

People Governance in the Judiciary: an essay on conceptual precision and institutional maturity

La gestión de los recursos humanos en el poder judicial: un ensayo sobre la precisión conceptual y la madurez institucional

A gestão de pessoal no Poder Judiciário: um ensaio sobre precisão conceitual e maturidade institucional

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ABSTRACT

This essay critically examines the terms people governance, governance and people management, and governance in people management within Public Administration, with emphasis on the Brazilian Judiciary. It starts from the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a normative backdrop that has progressively reshaped how public organizations understand the strategic role of human capital, and argues that these three terms, although often used interchangeably, carry distinct conceptual and organizational implications that affect the delimitation of responsibilities, the segregation of duties, and institutional control mechanisms. The general objective is to analyze the conceptual distinctions between governance and people management and to identify their effects on organizational structure and on the mechanisms of supervision and administrative execution. Methodologically, this is a qualitative theoretical essay based on bibliographic review, documentary analysis, and critical reflection on institutional regulations and frameworks related to public governance and people management. The study draws on documents issued by the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU), the National Council of Justice (CNJ), and the Federal Justice Council (CJF), as well as on authors who discuss public governance, judicial governance, public policy implementation, and public value generation. The findings indicate that people governance should be understood as a strategic dimension responsible for directing, supervising, and controlling people management, distinct from the operational activities performed by administrative human resources units. The incorporation of the SDGs into the iESGo-TCU further broadens the understanding of people governance by connecting it to contemporary agendas of sustainability, diversity, inclusion, integrity, and public value generation.

Keywords: *people governance; people management; public governance; 2030 agenda; public value.*

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RESUMEN

Este ensayo analiza de forma crítica los conceptos de «gobernanza de las personas», «gobernanza y gestión de personas» y «gobernanza en la gestión de personas» en el ámbito de la Administración Pública, haciendo hincapié en el Poder Judicial brasileño. Parte de la Agenda 2030 de las Naciones Unidas y de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) como marco normativo que ha ido redefiniendo progresivamente la forma en que las organizaciones públicas entienden el papel estratégico del capital humano, y sostiene que estos tres términos, aunque a menudo se utilizan indistintamente, conllevan implicaciones conceptuales y organizativas distintas que afectan a la delimitación de responsabilidades, la separación de funciones y los mecanismos de control institucional. El objetivo general es analizar las distinciones conceptuales entre gobernanza y gestión de personas e identificar sus efectos en la estructura organizativa y en los mecanismos de supervisión y ejecución administrativa. Desde el punto de vista metodológico, se trata de un ensayo teórico cualitativo basado en la revisión bibliográfica, el análisis documental y la reflexión crítica sobre las normativas y los marcos institucionales relacionados con la gobernanza pública y la gestión de personas. El estudio se basa en documentos emitidos por el Tribunal de Cuentas de la Unión (TCU), el Consejo Nacional de Justicia (CNJ) y el Consejo de Justicia Federal (CJF), así como en autores que abordan temas como la gobernanza pública, la gobernanza judicial, la implementación de políticas públicas y la generación de valor público. Los resultados indican que la gobernanza de las personas debe entenderse como una dimensión estratégica encargada de dirigir, supervisar y controlar la gestión de las personas, distinta de las actividades operativas que llevan a cabo las unidades administrativas de recursos humanos. La incorporación de los ODS al iESGo-TCU amplía aún más la comprensión de la gobernanza de las personas al vincularla con las agendas actuales de sostenibilidad, diversidad, inclusión, integridad y generación de valor público.

Palabras clave: gobernanza de las personas; gestión de las personas; gobernanza pública; Agenda 2030; valor público.

