

Impact of school day extension on educational outcomes: evidence from *Mais Educação* in Brazil

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There are many particularities to public policies required to reduce educational disparities among students. They comprise issues related to infrastructure, remuneration and training of education professionals, debates regarding unifying content at the national level and forms of public service provision. While there are many initiatives that focus on all of these aspects, their impacts are not always subject to a causal analysis capable of providing the information necessary to improve these interventions. This One Pager seeks to summarise the evidence found in a larger Working Paper (Oliveira and Terra 2016) regarding the impact of the extended school days implemented under the 'More Education' programme (*Programa Mais Educação*—PME), an initiative of the Brazilian federal government. The PME transfers funds directly to educational institutions, which purchase educational materials and fund monitoring grants so that students may take part in extracurricular activities.

This initiative covers schools whose classes comprise only the morning or afternoon shifts. In Brazil, this is the most common practice in both public and private schools, and it limits family members' use of time and labour supply. Brazilian municipalities are the main entities responsible for the administration of elementary public schools; which are very heterogeneous in terms of administrative practices and socio-economic characteristics. Over the past three decades, various changes have occurred in the financing of public education nationwide, in addition to the adoption of compensation funds, such as the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Appreciation of Teaching (FUNDEF), between 1996 and 2006, and the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Appreciation of Education Professionals (FUNDEB), after 2006, as attempts to promote greater equity in the system. The intent is that states that are not able to reach the minimum disbursement per student receive supplementary funds from the federal government.

The PME began in 2008, having grown significantly since then, undergoing alterations in its eligibility criteria. It covered over 30,000 schools nationwide in 2012, but in 2014 that number jumped to 60,000. 2012 was chosen as the object of study, because that was when a new eligibility criterion for schools emerged. The programme focused on schools where the majority of students were beneficiaries of the *Bolsa Família* programme. This was because policymakers saw this well-known cash transfer programme as a possible way to achieve better integration between educational initiatives and poverty reduction policies.

From an evaluation standpoint, the PME also contributed to the adoption of a correct econometric approach, comparing schools relative to the new criterion in a causal manner. Schools very close to the cutoff point (usually no further than 2.5 percentage points

away from the criterion of 50 per cent of students being beneficiaries of the *Bolsa Família* programme) are very similar in terms of geography, number of employees, classes, computers and internet access, and an indicator that aggregates around 40 infrastructure indicators. Even so, among those schools there was an increase of around 20 percentage points in the probability of participating in the PME. This fact ensures the validity of the exogenous instrument.

However, despite the higher chances of selection, no improvements were found in the learning process (Portuguese and Mathematics) or in performance indicators (dropout, approval and failure rates). Next, 24 regressions were estimated, separated in 12 variables of interest for the initial years (first to fifth) and 12 for the final years (sixth to ninth) of elementary education. These outcomes contemplate performance indicators for each stage and also the specific years for which the policy is recommended (fourth, fifth, eighth and ninth years) for elementary education, as well as proficiency in Mathematics and Portuguese and the Index of Development of Primary Education (IDEB), which is a composite of proficiency and approval rates. The IDEB is also a way to capture the persistence of the policy, given that it was measured in 2013.

The fact that no impacts were found on any of the 24 analysed indicators allows for the conclusion that the programme has only accrued the participation of priority schools but has not been able to translate the transfer of funds into direct gains in proficiency, approval or even dropout rates. In terms of heterogeneous effects, the results were maintained. Therefore, it is not possible to state that there were relevant results in schools that enrolled more students compared to those that enrolled fewer students. Moreover, it was not possible to observe effects on the number of educational support activities—more focused on traditional content—compared to other (sporting, cultural or extracurricular) activities.

This issue brings to light the fact that, even after two years of participation in the programme or emphasis given to the inclusion of students, schools did not reap the expected benefits of the policy regarding traditional educational indicators. Furthermore, this impact evaluation indicates that the involvement of the federal government in the transfer of funds to schools, without demands regarding demonstrable improvements, needs to be reviewed and updated.

Reference:

Oliveira, Luis Felipe Batista, and Rafael Terra. 2016. "Impact of school day extension on educational outcomes: evidence from *Mais Educação* in Brazil" IPC-IG Working Paper No. 147. Brasília: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.

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