

# The Instrument Constituency in the Political Subsystem of Brazilian Vocational Education

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## Abstract

The instrument constituency is a component of the political subsystem dedicated to the articulation and promotion of particular types of solutions. Simons and Voss (2018) say that instrument constituencies are neglected political forces in national and transnational policymaking, advocating for more research to understand how these networks of actors emerge and their role in the political process. The aim of this work is to analyze how this type of network forms and interacts in the policy subsystem, exploring the case of the program *Mulheres Mil*. This is a qualitative research and it was based on the transdisciplinary proposal, which discuss with the principles of the critical discourse studies of Fairclough, combined with the model of multiple streams of Kingdon and its relation with the actors of the policy subsystem. The data used in this study were collected through: selection of the corpus of analysis; critical reading; and identification of the sections most relevant for the analysis. The corpus of analysis consisted of an interview with one of the creators of the program *Mulheres Mil*, and of the project *Mulheres Mil* in the Northeast region. It was concluded that the instrument constituencies and the groups of defense collisions refer to two distinct levels of political reality, which interact in search of different interests and objectives. In this interaction, political entrepreneurs are key elements for certain solutions to have prominence in the policy process, bridging the different networks of actors and the government.

**Keywords:** defense coalition, epistemic communities, instrument constituencies, thousand women program

## 1. Introduction

According to Simons and Voss (2018), the concept of instrument constituencies was first introduced by Voss (2007) as a component of the political subsystem dedicated to the articulation and promotion of specific solutions, regardless of the context of problems tackled in the political agenda. Subsequently, the concept was resumed and used by Voss and Simons (2014) when arguing that the instruments are networks of interrelated practices, called instrument constituencies. Such instruments have been studied by other authors, such as Mann and Simons (2014), Voss (2014), Simons and Voss (2015), Mukherjee and Howlett (2015), Béland and Howlett (2016), Voss and Amelung (2016), and Amelung and Grabner (2017).

However, Simons and Voss (2018) say that instrument constituencies are neglected political forces in national and transnational policymaking, advocating for more research to understand how these networks of actors emerge and their role in the political process.

Beland and Howlett (2016) point out the need for additional case studies outside the field of environmental policy, to verify the effectiveness of the instrument constituency concept and its usefulness as part of a broader framework. This framework should better describe and explain the policymaking activities in comparison to existing models of political subsystems. It also helps to analyze how this network of actors relates, in practice, to other actors in the subsystem, such as epistemic communities and advocacy coalitions.

This article, therefore, analyzes how this type of network was formed and the way it interacts in the political subsystem of Brazilian vocational education. The study examined the political connections around the formulation of the program *Mulheres Mil* (PMM) (Thousand Women Program), which is based on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

The PMM was developed under President Lula da Silva's government (2003-2010) and expanded under President Dilma Rousseff's administration (2011-2016) when there was an increase in the Federal network of vocational and technological education. The program was implemented in 2007, in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil, to foster social inclusion and gender equality, in an attempt to overcome difficulties related to income, low schooling, and the triple working hours of socially disadvantaged women. From 2011, it was recognized as an affirmative public policy and implemented nationally (Brasil, 2011). Between 2008 and 2016, the program served 100,718 socially disadvantaged women (Brasil, 2017).

PLAR emerged in the United States in the 1980s to recognize the practical knowledge acquired by white-collar professionals. It is a tool formed by a set of approaches and methodologies based on the notion that people learn skills and acquire essential knowledge throughout life, and it is essential to identify, understand and use this knowledge and experience when it comes to continuing and complementary education (Morrissey et al., 2008).

According to Morrissey et al. (2008), PLAR was implemented in the 1980s in the Province of Quebec (Canada), as part of learning support and services offered to aboriginal peoples. Nowadays, the tool faces the problem of the limits of immigrants' social integration, and their difficulties to enter the Canadian labor market. Canada's college system uses PLAR processes mainly for entry into higher education and continuing progression.

PLAR started to be considered in the European Union's educational policy documents in the 1990s and stands out as a policy for professional mobility and social inclusion (Cavaco, 2009). Thirteen countries have politically committed to creating national strategies to recognize non-formal and informal learning. Finland, France, and Spain have implemented comprehensive strategies involving all education subsystems (vocational training, general education, and higher education), as explained by the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2014).