RESUMO

O presente ensaio analisa criticamente as terminologias governança de pessoas, governança e gestão de pessoas e governança em gestão de pessoas no contexto da Administração Pública, com ênfase no Poder Judiciário brasileiro. Parte-se da Agenda 2030 da Organização das Nações Unidas e dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) como pano de fundo normativo que vem reconfigurando progressivamente a compreensão do papel estratégico do capital humano, e do pressuposto de que tais expressões, embora frequentemente utilizadas como equivalentes, possuem implicações conceituais e organizacionais distintas, capazes de influenciar a delimitação de responsabilidades, a segregação de funções e os mecanismos de direcionamento e controle institucional. O objetivo geral consiste em analisar as distinções conceituais entre governança e gestão de pessoas, identificando seus reflexos na arquitetura organizacional e nos mecanismos de supervisão e execução administrativa. Metodologicamente, trata-se de um ensaio teórico, de natureza qualitativa, fundamentado em revisão bibliográfica, análise documental e reflexão crítica sobre normativos e referenciais institucionais relacionados à governança pública e à gestão de pessoas. O estudo apoia-se em documentos do Tribunal de Contas da União, do Conselho Nacional de Justiça e do Conselho da Justiça Federal, bem como em autores que discutem governança pública, governança judicial, implementação de políticas públicas e geração de valor público. Os resultados indicam que a governança de pessoas deve ser compreendida como dimensão estratégica responsável pelo direcionamento, supervisão e controle da gestão de pessoas, não se confundindo com as atividades operacionais desempenhadas pelas unidades administrativas de pessoal. Evidenciou-se, ainda, que a incorporação dos ODS ao iESGo - TCU amplia a compreensão da governança de pessoas,

conectando-a às agendas contemporâneas de sustentabilidade, diversidade, inclusão, integridade e geração de valor público.

Palavras-chave: *governança de pessoas; gestão de pessoas; governança pública; agenda 2030; valor público.*

1 INTRODUCTION

The gradual incorporation of governance as a paradigm in public administration, reinforced internationally by the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), has produced significant shifts in how government organizations understand strategic direction, accountability, and the creation of public value. Within this shift, the human resources function is no longer viewed merely as an administrative support structure; it has come to occupy a central position in institutional sustainability, in the capacity to deliver public policies, and in organizational integrity, precisely the dimensions the 2030 Agenda associates with decent work, institutional strengthening, and inclusive, accountable public organizations (SDGs 8, 10, and 16). However, as governance becomes established as a framework, questions arise regarding the conceptual precision used to describe the relationship between those who set guidelines and those who execute processes.

In the field of human resources management, three terms are widely used: people governance, governance and people management, and governance in people management. Although semantically similar, these formulations rest on distinct assumptions about scope, institutional maturity, and the distribution of responsibilities. Using them indiscriminately can produce overlapping functions, weak role separation, difficulty in assigning responsibility, and limits on the effectiveness of oversight and control mechanisms.

The debate, therefore, is not confined to semantics; it extends to the institutional architecture of public organizations. The terminology adopted shapes how policies are structured, how decisions are legitimized, and how the cycle of direction, execution, and monitoring is established. Conceptual precision is thus an indispensable element for strengthening governance and improving administrative practice, and, as argued throughout this essay, for embedding sustainability commitments such as the 2030 Agenda into the everyday functioning of public organizations rather than leaving them as declaratory aspirations.

This essay's research problem is to understand the conceptual and organizational implications of using the terms “people governance,” “governance and people management,” and “governance in people management” in Public Administration. It starts from the thesis that these expressions are not

equivalent and that the choice among them has concrete effects on the delineation of responsibilities, managerial autonomy, supervisory capacity, and institutional maturity.

The hypotheses are, first, that *people governance* is associated with more mature institutional contexts in which senior management plays a clear directing role; second, that the term *governance and people management* tends to blur the distinction between direction and execution; and third, that *governance in people management* reflects intermediate stages of institutional consolidation. It is further argued that terminological imprecision compromises the effectiveness of control mechanisms and the quality of decision-making, and, by extension, the capacity of organizations to operationalize cross-cutting commitments such as the SDGs within their people-management architecture.

The general objective is to critically analyze how these different terminologies influence the understanding of institutional architecture and the distribution of responsibilities in the public sector. As specific objectives, the study examines the foundations of public governance, defines people management as an executive function, compares the three terms in use, assesses their practical implications for supervision, control, and accountability, and situates this discussion within the 2030 Agenda's push for more sustainable, inclusive, and accountable public institutions.

