The Discursive Construction of the Thousand Women Program in Brazil

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Abstract

This article analyzes the assumptions and logic of the *Programa Mulheres Mil* (Thousand Women Program) in Brazil, observing the formation of the network of actors involved and the programs' instruments. The study used qualitative research, guided by critical discourse analysis. The results help to understand that the logic of the problem – connecting poverty to a lack of education and unfair training opportunities – contributed to justifying and legitimizing the policy instrument. The program's unexpected effects are closely related to the social construction of women. Based on the methodology, its rules are mechanisms supporting and maintaining the inequalities and asymmetrical power relations observed within the program. Therefore, although the program has a relevant role for social inclusion, it presents significant limitations regarding gender equity and the promotion of social justice, which requires a serious political debate on the initiative's effects, challenges, and opportunities. The PMM is a compensatory policy designed to develop and disseminate an instrument with assumptions and logic that operate more as a self-legitimation strategy than an integrated solution to public services. We suggest following the beneficiaries' life project and adopting a structure separated into modules as strategies to overcome the challenges observed in this research. A structure based on modules would meet the needs of women who desire educational inclusion, offering the possibility of education leveling so those who want can continue schooling.

Keywords: Thousand Women Program, professional qualification, gender, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

1. Introduction

Despite social advances in recent years, Brazil is one of the countries with the most inequality in the world. For example, male workers in Brazil earn 50% more than women – a difference 10% greater than the average for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and women are also more likely to engage in informal jobs (OECD, 2018).

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), gender and race/ethnicity discrimination is a source of inequalities and contributes to the persistence of poverty and social exclusion (OIT, 2006).

Therefore, even for those not in poverty, overcoming gender and race/ethnic inequalities requires active measures. Equality has to be achieved in the labor market and in public policies, and social actors in the private sector must realign procedures and priorities pursuing equality (Marques & Sanches, 2010).

Socioeconomic conditions, political and religious views, race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender are the many forms of inequality and exclusion affecting society. In this sense, the definition of decent work must encompass the notion of work free from all discrimination (OIT, 2006).

When discussing women's human rights, the United Nations team in Brazil observes that the female workforce is allocated mainly in service provision. The UN in Brazil points out the discrimination of women regarding access to management positions (ONU, 2018).

According to Moraes (2010), gender inequality in Brazil manifests in more women working in low-paid and precarious positions. Also, it is observed in the unequal remuneration between male and female workers occupying positions in the same category and by discrimination in admissions and promotions.

Another type of inequality occurs in geographical terms. Hirata (2005) points out inequality when examining the global North and South. This perspective is relevant since a) globalization means market interdependence but not a homogenization of work; b) inequality in social and work situations persists and may increase based on the countries or gender, race, generation; and c) there is a polarization in certain regions in the world, which demonstrate the existence of hierarchy among countries, relationships of domination, and economic and political supremacy encompassing entire regions, as seen in economic blocs.

Against this backdrop, the *Programa Mulheres Mil* (PMM) (Thousand Women Program) was implemented in 2007 in the Brazilian North and Northeast regions to promote social and productive inclusion and gender equality, addressing the women's triple burden and contributing to increasing income and education of women in social vulnerability. As of 2011, the PMM was recognized as an affirmative public policy and taken to a nationwide scale (Brasil, 2011).

Between 2008 and 2016, the PMM benefited 100,718 women at risk of social vulnerability (Brasil, 2017), working on their self-esteem and sense of well-being. However, the program did not significantly improve education or contribute to accessing or returning to the formal labor market (Oliveira, 2013; Lagos, 2014; Nascimento, 2015; Tupiná, 2015; Gois, 2016; Altoé & Silva, 2017).

The program's professional training prepared the beneficiaries for socially devalued low-paying positions that do not require intellectual development. Therefore, underprivileged women obtained income (albeit minimum) and integrated the consumption market, but they continued unable to change their precarious living conditions in the long term (Ferreira, 2016; Rosa, 2016; Altoé, 2017, Ponciano, 2017; Trinity, 2017)

This study seeks to help the PMM overcome its challenges by analyzing its assumptions and logic and examining the network of actors and the instruments used.

