

Institutional Reconfiguration in the Public Sector: An Analysis of the Evolution of the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE) from an Agency Theory Perspective

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Abstract: Transformations in public administration have intensified the need to improve human resource management policies, assigning public career structures a strategic role in enhancing employee development and strengthening the State's institutional capacity. The present study aimed to analyze the institutional reconfiguration of the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE) from the perspective of Agency Theory. To this end, an integrative literature review was conducted based on searches in Google Scholar, covering studies published between 2020 and 2026 on Agency Theory, governance, human resource management, and the evolution of the PCCTAE, complemented by classical authors that provide the theoretical foundation for the analytical approach. The findings indicate that the evolution of the PCCTAE extends beyond normative changes, representing a continuous process of restructuring career progression mechanisms, qualification incentives, professional recognition, monitoring practices, digital transformation, and career sustainability. The analysis also revealed that the recent reforms introduced into the career structure reflect a shift in the rationale of public management, guided by the alignment of institutional incentives, professional development, and the strengthening of governance. It is concluded that Agency Theory provides a consistent analytical framework for understanding the evolution of the PCCTAE as a process of institutional reconfiguration aimed at reducing information asymmetries, improving incentive mechanisms, and strengthening strategic human resource management within Federal Higher Education Institutions.

Keyword: Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE); Agency Theory; Institutional Reconfiguration.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Transformations in public administration over recent decades have intensified the need to modernize human resource management policies, particularly regarding the development of career structures capable of reconciling professional recognition, institutional development, and improvements in public service delivery. In this context, career plans have become strategic instruments for strengthening the State's institutional capacity, as they directly influence employee motivation, talent retention, professional qualification, and organizational efficiency. From this perspective, human resource governance plays a central role in improving public administration by promoting mechanisms that align employee development with institutional objectives and the generation of public value (Gaia et al., 2024).

Within Brazilian Federal Higher Education Institutions, this evolution materialized through the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE), established by Law No. 11,091 of January 12, 2005, which introduced a new framework for the professional development of technical-administrative staff. Since its implementation, the career plan has undergone successive reforms aimed at improving career progression mechanisms, qualification incentives, professional development, and competency recognition, reflecting the evolution of human resource management policies in the Brazilian federal public sector and the institutional demands of universities and federal institutes.

Accordingly, the present study aims to analyze the institutional reconfiguration of the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE) from the perspective of Agency Theory through an integrative literature review.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is characterized as an integrative literature review with a qualitative and exploratory approach, aimed at analyzing the institutional reconfiguration of the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE) from the perspective of Agency Theory. The theoretical framework was developed in two stages. Initially, classical Agency Theory scholars were selected, emphasizing the fundamental concepts of the principal-agent relationship, information asymmetry, agency costs, incentive mechanisms, monitoring, and control. Subsequently, contemporary studies applying this theoretical perspective to the public sector, governance, human resource management, performance evaluation, public careers, and higher education institutions were incorporated.

To identify the contemporary studies included in the theoretical framework, searches were conducted in Google Scholar, considering the period from 2020 to 2026, without excluding classical works published before this period due to their conceptual relevance to Agency Theory. Search terms in both Portuguese and English included: “teoria da agência,” “agency theory,” “public administration,” “public sector,” “governance,” “accountability,” “human resource

management,” “performance evaluation,” “public careers,” and “higher education institutions.” Priority was given to studies closely related to the investigated phenomenon, particularly those addressing incentive mechanisms, control, performance, autonomy, governance, and institutional alignment within the public sector.

The results section was developed from studies focusing on the PCCTAE and related public career structures, also identified through Google Scholar between 2020 and 2026. The search strategy included descriptors such as “Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education,” “PCCTAE,” “technical-administrative staff in education,” “career plan,” “career progression,” “qualification incentive,” “PCCTAE restructuring,” “teleworking in the PCCTAE,” “salary inequality in the PCCTAE,” and “human resource management in federal higher education institutions.” Studies addressing the evolution, restructuring, remuneration, career progression, motivation, diversity, sustainability, digital transformation, or work management related to the careers of technical-administrative staff in education were included.