Methodologically, this is a qualitative theoretical essay grounded in conceptual analysis and critical reflection on categories used in Public Administration. It does not rely on empirical data but on the problematization of theoretical constructs, aiming to contribute to the improvement of institutional practice.

Transparency statement on the use of artificial intelligence: in line with growing editorial expectations for disclosure of AI-assisted research practices, the authors report that generative AI tools were used in two bounded ways in this study: (i) NotebookLM was used to generate the visual synthesis presented in Figure 1, from a prompt authored by the researchers, based on the authors' own reading of the source documents; and (ii) an AI-based language tool supported English-language proofreading and clarity editing of the manuscript. AI tools were not used to generate citations, interpret primary sources, or draw the essay's conceptual conclusions; all conceptual analysis, selection of literature, and argumentation remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Before turning to human resources specifically, it is necessary to establish the conceptual foundations of governance in public administration, as introduced in Brazil by the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU) and codified through Decree 9203/2017 (Brazil, 2017), which sets the governance policy for the direct, autonomous, and foundational federal public administration. The essential

components of governance, leadership, strategy, and control, are examined first, to define their role in guiding and supervising public organizations.

The discussion then turns to people governance, emphasizing the distinction between strategic and operational functions and offering a critical analysis of the recurring confusion between governance, management, and the organizational unit known as People Management.

In this context, it is useful to bring into the debate the parameters the TCU uses to assess how closely federal public organizations adhere to ESG, Environmental, Social, and Governance, practices through the iESGo (TCU, 2024), the index that replaced the former Integrated Governance and Management Index (iGG) and, notably, embedded the SDGs directly into the assessment of the people dimension.

This analytical approach shows that conceptual precision is not merely a theoretical refinement but an indispensable element for properly defining responsibilities and strengthening institutional architecture.

2.1 The Emergence of Governance in the State Context

According to Maranhão (2023), governance, a broad, polysemic, and relational concept, emerged historically as a response to transformations in the state and in contemporary society, particularly from the 1980s onward, amid crises in the traditional state model and the growing complexity of public problems. Two proposed paths to resolving that crisis stood out: an economic path and a sociological path. The economic narrative linked the state crisis to rising public spending and fiscal overload, calling for austerity-oriented reform, a smaller state, and greater efficiency. The sociological narrative understood governance as a response to the state's growing inability to act alone in the face of globalization, the rising complexity of public problems, and the expansion of interdependencies among the state, the market, and society.

These two narratives gave rise to New Public Management (NPM), a reformist movement that sought to introduce private-sector practices and rationales into the state apparatus, emphasizing efficiency, performance, competition, and the contractualization of results (Cavalcante, 2018).

Despite its relevance, NPM proved insufficient to address the complexity of contemporary state action. Maranhão (2023) explains that it is in the post-NPM era that public governance emerges, shifting the focus from administrative efficiency alone to the coordination of multiple actors, the building of institutional capacity, and the design of arrangements capable of addressing complex public problems. In Brazil, public governance was introduced by the TCU, whose Basic Governance Framework (TCU, 2020) defines governance as the set of leadership, strategy, and control

mechanisms aimed at evaluating and monitoring management. It is within this same post-NPM movement, and increasingly since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), that sustainability, social inclusion, and accountability have been incorporated as constitutive elements of governance rather than as external add-ons, a shift that is directly visible, as shown in Section 2.3, in how the TCU itself redesigned its assessment instruments to absorb the SDGs.

Because the TCU is a control body, this model has drawn criticism: excessive emphasis on control, a second-order variable, may limit governance's effectiveness in solving complex problems and delivering services to society (Maranhão, 2023).

For Gaetani and Nogueira (2018), problems related to institutional development, the delivery of results, and the quality of public spending cannot be resolved through improved control alone. Their critique does not reject the importance of control but warns against models excessively oriented toward an oversight logic. Governance, especially in the human resources field, also requires the capacity for strategic coordination, the development of institutional competencies, the promotion of healthy organizational environments, and the strengthening of the state's capacity to deliver results to society, commitments that again echo the SDGs on decent work and strong institutions.