2. Gender-Sensitive Public Policies on Education

According to Vianna and Unbehaum (2006), there is little research in Brazil addressing gender discrimination in public education policies, exploring issues such as the distinct impact of school failure in the education trajectory of boys and girls, and the challenges of access to education, and school permanence. Furthermore, according to the authors, gender relations have little relevance in the contents of teacher training courses.

Horizontal segregation is one of the barriers that women face in society. Women are led to make choices and follow different paths from men in the labor market. They tend to see themselves professionally and pursue careers under the influence of gender stereotypes socially constructed (Olinto, 2011).

The continuous use of global indicators that disregard elements such as age, generation, geographical differences, and ethnic-racial characteristics in studies on education has led to establishing uniform, inefficient, and misguided policies regarding gender (Rosemberg, 2001).

For Stromquist (1996), many of these policies see women as passive beneficiaries of welfare assistance even though they represent a workforce with certain skills stereotypically defined. Thus, education policies tend to focus on urban and rural low-income women targeted by welfare programs, improving their skills in sewing, nutrition, health, family planning, secretarial activities, handicraft, with a view of offering better life opportunities for their children (Stromquist, 1996).

In a study on the quality of teaching and gender in educational policies in Latin America, Stromquist (2007) explains that, from a feminist perspective, educational quality surpasses cognitive performance. It includes values and practices to transform the notions of gender in society. For the author, teaching quality should encompass four components: 1) female and male students receive equal teaching treatment, 2) an expanded curriculum able to change the mindset of new generations, leading to less polarized gender identity, 3) dissemination of knowledge for both male and female students on issues such as domestic violence, sex education, and, in case of women, exercising citizenship delinked from motherhood and marriage, and 4) school practices promoting the development of confident people who respect democratic behaviors.

According to Carvalho and Mendes (2015), the school and the educational space are not responsible for reproducing gender inequalities, but it is an environment that reinforces the incorporation of stereotypes and social roles. Despite advances in the implementation of educational policies, it is essential to expand gender issues in educational policies and programs since the school promotes citizenship and knowledge socialization.

Thus, it is crucial to reflect on the consequences of the low relevance of gender relations in educational policies and the implications in teaching practices in the classroom, in the elaboration of teaching materials, and in how curriculum content is transmitted, considering the influence of education in reinforcing particular social

constructions.

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative research that refers to "a set of material and explanatory practices that offer visibility to the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006, p. 17, our translation). Qualitative studies aim to understand the phenomena considering the meanings people attribute to them.

The study is based on critical discourse analysis (CDA) developed by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) and Fairclough (2000, 2001, 2003). The method assumes a critical-realistic ontological position, and it was chosen because it offers scientific support to analyze social problems associated with asymmetrical relations of power and justice.

The analysis considered the perception of the following social problem: when observing the field of education, women are, in general, in a better position than men. However, this advantage is not reflected in the labor market, where indicators from 1995 to 2015 in Brazil reveal an unchanged hierarchy, in which white men are at the top, and black women are at the bottom. The indicators demonstrate that almost half of the Brazilian working-age women are out of the labor market. Therefore, the gender bias is clear, and women form the more significant part of the population without income, a phenomenon directly related to their lower participation in the labor market (IPEA, 2015).

After such analysis, we delineated the challenges to be overcome and the permanent characteristics in the Thousand Women Program (PMM) that somehow contributed to the problem perceived (the network of practices). The analysis consisted of three correlated focuses: analysis of the context, analysis of the specific practice, and discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Finally, we sought forms to overcome the identified challenges, discussing the analysis and presenting the research contributions.

The data that formed the corpus analysis were obtained by a) selecting the corpus analysis, b) conducting a critical reading, and c) identifying the most relevant extracts considering the objective of the analysis. The corpus analysis consisted of:

- The document with the project Thousand Women in the Northeast, written in 2006 by the program's creators (ACCC/SETEC); and

- A document containing the program's methodological guidelines, developed by the program's managers in 2011 (Methodological Guidelines of the System of Access, Permanence, and Success of the Thousand Women Program).

