

Policy for the Implementation of Full-Time Schools: An Analysis of the Performance of Ceará Students in the Saeb in 2013 and 2021

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Área 2 - Desenvolvimento e Microeconomia Aplicada

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Abstract

This study examines the academic performance gap between students attending full-time high schools and traditional schools within the educational context of Ceará, Brazil, a pioneer in full-time schooling policies. Based on data from the Brazilian System for the Evaluation of Basic Education (Saeb) for 2013 and 2021, we employ the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition method to disentangle performance disparities between these groups. Descriptive results indicate that full-time high school students consistently outperform their peers in traditional schools in both Portuguese and mathematics throughout the study period. The Oaxaca-Blinder results reveal a positive performance differential favoring full-time students, with gains of 18.31% in mathematics and 16.53% in Portuguese in 2013, and 17.96% and 16.81% in 2021, respectively. These findings highlight the role of observable factors—such as access to technology and parental education—and suggest broader implications for educational policy in reducing inequalities, providing insights for other developing regions.

Keywords: Academic performance, Ceará, Oaxaca-Blinder, full-time education, educational policy.

Resumo

Resumo

Este estudo examina a lacuna de desempenho acadêmico entre estudantes de escolas de ensino médio em tempo integral e escolas tradicionais no contexto educacional do Ceará, Brasil, estado pioneiro em políticas de escolarização em tempo integral. Com base nos dados do Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica (Saeb) referentes a 2013 e 2021, empregamos o método de decomposição Oaxaca-Blinder para identificar e analisar as disparidades de desempenho entre esses grupos. Os resultados descritivos indicam que os alunos das escolas de tempo integral superaram de forma consistente seus pares das escolas tradicionais, tanto em Língua Portuguesa quanto em Matemática, ao longo de todo o período analisado. Os resultados da decomposição Oaxaca-Blinder revelam um diferencial positivo de desempenho em favor dos estudantes de tempo integral, com ganhos de 18,31% em Matemática e 16,53% em Língua Portuguesa em 2013, e de 17,96% e 16,81%, respectivamente, em 2021. Esses achados ressaltam o papel de fatores observáveis — como acesso à tecnologia e escolaridade dos pais — e sugerem implicações mais amplas para políticas educacionais voltadas à redução de desigualdades, oferecendo subsídios relevantes para outras regiões em desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave: Desempenho acadêmico; Ceará; Oaxaca-Blinder; educação em tempo integral; política educacional.

1 Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar of human development and socioeconomic progress, with widely recognized effects on both individual and collective growth (Becker, 1964). In Brazil, the 1988 Constitution marked a turning point in educational policies by prioritizing universal access and quality education—challenges that persist in many developing countries facing structural inequalities. In this context, full-time schools have emerged as a promising strategy for expanding learning opportunities and mitigating educational disparities, a topic of growing global interest (OECD, 2017). In Ceará, a

pioneer in implementing this model in Brazil, the expansion of full-time schools since 2008 provides a unique laboratory for assessing their impacts, with potential lessons for other regions operating within resource-limited contexts.

The full-time education policy in Brazil gained momentum with the federal program *Mais Educação*, launched in 2007 and regulated by Decree No. 7,083/10, aiming to extend the school day to at least seven hours, integrating complementary activities such as academic reinforcement, sports, and arts. In Ceará, this approach was adapted for high school education, combining the traditional curriculum with technical and socio-emotional training, reaching more than 70% of state schools by 2023 (Seduc, 2023). While empirical Brazilian literature, such as studies by Xerxenevsky (2012) and Galvão (2023), suggests positive effects on academic performance, the underlying mechanisms behind these gains remain underexplored, particularly in longitudinal comparisons. Internationally, extended-time disciplines have shown mixed results, with evidence indicating that success depends on factors such as pedagogical quality and resource availability (Rivkin et al., 2005; Duflo et al., 2011).

In light of this, the present study investigates whether full-time schools generate superior performance differentials compared to traditional schools in Ceará, analyzing high school students' Portuguese and mathematics scores in 2013 and 2021 based on data from the Brazilian System for the Evaluation of Basic Education (Saeb). Using the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, we aim to distinguish the effects of observable characteristics (e.g., technology access and parental schooling) from unobservable factors, complementing approaches such as Difference-in-Differences, which are prevalent in the literature. The study period is justified by the initial availability of integrated school data in 2013 and the most recent update in 2021, allowing a temporal perspective on this policy. Thus, the objective is to contribute to the understanding of full-time education's impacts, providing evidence to inform educational policies in Brazil and other global contexts that focus on educational equity.

Beyond this introduction, the article is structured into six sections. The second and third sections review the literature on full-time education and academic performance. The fourth details the methodology. The fifth presents the results and discussion, followed by the final considerations.

2 Full-Time Education in Ceará

The origins of this education model in Brazil trace back to the early 20th century, when the first movements emerged advocating for an education focused on the holistic development of children and young people (Pereira et al., 2023). In 1950, the full-time education model was conceived in Brazil by educator Anísio Teixeira in Salvador, Bahia, with the establishment of the Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro, also known as Escola Parque. This initiative aimed to provide extended education hours for the children of workers, seeking to promote comprehensive student development (Júnior, 2022).

Overview of Ceará's Full-Time Education Model

Based on the Ceará State Education Secretariat (Seduc), the full-time education model, known as Ensino Médio em Tempo Integral, is a cornerstone of the state's educational policy, launched in 2008 to enhance academic outcomes and address socioeconomic challenges. The model extends the school day to a minimum of seven hours (typically 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM), compared to four hours in traditional high schools, and integrates academic, vocational, and socio-emotional components to foster holistic student development.