Collaborative public governance stands out in this context, as it presupposes the joint action of multiple actors in implementing public policy. This model relies on networks, collaboration, participation, and innovation to address complex public problems ("wicked problems", in the literature's terminology). From this perspective, governance is a dynamic process of building institutional capacity and generating results, establishing itself as an essential tool for producing public value in complex, interdependent organizational settings.

Bichir (2018) notes that governance is a polysemic term used across different fields and institutional contexts, which calls for caution in its application to the public sector. This conceptual multiplicity means governance is often used broadly, at times imprecisely, ranging from institutional coordination mechanisms to participatory models, decision-making arrangements, and managerial practices.

Within Public Administration, this polysemy tends to produce interpretive ambiguity, especially when governance is used interchangeably with management, administration, or operational execution. This reinforces the importance of conceptually delimiting the term people governance, avoiding its generic or merely rhetorical use.

Notwithstanding ongoing debate about the concept and scope of governance, Maranhão (2023) emphasizes that, to date, the TCU's perspective, codified in Decree 9,203/2017 (Brazil, 2017),

prevails in Brazilian Public Administration, and it is through this perspective that people governance is explored here.

2.2 Governance in Public Administration: Leadership, Strategy, and Control

Governance in Public Administration is structured as a system of direction, monitoring, and evaluation oriented toward the generation of public value, institutional integrity, and the accountability of agents. This understanding is supported by the TCU's Basic Framework for Organizational Governance, according to which governance corresponds to “the set of leadership, strategy, and control mechanisms put into practice to evaluate, direct, and monitor management performance” (TCU, 2020, p. 28).

Leadership is the role senior management plays in defining institutional priorities and promoting a results-oriented organizational culture. As the TCU states, “leadership is responsible for setting the organization's direction, ensuring alignment between values, strategies, and institutional practices” (TCU, 2020, p. 45). It is a structural element, without which governance loses its capacity to induce coherent organizational behavior.

Strategy translates institutional guidelines into objectives and goals. The TCU states that “strategy establishes the path to be followed by the organization, defining priorities and guiding the allocation of resources” (TCU, 2020, p. 52). Within the Judiciary, this guidance is supported by the National Council of Justice (CNJ), particularly Resolution 240/2016 (CNJ, 2016), which reinforces alignment between human resources management and institutional strategic planning.

Control ensures the monitoring of actions and the evaluation of results. According to the Basic Governance Framework, “control aims to ensure that the established objectives are achieved, through performance monitoring, risk management, and the implementation of corrective actions” (TCU, 2020, p. 60). This element is essential for the feedback of the governance system, allowing continuous adjustment.

Public governance is thus understood not only as a system of direction and control but as an arrangement oriented toward the generation of public value. As Resende et al. (2024) note, “the discussion around public value is consolidated as an essential element [...] of the success of public management strategies,” indicating that governance should be oriented toward effectiveness and the delivery of results to society, a shift from a traditional focus on efficiency toward effectiveness, which reinforces governance's strategic role in Public Administration.

Within the Judiciary, studies show governance to be directly associated with institutional performance, with a “correlation between the proper functioning of governance structures and

increased performance” (Coningham et al., 2022). It is also observed that, in many cases, “governance is not effectively integrated into the decision-making process” (Coningham et al., 2022), which compromises its effectiveness and reduces its influence on organizational results.

In the Federal Justice system, the Governance and Management Guide (CJF, 2020), established by CJF Resolution 655/2020, reinforces that governance should promote alignment among strategy, management, and results, showing that governance acts at the level of direction, while management deals with execution.

As Akutsu and Guimarães (2012) point out, governance in the judicial system involves multiple dimensions that directly influence organizational performance and institutional effectiveness, reinforcing that governance is not limited to operational aspects but is part of the macro-management of courts.

The interaction between leadership, strategy, and control constitutes a continuous governance cycle. In this arrangement, governance is not confused with management: its function is to evaluate, direct, and monitor, while management executes. The absence of this distinction compromises the segregation of functions and weakens control mechanisms.

