John Diebold published an article titled "The Application of Information Technology." In it Diebold maintained that there were then around 5,000 digital computers in use in the United States and 7,000 being assembled, which would substantially modify the way society administers information. The rapid advances were due to developments in two variables, theory and hardware. Among the practical branches affected by computing he included medical diagnosis, weather forecasting, and language translation. The uses mentioned in the article are ordinary today. He also explains that the critical issues of these new technologies as regards automation had not been noticed by the scientific community in general.

On the general impact of technology, the communications scholar Aníbal Ford (2002) wrote:

If in the passage from orality to writing mnemonic skills were lost and new capacities of abstraction and mediation acquired, if with photography, cinema, or television one learned to see bodies cut in half or to read metonymically or to recover the significant value of the image or of hearing, with the new technologies, with digital articulation, interactivity (with the screen, for example), the possibilities of storing and

⁴² This annex consists of complementary research on information technologies in education.

processing information, there are being produced, despite the enormous infocommunicational gaps in the world, very strong or accelerated transformations in the “toolbox” of a brain whose potential we exploit only in a very limited way. (2002, 20)

To speak of information technology as a general concept is to refer to the set of technologies that process, store, and distribute information, generally through software or programming languages. The person commonly credited with the invention of the contemporary computer is Alan Turing (in about 1946), who is also considered the founder of computing as a theoretical discipline today (Shyamasundar 2014). The impacts of digital computing transcended the technical or the specific, particularly through the work of firms such as IBM, Intel, Microsoft, and Apple, which brought Turing’s work to mass audiences. The new advances in marketing and business strategy developed in the twentieth century also helped propel the entry of new technological products into the global market.

The anthropologist Bryan Pfaffenberger (1988), for his part, qualified the use of the concept of revolution to refer to the social changes of computing, on the grounds that it adapted to preexisting social patterns of production and consumption. The macroeconomist Paul Beaudry (2010) of the University of British Columbia, however, together with his team, developed a model that adjusts for the speed and extent of technology adoption and maintained in a 2010 publication that the introduction of the computer coincides with the pattern expected of a technological revolution for the period 1980-2000. For public policy, moreover, the impact of the digital computer was greater than policymakers expected in the twentieth century. According to the anthropologist Luis Reygadas:

(...) computers, telecommunications, genetic engineering, the opening of borders, and the intensification of transnational networks also have enormous potential to reduce poverty, improve health, increase well-being, and reduce inequality and exclusion. (Reygadas 2008)

It should be borne in mind that the development of the mechanical computer was tied to the historical development of mechanical calculators. According to the mathematician, professor, and IBM consultant Herman Goldstine, the first mechanical calculator dates from the seventeenth

century and is attributed to the German professor Wilhelm Schickard. It could be affirmed that the first technological developments leading to computing had as their objective the development of methods of rapid counting or measurement and rested theoretically on the development of mathematics (Larrivee 1958). The mechanical calculator, in turn, rested on earlier counting technologies such as the abacus. These examples seem sufficient to establish a certain link between the development of mathematics, its dissemination in educational terms, the subsequent development of computing, and the present impact of computing on education. Proceeding from the articles cited, it could follow that the development of computing is the result of hundreds of years of transmitting knowledge from generation to generation, in the course of which technological theories and practices have grown more complex. One of the uses of computing today is thus educational practice itself, without setting aside the relevance computing has in production. Among the novelties in terms of use we find artificial intelligence and the branch called learning analytics.

Computers in general

As Sharpes (1968) shows, as early as 1968 people were talking about how computers could contribute to the educational process, accompanying learning and, in a certain way, exposing the teacher who simply devoted himself to transmitting information rather than to forming or teaching. This distinction has become more necessary as the debate separating formation from information has widened. The mathematician William F. Atchison explained in 1973 the need to add computing subjects to curricula, given that their use was growing and would soon have an enormous impact on the daily functioning of society. At the time he proposed mathematicians as the teachers best suited to introducing computing into classrooms. A specific education for teachers has also been proposed with the aim of preparing them for the use of the computer.

Today, however, society has teachers specialized in the subject. During the 1990s the use of computers in schools and classrooms became widespread, with Windows as the principal operating system. Although educational institutions were already interested in computing in the

1960s, it was only in the 1970s that firms became able to begin mass production of personal computers (PCs, for professional or recreational use). The Commodore VIC-20, launched in 1980, together with the IBM PC, launched in 1981, were among the first popular PCs that crossed the technical barrier and entered business use. The popularity of computing changed the way governments and firms operated and communicated with one another.

The growth of computing's influence in everyday life is a historical process that has taken place within the framework of what we call globalization. On this subject the sociologist and anthropologist Renato Ortiz has said:

The process of globalization is not equivalent to the homogenization of the planet. It is therefore useful to distinguish between the globalization of the economy and of technology and the mundialization of culture. (...) Economists can even measure the dynamic of this globalized order by means of vain indicators: exchanges and financial investments. The same can be said of technology, insofar as it is identical across the planet. (...) The sphere of culture, however, cannot be considered in the same way. The process of the mundialization of culture does not necessarily entail the annihilation of other cultural manifestations; rather, it coexists with them and feeds on them. In this sense there neither is nor will be a single global culture, identical everywhere. (...) That means that mundialization and globalization are simultaneously one and diverse. (2002, 106)

Computing has been of help in research. In sociology, for example, software is used to generate data simulations in order to explain social phenomena on the basis of models. Francis Keppel, who was a professor of education and a leader in education policy, held in 1967 that computing can help promote more rigorous and inclusive procedures and organizational arrangements for teaching in general. Computing was already understood at that time as a facilitator of organizational procedures generally and educational ones in particular.

The programmer, engineer, and Stanford University researcher Alan Curtis Kay, known for being part of the team at the Xerox company in California credited with the prototype of the desktop on computers,

expressed a certain concern about using the computer abundantly as a menu of educational possibilities, which makes it difficult to move on to the meal (Kay 1991). He used this metaphor, that is, to give voice to the problem of the container against the content. He was asking, in 1991, what would happen with the overabundance of content to which students would be exposed, whether that would make the task easier for them or, on the contrary, overwhelm and weary them, like someone sent to study and play Beethoven's sonatas without any musical desire or appreciation of their beauty. In this article Kay called for not forgetting the emotion and beauty proper to learning, stipulating that educators would still be needed to guide students, not to give them content but to provide them with theoretical and emotional frameworks.

Mobile devices

Although we are still coming to terms with the personal computer revolution, new technologies have provided a new context that fits alongside it in a complementary way: mobile devices. Today mobile technology has become an appendage of the everyday life of millions of people. In 2015, 90 percent of adolescents in the United States had regular access to a mobile phone or owned one outright (George and Odgers 2015). In Uganda in 2011 the figure for ownership was approximately 27 percent, with 50 percent stating that they would use it for health matters. It would be safe to affirm, then, that in the coming years practically all new adults in the countries of the Americas, from 2024 on, will have had access to a mobile phone, whether their own or that of a schoolmate or fellow university student. Its use is also influential among secondary and university students (Norris, Hossain, and Soloway 2011; Mitchell, Bull, Kiwanuka, and Ybarra 2011).