The model comprises several key elements. First, the extended school day allows for in-depth coverage of core subjects (e.g., Portuguese, Mathematics, Sciences) aligned with Brazil's National Common Core Curriculum, supplemented by elective courses and

extracurricular activities. Second, vocational training is a hallmark, with 131 state vocational schools offering technical-level courses in fields like Information Technology, Nursing, Tourism Guide, and Occupational Safety by 2023 (Seduc, 2023). These courses enable students to earn a professional certification alongside their high school diploma, addressing regional economic needs. Third, socio-emotional learning is embedded through workshops on leadership, teamwork, and resilience, aimed at reducing dropout rates and enhancing motivation. The pedagogical approach emphasizes active learning methodologies, such as problem-based learning and collaborative projects, supported by specialized facilities (e.g., computer labs, vocational workshops) and continuous teacher training (Seduc, 2023).

Compared to traditional schools, which focus on core academics with limited resources, full-time schools benefit from targeted investments in infrastructure, technology, and teacher development. This model aligns with Brazil’s Mais Educação program (Decree No. 7,083/10) but is tailored to Ceará’s high school context, emphasizing technical education and regional relevance. By 2023, the model served over 140,000 students across 165 municipalities, covering more than 70% of the state’s public high school network (Falcão, 2023).

Table 1 The implementation timeline reflects steady expansion

Year	Milestone	Coverage
2008	Launch of 25 vocational full-time schools	20 municipalities, ~5,000 students
2013	Expansion to 50+ full-time schools	50 municipalities
2021	341 full-time high schools, 131 vocational schools	165 municipalities, 140,000 students
2023	Consolidation with rural expansion and teacher training	70% of state high schools

Source: Seduc (2023).

Integral Education is founded on a broad principle that connects multiple dimensions, including human vision, school, curriculum, teaching methods, society, and the different stages of basic education. This approach seeks to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge and integrate it into social practice and daily life (Brasil, 2023).

3 Academic Performance in the Full-Time Education Model

The expansion of school time as a strategy to improve student performance has been widely debated in the educational literature, both in Brazil and internationally. Empirical Brazilian studies, such as those by Xerxenevsky (2012), Granda (2017), Fernandes et al. (2017), and Galvão (2023), have investigated the impacts of full-time schools, often using impact assessment methods such as Difference-in-Differences (DiD) combined with Propensity Score Matching (PSM). These studies reveal a heterogeneous landscape: while some identify positive effects on Portuguese and mathematics performance (e.g., Fernandes et al., 2017; Galvão, 2023), others point to null or negative impacts, especially in contexts of recent or prolonged implementation (e.g., Granda, 2017). Xerxenevsky (2012), for instance, found gains in Portuguese in the fourth grade in Rio Grande do Sul but negative results in mathematics, indicating that policy success depends on contextual factors and exposure time.

Internationally, the literature on extended school hours also presents mixed results. Studies such as Rivkin et al. (2005) in the United States emphasize that academic gains are more strongly associated with teaching quality than with mere time extension, while Duflo et al. (2011) demonstrate, through experiments in Kenya, that structured

educational programs can improve performance when combined with adequate resources. These global findings underscore the necessity of investigating not only aggregate effects but also the underlying mechanisms driving performance differentials, a gap still scarcely explored in the Brazilian context.

In Brazil, analyses of full-time education have focused on causal impacts but have rarely addressed disparities between student groups, such as full-time versus traditional schools. Fernandes and Justo (2018), for example, confirmed the superior performance of Pernambuco students using PSM but did not explore the role of specific student or teacher characteristics. Similarly, Miranda et al. (2017) suggested that factors such as teacher dedication influenced outcomes in São Paulo but warned that increasing school time alone does not guarantee meaningful learning. This lack of consensus and the emphasis on causal methods leave room for alternative approaches, such as the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, which allows for distinguishing explained effects (e.g., access to technology, parental education) from unexplained ones (e.g., teaching quality, motivation).

Thus, although the literature indicates that full-time education can improve academic performance, its effects vary according to context, implementation, and available resources. Brazilian studies often lack a longitudinal perspective and a detailed analysis of the factors driving observed differentials—gaps that this research aims to address. By focusing on Ceará between 2013 and 2021, this study complements existing literature by exploring not only whether full-time education generates better results but also how and why these differences occur, offering relevant insights both locally and for global debates on school time policies.

Components of Full-Time Education and Their Impacts

The full-time education model implemented in Ceará integrates extended school hours, vocational training, and socioemotional development activities. International studies, such as Duflo et al. (2011), indicate that extended instructional time can improve academic outcomes when paired with high-quality pedagogy, though results vary depending on context. Vocational training, as emphasized by Patrinos and Angrist (2018), enhances human capital by preparing students for entry into the labor market—a fundamental feature of the model adopted in Ceará. Socioemotional learning, increasingly emphasized in global education policies (OECD, 2017), fosters resilience and student engagement, potentially explaining observed performance gains. The control variables employed in this study—such as parental education (Curi & Menezes-Filho, 2009), access to technology (OECD, 2021), and teacher experience (Rivkin et al., 2005)—were selected based on their established influence on academic achievement, capturing both student- and school-level factors.

4 Methodology

To analyze the differences in academic performance between students in full-time and traditional high schools in Ceará, this study adopts the Oaxaca-Blinder model (Oaxaca, 1973; Blinder, 1973), a widely used econometric technique for investigating disparities between groups. Unlike causal methods such as Difference-in-Differences (DiD) or Propensity Score Matching (PSM), which are common in Brazilian literature on full-time education (e.g., Xerxenevsky, 2012; Galvão, 2023), the Oaxaca-Blinder model decomposes the average score difference into two components: the "explained effect," attributed to observable characteristics (e.g., access to computers, parental education), and the "unexplained effect," associated with various unobservable factors (e.g., teaching quality). This approach is particularly suited to the objective of this study, as it provides a complementary perspective on the underlying mechanisms of performance differentials, going beyond the identification of aggregate impacts.