2.3 iESGo-TCU and the Distinction Between Governance and People Management

In its Technical Report, the TCU (2024) explains that iESGo, the Governance and Sustainability Index, is the instrument used to assess how closely federal public organizations adhere to governance, management, and sustainability practices, in alignment with the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) concept. The index emerged from remodeling the former iGG, expanding the assessment of governance and management to incorporate environmental and social sustainability practices.

It is not the objective of this essay to critically analyze iESGo itself, but to identify how the TCU distinguishes between governance and people management, an aspect directly related to the problem addressed here.

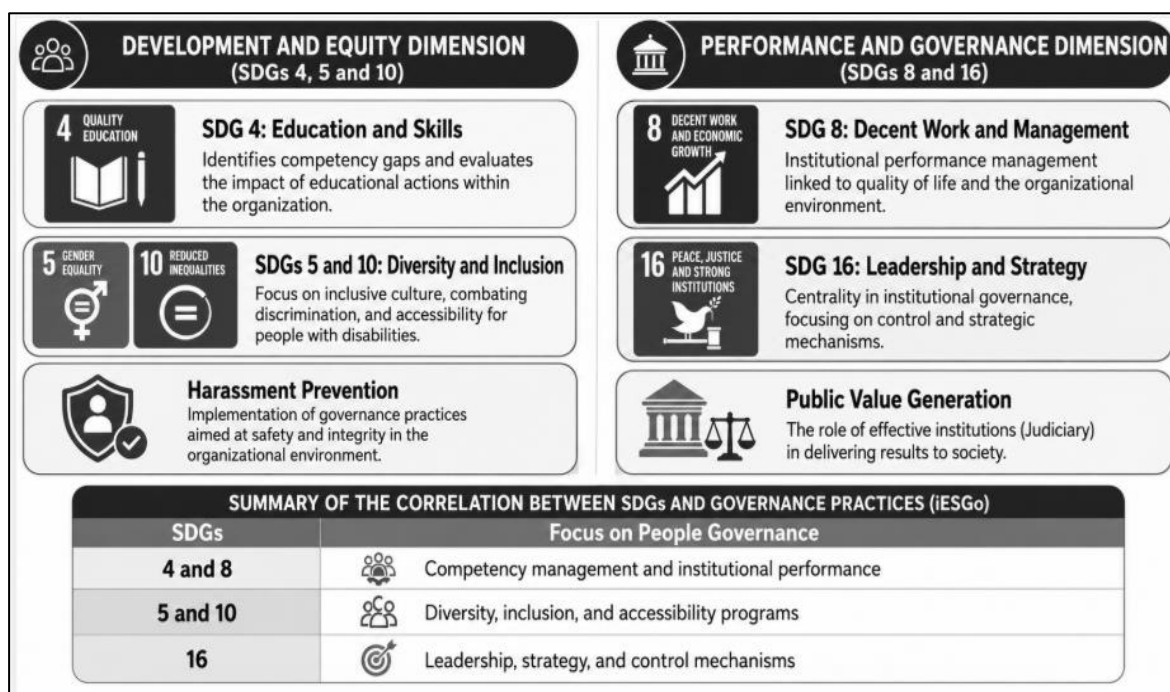
The 2024 iESGo, authorized by TCU Decision 1,205/2023-Plenary (TCU, 2023), preserved the people indicators previously present in the iGG while expanding them to incorporate dimensions related to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015).

Within the Judiciary, this alignment was progressively institutionalized through CNJ Provision 85/2019, on observing and encouraging the SDGs in the Brazilian Judiciary, and CNJ Resolution 296/2019, which created the Permanent Commission for Monitoring the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The movement was consolidated by CNJ National Goal 9 (2020), aimed at integrating

the 2030 Agenda into the Judiciary, and by CNJ Resolution 325/2020, which established the National Strategy of the Judiciary for 2021-2026.

With the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) thus embedded in its structure, iESGo shows that people policy connects directly with the social dimension of public sustainability, moving the people function away from being understood as a merely internal administrative activity. Themes such as diversity, inclusion, accessibility, harassment prevention, and combating discrimination have become part of the institutional evaluation process. Figure 1 below highlights the strategic alignment between the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda and people governance.