Since 1990, this center has systematically worked to validate non-formal and informal learning in European countries, slowly but continuously evolving regarding methodology. The efforts aim to recognize the experience of low-skilled individuals.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 *The Network of Actors and Kingdon's Multiple Streams Model*

In their efforts to understand the concept of instrument constituency, Simons and Voss (2018), point to the work by Mukherjee and Howlett (2015), who "argued that instrument constituencies are one of three concepts in the policy analysis literature that help to explain the agency behind the type of streams Kingdon had in mind" (Simons & Voss, 2018, p.26). About Mukherjee and Howlett (2015), Simons and Voss (2018) continue: "Asking 'who is a stream?', Mukherjee and Howlett (2015) identify epistemic communities, instrument constituencies, and advocacy coalitions as the principal agents of Kingdon's problem, policy and politics streams, respectively" (Simons & Voss, 2018, p.26).

The idea that knowledge-based communities are politically influential was developed in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Smirnova and Yachin (2015), the epistemic community has its origin in the concept "*episteme*," widely used by Michel Foucault. Ruggie (1975) introduced the term epistemic community, drawing on Foucault (2006) to describe a comprehensive perspective through which political relations are viewed and understood throughout history.

However, according to Haas (1992), in the 1980s, the term "epistemic community" still had several interpretations. The concept of epistemic community, as understood nowadays, was formed in the 1990s by Emanuel Adler and Peter M. Haas (1992) and by Ernst B. Haas and Peter M. Haas (1995).

For Haas (1992), epistemic communities are often transnational networks of knowledgeable and recognized specialists with authoritative claims to policy-relevant knowledge in their field of expertise. Members share knowledge about the causes of social or physical phenomena in their area of expertise, as well as the share normative beliefs about what actions will benefit people's well-being in this domain.

The epistemic community has scientific truth as a shared value and promotes its knowledge to help solve global problems that affect human development, well-being, and security. Members of an ideal epistemic community act on their own will, but some authors, such as Heritage and Green (2013), consider government-initiated epistemic communities as usual and effective (Smirnova & Yachin, 2015).

According to Haas (1992), epistemic communities influence decision-makers in a wide variety of problem areas. Generally solicited for advice under conditions of uncertainty, they can often be important actors in shaping international policy coordination patterns.

However, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) argue that a policy subsystem may consist of several subcomponents or grouping of actors whose interactions affect their activities and the outcomes of public policies (Béland & Howlett, 2016).

These researchers used evidence from case studies on public policies in areas such as environment, water, and energy, at the state and federal levels in the United States. In addition, they argue that actors from various public and private institutions share a basic set of beliefs about particular policy areas, forming informal coalitions within subsystems with the aim of prevailing over other actors in defining and advocating for related policies, to their central political beliefs and preferences (Sabatier & Weible, 2007; Béland & Howlett, 2016).

The advocacy coalition framework has three principles. A macro principle, whereby most policymaking occurs among experts within a political subsystem, but their behavior is affected by factors in the broader political and socio-economic system. This specialization occurs in political subsystems composed of participants who often seek to influence policy within a subsystem. For Sabatier and Weible (2007), the framework assumes that policy participants have strong beliefs and are motivated to translate these beliefs into real policies.

A second principle is the micro-level, the “model of the individual,” which is strongly inspired by social psychology. Advocacy coalitions emphasize the difficulty of changing normative beliefs and the tendency of actors to relate to the world through a set of perceptual filters composed of pre-existing beliefs that are difficult to change.

Finally, there is a meso-level belief, where the best way to deal with the multiplicity of actors in a subsystem is to aggregate them into “advocacy coalitions.” To succeed, the coalition must seek allies, share resources, and develop complementary strategies. The advocacy coalition framework assumes that policymakers will seek allies with people who hold similar beliefs among lawmakers, agency officials, lobbyists, judges, researchers, and intellectuals at various levels of government. Thus, as Sabatier and Weible (2007) point out, coordination involves some degree of working together to achieve similar policy objectives.

The advocacy coalition framework has three sets of variables external to the political subsystem, which affect the resources and constraints of subsystem actors, as well as policymaking: stable system parameters, external events, and opportunity structures of the coalition. These variables are the characteristics of a relatively endorsed policy that affect the resources and constraints of subsystem actors (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

However, Voss and Simons (2014) argue that there are other actors in the subsystem of political actors involved in the designation and definition of political problems. These actors are exclusively concerned with the instruments or with articulating and promoting political solutions. The authors believe that the demand for policy instruments can be driven not only by new problems, changes in ideologies, or power but also by dynamics endogenous to instrument development.