The linguistic-discursive analysis was conducted using the categories a) interdiscursivity (what are the discourses in the text and how are they expressed?), b) intertextuality relationships (what are the voices and texts in the material of analysis? Are the assumptions linked to other main texts? Are they reported directly or indirectly?), and c) transitivity system (what are the most used types of process – behavioral, material, relational, mental – and what factors should be considered when observing these processes?).

The categories were established a posteriori, based on the analysis of the documents and as a consequence of the research questions established. For the analysis of the transitivity system, the systemic-functional grammar in Portuguese was used, inspired by Halliday's functional grammar in English (Fuzer & Cabral, 2014). As for the analysis of the ideology operation, we used the general operation modes of Tompson's (2011) ideology.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Results

4.1 The Logic of the Program's Network of Actors

The Thousand Women Program (PMM) was conceived from a joint effort involving the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the Secretariat of Professional and Technological Education of the Brazilian Ministry of Education (SETEC/MEC). The initiative was called *Projeto Piloto ARAP* (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition – PLAR Pilot Project) and occurred from 2005 to 2006. ACCC coordinated the development and implementation of training programs in five Brazilian Federal Centers of Technological Education (CEFETs) in the North and Northeast regions through a partnership with Canadian colleges. This experience led to a new project with the participation of 13 CEFETs in the same Brazilian regions and involving Canadian colleges, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Ministry of Education (Brasil, 2006).

The first phase of the PMM was planned to last four years, between 2007 and 2010. The objective was to develop innovative systems and practices to offer vocational education to underprivileged women.

Canada and Brazil supported the program offering grants of USD 2,596,339 and USD 4,057,390, respectively (Brasil, 2006). In this phase, the program was formulated and implemented by ACCC, Niagara College, SETEC,

and the 13 CEFETs of the North and Northeast regions (Brasil, 2006). Table 1 shows the main partners of the PMM, which counted on general coordination at the national level.

Table 1. Network of actors involved in the PMM in the first phase

Level	Brazil	Canada
National	Secretariat of Professional and Technological Education of the Brazilian Ministry of Education (SETEC/MEC).	Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)
Regional	North and Northeast Technology Education Network (REDENET)	ACCC
Institutional	Brazilian Federal Centers of Technological Education (CEFETs) in the North and Northeast regions of the country. The institutions were located in the following states: Alagoas, Bahia, Maranhão, Paraíba, Piauí, Roraima, Tocantins, Amazonas, Ceará, Pará, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, and Sergipe.	Niagara College (leading partner college) Canadian Colleges (selected based on the institutions' expertise)

In this phase, the PMM prioritized the following objective:

> 1. The main objective of the Thousand Women Project is to promote the social and economic inclusion of underprivileged women in the Northeast and North of Brazil, allowing them to improve labor capacities, lives, and the lives of their families and communities (Brazil, 2006, p.1, our translation).

Through the transformative material processes "promote" and "allowing" (excerpt 1), the policy assumes that social and economic inclusion leads to opportunities to improve women's labor capacities. This assumption is related to the discourse of the human capital theory, which holds that an individual's capital is formed of their competencies, abilities, and aptitudes. Thus, training and education are investments that can increase the worker's productivity and increase their income throughout life (Costa, 2009).

In addition, part of the objective was that the women's social and economic inclusion would promote better quality of life for them, their families, and the community. According to Carvalho (2008), the home gained centrality from the nineteenth century onward, configured as a place to reproduce the psychosocial system. The woman is a central element for stabilizing the individuals' psychic structures, and this was an important assumption of the PMM.

The purpose of the PMM reflects the expectations with the project:

> 2. The purpose of the project is to contribute to the development of the competence of the CEFET network in the Northeast and North of Brazil, developing tools, techniques, and curriculum to offer, within four years and to at least 1,000 underprivileged women, training, relationship with employers, and services to facilitate entering or progressing in the labor market (Brasil, 2006, p.1, our translation).

The assumption seems to be that the development of specific competencies of the CEFETs in the area of professional qualification allows for a better relationship with employers and the entry and progression of disadvantaged women in the labor market. The transformative material process "contribute" leads to this conclusion, indicating that the goal is "the development of the competence of the CEFET network in the Northeast and North of Brazil." Excerpt 2 also identifies the creative material process "developing," in which the goals are "tools, techniques, and curriculum." In this excerpt, the role of underprivileged women as beneficiaries is clear.