Figure 1 - Connection between the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda and iESGo



Source: image generated with NotebookLM (AI), from a prompt authored by the researchers (2026).

This perspective is close to the contemporary notion of governance oriented toward the generation of public value. As Resende et al. (2024) highlight, “the creation of public value [is] a crucial metric for evaluating the performance of public managers.” Aspects of people management thus directly influence institutional capacity to deliver quality public services.

Within the Judiciary, skills development, a healthy organizational environment, institutional performance, and adequate workforce allocation directly affect the effectiveness of judicial services and the generation of public value. The iESGo questionnaire assesses, for example, the existence of a diversity and inclusion program, a system for preventing and combating harassment and

discrimination, and a system for promoting accessibility for people with disabilities or reduced mobility.

These same topics, skills development, a positive work environment, performance, appropriate workforce allocation, and the selection of managers, are directly related to institutional capacity to deliver better public services which, in the Judiciary, are essential to the quality and speed of judicial services. In the Federal Court of the 1st Region, they also influence the expected generation of public value, as highlighted in Article 1 of the Court's Governance and Management System (TRF1, 2020).

From a conceptual standpoint, the most relevant aspect of iESGo for this essay is its explicit separation between governance and people management. The TCU model treats both as distinct, complementary dimensions, structured through three indicators:

- **People Governance Index (iGovernancePeople):** evaluates strategic and normative practices related to the guidance, direction, and control of personnel policies, corresponding to the strategic plan.
- **People Management Index (iPeopleManagement):** evaluates operational practices related to workforce administration, corresponding to the executive plan.
- **Governance and People Management Index (iPeopleGovernance):** a composite indicator integrating the two previous dimensions into a single assessment of organizational maturity.

This structure reinforces the thesis defended in this essay, that governance and people management are not the same, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 - Governance and People Management in iESGo

Dimension	iESGo indicator	Role	Content
People Governance	iGovernancePeople	Shows the role of senior management in directing and monitoring people policy.	People-management model; responsibilities; objectives; indicators; goals; monitoring by leadership.
People Management	iPeopleManagement	Shows the executive and technical role of the people-management unit.	Planning, provision, skills, work environment, and performance.
Governance and People Management	iPeopleGovernance	Shows that the concepts are complementary but not equivalent.	Aggregation of the two previous dimensions.

Source: authors' own elaboration (2026).

While governance operates at the level of strategic direction and control, management operates in the field of administrative execution.

2.4 People Governance and the Confusion with the People Management Unit

Applying governance principles to the people function stems from recognizing human capital as central to organizational performance. People governance, in this sense, is the system by which an organization directs, supervises, and evaluates the management of its workforce, ensuring strategic alignment and the generation of public value.

Alves (2020) argues that governance cannot be separated from people management, since decisions about human capital directly affect institutional results: “it is not possible to speak of good governance without considering how people are managed within public organizations” (Alves, 2020). Governance, in other words, should guide the performance of people management, avoiding fragmented practices disconnected from institutional strategy.

The literature on judicial governance reinforces that its proper structuring is associated with improved institutional performance, as shown by Akutsu and Guimarães (2012), corroborating the need to strengthen people governance as a strategic mechanism for aligning institutional guidelines with administrative execution.

A proper understanding of the concept, however, requires recognizing that speaking of people governance presupposes an object to be governed: people management itself. Governance already implicitly and structurally involves the capacity to direct, supervise, evaluate, and correct management.

Management, therefore, is not the same as governance but constitutes its object, a relationship analogous to information technology governance, in which the phrase governance and operation of it is not used, precisely because operation is already contained within the scope of what is governed.

This distinction matters because, when “and management” is added, as in governance and people management, the expression stops representing a single systemic concept and becomes descriptive, indicating the coexistence of two distinct fields: the decision-making field typical of governance, and the executive field characteristic of management.

At that point it is no longer one concept but a statement of scope, which makes a didactic precaution necessary: to state explicitly that governance and management are distinct, even if integrated, functions.

