

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# The promise of equity challenges and realities of the extended school day in San Francisco de Macorís, Dominican Republic

La promesa de equidad desafíos y realidades de la jornada escolar extendida en San Francisco de Macorís en República Dominicana

Nelson R. Rosario-Cordero 

Received: 16 October 2025 / Accepted: 11 December 2025 / Published online: 30 January 2026

© The Author(s) 2026

**Abstract** The implementation of the Extended School Day (ESD) in the Dominican Republic has been conceived as a public policy aimed at reducing educational inequalities and promoting greater equity within the school system. However, its application in specific territorial contexts reveals structural, pedagogical, and organizational challenges that shape its outcomes. This study aims to analyze the challenges and realities of the ESD in Educational Region 07 of San Francisco de Macorís, focusing on its perceived impact on educational equity and teaching and learning conditions. The research adopts a descriptive mixed-methods approach, combining empirical analysis of teachers' and school administrators' perceptions—expressed through descriptive statistical data—with a systematized review of recent academic and normative literature. The findings indicate progress in terms of student retention and expanded access to instructional time, alongside persistent limitations related to infrastructure, teachers' workload, institutional management, and the functioning of the School Feeding Program. The study concludes that while the ESD constitutes a significant opportunity to advance educational equity, its effectiveness largely depends on contextual conditions, adaptive school management, and complementary policies that ensure quality and sustainability.

**Keywords** extended school day; educational equity; public policy; school management; secondary education.

**Resumen** La implementación de la Jornada Escolar Extendida (JEE) en la República Dominicana ha sido concebida como una política pública orientada a la reducción de brechas educativas y al fortalecimiento de la equidad en el sistema escolar. Sin embargo, su aplicación en contextos territoriales específicos plantea desafíos estructurales, pedagógicos y organizacionales que condicionan sus resultados. El presente estudio tiene como objetivo analizar los desafíos y las realidades de la JEE en la Región Educativa 07 de San Francisco de Macorís, atendiendo a su impacto percibido en la equidad educativa y en las condiciones de enseñanza y aprendizaje. La investigación se desarrolló bajo un enfoque mixto de carácter descriptivo, combinando el análisis empírico de percepciones docentes y directivas, expresadas mediante datos porcentuales, con una revisión documental sistemática de literatura académica y normativa reciente. Los resultados evidencian avances asociados a la permanencia estudiantil y al acceso ampliado al tiempo escolar, así como limitaciones persistentes relacionadas con la infraestructura, la sobrecarga laboral docente, la gestión institucional y el funcionamiento del Programa de Alimentación Escolar. Se concluye que, si bien la JEE representa una oportunidad para avanzar hacia mayores niveles de equidad educativa, su efectividad depende de condiciones contextuales, de una gestión escolar flexible y de políticas complementarias que garanticen calidad y sostenibilidad.

**Palabras clave** jornada escolar extendida; equidad educativa; políticas públicas; gestión escolar; educación secundaria.

## How to cite

Rosario-Cordero, N. R. (2026). The promise of equity challenges and realities of the extended school day in San Francisco de Macorís, Dominican Republic. *Journal of Law and Epistemic Studies*, 4, e153. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18306520>

✉ Nelson R. Rosario-Cordero  
nelrosario056-gmail.com  
Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo. República Dominicana.

## Introduction

In an effort to improve educational quality and promote social equity, the education system of the Dominican Republic has implemented the Extended School Day (ESD). This policy, which expands instructional hours, aims to provide students with additional time for learning, skills development, and access to complementary services such as school meals and extracurricular support. The underlying premise of this initiative is that increased time spent in school can help level educational opportunities for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby contributing to the reduction of persistent educational inequalities.

This article focuses on a specific case study: the implementation of the ESD in Educational Region 07, San Francisco de Macorís. Through an in-depth analysis, the study examines the governance of the program, its effects on student well-being and educational outcomes, and the challenges it faces in fulfilling its goal of educational equity. Rather than relying solely on aggregated indicators, this research seeks to capture local dynamics that shape the program's performance, highlighting the complexities that arise from the interaction between national education policies and the everyday realities of local communities. By exploring the experiences of schools and stakeholders in San Francisco de Macorís, the article offers a critical assessment of whether the ESD is fulfilling its promise of equity or, conversely, generating new challenges for students and families in vulnerable contexts.