The modeling is based on studies of separate Mincerian equations for the two groups—traditional (T) and full-time (I)—expressed as follows:

$$\ln \ln Y_T = \beta_T X_T + u_T \quad (1)$$

$$\ln \ln Y_I = \beta_I X_I + u_I \quad (2)$$

Where $\ln Y$ represents the natural logarithm of academic performance, β_T and β_I are the parameters to be estimated, X_i represents a vector of student, family, teacher, and school characteristics; the subscripts T and I denote the two groups being compared, and u_i is the random error term. Decomposing the differential yields the following equation:

$$\ln \ln Y_T - \ln \ln Y_I = (\bar{X}_T - \bar{X}_I) \hat{\beta}_I + \bar{X}_T (\hat{\beta}_T - \hat{\beta}_I) \quad (3)$$

Equation (3) identifies the total academic performance differential between the two student groups, T and I. The total differential is decomposed into two components: the expression $(\bar{X}_T - \bar{X}_I) \hat{\beta}_I$ captures the performance differential due to the "endowment effect" or "explained effect," while the term $\bar{X}_T (\hat{\beta}_T - \hat{\beta}_I)$ represents the differential attributed to the "unexplained effect."

Longitudinal Analysis Approach

To examine the evolution of performance differentials, the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition was applied separately to the 2013 and 2021 Saeb datasets. This cross-sectional strategy enables the comparison of performance gaps between full-time and traditional high school students at two distinct points in time, capturing changes associated with the expansion of Ceará's full-time education policy. Separate estimations were chosen instead of a pooled model to avoid imposing assumptions regarding the stability of coefficients over time, given the substantial scale-up of the policy between 2013 and 2021 (Seduc, 2023).

Table 2: Description of Characteristics, 2021

Variables	Variable Description
Dependent Variable	-
Ln_proficiency_lp_saeb	Logarithm of Portuguese scores
Ln_proficiency_mt_saeb	Logarithm of Mathematics scores
Explanatory Variables	-
Student Characteristics	-
Gender	Dummy variable for student's gender: male = 1, female = 0
Race_color_student	Dummy for student's race or ethnicity: white (white and yellow) = 1, non-white (mixed, black, indigenous) = 0
Computer	Dummy for number of computers at home: one or more = 1, none = 0
Internet	Dummy for internet access at home: yes = 1, no = 0
Location	Dummy: urban = 1, rural = 0
Repeated_grade	Dummy for past grade repetition: yes = 1, no = 0
Dropped_out	Dummy for previous school dropout: yes = 1, no = 0
Family Characteristics	-
Mother's education	Dummy variables for mother's education level: primary education = 1, otherwise = 0; secondary education = 1, otherwise = 0; higher education = 1, otherwise = 0
Father's education	Dummy variables for father's education level: primary education = 1, otherwise = 0; secondary education = 1, otherwise = 0; higher education = 1, otherwise = 0
Mother's education	

Father's education	Dummy variables for mother's education level: primary education = 1, otherwise = 0; secondary education = 1, otherwise = 0; higher education = 1, otherwise = 0 Dummy variables for father's education level: primary education = 1, otherwise = 0; secondary education = 1, otherwise = 0; higher education = 1, otherwise = 0
Teacher Characteristics	-
Teacher gender	Teacher's gender: male = 1, female = 0
Teacher race	Teacher's race or ethnicity: white = 1, non-white = 0
Teaching experience	Years of teaching experience: 0–2 years = 1, otherwise = 0; 3–10 years = 1, otherwise = 0; 11 or more years = 1, otherwise = 0
Income 1	From R\$ 0 to R\$ 3,300
Income 2	From R\$ 3,300.01 to R\$ 6,600
Income 3	Above R\$ 6,600.01
Teacher gender	Teacher's gender: male = 1, female = 0
Teacher race	Teacher's race or ethnicity: white = 1, non-white = 0
School Characteristics ¹	-
Students_per_class	Number of students per class

Source: Own elaboration based on Saeb (2021) data.

Control variables were selected based on reflective factors associated with academic performance in the literature (Curi & Menezes-Filho, 2009). Student characteristics include gender, race/color (categorized as white or non-white to simplify racial analysis), access to a computer and the internet, location (urban/rural), and history of grade repetition or school dropout. Parental education was divided into three levels (primary, secondary, and higher education), while teacher characteristics encompass gender, race, experience (categorized into 0–2, 3–10, and 11+ years, based on commonly used thresholds in educational studies), and employment contract type. The selection of these categories aims to capture relevant variations without overloading the model, although robustness tests with alternative specifications (e.g., continuous experience) were conducted and are available upon request.

Data Construction and Variables

This study draws on data from the Brazilian Basic Education Assessment System (Saeb), a nationwide standardized assessment administered by Brazil's Ministry of Education to evaluate student performance in Portuguese and Mathematics. Data from 2013 and 2021 were selected to capture the evolution of Ceará's full-time education policy, comprising sample sizes of 3,028 and 92,950 students, respectively. Saeb tests are standardized and administered to upper secondary students in 9th and 12th grades, with scores reported on a continuous scale ranging from 0 to 500. Full-time schools are identified in the dataset based on reported instructional hours (≥ 7 hours/day) and participation in vocational programs, whereas traditional schools typically operate 4–5 hours per day.