According to Béland and Howlett (2016), the instrument constituency is closely linked to the ideas of John Kingdon. Kingdon (1995) assumes that political entrepreneurs most often act individually, trying to convince political communities and other audiences, building consensus around their proposals and seizing windows of opportunity. An open policy window provides an opportunity for political entrepreneurs to offer their solutions or to draw attention to a problem that they consider unique or priority.

For Kingdon (1995, p.239), “entrepreneurs are crucial for softening up the decision-making dynamics.” They can be well-informed and connected people, who provide knowledge and persistence to connect the streams (Cairney & Jones, 2015). The ‘entrepreneurs’ can be organizations, and also either strongly interconnected or quite distinct and separate individuals, who may assume different roles depending on their problems, policy, or political orientation (Knaggard, 2015; Mukherjee & Howlett, 2015).

Based on the perspective of instrument constituencies, Voss and Simons (2014) say that political entrepreneurs would incorporate into the context of a larger group that would transnationally extend across the fields of policy formulation and modeling.

The instrument constituencies, in this perspective, are social entities that manage the connections between the knowledge-oriented model and policy implementation. As these actors reflexively seek to manage the interdependencies that emerge from their engagement in conjunction with an instrument. They are mutually presented to specific versions of the instrument based on the expectations (Voss & Simons, 2014).

For the authors, the instruments are formed by social practices that originate and are imbricated in specific socio-material activities. They add that “instruments do not only cognitively organize governing strategies, but that they shape practices, allocate roles and create social positions” (Simons & Voss, 2018, p.18). Their strength would not lie in the ability to mirror a given reality, but in the potential to provide support and align practices to

create the reality they describe (Voss, 2016).

Therefore, instrument constituencies act to recruit support for a specific innovative policy through functional and structural promises. Functional promises refer to the ability of instruments to achieve public objectives, working to rationalize the project and legitimize it in society (Voss, 2007; Voss & Simons, 2014; Simons & Voss, 2018).

Structural promises are implied in the structural features of a future world potentially produced by the instrument, especially concerning the roles and positions that this future world will offer to different actors. This kind of promise is usually not publicly announced and works to include the practical support in a collective project. Structural promises, therefore, may provide an opportunity for advancing a specific research agenda; the formulation of public policies, when it is suggested that part of the ongoing efforts are dedicated to obtaining public support; and, in the case of companies, they use the opportunity to market products and services (Voss, 2007; Voss & Simons, 2014; Simons & Voss, 2018).

The concept of instrument constituency is “one in which a specific kind of collective actor is involved in the formulation and configuration of policy instruments, just as epistemic communities are involved in problem definition and advocacy coalitions in policy alternative adoption” (Béland & Howlett, 2016, p.397).

According to Voss and Simons (2014), unlike the political communities of the advocacy coalitions and the epistemic community, instrument constituencies are not necessarily held together by strong and shared convictions, but mainly by the intertwining of practices that can be reflected and coordinated strategically.

## 2.2 The Social and Political Context of Brazilian Vocational Education

According to Marques and Mendes (2007), the first government of President Lula da Silva (2003-2006) was marked by an economic policy that favored agribusiness and national and international financial capital, maintaining a high return on capital and high-interest rates. Due to the economic situation of high inflation rates, measures such as public primary surplus, and the restriction on public spending stood out in this period (Fagnani, 2011).

Marques and Mendes (2007) observed that, at the same time, the government implemented several policies aimed at the poorest part of the Brazilian population. According to Fagnani (2011), the early years of President Lula da Silva’s administration was marked by the debate regarding the directions of the social strategy, highlighting the dispute between “focusing” and “universalization,” opening space also to elements of the liberal agenda in the social field.

Fagnani (2011) explains that from 2003, various mechanisms of pressure and social accountability were implemented, such as national conferences in the area of health, education, social security, urban policy, and policies for women. These mechanisms contributed to institutionalize policies such as the *Bolsa Família* conditional cash transfer program, the *Política Nacional de Assistência Social* (PNAS) (national policy of social services), *The Sistema Único de Assistência Social* (Suas) (unified system of social services), the *Sistema Único da Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (Susan) (unified system of food and nutrition security), the *Programa Saúde da Família* (family health program), and the *Programa Universidade para Todos* (Prouni) (university for all), as discussed by Fagnani (2011).