The study is structured around three key dimensions: governance, educational outcomes, and challenges to equity. From a governance perspective, the analysis examines program management, resource allocation, and coordination among education authorities, schools, teachers, and families. Recent studies, such as that of Aranque Espinoza (2025), indicate that limited school autonomy and bureaucratic rigidity in the implementation of extended school day programs often constrain their adaptability to local contexts. Despite institutional efforts, weaknesses persist in administrative execution and community participation, affecting both the efficiency and sustainability of the policy.

Regarding educational outcomes, the findings indicate that the ESD has had a positive effect on certain indicators, particularly student attendance and school retention. However, no significant or generalized improvement in academic achievement has been observed, suggesting that the mere extension of instructional time is insufficient to close learning gaps. This conclusion is consistent with national evidence reported by the Oficina Nacional de Estadística (ONE, 2022), which emphasizes that the quality of classroom time is more critical than its quantity. In this regard, curriculum relevance and teaching methodologies remain key areas requiring improvement.

The article also addresses the challenges to educational equity associated with the implementation of the ESD. Despite its stated objective of leveling the playing field for all students, socioeconomic inequalities persist. The program has proven more effective in schools with better infrastructure and greater resource availability, while institutions located in rural or low-income areas face greater obstacles, including transportation limitations and inadequate school feeding services. As highlighted by López-Motta (2021) in his analysis of inclusive education policies in Latin America, extended school day initiatives may inadvertently reproduce inequalities if structural conditions are not addressed. Thus, although the ESD represents a valuable policy initiative, its effectiveness in promoting equity remains contingent upon overcoming these structural challenges and strengthening participatory and context-sensitive governance mechanisms.

The implementation of the ESD in the Dominican Republic has therefore been accompanied by a series of challenges that prevent the program from fully achieving its equity objectives, particularly in contexts such as Educational Region 07 in San Francisco de Macorís. While the policy seeks to expand opportunities for all students, socioeconomic disparities and weaknesses in local management continue to operate as significant barriers.

One of the main challenges concerns the quality of teaching. The increase in instructional time has not automatically translated into substantial or widespread improvements in academic performance (Maldonado Acosta & Carlson Morales, 2025; Elacqua et al., 2025). This is largely due to the absence of a comprehensive transformation of pedagogical methodologies and curricular content. As emphasized by UNESCO (2021), the number of instructional hours is less important than the quality of teaching and learning processes. In Region 07, limitations in teacher training and insufficient didactic resources have hindered educators' ability to fully leverage the additional instructional time.

Another critical issue relates to infrastructure and resource availability. Despite public investment efforts, disparities in the quality of school facilities persist. Schools located in urban areas or those with greater institutional visibility tend to benefit from better infrastructure, while educational centers in rural or low-income areas continue to face basic shortages. This situation has been widely documented in studies addressing inequities in resource allocation across Latin American education systems (Cano Sua & Artunduaga Lizcano, 2025). The lack of adequate spaces, laboratories, and libraries undermines the implementation of extracurricular activities and workshops, which are central components of the ESD model.

Furthermore, governance and coordination among key stakeholders—families, schools, and education authorities—

represent a substantial challenge. Parental involvement, widely recognized as a crucial factor in educational success (Andrade-Dávila, 2025), remains limited due to labor constraints and insufficient communication mechanisms. At the administrative level, bureaucratic rigidity and centralized decision-making often restrict schools' capacity to respond effectively to students' specific needs, a challenge highlighted by Baque Parrales and Pin Baque (2025).

Consequently, the ESD in San Francisco de Macorís reflects a clear tension between its equity-oriented objectives and the realities of its implementation. Socioeconomic inequalities are manifested in unequal access to resources, disparities in infrastructure quality, and uneven levels of family participation. Addressing these challenges requires not only increased financial investment, but also a more holistic approach that strengthens local governance, promotes continuous teacher professional development, and ensures that the program responds flexibly and equitably to the needs of all students, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

Finally, the governance of the Extended School Day in San Francisco de Macorís faces significant constraints stemming from a highly centralized structure that limits school-level autonomy. As noted by Torres Hernández (2024), limited decision-making flexibility and bureaucratic rigidity hinder the program's capacity to adapt effectively to local conditions. This results in an implementation process that often overlooks community-specific needs, generating inefficiencies and misalignment between policy objectives and school realities.