Student characteristics (e.g., gender, race, access to technology) are self-reported through Saeb questionnaires; teacher characteristics (e.g., experience, contract type) are provided by educators; and school-level variables (e.g., students per class) are reported

¹ Although the school's characteristics (School library, Computer lab, Science lab, Internet for student use, Computer for student use and Cafeteria) are important for this analysis, it was not possible to add the information from the census to the Saeb database. The school code (school_id) is different in both databases.

by school administrators. Students are matched to teachers and schools using hierarchical identifiers embedded in the Saeb dataset. Missing data were handled via listwise deletion, with robustness checks confirming minimal impact on the results (available upon request).

4.1 Methodological Limitations

Although the Oaxaca-Blinder model is robust for assessing performance differentials, its application in this study presents limitations. The absence of randomization in student allocation between full-time and traditional schools may introduce selection bias, as factors such as family motivation or local enrollment policies are not fully controlled. Additionally, the endogeneity of variables such as technology access or teaching experience—specifically correlated with unobservable school characteristics—may affect the estimates.

To mitigate these issues, the model includes a broad set of control variables, but instrumental variables or more detailed longitudinal data could further strengthen causal identification in future research. These limitations are inherent to observational studies and do not invalidate the results but suggest caution in interpreting the unexplained effect as definitive evidence of discrimination or differential quality.

5 Results and Discussion

This section is structured into two subsections. The first presents the descriptive statistics of the variables considered in this study. The second analyzes the econometric results of the Oaxaca-Blinder model.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

This subsection presents the descriptive statistics of the variables analyzed. Tables 3 and 3 provide information on the characteristics of students, their parents, teachers, and schools for the years 2013 and 2021.

The results presented in Table 3 reflect the comparisons between Traditional and Full-Time High Schools in 2013. Regarding student performance in Portuguese and Mathematics, students in Full-Time High Schools exhibited higher average scores in both subjects compared to those in Traditional High Schools, suggesting that full-time education may be associated with improved academic outcomes in these disciplines.

Regarding the proportion of students by gender, in both traditional and full-time models, the proportion of female students was higher than that of male students, standing at 58.83% and 60.14%, respectively. In terms of race/color, the proportion of non-white students exceeded that of white students in both educational models, with 77.12% in Traditional Schools and 74.84% in Full-Time Schools.

Regarding student location, all Full-Time School students were from urban areas, whereas a small percentage of Traditional School students (5.52%) came from rural areas, reflecting limited access to full-time education in rural regions.

As for the number of computers at home, a higher proportion of Full-Time School students had access to computers and the internet compared to those in Traditional Schools, which may positively influence academic performance by providing additional educational resources.

Regarding grade repetition, the proportion of students who had never repeated a grade was significantly higher in Full-Time Schools, at 88.21%, compared to 64.83% in Traditional Schools. Regarding school retention, the percentage of students who had never dropped out was 87.98% in Traditional High Schools and 97.84% in Full-Time High Schools.

In terms of parental education, the proportion of mothers (and fathers) with higher education degrees was higher among Full-Time High School students, reaching 37.09%, compared to 20.13% in Traditional Schools.

Examining teacher characteristics, the years of experience—specifically in the 3 to 10-year range—were higher in Full-Time Schools. Regarding employment contracts, the proportion of tenured teachers was higher in Full-Time Schools, at 34.20% compared to 29.93% in Traditional Schools. In terms of salary ranges, the majority of teachers in both Traditional and Full-Time Schools fell within Income Level 2 (R\$ 3,300.01 to R\$ 6,600.00), an indicator that may positively contribute to student performance.

Based on school characteristics, the average number of students per class was lower in Traditional Schools, with 34 students per class, compared to Full-Time Schools, which had an average of 35 students per class.

Table 3 – Profile of Students, Families, Teachers, and Schools in Traditional and Full-Time High Schools in Ceará, 2013

Variable (2013)	Category	Traditional High School		Full-Time High School	
Dependent variables	-	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Portuguese Proficiency	Mean	247,86*	47,84	287,51*	47,06
Mathematics Proficiency	Mean	251,73*	45,91	297,74*	51,36
Logarithm of Portuguese Score	Mean	5,49*	0,20	5,65*	0,18
Logarithm of Mathematics Score	Mean	5,51*	0,18	5,68*	0,18
Explanatory Variables		N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	879	41,17%	275	39,86%
	Female	1256	58,83%	415	60,14%
Race or Color	White	455	22,88%	157	25,16%
	Non-White	1.534	77,12%	467	74,84%
Location	Urban	3.183	94,48%	1058	100,00%
	Rural	186	5,52%	0	0,00%
Computer / Internet Access	Yes	844	36,89%	499	69,99%
	No	1444	63,11%	214	30,01%
Grade Repetition	Yes	772	35,17%	83	11,79%
	No	1.423	64,83%	621	88,21%
School Dropout	Yes	266	12,02%	15	2,16%
	No	1.947	87,98%	681	97,84%

Mother's Education	Primary	1.257	66,40%	275	43,04%
	Secondary	255	13,47%	127	19,87%
	Higher	381	20,13%	237	37,09%
Father's Education	Primary	1.383	74,96%	309	50,99%
	Secondary	222	12,03%	106	17,49%
	Higher	240	13,01%	191	31,52%
Teacher Characteristics		N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	1.557	59,31%	517	71,41%
	Female	1.068	40,69%	207	28,59%
Race or Color	White	940	32,82%	135	17,29%
	Non-White	1.924	67,18%	646	82,71%
Experience	0 to 2 years	473	15,12%	2	0,22%
	3 to 10 years	1.315	36,99%	758	63,64%
	11+ years	1340	30,83%	129	13,10%
Employment Status	Tenured	900	29,93%	304	34,20%
	Temporary Contract	2.106	70,04%	552	62,09%
	CLT Contract	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
	Other	1	0,03%	33	3,71%
Gross Salary as Teacher	Income 1	643	21,80%	62	7,57%
	Income 2	1.614	54,73%	438	53,48%
	Income 3	692	23,47%	319	38,95%
School Characteristics		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Number of Students per Class	Mean	34,28	5,96	35,33	7,5

Source: Own elaboration based on Saeb (2013) data.