The author says that the structured and massive land reform the new government had promised in the electoral campaign was left aside from the first year. However, policies such as the *Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar* (Pronaf) (national program to strengthening family farming) and others in this field stood out as important achievements.

The flagship of the first mandate of President Lula da Silva was *Bolsa Família*, a conditional cash transfer program benefiting families below the poverty line. The program was designed to fight poverty and social exclusion, promoting the emancipation of the most impoverished families. In May 2006, the program was implemented in 99.9% of Brazilian cities, benefiting almost 47 million people and favoring the local markets. In some municipalities, almost half of the population received the benefit, which significantly affected the local businesses (Marques & Mendes, 2007).

In President Lula da Silva’s second term (2006-2010), economic growth resumed, and there was a more positive articulation between economic and social policies. The improvement of employment and the balance of public accounts led to the expansion of social spending. The 2008 international financial crisis diminished neoliberal hegemony, and the agenda of “minimum state” lost power, allowing a favorable scenario for the expansion of the role of the state in the economy and market regulation (Fagnani, 2011).

New programs, such as the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) and the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* program were

launched, consolidating a social strategy, supported by the defense of universal policies and fighting extreme poverty, combined with successful economic stability, economic growth, income distribution, social inclusion, and the promotion of citizenship (Fagnani, 2011). In the field of education, the author highlights initiatives such as the *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica* (FUNDEB) (fund for the maintenance and development of basic education); the approval of the education development plan; and the reform of higher education, increasing the budget of federal universities and expanding the public education system.

In the context marked by the expansion of the Brazilian economic and social development, in 2004, the schools started to offer (as they did in the past) vocational and high school education in an integrated fashion. This type of combined education included courses and training programs of basic and continuing education of workers, high school level vocational and technical education, and undergraduate and graduate professional technical education (Wermelinger; Machado & Amário Filho, 2007; Foguel & Normanha Filho, 2007).

The *Programa Nacional de Integração da Educação Profissional com a Educação Básica na Modalidade de Educação de Jovens e Adultos* (PROEJA) (national program to integrate vocational education with basic education for youths and adults) was implemented in the same period through Decree 5478/2005, and restructured in 2006 to include not only high school but all basic education. This program aims at the integral education of young people and adults who return to school to complete formal education out of regular time, so they are prepared to understand the social, political, economic, and cultural reality, integrated to the world of work (Ivo & Hypólito, 2012).

In 2008, the government announced a plan to expand the federal system of professional and technologic education. After an intense debate, the government established the *Institutos Federais de Educação* (federal education institutes) by changing and integrating federal educational institutions (some of them were more than a hundred years old) previously known as *Escolas Técnicas Federais* (ETFs) (federal technical schools), *Escolas Agrotécnicas Federais* (EAFs) (federal agro-technical schools), *Centros de Educação Tecnológica* (CEFETs) (centers of technological education), and other technical schools operating under the umbrella of federal universities (Fernandes, 2016).

The *Institutos Federais de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia* (IFs) (federal institutes of education, science, and technology) were created to provide basic and vocational education, as well as undergraduate and graduate programs emphasizing vocational training. IFs were part of a strategy to integrate national, regional, and local development, to connect the policies of vocational and technological education with the other public policies developed by President Lula da Silva's government (Pacheco; Pereira & Domingos Sobrinho, 2010).

### 3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach using documental analysis and focalized interviews. The data were examined based on a transdisciplinary perspective, which dialogues with the epistemological principles by Fairclough's (2000, 2001, 2003) critical discursive studies and the notion of the network of political actors by Haas (1992), Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), Kingdon (1995), Voss (2007, 2016) and Voss and Simons (2014).

The data used in this study were collected through a) selection of the corpus of analysis; b) critical reading; and c) identification of the sections most relevant for the analysis. The corpus of analysis consisted of an interview with one of the creators of the program *Mulheres Mil* (PMM), and of the project *Mulheres Mil* in the Northeast region. The PMM was developed in 2006 by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the Secretariat of Vocational and Technological Education of the Ministry of Education of Brazil (SETEC). The interview occurred in October 2017, based on a semi-structured script.