Table 2 - Comparison Between Governance and People Management

Governance	Management
Assesses the scenario and defines direction and priorities.	Implements.
Deliberates on policies.	Executes routines.
Supervises performance.	Delivers services.
Acts on risks and results.	Acts on procedures.
Is the responsibility of senior management.	Is the responsibility of human resources management units.

Source: authors' own elaboration (2026).

This distinction is particularly relevant for auditing, maturity assessments, and integrity programs, where it is crucial to avoid confusing “defining guidelines” with “executing processes.”

In contexts oriented toward institutional maturity, Public Administration increasingly favors the expression people governance. This choice reflects a more sophisticated understanding of organizational architecture, one in which management exists but is necessarily directed, supervised, and evaluated by governance bodies.

At the normative level, this perspective is reinforced by instruments such as CNJ Resolution 240/2016 and CJP Resolution 759/2022, which establish guidelines for aligning people management with institutional strategy, demonstrating that people management should be guided by higher-level directives rather than acting autonomously.

In administrative practice, however, confusion recurs between people governance and the organizational unit called People Management, which is responsible for typical operational activities in the personnel area, staffing, training, performance evaluation, and functional administration.

The confusion arises from the overlap between “management” as an administrative function and “People Management” as the name of an organizational unit. This ambiguity can lead to the mistaken interpretation that the executing unit also performs governance functions, contradicting the TCU's Basic Framework for Organizational Governance, according to which “governance must evaluate, direct, and monitor management, not being confused with executive activities” (TCU, 2020, p. 34).

Alves (2020) reinforces this distinction, noting that people governance requires the involvement of senior management in defining guidelines and monitoring results, and that assigning this function to the operational unit is inappropriate.

The absence of this distinction compromises the segregation of functions, hinders accountability, and weakens control mechanisms. The use of expressions such as governance and people management tends to intensify this ambiguity by combining distinct functions within a single statement, which can obscure organizational analysis and blur the distribution of responsibilities.

Conceptual precision is therefore fundamental for strengthening people governance: it allows for a clear delimitation of roles and an appropriate distribution of responsibilities, contributing to improved administrative practice and to the strengthening of the state's institutional capacity.

This analysis can be broadened from the standpoint of public policy implementation, since people management, as an institutional policy, is not realized solely through normative guidelines but depends on effective implementation in the organizational context. Silva-Dias (2023) highlights that implementing public policy involves multiple actors and institutional contexts, which can generate gaps between the formal plan and administrative practice.

People governance must therefore ensure not only the definition of guidelines but also their effective internalization in management, preventing the policy from being confined to the normative plane, which underscores the need for a people governance policy capable of aligning, systematizing, and standardizing practices related to the direction, supervision, and monitoring of people management across the organization.

Formalizing such a policy provides conceptual unity and institutional coherence by establishing clear parameters for the different actors involved, delimiting responsibilities, and integrating the strategic and operational levels. It also consolidates leadership, strategy, and control mechanisms applied to the people function, reducing fragmentation and strengthening institutional implementation capacity.

Conversely, the absence of a structured people governance policy tends to favor decisional dispersion, disjointed practices, and reactive approaches, compromising the effectiveness of institutional guidelines. Its institutionalization, on the other hand, enables a more mature organizational arrangement in which people management ceases to operate in isolation and instead acts in alignment with strategic priorities, including, centrally, the SDG-related commitments discussed in Section 2.3.

In this way, a people governance policy plays a structuring role by promoting integration between governance and management, not by conflating their functions, but by articulating their respective levels of action, so that execution is guided by clear directives, monitored by competent bodies, and evaluated on the basis of results. It is, in short, an essential instrument for strengthening governance in the people function and for the effective generation of public value.

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This essay has shown that the distinction between governance and people management extends beyond semantics and carries structuring implications for the organization of Public Administration. Examining the terms people governance, governance and people management, and governance in people management demonstrates that these terminologies are not equivalent: they produce concrete effects on the delimitation of responsibilities, the segregation of functions, and the effectiveness of direction and control mechanisms.

Governance, understood as the set of leadership, strategy, and control mechanisms, plays a fundamental role in institutional direction, evaluating, guiding, and monitoring management's performance. People management, in this context, is an object of governance, responsible for executing established guidelines. Failing to observe this distinction compromises organizational coherence, weakens control systems, and hinders the accountability of public agents.