Notes: A mean comparison test was performed between students in traditional and full-time schools: * indicates that the mean difference between the two student groups is statistically significant ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$)

Table 4 presents the analysis comparing Traditional and Full-Time High Schools in the year 2021. Among the key results from Table 3, students in full-time schools exhibited higher academic performance in Portuguese and Mathematics compared to

those in traditional high schools. This difference was statistically significant based on the mean test.

Examining the proportion of male and female students, in both traditional and full-time education models, the proportion of female students (51.84% and 56.82%, respectively) was higher than that of male students. Regarding race/color, the proportion of non-white students (74.72% and 70.03%, respectively) exceeded that of white students in both educational models.

Regarding access to computers at home, 71.87% of traditional school students reported having one or more computers at home, while in full-time schools, 51.80% of students reported the same. Regarding internet access at home, the majority of students in both traditional and full-time schools (86% and 92.36%, respectively) reported having internet access.

Concerning grade repetition, the proportion of students who had never repeated a grade was higher in full-time schools (92.10%) compared to traditional schools (71.79%). Regarding school retention, in traditional high schools, this percentage was 88.30%, while in full-time schools, it was 98.03%.

Based on student family characteristics, it is noteworthy that the proportion of mothers (and fathers) with higher education degrees was higher among full-time high school students (15.35%) compared to traditional school students (8.95%). Curi and Menezes-Filho (2009) highlight that parental education levels are directly related to their children's academic performance—that is, the higher the parents' education level, the better the students tend to perform academically.

Examining teacher characteristics, work experience (i.e., years of experience as a teacher) was higher for full-time education, particularly in the 3 to 10-year experience range. Regarding employment contracts, the proportion of tenured teachers was high in both models—60.39% in traditional schools and 60.26% in full-time schools. In terms of salary ranges, the largest number of observations for both traditional and full-time education falls within Income Level 2 (R\$ 3,300.01 to R\$ 6,600.00). These factors tend to contribute positively to improved student performance.

Based on school characteristics, the average number of students per class in traditional schools was lower (39 students) compared to full-time schools (41 students).
Table 4 – Profile of Students, Families, Teachers, and Schools in Traditional and Full-Time High Schools in Ceará, 2021

Variable (2013)	Category	Traditional School	High School	Full-Time School	High School
Dependent variables	-	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Portuguese Proficiency	Mean	270,64*	48,71	313,74*	40,95
Mathematics Proficiency	Mean	263,88*	49,46	309,57*	47,72
Logarithm of Portuguese Score	Mean	5,58*	0,19	5,74*	0,14
Logarithm of Mathematics Score	Mean	5,56*	0,19	5,72*	0,16
Explanatory Variables		N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	34.655	48,16	7.588	43,18
	Female	37.305	51,84	9.983	56,82
Race or Color	White	18.105	25,28	5.251	29,97

Location	Non-White	53.518	74,72	12.267	70,03
	Urban	82.564	94,17	19.151	94,18
	Rural	5.111	5,83	1.183	5,82
Computer / Internet Access	Yes	62.077	86	16.456	92,36
	No	10.107	14	1.362	7,64
Grade Repetition	Yes	44.017	71,87	7.935	51,8
	No	17.225	28,13	7.384	48,2
School Dropout	Yes	20.485	28,21	1.404	7,9
	No	52.137	71,79	16.363	92,1
Mother's Education	Primary	8.500	11,7	349	1,97
	Secondary	64.165	88,3	17.407	98,03
Father's Education	Higher	33.508	58,67	7.439	46,23
	Primary	18.498	32,39	6.184	38,43
	Secondary	5.109	8,95	2.470	15,35
Teacher Characteristics		N	%	N	%
Race or Color	White	14.465	50,67	2.347	40,04
	Non-White	14.085	49,33	3.515	59,96
Experience	0 to 2 years	9.325	32,69	1.583	27,83
	3 to 10 years	19.204	67,31	4.105	72,17
	11+ years	238	0,91%	168	5,19
Employment Status	Tenured	10.276	62,37	2.027	79,16
	Temporary Contract	15.559	28,88	3.510	12,88
	CLT Contract	16.839	60,39%	3.530	60,26%
Gross Salary as Teacher	Other	11.038	39,58%	2.199	37,54%
	Income 1	4	0,01%	0	0,00%
	Income 2	4	0,01%	129	2,20%
School Characteristics		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Students_per_class	Mean	38,75	7,24	40,66	5,3

Source: Own elaboration based on Saeb (2021) data

Notes: A mean comparison test was performed between students in traditional and full-time schools: * indicates that the mean difference between the two student groups is statistically significant (p-value < 0.05).

5.2 Results of the Oaxaca-Blinder Model

The results in Table 5 highlight the academic performance differential between students in Traditional and Full-Time High Schools in 2013. For this analysis, the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition method was used. The selected model divides the results into two components: the explained part (which considers observable characteristics such as internet access at home and parental education level) and the unexplained component (which includes unobservable characteristics such as student race and gender).

Table 5 shows that students in Full-Time High Schools had a mean logarithm score for Mathematics of 5.6809, compared to 5.5129 for students in Traditional High Schools. This difference represents a performance differential of 0.1681 (or 18.31%) in favor of Full-Time School students.

Considering the logarithm of performance in Portuguese, Full-Time School students had a mean score of 5.6465, while students in Traditional High Schools presented a mean score of 5.4935. This result also revealed an academic performance differential of 0.1530 (or 16.53%) benefiting Full-Time School students.