The categories used for the discourse analysis of the interview and the documents of the project were:

- Transitivity system: how are political actors represented in the political process? What types of process - activity, event, relational, mental – are most used, and what factors can be considered based on that information? and
- Assessment: to what values – as for what is desirable or undesirable – does the interviewee commit? How are values put into practice? (Such as evaluative statements, statements with deontic modalities, statements with affective mental processes, presumed values).

The categories were established *a posteriori* based on the data collected in the interview and observing the research questions.

### 4. Analysis and Discussion of Results

The changes in the national political atmosphere were evidenced in the 2002 elections, which resulted in a new party in government, with a new ideology and party configuration in Congress. The new structure of government

led to a new conception for vocational and technological education and the expansion of the network of *Institutos Federais de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia* (IFs) (federal institutes of education, science, and technology) in Brazil. This context is observed in the interview with one of the creators of the PMM:

1. One thing is to put ideas into practice, materializing them. We already had something materialized, but nobody really believed it would work. You can imagine they [the technical schools] are a hundred or so years old [...] And you have 100 institutions. In a matter of 7 or 8 years, there were 600 or so institutions [in the network of IFs]. This was unimaginable both in terms of resources and results. But we have to have a start, a middle, and never an end, because the end can always be revised [...] It's complex, why? Because you have to have coincidences in these initiatives. For example, we had a coincidence, we had a government sensitive to this context of changing the face of this country, a scenario where there were a lot of people in the secretariat and policy-making bodies with the same ideas, and a technical staff with experience, expertise, and knowledge, also believing in it. Then, thanks to these elements altogether, it was possible to build these initial structures.

Through the circumstantial relational process “have,” there was a favorable political environment for restructuring and expansion of the network of IFs, and the causes observed in the narrative were “a government sensitive to this,” “people in the secretariat and policymaking bodies with the same ideas,” and “a technical staff with experience, expertise, and knowledge.”

In this scenario of restructuring and expansion of public vocational education, political entrepreneurs were crucial in softening up the decision-making dynamics and in advocating the idea of an organization, an institute, which would act as a bridge between the government and the disadvantaged population:

2. So, in this process, we had several political clashes, right? We had a map of the country where all the units had to be located, and this map showed over 800 locations. Of course, that number was impossible at that time, so we had to prioritize. The clashes were about what should prevail in the early stages, the regions with a larger area of influence that served a larger number of people, or the unit that would serve a smaller number. Then we had a lot of political clashes, some we lost, but most we won. But, as the SETEC group was consolidated, it gained more scientific information, more technical information. As a result, the level of resistance increased, and we were very lucky to have a MEC executive secretary, who was a career manager and had absolute confidence from the minister.

In this part of the interview, the material process “gained,” in which the actor is the “SETEC group,” the goal is “clashes” and the circumstances were about “what should prevail in the early stages.” It was clear that there were clashes of ideas, in which the SETEC group was successful in advocating for the implementation of new IFs campuses in less developed regions and lower human development indices (HDI).

When choosing public policies, Kingdon (1995) argues that the alternatives can be generated and selected within the dynamics of the public policy itself, or through the involvement of relatively invisible participants in a long process of softening up the political system, in which political entrepreneurs promote their favorite proposals. At this point, proposals that may be related to specific political events, such as initiatives aligned with the new administration, are highlighted and associated with the new political context:

3. In this model, I am not the center, I am one more agent engaged in reaching the center, which is the community, which is the territory, which is the people. So this model is the change of culture, change of mindset, change of world view, society view, vision of everything. If I do not have an agency in power, such as the secretariat or MEC thinking like that, if I don't have managers thinking like that, the whole discussion, in the end, is fragmented and is postponed, it will never happen. If I have managers with power, managers – in the position of rectors – who understand this, the discussions and debates in the community will be in another direction, because the discussion will not be about whether the PMM will be priority this year, whether tomorrow the program will not be implemented because another graduate program will be implemented instead... it

will be a different discussion. So, we'll have another kind of clash, another kind of identity building. So, this process is still going on.

Through “to be” and “to have” relational processes, one can perceive the action of two types of agents in the policy stream: the entrepreneurial agent, who acts in the process connecting the government and the community, as well as advocating for specific ideas; and the political agents, who support new political conceptions, enabling new public policies.