When we say "mobile phone" in 2024 we are also saying "portable computer." Mobile phones have been transformed through a process called technological convergence. Previously, however, these technologies were separate. Prior to this convergence between mobile telephony and personal computing, Kay had developed a portable computer prototype called the Dynabook, in 1972, which we might call one of the first attempts to move contemporary educational technology toward the

mobile, since it was oriented toward children and young people for educational purposes. According to Kay, his professional development and that of his work in computing were largely influenced by the work of the mathematician and educator Seymour Papert, who in turn devoted much of his work to the development of educational technology, such as the Logo programming language of 1967. Kay's Dynabook was a precursor of e-readers, which were made possible on a large scale by the intersecting technological development of electronic paper, in which the Xerox company was also involved.

Before the convergence between mobile telephony and portable computers, then, the latter had a development of their own that continues on its path today, in 2024. Colloquially called laptops or notebooks for their mobility, some of their first commercial versions, called portable or "luggable" computers, were the Osborne 1 (1981), the Epson HX-20 (1982), the Compaq Portable (1983), and the TRS-80 Model 100 (1983). Although portable, they were not considered easy to handle or simple to carry in a backpack or pocket, as today's personal computers are. Their commercial use was particularly tied to business tasks such as accounting or information management. The Sony Data Discman (1991), for its part, was the beginning of commercial launches of electronic reading devices, or conceptual successors of the Dynabook.

Educational programming languages

Another development to consider carefully is educational programming languages (EPLs from here on). EPLs are specialized programming languages that seek to introduce students to various areas, such as critical reasoning or programming in general. The first programmable computer, called the Z3, is attributed to the German Konrad Zuse in 1941. Zuse is also credited with the first advanced programming language, Plankalkül (1946), which is remembered by specialists although it saw little use for want of dissemination. In 1954 FORTRAN was introduced, a language still in use today and an example of a widely disseminated one. In brief, programming languages are systems of notation for developing software, which is to say contexts in which certain computational pro-

cesses unfold. Hundreds of languages are available today, developed rapidly in less than a century.

Logo (1967), an EPL developed by Seymour Papert, is a classic language oriented toward educational work, particularly with children, and considered a pioneer in this respect. This language allows vectors to be formed in different directions and at different angles, in different colors, within a graphical interface, so that by entering commands the user can draw on the screen. The cursor, shaped like a turtle in several versions, can move so as to form vectors or be lifted so as to form no vector and thus be placed in another sector of the screen without having made a stroke. According to Wallace Feurzeig, another of the developers of this EPL, one of its principal uses is teaching mathematical reasoning. The mathematician and professor Paul Ernest agreed with Feurzeig's assessment and added that Logo would be useful for working on mathematical problems in small groups, fostering cooperation and inquiry. It has also been claimed that it could prove useful for special education, for example for deaf people, and for helping to teach organizational capacity and general problem solving. It has likewise been considered to have helped children internalize concepts that function as prerequisites for understanding and using it, such as right and left or angle, since the language uses angular directions in order to work. Already in the 1980s, as it spread, Logo was considered a standard for teaching programming to children.

Scratch (2003), released to the public in 2007 and developed by the MIT Media Lab, is a contemporary EPL that works on the basis of blocks and is accessible online from the website of MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Influenced by Logo, Scratch adds variables: interactions, movements, sounds, extensions, among others. This EPL has also been recommended for teaching computational thinking or computing in general. Like Logo, it has in turn been considered for teaching programming and mathematical or geometric reasoning. Unlike Logo, it has a more colorful and dynamic visual scheme, adapted to the development that the use of interactive sites accessible through a browser has undergone. In Taiwan Scratch has been used for four years in primary school, and one study found it effective in accelerating the

learning process. In sum, this EPL presents more novel, attractive, and up-to-date options for twenty-first-century contexts.

Conclusions

According to Kay (2000) in the article cited, “Dynabooks: Past, Present, and Future,” the problem of educational development is no longer access to information but its adequate use and understanding. We might trace in that claim a line connecting it to the arguments made by the educator Inés Dussel (2014), for example, about curricula, which she considers to remain relevant in digital culture. Kay and Dussel would agree, that is, on the conceptual importance of formation as a proposal of value or as the setting in motion of sociocultural bonds, in parallel with the ease of access to information that new technologies have given us. According to Kay:

The real haves and have-nots are those who have or have not acquired the discernment to search for and make use of high content wherever it may be found. As with the printing press, computer and networking technologies will cover the whole range of human content in a form affordable for all—it is up to us to get children and adults interested in that which matters. (2000, 395)

Information technologies, that is, present us with the unprecedented advantages of access to information and the consequent challenge of using that information adequately in educational and social terms.

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ANNEX III: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL⁴³

- 1) Could you briefly describe your academic trajectory up to joining the IDB?
- 2) When did you begin working at the IDB? In what area? What were the responsibilities of the role? What is your role currently?
- 3) What aspects would you consider unique to the IDB in relation to other multilateral organizations in the field of policy formulation?
- 4) What aspects would you consider unique to the IDB in relation to other multilateral organizations in the field of education and technology?
- 5) Could you identify and describe key periods in the historical and institutional development of the IDB in relation to educational and technological programs?
- 6) How does the IDB ensure that program designs are relevant and in keeping with the needs of different educational, cultural, and technological contexts? What criteria are used in program design to adjust programs in light of the sociocultural and economic particularities of each country?
- 7) Within program design, what role is given to national or subnational states? Were there significant disagreements among the actors involved during the design process? If disagreements did arise, how were they resolved?
- 8) Are there instances of negotiation and adaptation to particular countries and regions? How do the funders' interests come to bear on the prioritization of program objectives or strategies?
- 9) What factors were considered in defining the objectives and priority areas of these programs? What elements does the IDB

⁴³ This annex consists of the interview protocol used as the technique for this general instrument in the four transcribed cases.

consider central to design in order to guarantee the sustainability and feasibility of programs? How are the indicators built, and on what criteria?

10) In light of what we have discussed, could you affirm that the IDB designs public policy autonomously?

11) With respect to the “Digital Skills” and “SilverTech” programs, did you have any connection to those projects? If so, what was your area responsible for? What did your role require?

a) If there was no connection:

i) If you had no connection to them, what information circulated within the institution? Do you know any colleague who worked on the projects and told you about them?

b) If there was a connection:

i) Was there a process of training within the institution about these programs?

ii) Were you able to form an opinion about the design of these educational programs?

iii) What could you say about the process of program design in general?

iv) What could you say about the process of program design within the category of education?

v) When and why did the IDB decide to incorporate the “Digital Skills” and “SilverTech” programs into its policy agenda?

vi) What was the initial design process of these programs? What institutional stages did the programs pass through at the time of their design?

vii) What actors took part in drafting them? Do you know how the experts and consultants who took part in the design of the programs were selected? What role did private firms play in the formulation of these programs?

12) Having gone through this conversation, is there anything else you would like to add about what we have discussed? Does any question occur to you that I have not asked and that might contribute to the interview?

ANNEX IV: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL IDB DOCUMENTS⁴⁴

Institutional context

It is relevant to consider the IDB's institutional and bureaucratic context. A comparison between the IDB's bureaucracy and the Argentine one will help here. Strategically, moreover, the IDB holds a certain ascendancy over particular decisions of Latin American states, since it depends in part on funders that act in part as guarantors of their own political and economic interests.