The inclusion criteria comprised full-text articles published between 2020 and 2026 that demonstrated thematic alignment with the research objective and contributed directly to understanding the institutional evolution of the PCCTAE or the application of Agency Theory to public management phenomena. Studies unrelated to the research topic, duplicate publications, documents lacking minimum information regarding authorship or publication year, investigations of public careers without conceptual proximity to the research object, and studies without theoretical or empirical contributions to the research objectives were excluded.

The selected studies were analyzed through interpretative reading and thematic categorization. The evidence was organized into analytical axes related to career institutionalization, career progression and incentive mechanisms, professional recognition, motivation, digital transformation, teleworking, diversity, fiscal sustainability, and governance. Subsequently, the findings were triangulated with the assumptions of Agency Theory, allowing the evolution of the PCCTAE to be interpreted as a process of institutional reconfiguration aimed at reducing information asymmetries, aligning incentive mechanisms, improving performance monitoring, and strengthening governance within the public career system.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Agency Theory is one of the leading theoretical approaches for understanding organizational relationships characterized by the delegation of authority, information asymmetry, and divergent interests between those who establish objectives and those responsible for executing them. Ross (1973) introduces the agency relationship from the principal's perspective, arguing that delegated decision-making creates risks of misalignment, particularly when the agent possesses more information about his or her own actions than the principal who delegated the task.

Jensen and Meckling (1976) further develop this perspective by defining the agency relationship as a contract in which the principal delegates decision-making authority to the agent, assuming that both parties seek to maximize their own interests. According to the authors, agency costs arise from monitoring expenditures, incentive mechanisms, and residual losses resulting from the imperfect alignment between the principal's objectives and the agent's actions.

Fama (1980), in discussing agency problems within the theory of the firm, broadens the understanding of control mechanisms by emphasizing that agents' behavior may be regulated through institutional, reputational, and evaluative systems. This contribution suggests that career structures, performance evaluations, promotion systems, and reward mechanisms operate not only as administrative tools but also as behavioral instruments designed to reduce conflicts between individual interests and organizational objectives.

Eisenhardt (1989) systematizes Agency Theory within organizational studies by demonstrating that its primary contribution lies in explaining the relationships among information, incentives, risk, monitoring, and organizational outcomes. According to the author, agency problems emerge whenever conflicts of interest exist between principals and agents or when it becomes difficult to directly observe agents' behavior, requiring contractual arrangements based either on behavior or performance outcomes.

Within the public sector, Agency Theory becomes even more complex because principal-agent relationships extend beyond owners and managers to encompass society, governments, public managers, bureaucracies, civil servants, and public institutions. Martins et al. (2019) argue that applying Agency Theory to public administration enables governance to be understood as a set of mechanisms designed to reduce information asymmetry and monitor the actions of public agents in pursuit of collective interests.

Complementing this perspective, Fantinelli and Lana (2022) demonstrate through a bibliometric study that Agency Theory has increasingly been applied to public administration research to explain delegation, control, accountability, and governance relationships. This approach shifts the analysis of public organizations beyond a purely normative perspective, enabling a broader institutional understanding of the mechanisms designed to align behavior, reduce opportunism, and strengthen public accountability.

In the field of human resource management, Agency Theory provides an important framework for interpreting performance evaluation, training, career progression, and compensation as mechanisms that align organizational expectations with employee behavior. Vokić (2016) argues that agency problems may also arise in human resource management decisions involving performance appraisal, promotions, rewards, and professional development, particularly when information asymmetry, favoritism, or misalignment exists between managers and subordinates.

Evans and Tourish (2017) further expand this discussion by examining performance appraisal through the lens of Agency Theory. Their findings suggest that evaluation systems may function as mechanisms of monitoring, reward, and sanction but may also generate unintended negative consequences when organizational learning becomes excessively subordinated to control-oriented practices. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because it allows performance evaluation to be interpreted not merely as a formal career requirement but also as an institutional mechanism for behavioral regulation.