Schneider and Ingram (1997) argue that political entrepreneurship, through individual actors, plays a vital role in the construction of policy design. Political entrepreneurs can structure issues so that they resonate with elected political agents or powerful interest groups, and are an important critical starting point for the transfer of issues to the political agenda.

In this new context of Brazilian vocational and technological education policy, the PMM was conceived as a government effort to foster social inclusion and gender equality to try to overcome the difficulties related to income, low education, and triple working hours of disadvantaged women (Brasil, 2011).

The program originated from a joint effort between Niagara College (Canada) and SETEC/MEC, under the administration of President Cardoso, called *Conectando escola com escola* (connecting school with school) project.

However, between the transition of governments (Cardoso – Lula da Silva) the project was interrupted. A group of people from SETEC decided to follow the activities of the project regardless the end of the partnership, which resulted in the graduation of about 60 women in a program in the area of tourism and hospitality in the city of Natal (State of Rio Grande do Norte, Northeast region). Not long after that, another partnership was established between Brazil and Canada, aiming at a pilot project using the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) methodology (*Projeto Piloto ARAP*), which took place between 2005 and 2006, as described below:

4. ACCC has built a strong relationship of trust with SETEC/MEC, CONCEFET, and the emerging REDENET in the Northeast and North. A solid relationship has been developed between one of the colleges, Niagara College, and CEFETRN in Natal in developing a customized educational curriculum in the area of tourism and hospitality. The college and CEFET's partners worked very well together, and when the project ended in March 2005, CIDA approved an extension of the original project that was aligned with the new priorities of the Brazilian government and CIDA – that of benefiting disadvantaged women by using the methodology PLAR (Brasil, 2006, p. 10).

A relationship of trust was built between Canadian and Brazilian actors after the completion of the first initiative involving both groups of actors. This is represented by the transitive material processes “built” and “work” in excerpt 4, in which the actors are ACCC, Niagara College, and CEFET's partners. Here, the excerpts show transformative phrases, as the outcome of the trusting relationship between ACCC and SETEC/MEC is a new project for disadvantaged women – who are considered in the discourse as the goal of the initiative.

Due to this relationship of trust between the countries and the good results of the pilot project, after 2006, the opportunity arose for a larger initiative involving 13 CEFETs in the North and Northeast regions, and Canadian colleges. The initiative was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC). Brazil and Canada engaged in technical cooperation starting the program *Mulheres Mil* (PMM), expecting to promote social inclusion and gender equality benefiting 1,000 women, based on the Canadian Community Colleges' knowledge of the application of the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) system (Brasil, 2011).

After the formalization of the technical cooperation between the countries, the PMM network of actors was formed, including the ACCC, Niagara College, SETEC/MEC, and 13 CEFETs from the North and Northeast regions of Brazil. ACCC offered services related to technical and vocational training, basic, higher, and non-formal education (Brasil, 2006). ACCC coordinated the Canadian part of the project, responsible for the overall project and budget management and the coordination of Canadian colleges. Niagara College in southern Ontario, Canada, developed and offered applied education and customized industry training, as well as educational services for students. The institution brought by its expertise and coordinated partners in the development of the PLAR adapted to the Brazilian reality.

In turn, SETEC was responsible for coordinating, guiding, and supervising activities related to the development and strengthening of vocational and technological education in Brazil. It was the Brazilian institution in charge

of coordinating the project, while CEFET offered vocational technological education, secondary and technical education, as well as higher education. CEFET was responsible for the implementation of the project in Brazil (Brasil, 2006).

It is important to highlight that the program began based more on a window of opportunity, which opens and closes relying on the dynamic interaction between organizations and political actors (Kingdon, 1995), than on conceptual bases, as observed in the interview:

5. The program started spontaneously with many coincidences; it was not something structured. The PMM did not have a philosophically based origin; it was a set of circumstances that led to others, which led to others. It was something happening without anyone's particular control.
6. [...] that's when the agent started in this line of action [PLAR]. The Canada method was a concrete one: courses, PLAR methodology, success. Their focus was very much on what happens next: how to do it after the course ends, how to dialogue with the business world. So, this first path, it just happened [...]