Therefore, through intensive attributive relative clauses, the documents analyzed characterize CEFETs and Canadian colleges as the right institutions to develop and implement the training instrument (excerpts 3 and 4). In this case, "CEFETs" have the attribute, and the attributes are "appropriate and sustainable institutions" and "the instruments of educational and social change." Therefore, the assumption was that the partnership between the two institutions would promote an effective instrument to encourage underprivileged women to enter the formal workforce:

3. CEFETs, similar to Canadian colleges, are the appropriate and sustainable institutions to develop and implement support and training programs to prepare and assist disadvantaged women to join the formal workforce (Brasil, 2006, p. 2, our translation)

4. CEFETs, with the support of Canadian colleges, are the instruments of educational and social change for these women (Brasil, 2006, p. 10, our translation)

According to Voss and Simons (2014), the instrument gains life and is materialized by offering actors and their practices a purpose and relevance framework. Thus, the legitimation of the network of actors and their instruments occurs through rationalization in an economic-financial logic (Figure 1).
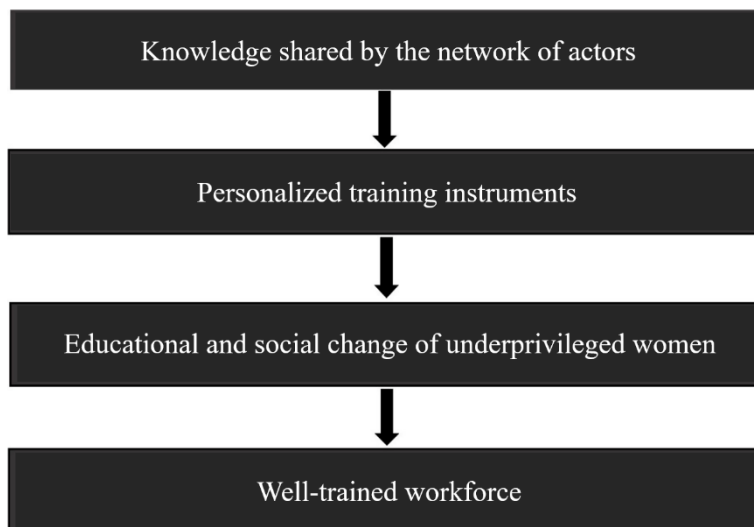

Figure 1. Elements of the PMM's operation logic

Beger and Luckmann (2014, p. 124) argue that "legitimation not only tells the individual why he should perform one action and not another; it also tells him why things are what they are." Thus, "one does certain things not because they work, but because they are right – right, that is, in terms of the ultimate definitions of reality promulgated by the universal experts." (p. 153). In this perspective, the discourse demonstrates that SETEC and ACCC legitimize the actions of CEFETs and Canadian colleges through the development of new educational technologies and professional training, since "legitimation is not just a matter of 'values.' It always implies 'knowledge' as well." (p. 124).

From a more constructivist perspective, political instruments carry meanings and values and contribute to constructing reality. Understanding instruments as institutions means reversing the causal relationship between policy instruments and other possible variables or factors. Therefore, instruments have their own contextualized history and structure the policymakers' behavior (Ingram & Schneider, 1993; Braun & Capano, 2010).

4.2 Professional Training as a Policy Instrument of the PMM

The program offers specific training preparing women for the labor market. The logic behind the relevance of professional training for underprivileged women assumes that the obstacle they face to access the labor market, the unfair income distribution, and poverty among women result from a lack of education and unfair training opportunities, as observed in excerpt 5:

5. Most of these women live in the Northeast and North regions of the country. Poverty, health, and the conditions in which these people live and work are fundamentally related to the unfair income distribution. Unfair income distribution is fundamentally related to unfair education and training opportunities (Brasil, 2006, p. 7, our translation)