Within higher education, Kivistö (2005) applies Agency Theory to the relationship between governments and higher education institutions, arguing that universities may be understood as agents entrusted with public resources, institutional autonomy, and accountability obligations by governmental principals. Although the study focuses primarily on government-university relationships, its theoretical rationale also helps explain the internal agency relationships existing within Federal Higher Education Institutions, involving managers, technical-administrative staff, evaluation systems, institutional goals, and career development mechanisms.

Le (2024) updates this discussion by analyzing the autonomy of Vietnamese public universities through the perspective of Agency Theory, demonstrating that governance reforms in higher education involve continuous tensions among institutional autonomy, governmental control, and accountability mechanisms. This discussion closely relates to the PCCTAE because it illustrates that autonomy and professionalization within public higher education institutions require institutional arrangements capable of aligning organizational interests, institutional performance, and the behavior of internal agents.

Rajala (2025), while discussing accountability in the public sector, argues that Principal-Agent Theory remains highly relevant for understanding governance and control mechanisms despite its limitations in addressing the complexity of contemporary public organizations. This critical perspective supports the use of Agency Theory not as an exclusive explanatory model but as an analytical lens for understanding how institutional mechanisms related to career development, performance evaluation, professional training, and recognition contribute to reducing information asymmetries and organizing accountability relationships within public administration.

Overall, the theoretical framework demonstrates that Agency Theory provides a robust foundation for analyzing public career policies, particularly when such policies establish mechanisms for career progression, professional qualification, performance evaluation, incentives, and recognition. Within this perspective, the evolution of the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE) can be understood not merely as a sequence of regulatory or remuneration changes but as a process of institutional reconfiguration aimed at organizing incentive structures, reducing information asymmetries, and

strengthening the alignment between the interests of the Public Administration and those of technical-administrative staff in education.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evolution of the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE) demonstrates that its institutional trajectory extends far beyond the mere updating of legal provisions, reflecting a continuous process of reorganizing the mechanisms responsible for guiding career development, professional recognition, and human resource management within Federal Higher Education Institutions. Since its establishment, the career plan has evolved from serving merely as a framework for position classification to becoming a strategic instrument for coordinating institutional expectations with the individual interests of civil servants. This transformation indicates that the underlying rationale of the plan has gradually shifted from a predominantly administrative model toward one that incorporates incentive structures, career development criteria, and management mechanisms capable of responding to the emerging demands of contemporary public administration. This perspective had already been highlighted by Manhães et al. (2020), who argued that the creation of the PCCTAE represented a significant departure from previous career models by establishing specific guidelines for professional development, career progression, and continuous qualification, thereby increasing the objectivity of career advancement processes and reinforcing the strategic role of human resource management within Federal Higher Education Institutions.

From the perspective of Agency Theory, this institutional reconfiguration represents much more than a simple regulatory reform. Ross (1973) argues that agency relationships require mechanisms capable of reducing the uncertainty inherent in delegated authority by transforming abstract expectations into formal coordination arrangements. Within this framework, the institutionalization of the PCCTAE can be interpreted as the establishment of an incentive system designed to align the interests of the State with those of public servants through predictable rules governing recruitment, career development, professional qualification, and career progression. Consequently, the career plan functions as an institutional governance mechanism that reduces information asymmetries while providing objective parameters to guide the expected behavior of public agents.

Nevertheless, the institutional consolidation of the career has not eliminated historically accumulated structural limitations. Comparative analyses of the PCCTAE with other administrative careers within the Brazilian Federal Executive Branch reveal that its structure continues to be characterized by slower career progression, lower initial remuneration, and the absence of permanent performance-related bonuses, factors that have reduced its ability to attract and retain highly qualified professionals. Furthermore, a substantial dependence on the Qualification Incentive (*Incentivo à Qualificação*) has been identified as the primary mechanism for salary enhancement, making wage progression more dependent on academic qualifications than on institutional

performance itself. These findings indicate that, despite the advances introduced by Law No. 11,091/2005, the architecture of the career has required successive reforms to preserve its competitiveness in comparison with other federal career structures (Costa et al., 2025).

