

Governance as the New Center of Gravity: What PMBOK 8 Means for the Brazilian Project Management Market ¹



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Introduction

In last month's edition of the *PM World Journal*, Prof. João Carlos Boyadjian (one of the founders of PMI São Paulo, the largest PMI chapter in Latin America) offered a detailed assessment of the PMBOK® Guide, Eighth Edition.

His central argument was direct: the most immediately impactful change in PMBOK 8 is the repositioning of governance as the integrating axis of the project life cycle, replacing the previous discourse that many practitioners perceived as philosophically sound but insufficiently actionable.

That assessment, grounded in four decades of practice and teaching, set the stage for this report. This month, we examine what the Eighth Edition means specifically for the

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Brazilian project management market (a large and mature community of project management professionals and PMP credential holders, a PMP exam transition scheduled for July 9, 2026, and structural challenges in governance and planning maturity that the new guide directly addresses).

1. What Changed: From PMBOK 6 to PMBOK 8 in Three Editions.

The evolution of the PMBOK Guide over its three most recent editions reflects a profession searching for balance between prescriptive clarity and adaptive flexibility.

The Sixth Edition (2017) provided a comprehensive process-driven framework: 49 processes organized into five Process Groups and ten Knowledge Areas. It was the reference standard for an entire generation of PMP candidates and organizational PMOs. The Seventh Edition (2021) introduced a paradigm shift, abandoning the process structure in favor of 12 principles and 8 performance domains focused on value delivery. While conceptually forward-looking, it left many practitioners without the operational guidance they needed for daily project execution. The Eighth Edition (2025) attempts to resolve this tension.

The following table summarizes the structural evolution across the three editions:

Dimension	PMBOK 6 (2017)	PMBOK 7 (2021)	PMBOK 8 (2025)
Principles	Not explicitly defined	12 principles	6 principles (streamlined)
Structure	5 Process Groups, 10 Knowledge Areas	8 Performance Domains	7 Performance Domains + 5 Focus Areas
Processes	49 processes with ITTOs	No formal processes	Reintroduced non-prescriptive process guidance
Integration	Integration Management (knowledge area)	Delivery (performance domain)	Governance (performance domain)
Cost Management	Cost Management (knowledge area)	Part of Delivery domain	Finance (performance domain)
Approach	Primarily predictive	Approach-agnostic	Explicitly predictive, agile, and hybrid
Emerging Topics	Agile Practice Guide (supplement)	Models, Methods, Artifacts (supplement)	AI, sustainability, PMOs (integrated)

Three changes deserve particular attention for their practical significance in the Brazilian context: the elevation of governance as a central domain, the replacement of cost management with financial management, and the reintroduction of process guidance in a non-prescriptive form.

2. Governance as the Integrating Axis: Why This Matters for Brazil.

In the Sixth Edition, integration was a knowledge area (one of ten). In the Seventh Edition, it dissolved into the broader concept of value delivery. The Eighth Edition introduces Governance as a named performance domain, positioning it as the integrating axis that connects decisions, quality, controls, and value generation across the project life cycle.

This is not merely a terminological change. It is a repositioning of the project manager's role: from "integrator of parts" to "orchestrator of governance" (the professional responsible for sustaining the decision-making environment that ensures coherence between strategy, execution, and benefits).

For the Brazilian market, this shift addresses a chronic weakness. In last month's interview, Prof. Boyadjian identified what he called "fazejamento"²: the deeply rooted culture of rushing into execution without adequate planning, as if planning were bureaucracy rather than management. The consequences are predictable: fragile scope definitions, schedules that function as "wish dates," budgets that become "guess estimates," and contracts initiated without sufficient solution maturity.

PMBOK 8's governance-centered model offers a structural response to this pattern. By placing governance (not integration, not delivery) at the center of project management practice, the guide reinforces that the project manager's primary responsibility is to sustain the environment in which decisions are made, roles are clear, escalation paths are defined, acceptance criteria are explicit, and accountability is maintained. In organizations where "fazejamento" prevails, this framing provides a language and a framework for demanding what was previously dismissed as unnecessary overhead.

Brazil has already produced leadership at the highest level of PMI's institutional governance. Ricardo Viana Vargas, a Brazilian project management professional, chaired the PMI Board of Directors in 2009, demonstrating that the country's practitioners operate at the frontier of global standards.

² A Brazilian colloquialism roughly meaning 'just-do-it-ism' — the habit of rushing into execution without planning.

The question for the broader market is whether the governance maturity demonstrated at the institutional level can translate into organizational practice across thousands of companies that still manage projects without formal governance structures.

3. From Cost to Finance: Elevating the PM's Conversation.

The renaming of “Cost Management” to “Finance” as a performance domain is one of the most symbolically significant changes in PMBOK 8. It reflects a reality that experienced practitioners have long recognized: the project manager’s financial responsibility extends beyond budget tracking.

The real world does not discuss only costs. It discusses cash flow, trade-offs between capital and operational expenditure, financial risk exposure, disbursement schedules, return on investment, and the relationship between project spending and organizational value creation. By adopting the language of finance rather than cost, PMBOK 8 positions the project manager closer to the executive conversation: revenues, constraints, predictability, and strategic value.