The explained effect is statistically significant and presents a positive sign, indicating that differences in observable characteristics between the two student groups influence academic performance by 0.0827 (or 8.62%). The unexplained effect also contributes to the performance gap by 0.0853 (or 8.90%).

Regarding the explained effect for the logarithm of Portuguese scores, the coefficient was not statistically significant, suggesting that observable characteristics did not account for the difference in Portuguese scores between the two groups.

The unexplained effect, which accounts for 8.90% of the differential in Mathematics and 11.78% in Portuguese in 2013, and 13.25% and 12.23% in 2021, points to intangible factors beyond those captured by Saeb variables. Recent studies, such as Glewwe and Muralidharan (2019), suggest that teaching quality—including the use of active methodologies and teacher engagement—is a critical determinant of performance in extended school time contexts, particularly in developing countries. In Ceará, this may reflect the emphasis on continuous teacher training (Seduc, 2023), though variables such as school climate and student motivation remain unexplored.

Table 5 – Academic Performance Differentials Between Full-Time and Traditional High Schools, 2013 and 2021

Variable	2013 (Math)	2021 (Math)	2013 (Portuguese)	2021 (Portuguese)
Full-Time High School Mean	5.6809*	5.7226*	5.6465*	5.7391*
Traditional High School Mean	5.5129*	5.5574*	5.4935*	5.5837*
Difference (%)	0.1681* (18.31%)	0.1652* (17.96%)	0.1530* (16.53%)	0.1554* (16.81%)
Explained Effect	0.0827*	0.0320*	0.0416	0.0329*
Unexplained Effect	0.0853*	0.1332*	0.1114	0.1225*

Source: Own elaboration based on Saeb (2013, 2021) data.

Note: Standard errors in parentheses (available in detailed tables). *p < 0.05.

Table 6 presents the detailed coefficients of the explained effect (year 2013). It is observed that students with access to a computer at home show higher performance in Portuguese (1.12%) in favor of Full-Time School students. Additionally, students who have never repeated a grade present a significant and positive coefficient, indicating that maintaining a history of academic progression without grade repetition is associated with better school performance, benefiting Full-Time School students.

Teachers with 3 to 10 years of experience, compared to those with up to two years of experience, have a positive impact on students' Mathematics performance (14.60%), favoring Full-Time School students. The coefficient for the income range of R\$ 6,600.01 or more was positive and statistically significant. This result suggests that teachers in this income bracket, compared to those earning up to R\$ 3,300.00, are positively associated with improvements in Full-Time School students' academic performance (by 0.74%).

Table 6 – Explained and Unexplained Effects, 2013

Explained Effect	Coefficient	SD	Coefficients	SD
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s				
Female		-0,0028	(0,0017)	0,0001 (0,0005)
Black, Mixed-Race, and Indigenous		0,0004	(0,0008)	0,0004 (0,0008)
Mother's Education	Secondary	0,0008	(0,0012)	0,0002 (0,0012)
Mother's Education	Higher	0,0042	(0,0025)	-0,0036 (0,0025)
Father's Education	Secondary	0,0006	(0,0010)	0,0022 (0,0012)
Father's Education	Higher	0,0013	(0,0025)	-0,0001 (0,0025)
Computer Access		0,0062	(0,0044)	0,0111* (0,0046)
No School Dropout		-0,0033	(0,0026)	-0,0040 (0,0027)
Never Repeated a Grade		0,0202*	(0,0047)	0,0242* (0,0048)
Teacher Experience (3-10 years)		0,1363*	(0,0547)	0,0325 (0,0556)
Teacher Experience (11+ years)		-0,1000*	(0,0361)	-0,0349 (0,0364)
Income Level 2		0,0091	(0,0063)	0,0116 (0,0065)
Income Level 3		0,0074*	(0,0030)	0,0044 (0,0029)
Tenured Teacher		0,0044	(0,0023)	0,0037 (0,0020)
Students per Class		-0,0022	(0,0017)	-0,0061* (0,0021)
Unexplained Effect		Coefficient s	SDerror	Coefficients SD
Female		-0,0196*	(0,0077)	-0,0279* (0,0080)
Black, Mixed-Race, and Indigenous		-0,0286*	(0,0096)	-0,0191 (0,0100)
Mother's Education	Secondary	-0,0013	(0,0023)	-0,0008 (0,0024)
Mother's Education	Higher	-0,0028	(0,0030)	-0,0081* (0,0032)
Father's Education	Secondary	-0,0010	(0,0021)	-0,0001 (0,0022)
Father's Education	Higher	0,0013	(0,0020)	-0,0025 (0,0022)
Computer Access		-0,0045	(0,0056)	0,0001 (0,0058)
No School Dropout		-0,0328	(0,0227)	-0,0268 (0,0234)
Never Repeated a Grade		0,0024	(0,0119)	0,0067 (0,0123)
Teacher Experience (3-10 years)		0,1295*	(0,0472)	0,0454 (0,0481)
Teacher Experience (11+ years)		0,1549*	(0,0522)	0,0640 (0,0532)
Income Level 2		0,0056	(0,0094)	0,0092 (0,0097)
Income Level 3		-0,0212*	(0,0085)	-0,0158 (0,0087)
Tenured Teacher		0,0226*	(0,0060)	0,0235* (0,0063)
Students per Class		0,0325	(0,0471)	0,1638* (0,0486)
Constant		-0,1518	(0,1219)	-0,1002 (0,1248)
N		3028		3028

Source: Own elaboration based on Saeb (2013) data.
Notes: (a) Standard errors in parentheses and (b) * indicates $p\text{-value} < 0.05$.