Through the material process represented by "started," in which "the program" operates as an actor and "spontaneously" is the circumstance, ACCC and the Canadian Colleges took the expertise on the PLAR methodology to Brazil. The target audience was only chosen after the beginning of discussions about program design, as recorded in excerpt 7, through the material process "discuss:"

7. Here, when we began to discuss which audience would be served, we took the program to the extremely marginalized population. That was when we entered in the debate on the organization reaching where no one had reached before [...] choosing the most suffering communities in each region [...] At that time, I was very involved in the articulation, because we had conceived the North and Northeast Technology Education network, REDENET, and the process had begun [...] So when we had the meeting with Niagara College and the principals, we asked them to choose the coordinators of each subproject and we said, 'Look, let's take the bull by the horns [...] let's get the most complex and hardest situation, and see where this methodology, this way of acting, achieves and have an impact.' It was more like a challenge [...] the methodology was PLAR because there was no other; it was PLAR that was coming from the partnership.

According to Simon and Voss (2018), instrument constituencies are formed as 'instruments' when functional and structural expectations and promises attract and generate agency to support the instrument. This type of network takes shape and develops in the interaction between governance models and their implementation. Therefore, political entrepreneurs mediate these connections, seeking opportunities and mobilizing collective actions for their implementation. They use them to develop and corroborate the functional claims of the governance model, as observed excerpt 7, through the material process "entering," in which the actor is the political entrepreneur, which is seen through the personal pronoun "I". Here "articulation" is the goal, as it is what will be affected.

In this case, the political entrepreneur became visible in the public policies stream when seizing the window of opportunity to propose new public policies through international partnerships, and in promoting the articulation between the network of directors of the CEFETs in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil with the Canadian Colleges. The political entrepreneur, therefore, used strategies such as meetings, seminars, technical presentations, testimonials, technical visits, and debates, to connect actors who would otherwise be unrelated in the subsystem.

In the initial process of building the PMM, political entrepreneurs moved between advocacy coalition groups and instrument constituencies, providing and promoting solutions that preceded problem definition. As Béland and Howlett (2016) point out, instrument constituencies can act as policy advisers or organizations that seek to combine pre-existing and previously defined and articulated solutions, by interacting with other political communities to propose and implement solutions. In this case, it is the political entrepreneurs who represent and update the stream of events or a response to them, who act as catalysts for the instrument constituencies.

Therefore, in the case studied, there was a convergence of factors before the constitution of the PMM network of actors, i.e., elements that enabled the network's agency and formation, such as:

- a political environment conducive to new ideas, with a new government sensitive to social inequalities;
- political debate of ideas addressing the new configuration of the policy of vocational and technological



education in Brazil, in which political entrepreneurs were key actors advocating for public vocational education; and

- a public policy window, which provided an opportunity for advocates of the PLAR methodology to offer their solutions to the agenda.

For Béland and Howlett (2016), it is necessary to look at domestic actors to understand how instrument constituencies work in policymaking. Without domestic actors, most public policies would not be adopted in certain countries. This is portrayed by the instrument constituencies formed for the development and implementation of the PMM. Here, as in the case of the United States social security, studied by the authors, an instrument constituency emerged nationally in connection with broader international trends due to the interests and viewpoints of other types of networks of actors.

It was also noted that the network emerged from an apparent void that existed between the government agenda for vocational education and its implementation. For Palier (2007), this void lends leverage and power to innovation projects addressing the instrument, as verified in excerpt 8:

8. PLAR, was a method, there was a subordination, like, I have a country with experience in one thing, and that experience will be passed on here. So, let's learn this technology [...] So, we chose the communities, because the logic was not just about having skills and training in the area of tourism and hospitality, or having waitresses or housekeepers, not only that [...] The idea was to apply this methodology, but it was also knowing the communities, knowing how people were organized there [...] because there was practically no expertise

In forming instrument constituencies, there were two structural promises that led Brazil to engage in this international cooperation. A promise of technology transfer, and a promise of closer rapprochement between the new government and the populations that had limited access to universal public policies. This fact is seen in excerpt 8 by the possessive relational process “having,” in which the possessed is “experience,” and by the cognitive metal process “knowing.” Finally, the phenomena are “the communities” and “how people were organized there.”