In the Brazilian context, this change is particularly relevant. The project manager in Brazil has historically been perceived (and often perceives himself or herself) as a “schedule manager.” The professional who tracks deadlines, updates Gantt charts, and reports progress. While these activities remain essential, they represent a fraction of what modern project leadership requires. The shift from “cost” to “finance” signals to the market, to hiring managers, and to executives that the PM’s domain includes business-level financial reasoning, not just budget control.

For sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and engineering, where capital expenditure projects routinely involve complex financial structures, long disbursement cycles, and contractual penalties, this reframing is overdue. It aligns the guide’s language with the reality that project managers in these sectors already face daily, while providing a standard vocabulary to elevate the conversation.

4. The PMP Exam Transition: A Window of Pressure.

Beyond the conceptual changes, the Brazilian market faces an immediate operational pressure: the PMP exam will be updated on July 9, 2026, under a revised Examination Content Outline (ECO) developed through a new job task analysis.

The changes to the exam are substantial. The following table summarizes the key shifts:

Dimension	Current Exam	New Exam (July 2026)
Questions	180	180
Duration	230 minutes	240 minutes
Predictive / Agile-Hybrid	50% / 50%	40% / 60%
Business Environment weight	8%	26%
Question format	Multiple choice, multi-select	+ Scenario sets, visual interpretation

The most dramatic shift is in the Business Environment domain, which jumps from 8% to 26% of the exam. This reflects PMI's expectation that project managers must understand organizational strategy, align projects with business value, and think beyond task execution: precisely the governance and financial reasoning that PMBOK 8 emphasizes.

For the Brazilian market, the transition creates a decision point for thousands of PMP candidates currently in preparation. Those who are close to exam readiness may choose to take the current version before July 9. Those who wait will need to adapt to a fundamentally different exam structure: one that places significantly greater emphasis on strategic thinking, value delivery, and hybrid approaches.

Authorized Training Partners (ATPs) across Brazil are in the process of updating their curricula. PMI São Paulo Chapter, as an ATP itself, is among the organizations adapting its preparatory programs. The quality and speed of this curricular transition across the broader ecosystem of training providers will directly affect the pipeline of new PMPs in Brazil during the second half of 2026.

5. Is Brazil Ready to Absorb PMBOK 8?

The Eighth Edition arrives at a moment when the Brazilian project management market presents a paradox: significant professional volume alongside structural gaps in institutional infrastructure.

On one hand, Brazil has a large and mature community of project management professionals and PMP credential holders. Interest in project management education continues to grow, with programs offered by leading institutions including FIA-USP, Fundação Getulio Vargas, USP/ESALQ-PECEGE, and Senac. The PMI São Paulo Chapter, founded in 1998, remains the largest in Latin America and an active promoter of professional development.

On the other hand, the academic infrastructure supporting project management education remains underdeveloped relative to the market's size. Of more than 205 programs accredited by PMI's Global Accreditation Center (GAC) worldwide, only eleven are in Latin America, and, currently, no GAC-accredited project management program in Brazil could be confirmed as active. This means that the vast majority of project

management education in the country occurs outside the quality framework that GAC accreditation represents.

The gap extends beyond academia. Many organizations, particularly mid-sized companies and public-sector entities, continue to operate without formal project governance structures. PMOs, where they exist, often function as reporting offices rather than as governance architectures connecting strategy, portfolio, and delivery. The culture of “fazejamento” identified by Boyadjian is not an exception; for a significant portion of the market, it remains the norm.

PMBOK 8 provides the right framework for addressing these gaps. Governance as a central domain, finance as a performance area, non-prescriptive process guidance that can be adapted to predictive, agile, or hybrid contexts: these are precisely the tools that the Brazilian market needs. But absorbing a guide is not the same as reading it. Absorption requires investment in training, organizational change, and leadership willing to challenge entrenched practices.

6. Conclusion: The Right Guide at the Right Time

The PMBOK 8th Edition represents the most balanced update to PMI’s global standard in a decade. It resolves the tension between the prescriptive clarity of the Sixth Edition and the philosophical flexibility of the Seventh Edition by offering a framework that is both principled and operational.

For the Brazilian market, three messages emerge. First, governance is no longer an implicit expectation: it is the named center of project management practice, and organizations that continue to operate without it will find themselves increasingly misaligned with global standards. Second, the project manager’s professional identity is evolving from schedule controller to business-oriented governance leader, and the shift from “cost” to “finance” in the guide’s vocabulary is both a signal and a tool for this transition. Third, the PMP exam update in July 2026 creates an immediate pressure that will test the responsiveness of Brazil’s training ecosystem.

The guide is ready. The question is whether the market (its organizations, its training institutions, and its professionals) will rise to meet it.

7. Disclosures, Use of AI

(1) Disclosures. The author declares no conflicts of interest. (2) Use of AI. Large language models (OpenAI ChatGPT-5.4 and Claude Opus 4.6) assisted with drafting, textual style editing, table formatting, and the practitioner prompt. All content was reviewed and verified by the author; no confidential or proprietary data were provided to the models; all third-party ideas are cited; and the models are not listed as authors nor bear responsibility for the claims.

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