The exact number of IDB employees is difficult to determine, given on one side that the information is not publicly available and on the other that there are reports with discrepancies. It is nonetheless known that it is a significantly small population in terms of policy formulation when compared with, for example, the Argentine national bureaucracy. It is also known that the IDB has fewer than ten thousand employees, while Argentina's national administration employs some 711,000 people and public employment as a whole, counting the national, provincial, and municipal levels, comes to around 3.39 million (National Directorate of Public Employment and Management 2023). This allows the IDB's action regarding decisions on education policy in Argentina to be put in scale and in context. It must also be considered that not all IDB personnel work on Argentine matters; only one sector of the institution does. The comparison mentioned is set out in the following charts:

⁴⁴ This annex consists of complementary research on the IDB's institutional and historical context, analyzing documents not included in the main body of the thesis. Charts were also prepared in order to understand the IDB's size and how it might be compared with the Argentine administration.

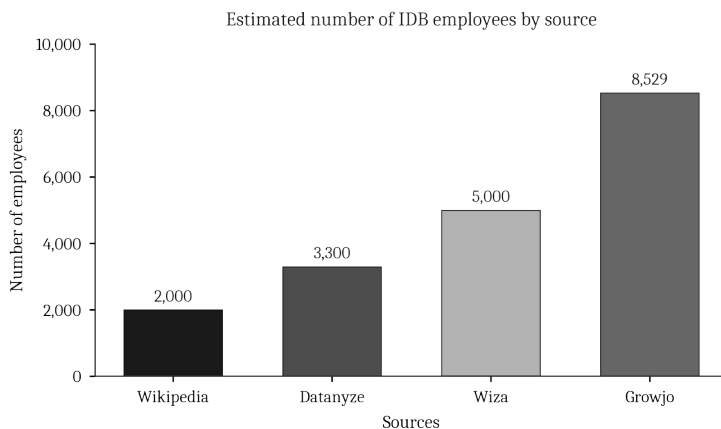


Chart 1.

This chart shows the approximate number of employees the IDB has. There are no official figures. Different portals give different results. The consensus is clearly that the number is greater than two thousand but less than ten thousand, and the figure the Bank itself supplies to the United Nations directory of statistical services of international organizations sits at the lower end of that range, at approximately two thousand (United Nations Statistics Division, n.d.). We might therefore liken the number of IDB employees to the approximate number of personnel at Argentina's national Ministry of Economy (2019-2024). Now, if we compare the IDB with the Argentine national administration, we find the following picture:

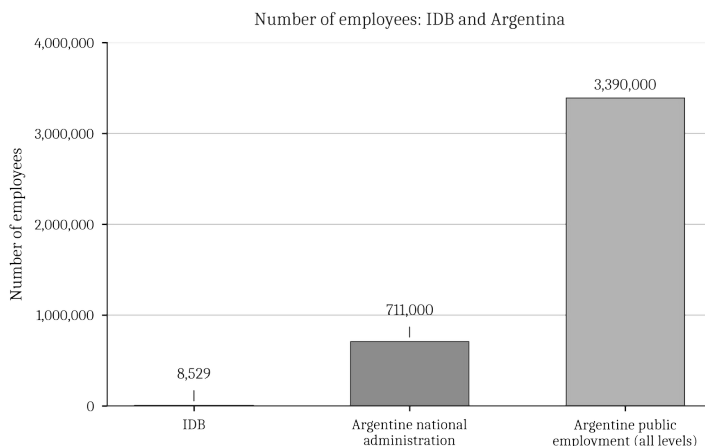


Chart 2.

The number of people working for the Argentine state is thus extremely greater than the number of personnel the IDB has, and the gap holds at either level of comparison, since the national administration alone employs roughly eighty times as many people as the Bank does, while public employment counted across the national, provincial, and municipal levels employs some four hundred times as many. This shows a certain disparity between the capacity for influence and financing of domestic bodies and the capacity of international ones.

Historical documents (1965-1975)

Correo del BID, volume 3, no. 2 (April 1965)

The IDB publishes articles and reports regularly, and they are catalogued. Within *Correo del BID*, an official IDB news bulletin, the first to mention educational matters is from 1965. Under the title “Round Table on the University and Development,” the passage reads:

During the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors, the Bank sponsored a round table discussion on “Advanced Education and the Development of Latin America.” The holding of the round table was a sign of the Bank’s great concern to help Latin American universities

and institutes of advanced education find the means necessary to make their contribution to Latin American development. The round table was held in two sessions, on the afternoons of April 27 and 28. Taking part in both sessions were: Juan Gómez Millas, Minister of Public Education of Chile; Philip H. Coombs, Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning; Paulo de Goes, Dean for Reform Affairs and of the University City of the University of Brazil; Julio H. G. Olivera, former rector of the University of Buenos Aires; José Vera L., IDB Program Consultant; Ramón de Zubiría, rector of the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá; and René Maheu, Director General of UNESCO, whose paper was read by Ricardo Diez-Hochleitner, Director of UNESCO's Planning Office. The moderators in the two sessions were, respectively, Jaime Posada, OAS Assistant Secretary for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Affairs, and Philip M. Sherlock, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica. (1965, 2)

This passage lets us identify the IDB's early concerns in educational matters, namely the financing of universities and institutes. It is understandable that the first institutional concerns for Latin American development placed the focus on the university system, since it is a fundamental part of the production of knowledge. University knowledge, in its various branches, is necessary for the development of any society, since it is what promotes better legal, economic, medical, and engineering practice, and so on. In sum, the production of one's own knowledge and the sovereign maintenance of solid institutions capable of prolonging, expanding, and conserving understanding is a fundamental factor in a country's growth. In this respect, since the university system is charged with producing specific knowledge and subsequently applying it in some cases, the IDB's promotion of educational interests is understandable.

The same document also shows, as early as 1965, a certain investment directed at advanced education through the Social Progress Trust Fund. Seventeen loans were identified for a total amount of USD 29.3 million (1965, unadjusted for inflation) for that purpose, devoted to educational investment directly by governments, as against other loans the IDB makes to finance private firms in the end. It was still a preliminary or early phase of the institution, however, and education was not a priority,

which meant the amount was lower than that devoted to private firms, government agencies, land improvement, housing, and drinking water, though higher than export credits.

This document is therefore illustrative, since it shows us that from its beginnings the IDB took educational matters into consideration in a programmatic and financing register, and higher education in particular. It is thus possible to understand the IDB's strategic vision. We might call the IDB's general imprint developmentalist or interventionist, since it holds that the state is a fundamental actor in the capitalist system and performs a role as guarantor of rights.

Annual Report for 1971 (March 1972)

This is a report of annual operations for 1971, detailing the IDB's activity with more precision than the official news bulletins. In one of its relevant parts, the report says:

In the field of social infrastructure the loans granted for the education sector were substantially higher than in any previous year. This increase raised the total of the Bank's financial assistance to education, health, and urban development to around \$127 million, representing 19 percent of the total lent. Finally, the preinvestment sector absorbed a further \$15 million, that is 3 percent of the lending activity granted during the year. (1972, 22)

This shows an increase in the IDB's tendency to finance educational initiatives. These were centered on academic matters and on university and tertiary institutional development, both technical and vocational. The same report then says:

The Bank's operations in the education sector benefited a variety of projects in Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. A loan of \$40 million to Argentina is helping to modernize and expand facilities at nine of the 10 national universities, where around 87 percent of higher education students are enrolled. (p. 26)

In this respect the Argentine national universities are mentioned, with the assurance that financing had been provided for nine of the ten then

in Argentine national territory. It can be affirmed, then, that the criterion the IDB set itself of giving relevance to Latin American university systems is met. As regards the concrete activities that were financed:

Thus, 29 percent of total financing has been devoted to institutional development, 18 percent to engineering, another 18 percent to the natural sciences, 12 percent to the agricultural sciences, 11 percent to technical and vocational education, 5 percent to the social sciences, 6 percent to health, and 1 percent to other educational projects. Moreover, 45 percent of the resources provided are devoted to the acquisition of laboratory equipment and library materials, 39 percent to the construction of buildings for university classrooms and other facilities, 10 percent to improving teaching through the granting of scholarships, and 6 percent to other improvements. (p. 30)

The passage shows the particular financing in disaggregated form, that is, what was collectively considered necessary to finance. Priority was given to engineering and the natural sciences, followed by the agricultural sciences and technical education. The humanities and the health sciences were in a second tier.