Based on the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, the results in Table 5 report the academic performance differential between students in Traditional and Full-Time High Schools for 2021. It is observed that Full-Time High School students had an average logarithm score for Mathematics of 5.7226, while Traditional High School students had an average of 5.5574. The academic performance differential was 0.1652 (or 17.96%) in favor of Full-Time School students.

Considering the average logarithm of performance in Portuguese (Table 5), Full-Time School students had an average score of 5.7391, while students in Traditional High Schools had an average of 5.5837. The academic performance differential was 0.1554 (or 16.81%) in favor of Full-Time School students.

The explained effect (Table 5) is statistically significant, with a positive coefficient in Mathematics (0.0320) and Portuguese (0.0329). This positive effect contributes to increasing the disparity in performance between Traditional and Full-Time School students. Therefore, the characteristic effect reflects the average increase in the logarithm of academic performance that Traditional School students would have if they possessed the same characteristics as Full-Time School students.

The evolution of differentials between 2013 and 2021—a decline from 18.31% to 17.96% in Mathematics and an increase from 16.53% to 16.81% in Portuguese—may be influenced by changes in the scale of Ceará's policy, which expanded from 25 to 341 schools by 2023 (Seduc, 2023). According to the OECD (2021), the impact of extended school time varies with implementation quality, and resource dilution in rapid expansions may reduce gains in subjects like Mathematics, which require greater investment in teaching materials. Conversely, the slight increase in Portuguese may indicate the resilience of the full-time education model in response to disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting local adaptations that warrant further investigation. These results align with Fernandes and Justo (2024), who, in evaluating the full-time education program in Pernambuco between 2009 and 2016 using ENEM data, also identified positive performance differentials, reinforcing the robustness of this model in Brazilian state contexts.

The comparison between 2013 and 2021 reveals a decline in the performance differential for Mathematics (from 18.31% to 17.96%), contrasting with a slight increase in Portuguese (from 16.53% to 16.81%). This variation may reflect changes in the implementation of Ceará's full-time education policy, such as the expansion from 25 schools in 2008 to 341 by 2023, potentially diluting resources or altering the student profile (Seduc, 2023). Alternatively, external factors such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 may have affected subjects differently, with Portuguese benefiting more from strengthened in-person activities in the full-time model.

Table 7 presents the detailed decomposition of explained and unexplained components for Traditional and Full-Time High Schools in 2021. Providing a detailed coefficient analysis, the variable related to students who have never repeated a grade accounts for the largest share of the characteristic effect on the academic performance differential concerning the natural logarithm of Mathematics and Portuguese scores, with effects of 2.28% and 1.98%, respectively.

Regarding the impact of parental education, students in Full-Time Schools whose mothers have higher education degrees exhibit better academic performance in both Mathematics and Portuguese (0.18% and 0.10%, respectively) compared to students in

Traditional Schools. This underscores the importance of parental education levels in students' academic achievements, as highlighted by Curi and Menezes-Filho (2009).

The effect of Full-Time School students having a computer at home is positive for Mathematics and Portuguese performance compared to Traditional School students with similar characteristics.

Regarding the detailed effects of the unexplained component, female students in Full-Time Schools exhibit lower academic performance (-1.25% and -1.05%, respectively) compared to female students in Traditional Schools in terms of Mathematics and Portuguese scores.

Table 7 – Explained and Unexplained Effects, 2021

Explained Effect	Coefficients	SD	Coefficients	SD
Female	-0,0030*	(0,0003)	0,0008*	(0,0001)
Black, Mixed-Race, and Indigenous	0,0003*	(0,0001)	0,0006*	(0,0001)
Urban	-0,0000	(0,0001)	-0,0000	(0,0001)
Mother's Secondary Education	0,0012*	(0,0003)	0,0009*	(0,0002)
Mother's Higher Education	0,0018*	(0,0003)	0,0010*	(0,0002)
Father's Secondary Education	0,0012*	(0,0002)	0,0014*	(0,0002)
Father's Higher Education	0,0007*	(0,0001)	0,0006*	(0,0001)
Internet Access	0,0010*	(0,0003)	0,0016*	(0,0003)
Computer Access	0,0055*	(0,0004)	0,0046*	(0,0004)
No School Dropout	-0,0035*	(0,0007)	-0,0030*	(0,0006)
Never Repeated a Grade	0,0225*	(0,0009)	0,0196*	(0,0008)
Teacher Experience (3-10 years)	0,0000	(0,0001)	0,0000	(0,0001)
Teacher Experience (11+ years)	0,0000	(0,0000)	-0,0000	(0,0000)
Income Level 2	0,0000	(0,0001)	-0,0000	(0,0001)
Income Level 3	0,0005*	(0,0002)	0,0000	(0,0002)
Tenured Teacher	-0,0005*	(0,0002)	-0,0001	(0,0001)
Students per Class	0,0050*	(0,0006)	0,0051*	(0,0005)
Unexplained Effect	Coefficients	SD	Coefficients	SD
Female	-0,0126*	(0,0013)	-0,0106*	(0,0012)
Black, Mixed-Race, and Indigenous	-0,0038	(0,0020)	0,0015	(0,0018)
Urban	0,0320*	(0,0054)	0,0322*	(0,0048)
Mother's Secondary Education	-0,0031*	(0,0008)	-0,0043*	(0,0007)
Mother's Higher Education	-0,0022*	(0,0003)	-0,0028*	(0,0003)
Father's Secondary Education	-0,0002	(0,0006)	-0,0010	(0,0006)
Father's Higher Education	-0,0005*	(0,0002)	-0,0006*	(0,0002)
Internet Access	-0,0171*	(0,0037)	-0,0152*	(0,0033)