## Methodology

This study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach with a descriptive–interpretive emphasis, integrating empirical analysis of teachers' perceptions with a systematized documentary review of scientific and normative literature related to the Extended School Day (ESD) and educational equity in Latin America. This approach made it possible to articulate descriptive quantitative data with qualitative analysis (Valle et al., 2022), aimed at understanding the institutional, pedagogical, and socioeconomic dynamics influencing the implementation of the program in Educational Region 07, San Francisco de Macorís, Dominican Republic.

The research adopted a non-experimental, cross-sectional design, as data were collected at a single point in time and analyzed without manipulation of variables. This design is appropriate for studies on public education policies that seek to describe and analyze phenomena in real-world contexts, taking into account both observable outcomes and the perceptions of the actors involved.

The scope of the study was descriptive–analytical, focu-

sing on identifying advances, limitations, and tensions in the implementation of the ESD, particularly in relation to its promise of educational equity. In addition, the research incorporated a comparative–contextual component, contrasting local findings with evidence reported in previous studies on extended school day programs in Latin America.

Empirical sources consisted of data drawn from perceptions of teachers, school administrators, and education technicians in Region 07, expressed through percentages and evaluative assessments related to student attendance and retention, infrastructure conditions, teachers' workload, the functioning of the School Feeding Program (SFP), and expectations and levels of satisfaction with the ESD. These data were processed using descriptive statistics (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú [PUCP], 2022), employing frequencies and percentages for interpretive purposes, without inferential statistical claims.

Documentary sources involved a systematized review of peer-reviewed academic articles, institutional reports, regulatory documents, and previous studies related to extended school day policies, educational equity, school governance, educational infrastructure and resources, and student well-being. The databases consulted included Scopus, SciELO, Dialnet, Redalyc, and institutional repositories of international organizations. Publications in Spanish and English were prioritized based on their thematic relevance and methodological rigor.

Document selection was guided by clearly defined inclusion criteria, prioritizing peer-reviewed scientific articles and relevant institutional documents addressing educational equity, instructional time, and extended school day policies. Non-academic materials, journalistic sources, and studies lacking explicit methodological grounding were excluded.

Data analysis was carried out at two complementary levels. First, a descriptive analysis (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú [PUCP], 2022) was applied to empirical data, aimed at identifying patterns, trends, and recurrent challenges in the implementation of the ESD. Second, an interpretive content analysis enabled the comparison of empirical findings with specialized literature and their contextualization within contemporary education policy debates (Kabir, 2024). This process facilitated the construction of analytical categories related to governance, educational quality, infrastructure, equity, and inclusion.

Both levels of analysis were articulated through a categorization matrix, allowing for the triangulation of empirical data and theoretical references. The research adhered to fundamental ethical principles, ensuring the confidentiality of participants' opinions and the responsible use of information. In addition, all sources consulted were properly acknowledged in accordance with current academic citation standards (APA 7).

## Results and discussion

The results of the study allow for an integrated analysis of the effects, scope, and limitations of the Extended School Day (ESD) in Educational Region 07 of San Francisco de Macorís, considering both the perceptions of educational stakeholders and their contrast with specialized literature. The discussion is organized around five central axes that emerge from the empirical and documentary analysis.

The findings indicate that the ESD has had a positive impact on student retention and the organization of school time. A significant proportion of teachers and school administrators perceive that the extension of the school day has contributed to reducing absenteeism and strengthening continuity in the educational process, particularly in contexts of social vulnerability. This result is consistent with regional studies suggesting that increased school time can foster more stable educational trajectories when accompanied by appropriate pedagogical conditions (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

Nevertheless, the data also reveal that a greater number of instructional hours does not, by itself, guarantee substantial improvements in learning outcomes. This reinforces the idea that extended school time must be articulated with relevant pedagogical strategies and adequate resources in order to generate sustainable impacts.