This logic is represented through the attributive relative process "they are fundamentally related," which refers to the clause "poverty, health, and the conditions in which these people live and work" and the circumstantial attribute identified in the clause "unfair education and training opportunities." Thus, the relational process helps create and describe scenarios that contribute to legitimizing the problem and its solution (Figure 2).
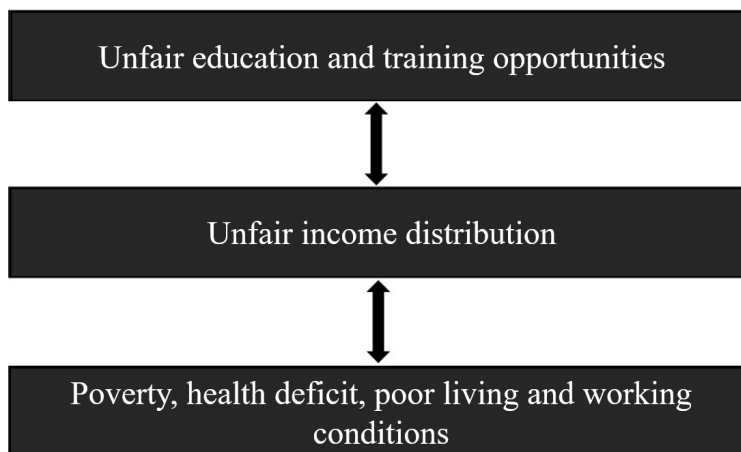
Figure 2. Reality of PMM beneficiaries

However, this logic disregards the complex context of the Brazilian labor market. It is a market influenced by other aspects beyond low professional qualification, encompassing gender relations, racial and generational issues, historic social inequality, and the disruption of the labor market due to globalization (Gelpi, 2009; Ribeiro, 2016).

According to Proni and Gomes (2015) and Ribeiro (2016), the reasons for gender inequality in the labor market emerge from the unequal relationships between men and women in the domestic space and the glass ceiling[1]. This element contradicts the logic that higher levels of professional qualification for disadvantaged women would automatically enable access to formal work and significant positions (also considering that the differences in the unemployment rate between men and women remain high). In 2012, the unemployment rate among men was 6.2% against 10.3% for women. In 2016, unemployment was estimated at 10.7% for men and 13.8% for women (PNAD, 2017).

Globalization is another important aspect influencing the configuration of work. It is characterized by networks progressively replacing territories and the transfer of industrial to financial power. Globalization effects are contradictory, increasing productivity and wages for part of the population, at the same time as it increases exclusion since it leads to a growth in the absolute number of illiterates, cases of child labor, school evasion, and increasing higher unemployment, presenting a perspective of permanent structural unemployment in marginalized countries (Gelpi, 2009).

Therefore, it makes sense to legitimize the policy instrument through a logic connecting poverty to lack of education and unfair training opportunities. The PMM's problems and solutions were proposed and combined while adopting the professional training policy, based on preexisting solutions defined and coordinated a priori among the network of actors involved in developing, disseminating, and implementing a specific policy instrument (prior learning assessment and recognition – PLAR). This instrument to validate non-formal and informal learning supported the development of the program's access, permanence, and success system.

4.3 The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Method as a Legitimate Technique[2]

The Methodological Guidelines of the System of Access, Permanence, and Success of the PMM was concluded in 2011, produced by the faculty and staff of the thirteen CEFETs involved in the program's first phase.

The guide was distributed firstly among the partners and then disclosed on the Internet, available for public consultation, particularly professors, instructors, technical-administrative employees, and researchers interested in the PMM. The objective of producing such a guide was to offer a document consolidating the knowledge accumulated during the pilot project phase and supporting the program's implementation in other Brazilian states, transforming the PMM into a permanent policy of the network of CEFETs.

The text of the guide explicitly uses the Canadian system PLAR, consisting, in general terms, of the certification of all informal and non-formal learning of women participating in the program and promoting complementary professional training in areas previously identified.

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[1] The woman is educated, prepared, and sees the highest positions in the company through the glass ceiling. However, she cannot go through the ceiling primarily due to prejudice (Loschi, 2017).
[2] Lascoumes and Le Gales (2007) offer a better understanding by differentiating policy instruments from techniques and tools, conceptualizing techniques as a concrete device that operates the policy instrument.