Within the Judiciary, the consolidation of governance still faces structural challenges: in many contexts, “governance structures function precariously” (Coningham et al., 2022) and are not fully integrated into the decision-making process. This reinforces the need for institutional maturity and greater conceptual precision, especially regarding people governance.

The indiscriminate use of these terminologies can also generate interpretive ambiguity, particularly where the administrative unit responsible for operational activities is itself called “People Management.” This overlap tends to produce the mistaken understanding that the executing unit also performs governance functions, contradicting the fundamentals of contemporary public governance models.

Terminological standardization is therefore a relevant element of institutional improvement. Adopting more precise concepts, such as people governance, clarifies the distinction between strategic and operational levels, promotes clarity in the distribution of responsibilities, and strengthens oversight mechanisms. More than a linguistic choice, this is a decision that directly affects organizational architecture and the quality of public management.

The effectiveness of people governance also depends on its capacity to shape the implementation of institutional policy. As Silva-Dias (2023) observes, policy implementation occurs in complex settings involving multiple actors, which can generate gaps between formal guidelines and organizational practice, reinforcing the need to strengthen people governance as a mechanism for integrating strategy and execution.

The incorporation of the 2030 Agenda's SDGs into the iESGo-TCU assessment model reinforces the strategic dimension of people governance in the public sector. Linking SDGs 4, 5, 8,

10, and 16 to the practices the TCU evaluates shows that corporate education, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, quality of working life, combating harassment, performance management, and institutional governance have become constitutive elements of public sustainability itself. The people function thus moves beyond a merely operational role to become central to generating public value, strengthening institutions, and improving the effectiveness of judicial organizations.

Within the Judiciary, people governance plays a relevant role in meeting institutional commitments tied to the 2030 Agenda, whose relevance extends beyond the provision of justice to the promotion of more inclusive, ethical, accessible, and socially sustainable institutions. This broadens the understanding of people governance, integrating it with contemporary agendas of integrity, sustainability, and institutional responsibility.

3.1 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As a qualitative theoretical essay, this study has clear boundaries that should guide how its conclusions are read and used. First, the analysis relies on conceptual and documentary reflection rather than on empirical or field data; it does not test, through interviews, surveys, or case studies, whether the conceptual distinctions proposed here are actually perceived or operationalized by practitioners within courts and administrative units. Second, the essay concentrates on Brazilian normative sources (TCU, CNJ, CJP) and on a still-limited set of secondary literature; it does not systematically engage recent comparative or international scholarship on public-sector HR governance, which would help test whether the Brazilian pattern described here is idiosyncratic or part of a broader international trend. Third, the discussion of the 2030 Agenda and iESGo is limited to how these instruments define and measure people governance, without evaluating their real implementation effects or unintended consequences within specific courts.

Future research could usefully address these limitations in at least three ways: (i) empirical studies, interviews, surveys, or organizational case studies within specific courts, assessing whether the conceptual distinction between people governance and people management is understood and applied in practice, and with what consequences for segregation of duties and accountability; (ii) comparative studies contrasting the Brazilian model with international experiences of public-sector HR governance and ESG-oriented public administration, to test the generalizability of the conceptual framework proposed here; and (iii) longitudinal analyses of iESGo results over time, examining whether the incorporation of the SDGs into the people-governance indicators has produced measurable changes in diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and anti-harassment practices within the Judiciary.

It is important to emphasize that this essay does not intend to exhaust the subject, but to foster critical debate on governance and people management, especially within the Judiciary. By reflecting on conceptual precision, it aims to contribute to institutional maturity, encouraging practices more consistent with governance principles and with contemporary demands for efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Finally, consolidating people governance systems requires not only the formalization of policies and structures but also the construction of a common language capable of accurately reflecting institutional roles, responsibilities, and relationships. Conceptual clarity remains an indispensable condition for strengthening state capacity, generating public value effectively, and aligning public organizations with the 2030 Agenda's commitments to sustainability and institutional development.

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