Noticias del BID, vol. 1, no. 11 (December 1974)

The present document is notable because it has a section devoted specifically to education, called "Education: New Objectives and Formulas for Attaining Them," which states the following:

From the beginning of its activities the IDB introduced a new aspect into international public financing: it included higher education among its fields of action, a pioneering decision based on the conviction that education and science are essential instruments in any process of development. From 1965 the Bank widened its operational action to include technical and vocational education, and in 1968 the Board of Executive Directors approved, as a complement, the policy for the scientific and technological sector. The IDB's operations in the education sector have been directed at achieving, simultaneously, the expansion of the system's capacity and its academic and administrative restructuring, including methodological reforms tending to in-

crease quality and efficiency, as a necessary complement to each country's development plans. (1974, 6)

The report cited is accurate in describing as innovative the IDB's proposal to finance higher education internationally as a measure of regional development. Development banks were a nineteenth-century invention at the national level, but internationally they only began to operate in the twentieth century. Previously, development banks financed strictly productive proposals, so that financing education internationally is a novel policy on the part of this institution.

It should also be borne in mind that the IDB's approach to development at this stage focuses on the productive. One possible criticism is a certain absence, at least in the documents, of a social or health-related view of the human being, focusing development exclusively on the productive and economic growth of member countries. The use of the international financial structure at this stage is bound, that is, to a productivist paradigm of human life, which goes together with the capitalist vision of global society that the IDB's principal shareholder (the United States) sustains or has sustained. Even so, one can appreciate a kind of discourse in which state intervention, or supra-state intervention in this case, is considered necessary in order to mobilize the resources needed for development. That is, the development of capitalism or of capitalist society is not left exclusively to the markets.

The IDB has been described as a mechanism of north-south cooperation. That cooperation is multifaceted and is bound up with the interests of the global north as much as with those of the global south, since both parties have strategic interests to defend and promote through cooperation of this kind. Depending on the theoretical framework used to analyze state decisions, various statements can be found as to what states seek in cooperating with others: harmony, peace, trade, growth, and so on. In any case, cooperation decisions have been made by the hierarchical members of each state, with various incentives to cooperate or not to do so, to a greater or lesser degree. According to Barghouthi (1993), north and south are socioeconomic and political categories more than geographic ones, given certain exceptions to the territorial division, since he

places some states of eastern Europe as south while placing Australia as north, in social, political, and economic terms.

Noticias del BID, vol. 2, no. 2 (March 1975)

This report is pertinent to the analysis in referring to meetings held by the IDB:

Interagency conference on education: Guatemala City hosted this meeting from January 20 to 24, attended by representatives of Guatemala's National Economic Planning Council; UNESCO; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); UNICEF; the Agency for International Development (AID); and the Universities of Michigan and Stanford, both specializing in education. Mr. Alberto Castillo, the Bank's representative in Guatemala, took part in the meeting on behalf of the IDB. The meeting analyzed "out-of-school" education, a sector parallel to the formal education system (primary, secondary, and university cycles), intended to absorb the school-age population that for various reasons leaves the formal education system. (p. 2)

The IDB's early participation in an internationally organized conference is thereby confirmed. Choosing out-of-school education as the subject shows a widening of the range of interests the IDB normally dealt with up to that date, since it is the first mention of the possibility of taking part in nonformal educational processes. This also shows the active participation of nonstate bodies in education policy, a tendency that has increased since the 1970s in the Americas.

References

Inter-American Development Bank. 1965. *Correo del BID*, vol. 3, no. 2, April 1965.

Inter-American Development Bank. 1972. *Inter-American Development Bank Annual Report 1971*.

Inter-American Development Bank. 1974. *Noticias del BID*, vol. 1, no. 11, December 1974.

Inter-American Development Bank. 1975. *Noticias del BID*, vol. 2, no. 2, March 1975.

ANNEX V: QUANTIFICATION OF THE INTERVIEWS^{4 5}

Concepts mentioned⁴⁶

- 1) Bank (Banco) – 181
- 2) IDB (BID) – 139
- 3) Countries (países) – 99
- 4) Country (país) – 87
- 5) Programs (programas) – 71
- 6) Government (gobierno) – 66
- 7) Education (educación) – 64
- 8) Policies (políticas) – 58
- 9) Argentina – 50
- 10) Policy (política) – 45
- 11) Development (desarrollo) – 42
- 12) State (Estado) – 41
- 13) Operation (operación) – 40
- 14) Design (diseño) – 36
- 15) Projects (proyectos) – 35

Phrases constructed by the interviewees⁴⁷

- 1) “que el banco va a” (that the Bank is going to) – 6
- 2) “los países de América Latina” (the countries of Latin America) – 4
- 3) “cada uno de los países” (each of the countries) – 4

⁴⁵ This annex consists of a count of specific elements within the transcripts of the interviews.

⁴⁶ They are listed in descending order of frequency in both cases. On the left is the concept or phrase, and on the right the number of times it arose in the interviews.

⁴⁷ By “phrase” a run of five identical consecutive words was searched for. Connective phrases and those that do not constitute a conceptual weave relevant to the subject were discarded. Phrases mentioned fewer than three times and those uttered by the interviewer were also discarded.

ANNEX VI: LIST OF DOCUMENTS ANALYZED IN CHAPTER IV⁴⁸

General documents

Bos, M. S., and G. Rucci. 2020. *Skills Development Sector Framework Document*. Inter-American Development Bank.

Lupo, J. L. 2021. *Estrategia del Grupo BID con Argentina 2021-2023*. Inter-American Development Bank.

Program documents

Bergamaschi, A., and M. A. Pérez Alfaro. 2019. *Digital Skills, Coding and Robotics in Education*. AR-T1224. Technical Cooperation (TC) Abstract. Inter-American Development Bank.

Sabra, M., and M. Okumura. 2021. *SilverTech: Apalancando el talento y la experiencia de los adultos mayores mediante el uso de tecnología*. AR-T1262. Donors Memorandum. Inter-American Development Bank.

⁴⁸ This annex consists of an extract of the documents analyzed specifically in Chapter IV.