According to Morrissey et al. (2008), PLAR was created in the United States in the 1980s to recognize practical knowledge accumulated by "white-collar" professionals. It consists of methodologies supported by the notion that people learn and acquire skills and knowledge throughout their lives. PLAR provides a means to identify, coordinate, and certify previous experiences and knowledge, based on the belief that this recognition increases people's confidence and motivation in identifying and addressing learning gaps.

In Canada, PLAR was implemented in Quebec as early as the 1980s as support and learning services for Aboriginal communities. From 1990, the methodology gained the interest of the federal government and the government of several provinces, considering the social transition in the country. Currently, the instrument is used to address the social integration of immigrants and the challenges of this population to access the Canadian labor market. The Canadian college system uses PLAR processes to a large extent for entry into post-secondary education and for ongoing progression (Morrissey et al., 2008).

In Brazil, PLAR was adapted to serve a disadvantaged and poorly educated target population. The methodology was structured around the system of access, permanence, and success, which has two stages: the module of access and the module of permanence and success module (Brasil, 2011).

4.3.1 The Module of Access

The system of access consists of approaching and establishing a dialogue with disadvantaged communities, including initiatives to identify these populations, understand their infrastructure, and facilitate admission and reception. The main objective of this phase is to enable the access and permanence of the Brazilian underprivileged female population in vocational education institutions, offering opportunities for educational, social, and economic inclusion (Brasil, 2011).

The services include opening an office to support women to access the program and forming a multidisciplinary team. Tools to identify prior learning include the socioeconomic questionnaire, interview, life map, and portfolio. The documents the women provide at this stage form a descriptive memorial, which is used to build the formative itinerary of each group of women collectively. The training courses must be aligned with the beneficiaries' demands, realities, and knowledge (Brasil, 2011).

Through the material transformative process "contribute," the module of access assumes that the training offered to each group of women will contribute to their employability, autonomy, and full citizenship, as shown in excerpt 6:

> 6. The goal of this training opportunity is to contribute to the successful insertion and permanence of women in the world of work and, consequently, the development of their autonomy and exercise of full citizenship (Brasil, 2011, p. 25, our translation).

For Gelpi (2009), training can be an instrument that reinforces the division of workers since such investment tends to privilege professionals who are already working (salaried workers, self-employed workers, and those who can pay for the course). In this context, unemployed young and adult professionals looking for work can be forgotten or receive superficial training designed to alleviate social costs – usually palliative and amortizing training, as observed in the type of courses offered in the PMM (Table 2).

Table 2. Training courses offered in the Thousand Women Program, per technology area

Technology area				
Cultural production and design	**Tourism and hospitality**	**Infrastructure**	**Environment and health**	**Industrial production**
Training courses				
- Ceramic artisan	- Housekeeping	- Caretaker	- Elderly caregiving	- Sewing
- Bio-jewel artisan	- Waitress	- Finishing and painting	- Child caregiving	- Furniture painter
- Hand embroidery artisan	- Touristic information agent	- Creative decoration and interior finishes	- Massage therapist	- Basic modeling for industrial production
- Sculpture in soapstone	- Kitchen Assistant	- Janitor	- Recycler	
- Fabric painting	- Nutrition		- Household management and family health	
- Clothing	- Tourism and hospitality		- Housekeeping	
- Crafts (Fuxico)	- Gastronomy			
- Craft from recyclable materials and seafood shells				
- Tilapia leather processing				
- Use of fish residues for crafts				

Technology area			
Food production	**Business and management**	**Natural resources**	**Information and communication**
Training courses			
- Preparation of sweets and preserves	- Receptionist	- Organic horticulture	- Computer operation
- Food freezing	- Secretary	- Poultry	- Computer assembler and repairer
- Craft liquor	- Customer relationship and management	- Retail plant nursery	- Basic computing and social media
- Food handling, storage, and freezing	- Administrative assistant	- Fishery	- Digital literacy basics and technological inclusion
- Baker		- Fish preparation	- Digital inclusion for seniors
- Fruit, milk, and meat processing		- Agroecology and family farming	
- Kitchen Assistant		- Natural and phytotherapeutic products	
		- Oil plants producer	
		- Farm chicken rearing	
		- Fish processing	