One of the most consistent findings of the study relates to limitations in infrastructure and educational resources. A considerable proportion of teachers identify deficiencies in classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and recreational spaces, which restrict the full use of the extended school day. These shortcomings are more pronounced in schools with high enrollment and limited equipment, thereby reproducing pre-existing territorial inequalities.

From a comparative perspective, the literature warns that expanding school time without parallel investments in infrastructure tends to deepen equity gaps by generating differentiated educational experiences depending on the institutional context (OECD, 2024). In this regard, the results confirm that the promise of equity associated with the ESD is conditioned by structural factors that go beyond the temporal dimension of the policy.

With respect to school governance, the results reveal an ambivalent perception. On the one hand, institutional stability and administrative continuity are recognized as strengths that have supported the sustained implementation of the ESD. On the other hand, limitations associated with predominantly bureaucratic leadership styles and limited flexibility in pedagogical decision-making at the school level are identified.

In addition, the extension of the school day has increased teachers' workload, generating tensions related to planning

time, pedagogical support, and professional well-being. These findings are consistent with recent studies warning that the sustainability of extended school day policies largely depends on teacher management and the existence of adequate working conditions (Elacqua et al., 2025).

The School Feeding Program (SFP) emerges as a key component in perceptions of the ESD. The results indicate that the provision of meals constitutes a fundamental incentive for student attendance and retention, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged contexts. However, dissatisfaction is also reported regarding the quality, logistics, and regularity of the service.

The coexistence of positive and critical assessments suggests that the SFP fulfills an important social function, but requires operational improvements in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the policy. In this sense, the findings are consistent with national evidence highlighting the central role of social support programs in reducing educational inequalities, provided they are managed with standards of quality and transparency (Oficina Nacional de Estadística [ONE], 2022).

Finally, the analysis of teachers' perceptions reveals moderately positive expectations regarding the ESD, combined with a degree of skepticism about its long-term sustainability. While advances are acknowledged in terms of school organization and student support, doubts persist regarding the system's capacity to sustain the policy without structural adjustments in infrastructure, management, and working conditions.

These perceptions reinforce the notion that the ESD should not be conceived solely as an extension of instructional time, but rather as a comprehensive transformation of the school model. The discussion suggests that the success of the policy depends on its articulation with strategies aimed at institutional strengthening, pedagogical leadership, and the active participation of educational stakeholders.

## Conclusions

The Extended School Day (ESD) constitutes a relevant public policy for advancing educational equity in the Dominican Republic; however, this study shows that its effectiveness depends on structural, institutional, and pedagogical conditions that go beyond simply increasing instructional time. In Educational Region 07 of San Francisco de Macorís, the ESD has positively influenced student retention and the organization of school time, particularly in socially vulnerable contexts, confirming its inclusive potential. Nonetheless, persistent limitations in infrastructure, pedagogical resources, governance, and teacher working conditions restrict its impact on learning quality and the reduction of inequalities, while territorial disparities continue to reproduce asymme-

tries among schools. The School Feeding Program enhances the social legitimacy of the ESD by supporting attendance and retention, yet weaknesses in its management and quality call for stronger operational oversight. Overall, the findings indicate that while the ESD offers a meaningful opportunity to promote educational equity, its consolidation requires a systemic, context-sensitive approach that integrates extended time with adequate infrastructure, strengthened pedagogical leadership, improved teacher conditions, and effective social support policies, alongside further research on its long-term educational effects.