ANNEX VII: QUANTIFICATION OF THE IDB'S EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS ⁴⁹

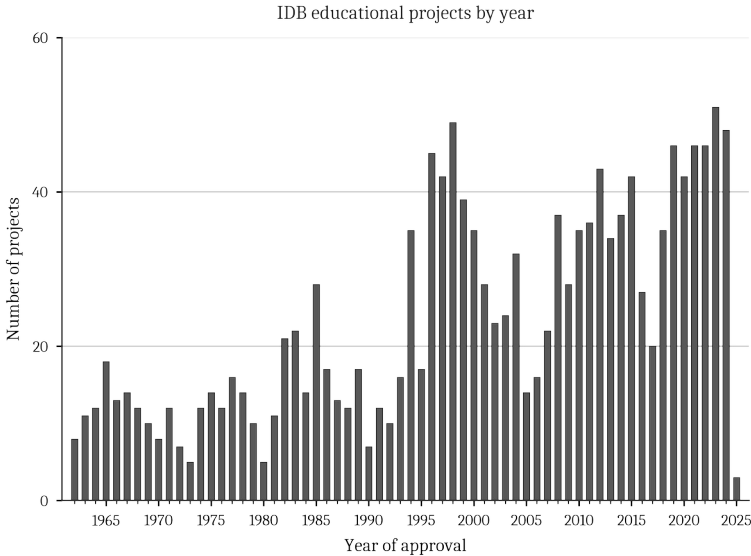


Chart 3.

This chart shows the number of IDB projects approved by year. Almost from the IDB's founding (1959), the Bank has undertaken educational projects, its first foray into the subject having been in 1962. As can be seen, the number of projects began in a tentative position, not an abundant one. Only in 1982 did the number of projects exceed 20 for the first time. From there we see that in 1994 the trend takes a strong upward turn that lasts to the present day (1994-2024), which marks some thirty years of significant IDB activity in educational matters. This is all the more relevant if we consider that the first educational projects were centered on subjects more closely tied to infrastructure and less to curricular questions, for example.

⁴⁹ This annex consists of a chart quantifying the IDB's educational projects in general.

ANNEX VIII: EXTENSION OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND COMPLEMENTARY DEBATES⁵⁰

Stromquist, N. (2002)

“Globalization, the I, and the Other.” *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 4 (2): 87–94.

Stromquist discusses the effects of globalization on international education as an academic discipline, maintaining that it is the greatest of the forces bearing on the subject. We might interpret this as a claim that unfolds concepts in general, placing them within the analysis, and, from that position, holds that the most relevant political term is globalization. Given this reflection, Stromquist carries out an analysis that takes in the intersection of the phenomenon studied with other disciplines beyond what has traditionally been understood by education in the twentieth century in strict terms, or, in other words, in the contemporary classificatory terms proper to Latin American academia.

Of all the forces touching upon comparative and international education, there is perhaps none more important than globalization. Much is being written about it; much still remains to be said. I am using such an unorthodox title to this paper to highlight how globalization is impacting individuals in special ways. Today, we are seeing a veritable economic and technological and, thus, cultural revolution that is simultaneously affecting values, institutions, practices, and futures. The staggering amount of information, goods, and persons circulating across countries is moving us toward greater homogeneity, despite various singular responses from some states and communities. You and I, as both individuals and comparative educators, need to develop wider and deeper understandings of the meanings and processes of

⁵⁰ This annex consists of an extended review of articles that were not included in the literature review for reasons of brevity and timeliness. They are nonetheless relevant for going deeper into the panorama of the subjects treated in this thesis. Given the annex's placement, moreover, in certain cases the document is not only presented but also discussed, contrasting what has been seen in this research with what the researcher cited has said.

globalization and of the full reach it is attaining through both market and state forces. (2002, 87)

In order to overcome the obstacles to analysis, the author proposes widening the academic capacities of research teams by making them interdisciplinary. She also ventures to know and, at the same time, issues a call to action; citing Dewey, she affirms her preference for the predominance of ethics in her discipline over other branches of philosophy. She thus proposes widening what we can understand as a research team in education, given the relevance globalization has had for the phenomena affecting our society, from the composition of business structures to the intervention of international institutions in relations among states, taking in the modification of family ties that technology has promoted.

Globalization is highlighting how education cannot be considered an isolated field but must attain centrality as part of a comprehensive intellectual domain, noting the many nodes created by macro and micro forces. Educators must respond to the complexity of globalization by creating interdisciplinary teams, not just within the social sciences but also across such fields as law, health, business, and technology. Educators must also respond to globalization by getting to know the “Other” much better: The experience from developing countries has important lessons to tell, and as some of the South increasingly becomes part of the North through migration, making sense of multiple human meanings and experiences is an unavoidable task. The challenges posed by globalization are immense and, while they will take years to be satisfactorily addressed, we must start now. (p. 93)

Stromquist thus invites us to include law, health, business administration, and technology among social science research teams in order to grasp the complexities of globalization. She also calls for a reconsideration of the role the states of the Global South play in international policy and in academia, given increasing migration, in order to know “the Other.” This vindication of interdisciplinarity on one side and of the states of the south on the other indirectly vindicates the present thesis,

since it argues for a combination of academic factors and for a stronger connection between academia and countries such as Argentina.⁵¹

Dolby, N., and A. Rahman (2008)

“Research in International Education.” *Review of Educational Research* 78 (3): 676–726.

Dolby and Rahman briefly describe the field of international education or, as it was traditionally known, comparative education. They note that globalization is the principal reason this branch of research in education has gained vigor. They also hold that international education as a discipline is strongly tied to the practices of international institutions rather than to classroom practice. Within these concepts they distinguish six strands from which the phenomenon of international education or of the international practices of education is studied: international comparative education, the internationalization of university education, international secondary schools, international teacher training, the internationalization of K-12 education (proper to the United States and Canada), and the globalization of education.

The authors describe a pressure (p. 676) within academia to conduct research internationally. They frame this as a reflection of the political, economic, social, and cultural factors that today alter the ordinary practices of research in education. They also describe the academic production of this field as principally oriented toward other researchers and, eventually, toward administrators of education systems or of administrative structures that might be enriched by what is proposed.

In recounting the history of the subject, they note:

As Michael Crossley and Keith Watson (2003) wrote, the roots of comparative education can be traced back to French scholar Marc-Antoine Jullien’s 1817 proposal that governments should collect and distribute statistical information on education so that through comparison education could become a science with standardized principles and practices. The International Bureau of Education, established in Geneva in 1925, was the first institute of its kind, and the post-World War II

⁵¹ This thesis has attempted to advance in the direction the author proposes, connecting historical, legal, and international relations scholarship with international education policy.

period saw the establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and the World Bank. The subsequent creation of statistical information about educational systems throughout the world drove the consolidation of comparative education as a field driven by a positivist, scientific outlook (Noah & Eckstein, 1969). Isaac Kandel (1881-1965) is often cited as the founder of modern comparative education, and his work for UNESCO in the 1940s on national schooling systems is considered central to the field's development (Epstein & Carroll, 2005). (2008, 680)

They show, that is, a clear link between the emergence of the field of international education and the emergence of international institutions. UNESCO and the World Bank in particular are mentioned as relevant in the paragraph above, which coincides with the argument of this thesis. They conclude, finally, that international education will keep growing as a correlate of the advance of globalization, as global processes continue to increase their influence on daily life.

Cantor, G. (2008)

“El discurso de participación ciudadana en organismos internacionales: El caso del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.” *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 14 (3): 468–478.