This finding is consistent with the arguments of Jensen and Meckling (1976), who maintain that organizational arrangements depend on incentive systems capable of reducing agency costs while encouraging behaviors aligned with institutional objectives. When career progression mechanisms exhibit limited attractiveness, reduced predictability, or insufficient returns, their capacity to encourage continuous investments in professional qualification, organizational commitment, and long-term retention is significantly weakened. From this perspective, the limitations identified within the PCCTAE should not be viewed merely as remuneration issues but rather as shortcomings in the institutional design of the incentive mechanisms that govern the principal-agent relationship.

The need for institutional adaptation became even more evident following the restructuring introduced by Provisional Measure No. 1,286/2024, which substantially altered the logic of career development within the PCCTAE. The replacement of the former Training-Based Career Progression system with the Accelerated Career Progression (*Aceleração da Progressão por Capacitação – APC*), the reformulation of salary steps, the extension of minimum progression intervals, and the redefinition of the Qualification Incentive eligibility criteria demonstrate that institutional concerns have shifted from automatic career advancement toward mechanisms that more closely align professional development with organizational needs. Although these reforms were presented as modernization measures, the literature indicates that important challenges remain regarding the predictability of career progression, the motivational effects arising from the restriction of the Qualification Incentive, and the need for continuous assessment of the impacts produced by these new rules on the professional recognition of technical-administrative staff (Cardoso et al., 2025).

From this perspective, Eisenhardt (1989) argues that organizations continuously revise their contractual mechanisms whenever existing arrangements fail to produce a satisfactory alignment between expected behavior and organizational outcomes. The recent reconfiguration of the PCCTAE can therefore be understood as a process of institutional redesign aimed at recalibrating incentive structures, redefining recognition criteria, and reorganizing career development mechanisms. Rather than merely modifying administrative requirements, these reforms represent the reconstruction of institutional arrangements capable of guiding individual choices toward the strategic priorities established by the State.

Alongside these structural changes, increasing attention has been directed toward factors associated with employee motivation, professional recognition, and strategic human resource management. The literature produced by the research group demonstrates that elements such as autonomy,

institutional recognition, employee appreciation policies, and professional development opportunities exert a direct influence on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee retention within the public sector. The findings further indicate that intrinsic factors related to public service motivation coexist with extrinsic factors associated with remuneration, career advancement opportunities, and organizational recognition, suggesting that the effectiveness of the career plan depends on maintaining an appropriate balance between these complementary dimensions (Castelo Branco et al., 2024).

This interpretation is consistent with the arguments of Evans and Tourish (2017), who contend that performance evaluation, recognition, and professional development systems should no longer be regarded merely as bureaucratic procedures but rather as institutional mechanisms capable of shaping organizational learning, professional behavior, and institutional capacity. From the perspective of Agency Theory, recognition mechanisms reduce opportunistic behavior not only through monitoring and control but also by establishing incentive systems perceived as legitimate by organizational agents. Consequently, professional recognition extends beyond an individual benefit and becomes a strategic component of public governance.

The modernization of work arrangements further reinforces this process of institutional reconfiguration. The implementation of teleworking, flexible working hours, and the intensive use of the Electronic Information System (SEI) demonstrates that the career has increasingly adapted to new forms of work organization that are incompatible with traditional monitoring systems based exclusively on physical presence. The studies report substantial improvements in productivity, employee autonomy, and quality of life while simultaneously highlighting the need to redesign performance evaluation systems, strengthen leadership practices, and adapt coordination mechanisms to these new organizational arrangements (Souza et al., 2025).