Computer Access	-0,0014*	(0,0007)	-0,0029*	(0,0006)
No School Dropout	-0,0522*	(0,0059)	-0,0430*	(0,0052)
Never Repeated a	0,0085*	(0,0031)	0,0027	(0,0028)
Grade				
Teacher Experience (3-10 years)	0,0026*	(0,0006)	0,0018*	(0,0006)
Teacher Experience (11+ years)	0,0027*	(0,0008)	-0,0001	(0,0007)
Income Level 2	-0,0072*	(0,0025)	0,0006	(0,0022)
Income Level 3	-0,0010*	(0,0003)	-0,0002	(0,0003)
Tenured Teacher	0,0075*	(0,0026)	-0,0001	(0,0023)
Students per Class	0,0687*	(0,0103)	0,0671*	(0,0092)
Constant	0,1117*	(0,0137)	0,0970*	(0,0122)
<i>N</i>	92950		92950	

Source: Own elaboration based on Saeb (2021) data.

Notes: (a) Standard errors in parentheses and (b) * indicates p-value < 0.05.

The results reflect the success of Ceará's strategy of integrating technical education and socio-emotional activities into the full-time education model, an approach that has evolved since its introduction in 2008 with 25 vocational schools (Marcelino & Justo, 2017).

The expansion to over 140,000 students across 165 municipalities by 2023 suggests that scaling up the policy could amplify its benefits, particularly in urban areas where access is greater (Falcão, 2023). These findings have implications for educational policies in similar contexts; however, the persistence of the unexplained effect highlights that the quality of implementation is as crucial as its expansion.

Ceará's experience of integrating technical and socio-emotional education since 2008 reflects a scalable model that has benefited more than 140,000 students by 2023 (Falcão, 2023). Patrinos and Angrist (2018) argue that educational policies in developing countries rely on targeted investments in human capital, reinforcing the relevance of technology access and teacher experience observed in this study. These factors indicate that full-time education can be a powerful tool for reducing inequalities, provided it is accompanied by pedagogical quality. Ceará's case offers a blueprint for other regions but requires attention to sustainability as the scale increases.

6 Final Considerations

This study analyzed the academic performance differential between students in full-time and traditional high schools in Ceará, using Saeb data for the years 2013 and 2021. The results confirm the academic superiority of students in full-time schools in Portuguese and Mathematics, with consistently positive differentials over the study period (18.31% and 16.53% in 2013; 17.96% and 16.81% in 2021, respectively). The Oaxaca-Blinder analysis revealed that both explained factors—such as technology access and parental education—and unexplained factors—likely related to pedagogical quality and school management—contributed to this advantage, underscoring the effectiveness of Ceará's full-time education model as a strategy for improving educational outcomes.

These findings have significant practical implications for policymakers. The positive impact of variables such as computer ownership suggests that investments in technological infrastructure could amplify the benefits of full-time education, particularly in contexts of inequality. Likewise, the link between teacher experience and student performance highlights the need for policies that attract and retain well-trained educators, such as the continuous training initiatives prioritized in Ceará (Seduc, 2023). However,

the persistence of the unexplained effect indicates that implementation quality—beyond merely extending school hours—is crucial, echoing international evidence that success depends on effective pedagogical practices (Rivkin et al., 2005).

Beyond the local context, these results offer lessons for developing regions facing similar educational challenges. Ceará's full-time education model, which reached over 70% of high schools in 2023, demonstrates how extended school-time policies can be scaled to mitigate disparities, provided they are accompanied by adequate resources. However, variations in differentials between 2013 and 2021 suggest that impact may be sensitive to factors such as resource dilution or external shocks (e.g., pandemic effects), necessitating continuous monitoring.

The success of Ceará's full-time education model, which reached over 70% of public high schools by 2023, offers a scalable framework for developing regions. However, policymakers must prioritize the equitable allocation of resources to avoid the dilution of benefits during rapid expansion, as suggested by the slight decline in mathematics gains (OECD, 2021). Expanding the model to rural areas—where only 5.8% of students were enrolled in 2021—requires targeted investment in infrastructure. Moreover, the resilience of Portuguese language performance in the post-COVID-19 period highlights the potential of full-time models to sustain learning continuity during crises, suggesting the incorporation of hybrid learning components. Cost-effectiveness analyses, as proposed by Patrinos and Angrist (2018), are critical to ensuring sustainability, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

To further enhance the global relevance of Ceará's full-time education model, future policy discussions should incorporate cross-country comparisons with similar extended school day programs, such as Chile's *Jornada Escolar Completa* (JEC) and Mexico's *Escuela de Tiempo Completo* (ETC). The JEC, implemented since 1997, extends school hours to improve academic outcomes and has been shown to yield modest gains in mathematics and language, particularly for disadvantaged students (Bellei, 2009, *American Educational Research Journal*). Similarly, Mexico's ETC, evaluated by Cabrera-Hernández (2020, *International Journal of Educational Development*), demonstrates positive effects on student achievement but highlights challenges in resource allocation and teacher training, echoing findings from Ceará. Comparing Ceará's model with these programs could illuminate best practices for scaling full-time education in resource-constrained settings, aligning with UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4 for equitable and quality education (UNESCO, 2015). Such cross-country analyses would provide valuable insights for policymakers in developing regions seeking to adapt extended school time models to local contexts.

Future research should explore the unobservable factors driving the unexplained effect, using qualitative data on teaching practices or controlled experiments to test hypotheses, such as the role of school climate or student motivation. Additionally, more refined longitudinal analyses incorporating instrumental variables to address selection biases could strengthen the causal identification of full-time education effects. By combining a temporal perspective with a robust econometric approach, this study contributes to the global debate on school-time policies, emphasizing the importance of strategic investments to promote equitable and high-quality education.

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