Cantor analyzes citizen participation as a concept in the IDB's operations and offers a criticism in which he describes it as limited in its capacity for influence and deliberation. He also maintains the relevance of the concept of civil society:

In parallel with that change, the idea of civil society has gained prominence as a central problem, both in academic discourse (see Cohen and Arato, 1992) and in international organizations, over others such as social movements, which involve more radical components. This sector includes a broad and heterogeneous set of nonprofit organizations, cultural associations, development agencies, educational organizations, and philanthropic institutions that form part of neither the private sector nor the market. Although there is no agreement in the literature on how to define the field of civil society, a plethora of stud-

ies based on different approaches have concentrated their attention on civil society as an object of analysis (see, for example, Cohen and Arato, 1992; Chambers and Kymlicka, 2002; Edwards, 2004). Most of these studies attempt, on one side, to delimit the object of study and, on the other, to systematize information on some of the most salient characteristics of civil society organizations. (2008, para. 9)

Cantor thus holds that educational organizations form part of civil society and, as such, potentially have a capacity for influence, albeit a limited one, on the IDB's action. He also claims to detect a tension between democracy and technocracy present in the institution's operations. That last claim, with which the article concludes, is relevant in that it presents a novel approach to the subject of decision-making at the level of an international institution. It also raises, albeit in binary form, a possible dichotomy worth exploring for a detailed analysis of education policies in which the technical aspect is not tied to the operational or the political one, owing to substantial differences between the academic and the practical.

Causa, M. (2012)

"Política y educación en América Latina: De la 'calidad competitiva' a la 'calidad para la generación de los bicentenarios.'" VII Jornadas de Sociología de la UNLP.

Causa points to the relevance international institutions have been acquiring in the education policies of Latin America, particularly from 1990 onward. He also points to the past strength of UNESCO, which waned from that date in favor of other institutions not devoted exclusively to the subject, the IDB and the World Bank.

One relevant fact to note is the displacement over the past two decades of UNESCO, as the international agency specializing in education, from leading actor at the head of the Major Project on Education for Latin America and the Caribbean at the beginning of the eighties to minor actor, with weak technical legitimacy and without resources, by the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. That space has been occupied by the World Bank (and secondarily by the Inter-American Development Bank), an institution which, as we observe, comes to

command education policy in this and in the other “developing” regions. Also notable is the new profile of the OAS with an active role in international cooperation and in the educational field in particular, charged with following up the Summits of the Americas together with the World Bank, the IDB, and ECLAC. (2012, 6)

The author concludes with the relevance of education in the region for combating poverty and marginality. He also notes that the challenges are diverse and will not simply be resolved with exaggerated rhetoric. He criticizes the direct, ideological struggle that uses education as an instrument of government, and holds that the relevant policies will be those that “transcend the governments of the day, that settle into the education systems and into their actors (...)” (p. 15). Causa thus defends the inclusion of technical expertise within politics, as a program that is not mediated but understood in a certain way as academic, even while he is critical of the position of international institutions as promoters of economic practices in the region, particularly during the decade from 1990 to 2000.

Oregioni, M. S. (2013)

“Aspectos político-institucionales de la internacionalización de la Universidad Nacional de La Plata.” *RAES* 5 (6): 97–118.

According to Oregioni, in the twenty-first century the internationalization of Argentine universities has gained strength through specialized departments within each of them, since they are self-governing. To that internationalization she links the concept of cooperation which, as we have seen, is a presupposition of multilateralism and of the IDB’s work. The author affirms the relevance, then, of cooperating internationally in order to achieve university internationalization. She also affirms the need to coordinate new south-south relations in order to promote cross-cutting policies that complement the traditional north-south logic. Oregioni writes:

According to Jiménez Ortiz (2011), (...) the international institutions have sought to integrate the Latin American countries into the world system (...). In the nineties, the reforms to Higher Education form part of a geopolitical project, known as the Washington Consensus, driven

by business corporations, political officials, and international institutions of the developed countries. In exchange for the reforms proposed, states could count on financial and technical assistance from the international agencies, which in this way increased their power of definition, oversight, and control over domestic policy. All of this accompanied by a process of depoliticization, in which national politics was subordinated to the administration of the experts who operated the adjustments demanded by the global economic system. This becomes more visible in the Latin American states, where development projects and decision-making rested on techno-financial programs formulated by experts of world techno-science, belonging to institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations (UN), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Such institutions "[...] can influence the political will of governments, inclined to heed the Bank's recommendations so as not to risk access to loans" (Tunnermann, 1995: 127). (2013, 103)

The author thus sustains a criticism of the intervention of international institutions, denouncing a depoliticization that would be removing political controls from local leaders in order to transfer them to entities based in foreign countries. On the author's account, this would amount to a transfer of political resources from local democracy to a global technocracy tied to the major powers within the framework of the UN, among other organizations. These claims, if not contrasted, contradict the testimony of the officials interviewed, who have stated that they require consensus in order to promote specific policies. They are also contradicted by Argentina's high share of participation in the IDB. Once again, then, we find a situation that is more complex and mixed in its nuances than the author appears to suggest.

Internationalization does not in itself imply the submission of one state to another; rather, the dynamics have varied with the period and with the subject. The author points to the relevance of technical financial knowledge for entering into the specific operations of these institutions, which is, to a greater or lesser degree, potentially foreseeable in the case of development financing. Even so, she does not expressly en-

gage with those technical debates, which produces an omission of the prevailing theoretical frameworks used to promote the programs. The complexities present in an approach such as the one proposed would require, in Stromquist's terms, an incursion into interdisciplinarity, which is to say a substantial immersion in academic production outside the educational field, moving into law, finance, and administration. Once steeped in those other bodies of knowledge, the author will be able to conclude, with greater care, on the pertinence, as regards effectiveness, of the programs proposed.

Mendy, M. (2016)

"Acción política y participación de las y los jóvenes de escuelas secundarias de la ciudad de La Plata." Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad Nacional de La Plata.

In this work the author highlights the practices of politics, culture, and communication that have had an impact on the formation of young people in the city of La Plata. To that end she recovers the concept of citizenship. The text develops the following idea:

It is difficult to capture the various meanings, traditional and emerging, with which young people give sense to citizenship: citizenship as the sphere of civil rights (courts, laws, the administration of justice); citizenship as the sphere of political rights (formal democracy, representative democracy, and direct democracy); as the sphere of social rights (social security services, education, the right to employment); as the sphere of cultural rights (inclusion and recognition of their identity in its multiple affiliations). (2016, 86)

It is relevant to consider that educational institutions are political settings, or settings liable to be politicized by the practices of young people, in the case of secondary schools but also in universities. Under this theoretical proposal, Mendy holds that the interrelation produced in this back-and-forth among rights, political practices, and learning is virtuous, since these elements feed one another and make it possible to produce new learning that widens the capacity for decision in autonomy of judgment on the part of those who are educated.

Miño Chiappino, J. S. (2018)

“Gestión, política y educación: Un acercamiento al gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos en la Dirección General de Cultura y Educación de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (DGCyE) (2016-2018).” Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Memoria Académica.