In addition, the extensive adoption of information technologies has enabled significant productivity gains despite reductions in the number of public servants, indicating that digital transformation has become a structural element of contemporary public workforce management (Silva Neto et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Agency Theory, these transformations represent a profound shift in monitoring mechanisms. Direct supervision of agents' behavior has gradually been replaced by systems centered on performance outcomes, performance indicators, digital workflows, and supervised autonomy. As Eisenhardt (1989) argues, when monitoring costs increase, organizations tend to replace behavior-based controls with outcome-based governance mechanisms. Consequently, the expansion of teleworking and digital transformation has not merely altered where work is performed but has fundamentally redefined the manner in which principals and agents establish relationships based on trust, accountability, coordination, and institutional governance.

The institutional reconfiguration of the PCCTAE is also reflected in the growing concern with career sustainability and workforce renewal. The studies reveal that a substantial proportion of technical-administrative staff is concentrated in older age groups, coexisting with gender inequalities, regional disparities, and challenges associated with the renewal of the public workforce. Furthermore, analyses of the financial and pension-related impacts of the career indicate that different pension schemes generate significantly different fiscal pressures on the Federal Government, reinforcing the understanding that career management has gradually expanded its focus beyond professional recognition to encompass the long-term sustainability of the entire system (Silva et al., 2024; Franco et al., 2024).

This broader institutional agenda demonstrates that the evolution of the PCCTAE cannot be understood simply as a sequence of isolated legislative reforms. Instead, the literature reveals a continuous process of reconstructing the incentive structures, career development mechanisms, monitoring systems, recognition policies, and sustainability strategies that govern the relationship between the State and technical-administrative staff within Federal Higher Education Institutions. Viewed through the lens of Agency Theory, each institutional reform introduces new governance mechanisms designed to reduce information asymmetries, strengthen the alignment between institutional expectations and employee behavior, and enhance the capacity of the career system to respond effectively to the organizational transformations required by contemporary public administration.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to analyze the institutional reconfiguration of the Career Plan for Technical-Administrative Staff in Education (PCCTAE) from the perspective of Agency Theory through an integrative literature review. The findings demonstrate that the evolution of the PCCTAE extends beyond merely normative reforms, constituting a continuous process of transforming the governance mechanisms that guide career management within Federal Higher Education Institutions. From this perspective, Agency Theory proved to be an appropriate analytical framework for understanding how career progression, professional qualification, recognition, monitoring, and career development have evolved into institutional mechanisms designed to align organizational objectives with the performance of technical-administrative staff.

The results revealed that the evolutionary trajectory of the PCCTAE has been characterized by the successive incorporation of instruments aimed at improving human resource management, ranging from the initial structuring of the career to recent reforms involving career progression criteria, the Qualification Incentive, the Accelerated Career Progression mechanism (APC), teleworking, digital transformation, and issues related to financial and pension sustainability. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the institutional reconfiguration of the career has occurred across multiple dimensions, encompassing not only remuneration policies but also incentive systems, monitoring

mechanisms, professional recognition, administrative modernization, and the strengthening of public governance. From the perspective of Agency Theory, these changes represent successive efforts to reduce information asymmetries, improve incentive structures, and strengthen the alignment between the interests of Public Administration and the expected behavior of public servants.

Finally, it can be concluded that the PCCTAE constitutes a dynamic institutional arrangement whose evolution reflects the ongoing transformation of contemporary public administration and the increasing demands for efficiency, professionalization, and the generation of public value. The principal contribution of this study lies in providing a theoretical interpretation of the evolution of the career through the lens of Agency Theory, expanding the understanding of the PCCTAE beyond its legal and remuneration dimensions while highlighting its role as an institutional governance mechanism. Future research should further investigate the empirical effects of the reforms introduced by Provisional Measure No. 1,286/2024 on employee motivation, performance, talent retention, and organizational effectiveness within Federal Higher Education Institutions, thereby assessing the extent to which the institutional reconfiguration of the career has contributed to strengthening public management and improving the delivery of public services.

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