Source: Adapted from Santos and Freitas (2014)

The majority of the training courses offered by the PMM are short-term and related to domestic activities. Therefore, the policy reinforces traditional gender roles and their hierarchies, contributing to perpetuating domination relations between genders (Carpenedo, 2011; Gois, 2016; Altóe; Silva, 2017; Corcetti, Souza & Loreto, 2018). "Professional qualification, in this sense, does not solve the problem and aggravates it, as the participant receives a certificate recognizing her as the "heart of the home" (Altóe & Silva, 2017, p. 25, our translation).

However, choosing certain types of courses helps to keep women in the program through the heuristic of affection[3]. This heuristic produces cognitive comfort, which, in turn, brings a reassuring sense of familiarity and appreciation (Kahneman, 2012), as demonstrated in the analysis of the module permanence and success below.

4.3.2 The Module of Permanence and Success

The module permanence and success seeks to promote a pleasant and welcoming environment, offer advice and enable all forms of support to women participating in the program, as shown in excerpts 7 and 8:

> 7. From this perspective, it is essential to implement all forms of support in a network of support activities that improve and expand the institution's capacity to respond adequately to the group of participants' diversity and their social demands, avoiding evasion (Brasil, 2011, p. 26, our translation).

> 8. The absence of school material can contribute to the evasion of participants and, consequently, to the program's failure. Thus, the institution must provide material and support as comprehensively as possible (Brasil, 2011, p. 30, our translation).

The logic for the political actors is: if underprivileged women have all forms of support (social, psychological, pedagogical, medical/dental, transport, food, school material, and guidance to access the labor market), they will feel confident and secure, and will not drop out of the program.

Therefore, encouragement and assistance are prerequisites for the success of the policy, as demonstrated by the transformative material process "improve and expand," in which the subject is represented by "all forms of support," the goal is reflected in the clause "the institution's capacity." The beneficiary is the "group of participants," the circumstantial relational process is "can contribute," in which the clause "absence of school material" has the circumstantial attribute reflected in the clause "evasion [of the participants]."

For Schneider and Ingram (1990), training instruments assume that target groups will have sufficient incentive or motivation to participate in the activities and change their behavior if they are properly informed and have the necessary resources. In the analyzed policy, however, the variations in the instrument occurred based on the social construction of the target population. Sorj and Gomes (2011) mentioned that transferring resources to women is considered an investment (which is explained by the perception associating women with motherhood and care. In this context, valuing traditional female attributes is a capital to be placed at the service of programs to combat poverty and social vulnerability.

Thus, the types of courses (based on the social construction of women) and the various types of assistance offered to PMM participants worked as tools to facilitate the permanence of women in the program and to elaborate a narrative of success. Therefore, this situation legitimized the adoption of PLAR in Brazil.

5. Conclusion

Our findings contributed to understanding that the unexpected effects of the *Programa Mulheres Mil* (PMM) (Thousand Women Program) are closely related to the social construction of women. The program's rules operate following the methodology of access, permanence, and success and are considered mechanisms that perpetuate inequalities and asymmetrical power relations. The women are represented in the program as the central element for stabilizing the psychic structures of individuals.

Therefore, although the program has a relevant role for social inclusion, it presents significant limitations regarding gender equity and the promotion of social justice, which requires a serious political debate on the initiative's effects, challenges, and opportunities. The PMM is a compensatory policy designed to develop and disseminate an instrument with assumptions and logic that operate more as a self-legitimation strategy than an integrated solution to public services.

Finally, we suggest following the beneficiaries' life project and adopting a structure separated into modules as strategies to overcome the challenges observed in this research. A structure based on modules would meet the needs of women who desire educational inclusion, offering the possibility of education leveling so those who want can continue schooling – through the Brazilian National Examination for Certification of Skills for Young People and Adults (Encceja) or enrolling in regular programs offered at the Federal Institutes of Education, or other educational institutions.

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[3] In the heuristic of affection, people let their likes and dislikes determine their beliefs about the world (Kahneman, 2012, p.133).

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