The author analyzes national education policies in the Province of Buenos Aires between 2016 and 2018 through documentary research and interviews. In her literature review she notes:

(...) following Claudio Suasnábar and Nicolás Isola (2013), the growing presence of the expert role within spheres of public management and its type of participation in that sphere can be divided into three historical stages. (...) in the nineties, the loss of state centrality and action and the growing technobureaucratization of politics, which was transformed into a merely technical matter for experts. In this, with the growing influence of international institutions, think tanks, and private analysts, expert knowledge in education policy turns toward technical advisory work, where scientific discourse was used to carry out a series of reforms tending to dismantle the state apparatus. (2018, 13)

Taking up Suasnábar, the presence of different stages in local education policy is affirmed, situating the influence of international institutions particularly in the period from 1990 to 2000, which coincides with the documents analyzing the history of globalization in Latin America. It also coincides with the quantification of educational programs, which rise significantly in nominal terms in that period. She mentions, however, technobureaucratization as a procedure in which politics becomes technified. This does not coincide with what the interviewees for this thesis said, since they do not deny their role in participating in public policy, and they do not maintain an impartial position but one aligned with the IDB’s guidelines, though independent of national governments.

Silván, C. R., and S. P. Aquino Zúñiga (2019)

“Los organismos internacionales y las políticas educativas de profesionalización docente de la educación normal en México.” *IE: Revista de Investigación Educativa de la REDIECH* 10 (19): 71–89.

Silván and Aquino Zúñiga propose a review of the available academic production on education policies in Latin America, and particularly in Mexico, that have been applied or promoted by international institutions between 1984 and 2018. They conclude that there is no homogeneous theoretical approach in use internationally. This occurs because the institutions are broad in terms of personnel and, moreover, do not have unified leadership but are self-governing. Each government, in turn, sends its own officials to the IDB, for example, resulting in a back-and-forth of international policy in keeping with the changes that may occur at the national level. According to the authors:

The review of the literature gives an account of the design, establishment, execution, and evaluation of teacher professionalization policies in Mexico during the period reviewed, running from 1984 to 2018. These policies have been established from human capital theory with reference points such as behaviorism and pragmatism and the postulates of new public management, which in turn takes up public choice theory, with its emphasis on the market approach, and the theory of managerialism, which emphasizes or privileges direction and relegates the routine aspects of administration, leaving greater room for maneuver to the personnel involved. The conduct of these policies has been carried out with the recommendation and advice of international institutions such as the World Bank, the IDB, the OECD, and UNESCO (García-Sánchez, 2017). In this sense, it was found that the establishment and execution of these theoretical approaches are not necessarily homogeneous, especially in the countries of Latin America. In Mexico's case the theory of managerialism has been preferred in the policies carried out on the education sector. (2019, para. 47)

According to the authors, the prevailing line is managerialism. In general this is a concept used critically by social researchers rather than by professional managers. What the concept sustains is an incursion, more or less accepted, into the challenges of managing public resources, in this

case the IDB's. The authors thus hold that in the international institutions mentioned in the paragraph above there is an explicit programming that favors, through various programmatic mechanisms, the expansion of professional or technocratic structures. In Causa's terms, this technical incursion would come into tension with the democratic forms and practices of states. Posed in binary form, however, this dichotomy is far too simple to reflect the complexities of the crossings and exchanges between the ranks of national officials and those of international officials. It is not possible to affirm the level of technocratism without an effective analysis of the concept's implications, the construction of indicators, and a subsequent application of those indicators to data collected from each institution in particular. Otherwise the analysis would confine itself to the linguistic or to the qualitative study of programs, and not effectively to the appointment of officials by their more or less political or technical provenance. That would limit the feasibility of such an analysis.

Fiorucci, P. (2022)

"Doctorarse en Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales en la Universidad Nacional de La Plata (2002-2018): Dinámicas políticas, programas y trayectorias doctorales." Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Memoria Académica.

Fiorucci analyzes doctoral education at the National University of La Plata between 2002 and 2018. To that end he studies the structure of graduate programs and formative trajectories. He also stresses the bureaucratic structures which, outside the university, influence the development of the research that makes up doctoral students' activity. In this context he mentions the IDB as follows:

This complex and traumatic process of reorganization that the institution underwent was also accompanied by a spurious use of economic resources. With the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and while the country's economy was stagnant, CONICET's budget multiplied sevenfold and its operating expenses twelvefold. With a notable increase in its budget, the institution deployed a web of resource allocation through subsidies, which sought a transfer of

public funds into private hands that did not account to the institution for the use of those funds (Hurtado, 2010). (2022, 78)

Fiorucci thus affirms the IDB's capacity to expand a sector of the national bureaucracy, in the period of Argentina's last military dictatorship (1976-1983). Through direct intervention in CONICET, the IDB fostered, on the author's account, the institution's concrete capacities to produce research. Fiorucci also wrote:

Several authors (Suasnábar, 1999; Feldfeber, 2000; Saforcada, 2012) note that the great intellectual drivers of these reforms, at the international level, were the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which proposed the structural adjustment of the system as a strategy for overcoming the fiscal crisis the state was going through. Thus the period will be marked by a strong tendency toward the commodification of education. (p. 148)

In another period, the decade from 1990 to 2000, Fiorucci affirms that the IDB, among other institutions, was part of an international strategy to drive structural reforms in Argentina. It was an institution that gave technical support to that decade's state reforms, among them the educational one. Behind the technicalities, however, on the author's account, lay a structural adjustment that proposed the commodification of education, which is to say the more or less gradual transformation of Argentine educational structures for the entry of the market into the modes of access to and production of those practices. As we saw during the research, what Fiorucci claims has a correlate not only in the technical training of IDB officials, oriented toward economics and public policy with an embedded liberal approach, but also in the IDB's corporate purposes, since it presents itself as a financial institution oriented toward north-south cooperation for the economic development of Latin America and the Caribbean, its borrowing members.

Forero Hernández, D. J., and P. A. Castro Campos (2022)

“Políticas educativas y cooperación internacional en Latinoamérica.” *Revista Facultad de Ciencias Contables, Económicas y Administrativas* 12 (1): 8–23.

The authors analyze the academic production on the impact of globalization on education policy in Latin America. They highlight in particular the role in international cooperation of institutions such as UNESCO and the UN. In the course of the analysis they affirm that Latin America is the most unequal region on earth, which in practical terms means extremely unequal access to educational opportunity as well and, therefore, to work opportunity. This social difficulty is a source of injustice of every kind, since one's fortune would be more or less settled at birth, according to where one is born, by the natural lottery, in Rawls's phrase. Education, in turn, is only one more factor bearing on that natural lottery, which is not limited to economic aspects but is also cultural, familial, geographic, and even personal, as with intellectual qualities or physical appearance. It is in this context that international institutions operate. According to the authors:

By way of conclusion it can be argued that the international cooperation institutions have consolidated a vast influence over the education policies of Latin America and will continue to set the road map in many scenarios, principally because of their strong connotation of productive, commercial growth, their more pragmatic view of the teaching component, the purposes and goals, the objectives that are traced out by these institutions have a substantial and very eloquent discourse. (2022, 19)

Unlike other authors cited, this work actively praises the line the international institutions have followed. The link between education and the role of productive and commercial growth is emphasized, while the authors affirm the institutions' pragmatic view of the education sector's capacities within the economy. Once again, then, we enter the debate over how far the market should influence educational matters. Under the influence of a development financing institution this debate is practically unavoidable, since the interests in tension are mediated by gov-

ernments, firms, and educational organizations, each with a different mission.

Steiner-Khamsi, G., and M. E. Cardoso (2023)

“Las políticas de la comparación internacional: Un esbozo histórico de los cambios a lo largo del tiempo.” *Archivos de Ciencias de la Educación* 17 (23).