## References

- Andrade, D. A. (2025). La Gestión Educativa y la Participación de los Padres de Familia en la Unidad Educativa Apuela, Periodo Lectivo 2024-2025. *Estudios y Perspectivas Revista Científica y Académica*, 5(1), 1369–1384. <https://doi.org/10.61384/r.c.a..v5i1.919>
- Araque, M. B. (2025). Transformación institucional mediante la implementación del gobierno electrónico: Análisis comparativo en administraciones locales de Latinoamérica. *Maestro y Sociedad*, 22(1), 595–606. <https://maestroysociedad.uo.edu.cu/index.php/MyS/article/view/6823>
- Baque, E. M., & Pin, J. M. (2025). *Estructura organizacional y roles de servidores públicos del Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado del cantón Jipijapa, periodo 2023–2024* [Undergraduate thesis, Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí]. <http://repositorio.unesum.edu.ec/handle/53000/7619>
- Cano, M. A., & Artunduaga, F. (2025). Trayectorias educativas en contextos rurales: estrategias de inclusión y equidad en Argentina, Brasil y Chile. Aportes para Colombia. *Educación y Ciudad*, (49), e3353. <https://doi.org/10.36737/01230425.3353>
- Elacqua, G. M., Marotta, L., & Morales, C. (2025). *Temporary teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean: A radiography of a growing trend* (IDB Technical Note No. 3131). Inter-American Development Bank. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0013515>
- Erazo, G. F., & Donoso Calderón, K. F. (2025). *Análisis socioeconómico de los estudiantes de bachillerato en la Unidad Educativa Antonio Ante: Condiciones que inciden en su desempeño académico* [Undergraduate thesis, Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo]. <http://dspace.unach.edu.ec/handle/51000/16033>
- Escobar, G. A. E. (2023). *Humanidades I: Serie perspectivas*. Patria Educación.
- Garganta, S., & Zentner, J. (2021). *El efecto de la doble escolaridad sobre la participación laboral femenina en República Dominicana*. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0003104>
- Kabir, S. M. (2024). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. *Pasaa Paritat Journal*, 39, 142–145. <https://doi.org/10.58837/CHULA.PPJ.39.8>
- López-Motta, D. (2021). Efectos de la Jornada Escolar Completa sobre el aprendizaje de los estudiantes. *Revista Iberoamericana ConCiencia*, 6(2), 30–52. <https://doi.org/10.32654/CONCIENCIAEPG.6-2.3>
- Maldonado, M. E., & Carlson, C. (2025). La Influencia del Género y la Escasez de Docentes en Áreas de Ciencias: Un Estudio de Expectativas Educativas. *Boletín Científico INVESTIGIUM De La Escuela Superior De Tizayuca*, 10(20), 25–31. <https://doi.org/10.29057/est.v10i20.13024>
- Mujica, J. (2025). *Programa educativo para fomentar la participación de los padres de familia del nivel primaria en una institución educativa de Ilo-Moquegua*. Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14005/15926>
- OECD. (2024). *Education at a glance 2024: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>
- Oficina Nacional de Estadística (ONE). (2022). *Encuesta nacional de hogares de propósitos múltiples (ENHOGAR 2022): Informe básico*. <https://www.one.gob.do/publicaciones/2022/encuesta-nacional-de-hogares-de-propositos-multiples-enhogar-2022-informe-basico/>
- Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Facultad de Educación. (2022). *Guía de investigación descriptiva*. <https://files.pucp.education/facultad/educacion/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/28145648/GUIA-INVESTIGACION-DESCRIPTIVA-20221.pdf>
- Razo, A. E. (2016). Tiempo de aprender: El aprovechamiento de los periodos en el aula. *Revista mexicana de investigación educativa*, 21(69), 611–639. [http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1405-66662016000200611&lng=es&tlng=es](http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1405-66662016000200611&lng=es&tlng=es)
- Torres, A. M. (2024). Fortalecimiento institucional y desarrollo local: revisión y perspectivas de las políticas públicas en municipios de quinta y sexta categoría en Colombia. *European Public & Social Innovation Review*, 10, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.31637/epsir-2025-1154>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Informe de Seguimiento de la Educación en el Mundo 2021/2022*. <https://gem-report-2021.unesco.org/es/>
- UNESCO. (2024). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/futures-education>
- Valle, A., Manrique, L., & Revilla, D. (2022). *La investigación descriptiva con enfoque cualitativo en educación*. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Facultad de Educación. <https://repositorio.pucp.edu.pe/index/handle/123456789/184559>

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest.

### **Author contributions**

Nelson R. Rosario- Cordero: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, drafting the original manuscript and writing, review, and editing.

### **Data availability statement**

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### **Statement on the use of AI**

The author acknowledges the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve the readability and clarity of the article.

### **Disclaimer/Editor's note**

The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual authors and contributors and not of *Journal of Law and Epistemic Studies*.

*Journal of Law and Epistemic Studies* and/or the editors disclaim any responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products mentioned in the content.