However, according to the interviewee, unlike the initial stage of the cooperation between the countries, in which there was greater protagonism of Canadian actors and greater subordination of Brazilian actors, as evidenced in excerpt 8, by the identifiable relational process “be”, in which the “method” is the identified and “a certain subordination” is the identifier, there has been greater integration between partners as knowledge about Canada and the methodology has deepened through visits and technical workshops, as can be evidenced in excerpt 9:

9. This initial method, it just happened [...] Here, we gave our input [...] there were some anxieties about certain things. So, we decided at least to know which world is this, which country is this. So we went there for more information and spent a month in Canada learning about PLAR and doing workshops at each of the institutions.

According to the interviewee, an open and transparent relationship was created from the moment the Brazilians, visiting Canada, realized the great diversity that exists in the country, as presented in excerpt 10, through the processes “understand”, “see”, “think” and “perceive” in which the phenomenon is “diversity”:

10. We were creating a very open and transparent kind of relationship. I was asking about the country and understanding other things when I talked to many Brazilians who lived there, in various regions, from east to west, on the US border, up there [...] I saw that the country is indeed diverse. It's amazing when you walk into the mall or go on a street because it looks like Sao Paulo. You find indigenous, white, black [...] the diversity is amazing. I saw that it is a truly diverse country and I felt no discrimination as there is in the US, I said, “My God, is it really like this?” And another thing I realized, talking a lot about partnerships, is that every College is practically obliged to have international partners. I have seen that the partnerships, almost all of them, were in fact with poor countries like Senegal, Mozambique, Angola, etc.

According to Simons and Voss (2018), instrument constituencies seek to sell the solution in terms of efficiency and effectiveness rather than relying on core normative beliefs, which helps redefine problems and mobilize political support as a means of advocating the solutions. However, as highlighted by Vieira and Resende (2016, p.

54), this type of network can hide ideological objectives, since “the universalization of particular discourses and their legitimation are powerful tools for the maintenance of hegemonies.” As observed in excerpt 11:

11. I started to see some things, for example: I am rich, my stage is this, the world is uneven, I need to share some of it. This sharing, in my reading, is not one of domination [...] what they wanted in Senegal or Mozambique was to have a partnership, to be well regarded, to be known as a warless country, without dominating, to be a friend. I felt it was another relationship

Affective assessments are identified in the interview through the mental process “felt,” in which the phenomenon “another close relationship” brings a positive idea about the foreign country so that partnerships between Canada and countries considered poor and underdeveloped are identified by the interviewee as “to be a friend.” However, positive evaluations of institutions, actions, and relationships, as observed in excerpt 11, are questionable because they disguise asymmetric power relations between countries.

For Foucault (2006), power is a power relationship, an exercise of power, and in the case studied, power is gained more by consensus than by the use of force, reinforcing ideologies transmitted by discourse (Vieira & Resende, 2016).

According to Salamon (2001), the relationships the instruments promote are not free or transitory. They are, therefore, institutions, regular patterns of interaction between individuals or organizations. They define who is involved in running public programs, what their roles are, and how they relate. The instruments determine the set of considerations that can effectively occur in the public policy’s implementation phase.

However, policy instruments are not functional because they have the guidelines to reorganizing society, but because they bring together social practices and actors oriented toward the development, maintenance, and dissemination of a specific instrumental model of governance. As pointed out by Simons and Voss (2018, p. 31), “through constituencies, policy instruments can develop a life of their own, partly determining preferences and actively enrolling allies.”

## 5. Conclusion

This article aimed to understand how ‘instrument constituencies’ emerged and interacted with other networks of actors in the political subsystem of Brazilian vocational education. Instrument constituencies and advocacy coalitions refer to two distinct levels of interacting political realities for the attainment of diverse interests and goals. The political entrepreneur is a key-agent in this interaction process, facilitating that specific solutions prevail political process, bridging the gap between the government and the different interest groups.

The political entrepreneur becomes visible through the windows of opportunity that may arise due to the change of government, and the gap between the government agenda and the formulation of public policies, coupling independent streams.

These aspects also made it possible for Canadian political actors operating in several countries selling consultancy services and training, to be actively involved in the formulation of public policies in the area of Brazilian vocational education, offering the PLAR methodology during the formulation of the program *Mulheres Mil*.

However, further studies are needed to assess the extent to which instrument constituencies offer integrated solutions to democracy and justice, assuming that policy evaluation can assist in reducing possible imbalances reflected in public policy designs that consider these types of networks and partnerships.

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