In this article the authors connect data with education policy and decision-making at the international level. They hold that data are not in themselves an aseptic product; rather, their very logic of production affects relations between governments and international institutions. They also situate the institutions mentioned as preponderant factors in mobilizing resources to extract data, the OECD’s PISA test for example:

Lacking regulatory and coercive power, intergovernmental organizations resort to knowledge-based governance. The OECD’s PISA test lends itself as an example of how the political instrument of international comparison is used to generate or relieve, respectively, reformist pressure on governments (Waldow and Steiner-Khamsi, 2019; Martens and Jacobi, 2010; Niemann and Martens 2018; Grek, 2020; Grek and Ydesen, 2021). Of course, it is necessary to question how “soft” comparing, naming and shaming countries in league tables really is, and how “hard” or meaningful numerical “facts” really are if they are stripped of their narrative (Espeland and Sauder, 2016). As already mentioned, precisely because rankings and scores are decontextualized, they can be recontextualized and filled with new political meaning.

The literature on the sociology of quantification offers useful interpretive frameworks for measuring and conceptualizing regimes of quantification, such as the intermediary organizations that take part in governance by numbers (Mennicken and Espeland, 2019). The lock-in effect, astutely described by Boswell, Yearley, Fleming, Rodrigues and Spinardi (2015) for the United Kingdom context and mentioned earlier, is one of the main reasons for target setting in the context of global governance, as evidenced in the World Bank’s proposed Indicative Framework, presented more than a decade ago (Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos, 2011). As a measure of accountability, figures and indicators have thus become a key component of formal agreements between the

various levels of administration, including the national, regional and global levels. (2023, 18–19)

Understood in this way, data are, on the authors' account, not only an input for research or for circumstantial decisions but also a driver of global governance decisions, since they are used as a source or resource for establishing general objectives. They also warn of the danger of interpreting data without context.

Quiceno, L. G. (2023)

“Prácticas de lectura en el cotidiano escolar de la localidad de Sumapaz, política educativa y trabajo docente.” Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Memoria Académica.

Quiceno analyzes the peasant and rural region of Sumapaz, in Colombia, in its educational aspect. Within this context he situates neoliberal policies as bound up with commercialism, which is to say that he considers that this political doctrine has placed within commerce situations that are foreign to it. One of the relations that have been commodified, according to Quiceno (2023), is the curriculum, since neoliberalism drives the employability of those who are educated:

According to Del Rey (2016) the neoliberal policies of the 1980s promote education policies centered principally on economic performativity, which behind a humanist appearance is interested exclusively in the “employability” of individuals (p. 18). According to Del Rey (2016) it is assumed that employability guarantees the competitiveness of firms, as well as the growth and competitiveness of the state and its alliances. In this sense, school systems have been transformed into factories of high-performing students, supervised by international comparisons and standardized evaluations which divide knowledge into competencies. They likewise seek to evaluate the acquisition of these competencies in such a way that they can be oriented toward a potential for economic competitiveness, increasing efficiency, which is to say the performance of education systems. (p. 140)

As we have seen, the IDB's programs situate employability as a preponderant factor when they deal with education, since the macroeconomic

factor is prioritized by the institution's technical staff. The institution's approach, in turn, might be categorized as an embedded liberalism, as we saw. Categorizing the IDB as belonging to neoliberalism is debatable, given that no author cited from the IDB and no interviewee has defined himself as such. The term neoliberalism, moreover, tends to be associated with pejorative connotations, so that it is not in frequent use among authors belonging to international institutions. This presents us with the conceptual difficulty of defining another's ideology with a term that is rejected by the party being addressed, and then extrapolating it to international relations.

Quiceno accurately defines international institutions as institutions focused on efficiency and on the performance of students within education systems. This is an edge that also relates to employability as the capacity to bring students into a sociability outside the educational establishment itself. In general the institutions' position coincides with this description, since in their own programs they tend to establish employability as desirable. This might contrast with the nineteenth-century criteria that considered universities exclusively as settings for study, separate from everyday labor or traditional employment, with certain exceptions such as law or medicine. To enrich the analysis of the institutions' position, one possible proposal is to continue interviewing officials, asking them about the positions they adopt in an institutional context with respect to the concepts of embedded liberalism and neoliberalism.

Perilla Largo, N. A. (2024)

"Movimiento Pedagógico Colombiano como propuesta alternativa en el proyecto: La Escuela Territorio de Paz. Hitos e incidencias en la política educativa en el escenario del posconflicto 2021-2022." Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Memoria Académica.

The author set out to study a national pedagogical phenomenon, the Colombian one, consisting of a movement that was influential from the 1980s onward in that country's education policy. That movement was critical in particular of education policies emanating from administra-

tive institutions, whether national or international. They proposed that education policy be designed by teachers themselves, insofar as they are tied to daily practice.

Following Rovelli, Perilla Largo makes the following argument about international institutions:

From the foregoing we can turn to the ideal-typical constructions (Rovelli, 2018), which delimit an analysis or moment in the cycles of education policy, according to three stages. First, formulation, agenda-setting, and evaluation. In order to analyze what Avila sets out in relation to the curriculum, the instruments of measurement, and the single validation of the teaching and learning process, we will speak of the evaluation that estimates the impacts of public management (process-result). The implementation of different types of instruments and devices of oversight and auditing, protagonists of the Neoliberal model since 1990, issued through international cooperation programs. The instruments that have been applied are: external evaluation, standardized tests (such as PISA-OECD), the reordering of evaluation, the conception of education (education for work), the financing of education, as inputs for reform or changes in state policy, or for assuming the consequences of regulation in national policy within international bodies. (2024, 59–60)

The author points out, that is, that the debates of the movement in question set up a contradiction with the lines prevailing in the international institutions, citing the OECD as an example. International institutions constitute a paradigmatic phenomenon of policy formulation by technical staff who are not immersed in the specific field of action but operate, as we have seen, in a manner comparable to a think tank. Seen in this light, the tension between international institutions and social movements that propose a politics with popular roots or tied to mechanisms of direct democracy, without delegation to specific or technical institutions, is understandable. These two interest groups, though perhaps aligned in their interests, might not frequent the same channels for advancing their initiatives.

It is in these contexts that one should ask whether international cooperation programs could consist in cooperation properly speaking rather than simply, as this work interprets it, in devices of oversight and

auditing. A critical view can allow a more defined and detailed understanding of the phenomenon, but if one dwells only in the critical aspect it can also cloud matters and cause the omission of substantial details that make for harmony and for the cooperation of peoples in peace. In this respect the educational is a fundamental edge for uniting, even in difference, and limiting the concept of cooperation under a suspicion of a fiscal or policing character promotes the absence of the diplomacy required for the social and scientific advance of society.

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ANNEX IX: ABBREVIATIONS

- CONEAU: Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria (Argentina's national commission for university evaluation and accreditation)
- ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- EDPR: digital education, programming and robotics (educación digital, programación y robótica)
- ICT: information and communication technologies
- IDB: Inter-American Development Bank
- IIEP: International Institute for Educational Planning
- IMF: International Monetary Fund
- IT: information technology
- MECCT: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura, Ciencia y Tecnología (Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, 2018-2019)
- NAP: Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios (Priority Learning Cores)
- NGO: nongovernmental organization
- OAS: Organization of American States
- OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- SFD: Sector Framework Document
- TC: technical cooperation
- UN: United Nations
- UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization