Research Article

Reasonable Time Frame in Administrative Procedures: Qualitative Evidence from Ugel Lamas, Peru

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Abstract

This study examines how reasonable time requirements operate in administrative proceedings for the recognition and payment of teachers' employment benefits at UGEL Lamas, Peru, in 2024–2025. A qualitative, basic research design informed by grounded theory combined semi-structured interviews with six lawyers and four administrative employees and documentary analysis of administrative and related judicial records. The findings distinguish the verification of entitlement, the adoption of an administrative decision and the actual execution of payment. Participants described delays associated with repeated document checks, internal coordination and pending administrative steps. The reviewed files showed that a favorable decision did not necessarily establish that payment had been made. The study concludes that assessing reasonable time requires reconstructing the sequence of each case, identifying the responsible administrative actions and evaluating their effects on the claimant. Timeliness and reasoned decision-making are complementary requirements of effective administrative protection.

Keywords. Reasonable time; administrative procedure; teachers' employment benefits; due process.

1. Introduction

The protection of economic rights derived from teaching work is not limited to the existence of a regulation that recognizes an allowance, bonus, or reimbursement. For public servants, the usefulness of such recognition also depends on the possibility of obtaining an administrative response and, when applicable, the effective fulfillment of the obligation. Between the submission of the request and the satisfaction of the right, personnel, legal counsel, administration, and budget departments may be involved. This plurality of actions, legitimate when it serves to verify the request, becomes a legal problem when the file remains stagnant or the interested party must repeatedly resort to other bodies to obtain what has already been recognized.

In the Peruvian educational sphere, disputes over bonuses, compensation, and subsidies have demonstrated that the determination of the benefit and its realization do not always occur simultaneously. The discussion regarding a reasonable timeframe allows for an examination of this interval without reducing it to a matter of administrative speed. The authority must verify the facts, apply the relevant provision, and justify its decision. But it must also prevent these requirements from becoming an endless series of procedures. A delayed response may be formally valid and yet insufficient to protect the interest at stake.

The Consolidated Text of the General Administrative Procedure Law, approved by Supreme Decree No. 004-2019-JUS, provides a framework for understanding this tension. Its principles of official initiative, expediency, efficiency, and due process are not isolated mandates. Considered together, they impose a way of handling the case file in which the examination of documents and the final decision must correspond to the purpose of the request. In particular, the duty to provide reasons does not, in itself, legitimize delay, just as the obligation to resolve promptly does not allow for dispensing with the necessary evidence.

The problem takes on added significance when it involves teaching staff claiming financial benefits whose payment could affect their family stability. This article does not presume that every request should be granted, nor that each time delay demonstrates a constitutional violation. More precisely, it asks what elements allow us to distinguish the time reasonably necessary to resolve a case from the delay attributable to the administrative organization, and what consequences this distinction has for the protection of the claimed right.

To this end, a qualitative study conducted on the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL) is revisited, and its findings are reorganized around a single analytical category: the reasonable timeframe in administrative procedures. The article's contribution lies in relating the experiences of those involved in the process to the documented sequences of specific files and the applicable legal guarantees. The analysis does not aim to establish a statistical rate of non-compliance or to attribute individual responsibilities that the available documents do not allow us to demonstrate.

The central question is how the requirement of a reasonable timeframe manifests itself in the procedures for recognizing and paying teachers' labor rights at the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL). Three

interconnected dimensions are examined: the continuity of the process, the legal assessment of the delay, and the relationship between the reasoned decision and its actual implementation. This delimitation retains the empirical evidence of the original thesis but develops an independent interpretation geared toward the discussion on the functioning of public administration.

The value of this work for innovation in public management lies in observing a procedure from its material outcome, not only from the administrative act that formally concludes it. The research provides localized evidence on the separation between recognition and compliance and proposes criteria for identifying periods of inactivity or periods requiring verification. This is a qualitative case study, and therefore its results do not describe all educational management units in Peru.

In the public policy literature, Herd and Moynihan (2018) point out that the burdens imposed during access to benefits have consequences for citizens' experiences. This perspective allows us to formulate the article's central question: what features of the administrative process hinder the effective delivery of financial compensation within a justifiable timeframe?

The literature on administrative burdens helps to differentiate between essential requirements and demands that unnecessarily prolong access to a benefit. Moynihan et al. (2015) distinguish between the learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological impacts that accompany interaction with the state. In this study, this approach is used as an interpretive framework and not as a direct measurement of such costs among teachers.

Bozeman (1993) distinguishes between rules that are useful for public activity and those that maintain requirements without contributing to its purpose. This distinction is relevant for examining whether successive reports and reviews of a file serve to verify entitlement or merely reiterate controls that have already been met.

2. Literature review and legal framework

2.1. Reasonable time frame and effective protection

Administrative procedure is a technique for forming the will of the state and, at the same time, a guarantee for the interested party. Its structure allows for the gathering of background information, the verification of requirements, the formulation of observations, and the production of a verifiable decision. Time occupies a particular position within this framework: it is a necessary resource for making a correct decision, but also a limit on the exercise of public power. If the authority indefinitely postpones its pronouncement, the procedure ceases to serve the resolution of the claim and becomes a burden for the person requesting the protection of a right.

The Political Constitution of Peru recognizes the right to petition and requires that the competent authority respond in writing within the legal timeframe, under penalty of law. This provision offers a normative starting point for demanding a response, although the examination of reasonableness is not resolved simply by noting the expiration of a deadline. A delay may stem from essential evidentiary proceedings, conduct attributable to the petitioner, or institutional inaction that is not supported by the record. The legal assessment requires distinguishing between these scenarios.

Inter-American jurisprudence has developed criteria for assessing the duration of state actions, particularly considering the complexity of the matter, the procedural activity of the interested party, the conduct of the authorities, and the impact of the delay on the person's legal standing. These guidelines, developed within the framework of judicial guarantees, offer interpretative direction for the oversight of administrative procedures, provided that the differences between the functions of an administrative authority and those of a judicial body are taken into account. They do not replace the specific rules of Peruvian procedure nor do they automatically establish a uniform timeframe for all requests.

The General Administrative Procedure Law requires that the actions of the entity be useful in resolving the matter submitted to its consideration. The principle of official action prevents transferring to the interested party the responsibility of maintaining a process active when its management is the responsibility of the authority. Expediency demands avoiding superfluous actions; efficiency guides the interpretation of formalities toward the purpose of the procedure; and due process ensures the right to present arguments, provide evidence, access the proceedings, and obtain a reasoned decision. None of these guarantees can be isolated from the others without diminishing their content.

The reasoning behind the decision plays a crucial role in monitoring time. By explaining what background information was examined, what regulation was applied, and why the request is accepted or rejected, it allows one to understand whether the actions taken responded to specific needs. A decision that merely cites a lack of budget, insufficient information, or the need for further review, without specifying the impact of these circumstances, does not allow for an adequate reconstruction of the reason for the time spent. Not every budget shortfall equates to an illegitimate delay, but neither can it be used as a generic explanation to evade the duty to act.

In the recognition of teaching benefits, it is important to distinguish three stages: verification of entitlement, quantification of the amount, and payment. Valid actions may occur at each stage, yet a gap may still exist between legal recognition and the benefit actually received. This distinction necessitates avoiding hasty conclusions: the issuance of a favorable resolution demonstrates progress, but does not in itself prove that the procedure has fully achieved its purpose. The evaluation of the timeframe must identify which stage was pending and which body was competent to carry it out.

The right to petition and the administration's duty to respond are enshrined in the Political Constitution of Peru (1993). The continuity of the process and the elimination of unnecessary actions are linked to the principles set forth in the Consolidated Text of Law No. 27444 (Presidencia de la República del Perú, 2019).

2.2. Conventional standards and assessment of reasonable time

The international framework for this analysis is found in Articles 8.1 and 25 of the American Convention on Human Rights. The first provision establishes guarantees for the determination of rights and obligations of a labor, tax, or any other nature; the second requires effective judicial remedies against human rights violations. Their joint interpretation compels us to examine not only the possibility of obtaining a resolution, but also the existence of mechanisms capable of responding to state omissions that render legal recognition ineffective. Not every administrative delay automatically equates to a violation of the Convention: attributing such a violation requires assessing the specific facts and state obligations.

The Inter-American Court has extended its examination of the guarantees in Article 8 to actions by state bodies that determine rights, even if they are not judicial courts. In Baena Ricardo et al. v. Panama (2001), it examined due process guarantees in state decisions concerning workers. In Claude Reyes et al. v. Chile (2006), it highlighted the requirements for justification and oversight of administrative decisions regarding access to information. These precedents do not directly resolve disputes over teachers' benefits, but they do establish that administrative authority is subject to conventional limits.

The examination of the duration of the procedure must distinguish between the time limit set by law and the assessment of reasonableness. In Genie Lacayo v. Nicaragua (1997) and Valle Jaramillo et al. v. Colombia (2008), the Inter-American Court addressed factors such as the complexity of the matter, the activity of the interested party, the conduct of the authorities, and the impact caused by the length of the process. Applying these criteria to the management of labor benefits constitutes an argumentative proposal here: it requires chronologically reconstructing each file and not presuming a violation simply because there are pending actions.

From the perspective of international labor law, the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 95 establishes parameters for wage protection; however, the benefits under consideration should not be simply confused with the conventional notion of wages, as their nature and legal framework vary. Article 7 of the Protocol of San Salvador recognizes fair, equitable, and satisfactory working conditions. These sources reinforce the importance of workers' economic protection, without replacing the examination of the specific conditions for enforcing each benefit under Peruvian law.

Regarding the effectiveness of decisions, the case of Five Pensioners v. Peru (2003) demonstrates the conventional relevance of complying with rulings on economic rights. However, the facts and subject matter of that litigation differ from administrative requests for teachers' social benefits. The comparison is used to raise a question about effectiveness: what real protection does a person obtain when the State recognizes an economic obligation but its execution remains pending for an unjustified period?

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2008), in Valle Jaramillo et al. v. Colombia examined the duration of proceedings based on factors related to their complexity, the conduct of the authorities, the participation of the interested party, and the resulting impact. These criteria offer a framework for analysis, but do not replace a direct review of the administrative files.

2.3. Administrative burdens and institutional organization

Herd and Moynihan (2018) conceive of administrative burdens as costs incurred by individuals when interacting with the state. The requirement to submit documents, understand rules, or repeat procedures can affect actual access to services. This approach complements the legal perspective of reasonable time because it shifts the focus from the formal existence of a response to the effort required to obtain it.

Moynihan et al. (2013) analyze procedural barriers as part of public policy design. Their research on US healthcare benefits does not describe the Peruvian education system; rather, it offers a comparative reference point to question whether administrative steps fulfill a concrete verification function or transfer costs to the applicant that the organization could reduce.

Bovens and Zouridis (2002) argue that technology modifies decision-making and control processes in bureaucracies. In the context of this study, this discussion offers a cautionary note: digital file traceability can be an improvement, but it does not replace the justification for actions, the identification of the responsible party,

or the means of appeal. The UGEL Lamas is not being attributed with a technological transformation that has not been studied.

Christensen et al. (2020) warn that the experience of administrative burdens is not uniform, as it depends on the cognitive resources available to understand and meet the demands of the State. In teacher benefit procedures, this discussion suggests examining the clarity of notifications and requirements, without attributing uninvestigated personal circumstances to the participants.

Baekgaard et al. (2021) study the reasons why policymakers tolerate certain administrative burdens. Their contribution is useful for differentiating the institutional justification of a requirement from the effects it produces on the person requesting a benefit. This analysis is limited to the testimonies and records of the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL) and does not evaluate the preferences of its officials.

3. Research design

3.1. Sources of information and sample

This work is based on fundamental qualitative research, originally structured using grounded theory and hermeneutic analysis of administrative procedures. For this article, a new thematic reading of the material was conducted, focusing on the category of "reasonable timeframe." No new interviews or case files were added. This clarification is relevant because the article proposes a legal interpretation of the available material, not an expansion of the sample or a subsequent follow-up study.

The testimonial information comes from ten participants: six lawyers (A1-A6) and four public servants involved in administrative processing (S1-S4). The inclusion criterion for the lawyers was a minimum of five years of professional experience in administrative or labor matters related to the recognition of teaching staff rights; those who did not meet this requirement or lacked experience in the subject matter were excluded. The public servants were included due to their functional involvement in the receipt, review, or processing of applications. The open-ended questions addressed the sequence of the procedure, the duration of its stages, and the guarantees afforded to the applicant. The codes preserve the identity of the interviewees and allow for the distinction of professional perspectives, without attributing statistical representativeness to their responses.

The second source comprised three files identified in the article's results: No. 00034-2024, No. 00562-2024, and No. 01284-2025, related to the recognition or fulfillment of teaching staff's economic rights and to contentious-administrative proceedings linked to the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL). The document matrix examined the decisions issued, the appeals, the requests for settlement or payment, and the available dates to reconstruct the course of each case. Judicial proceedings from 2026 were included only when they continued proceedings related to the 2024-2025 period; these proceedings were not presented as events that occurred in 2025. The number indicated corresponds to the three files identified in this manuscript.

3.2. Data collection and analysis categories

The interpretation compared the responses of lawyers and officials with the recorded actions and identifiable guarantees: the right to petition recognized by the Peruvian Constitution, the principles of official action, expediency, efficiency, and due process of the Consolidated Text of Law 27444, and Articles 8.1 and 25 of the American Convention on Human Rights. For each case file, the verification of the right, the administrative decision, and the execution of the payment were differentiated; when notification dates or records of a stage were missing, no delay attributable to the entity was calculated. This avoided confusing the existence of subsequent litigation with a proven temporal violation.

3.3. Documentary triangulation and ethical considerations

The original research involved a review of the instruments by three specialists. The article's analysis was limited to the interview data and available case files.

The processing of the interviews considered convergences and divergences between codes A1–A6 and S1–S4. The responses were compared with the actions that could be reconstructed from the documentation, keeping separate the facts recorded in the case files and the participants' opinions. The analytical procedure was interpretive: opinion percentages were not calculated, nor was it assumed that agreement among interviewees demonstrated, in itself, the existence of an administrative infraction.

The unit of analysis was the administrative trajectory of the claimed right, understood as the succession of verifications, pronouncements, and actions aimed at payment. This choice maintains a single guiding category a reasonable timeframe in the administrative procedure and uses motivation, notification, continuity, and compliance as dimensions of interpretation, without presenting them as independent variables or statistical hypotheses.

4. Results

4.1. Administrative continuity and procedural delays

The interviews revealed broad agreement on the need for the procedure to follow a recognizable sequence: receipt of the application, background check, verification of requirements, intervention by the relevant departments, and issuance of the resolution. Lawyers A1, A2, A3, A4, and A6 emphasized the importance of an orderly process, while staff members S1 through S4 described the specific operations that comprise this sequence. This agreement shows that the formalization of the procedure is not, in itself, the cause of the problem. The difficulty arises when the stages are not linked in a timely manner or when referrals do not lead to effective action.

Regarding document review, both lawyers and staff members acknowledged that the entity must verify the basis for the claimed right. Staff members referred to personnel files, employment records, length of service, and internal reports; lawyers focused more on the legal prerequisites for recognition. These perspectives complement each other. The requirement for adequate documentation protects the legality of the expenditure and the correctness of the decision, but it requires the entity to clearly identify what information is missing and what the effect of that absence is on the procedure.

Inter-agency coordination emerged as a decisive factor. A1, A2, and A3 linked communication between departments to the continuity of the file; S1, S3, and S4 highlighted the involvement of various areas before the recognition. Differences were also noted: S2 placed the beginning of the process primarily in Human Resources and considered that the subsequent participation of other units depends on the nature of the benefit. This finding does not necessarily indicate contradiction, but rather variations in the administrative processes depending on the concept being claimed.

Participants A1, A2, A3, A4, and A6 identified unnecessary procedures, expired deadlines, and management deficiencies as sources of delay. A5 introduced the possibility of deliberate acts of corruption, an assessment that was not corroborated by the other testimonies and, therefore, cannot be considered a proven fact. This distinction is essential: interviews allow us to understand perceptions about the possible causes of the delay, but they are not enough to attribute illicit conduct to specific officials.

4.2. Reasonable time frame and procedural safeguards

Regarding the criteria for assessing the reasonableness of the time frame, A1, A2, A3, A4, and A6 agreed on considering the complexity of the matter, the conduct of the interested party, and the administrative action. A1, A2, A4, and A6 added the impact caused by the wait. A5 proposed incorporating territorial factors, infrastructure, and local conditions. This last observation broadens the debate, although it does not automatically transform institutional limitations into justification: their concrete effects and the diligence demonstrated in overcoming them must be examined.

Positions on classifying a delay were not uniform. A1 and A2 rejected the notion that any extension immediately equates to a violation of the reasonable time frame. A6 gave greater weight to the inactivity of the authority, while A2, A3, and A4 mentioned the relevance of organizational deficiencies. This contrast allows for a useful distinction: the mere passage of time is a verifiable fact; its unjustified nature requires relating it to the actions actually taken, the circumstances of the case, and the entity's duty to expedite matters. In terms of legal effects, A1 and A2 linked unjustified delays to violations of due process. A2, A3, A4, and A6 pointed to potential administrative or functional liabilities, without implying that any individual disciplinary infraction had been proven in the cases examined. A5, on the other hand, highlighted the economic, familial, and social consequences of the delay. Both approaches are complementary: one examines the legal system's responses, and the other the practical consequences that justify the requirement for a timely decision.

4.3. Documentary evidence and effectiveness of payment

The examined documentation revealed heterogeneous sequences. File No. 00034-2024 contained an administrative decision declaring the reimbursement for bereavement and funeral expenses inadmissible, a dismissed appeal, and a subsequent judicial review that recognized the reimbursement based on a different calculation method. This case illustrates how a substantive dispute can prolong the claim process. However, the original documentation indicates that it is not appropriate to attribute a breach of a specific deadline without having the necessary information to verify it.

File No. 00562-2024 is particularly illustrative of the difference between recognition and compliance. According to the document matrix, a regional resolution dated November 4, 2025, authorized the issuance of the corresponding calculation, and a court order dated January 22, 2026, required the settlement to be carried out and the payment to be included in the institutional budget. Subsequent judicial proceedings demonstrate that performance obligations remained, but the evidence does not authorize asserting, without further examination, the individual responsibility of a specific authority.

In case file no. 01284-2025, judicial decisions from October and November 2025 and an additional action from April 2026 were identified. Their value for this study lies in reconstructing the procedural sequence and distinguishing between claims previously filed administratively and others whose lack of prior filing affected their judicial review. The mere fact that these dates are recorded does not, in itself, demonstrate a breach of an administrative deadline. This caution avoids confusing the duration of the litigation with the time attributable to the administration.

Other reviewed files show calculation procedures, authorizations, and compliance requirements subsequent to the recognition of the right. Overall, the document analysis does not provide a homogeneous basis for calculating an average delay, but it does identify a legally relevant situation: the succession of resolutions, reports, and requirements can continue even after the main dispute has been resolved. The result requires observing the final effectiveness of the procedure without treating each subsequent stage as a presumed time violation.

Finally, the interviews regarding due process identified three guarantees closely related to time: access and participation of the interested party, justification of decisions, and communication of actions. Lawyers and public servants agreed that the interested party must be informed of the observations and the outcome of the process. Differences were noted regarding the specific means of communication, ranging from in-person service to electronic channels and home notification. The diversity of means necessitates differentiating between informal information about the status of the file and legally valid notification.

Table 1. Analytical summary of the files examined

File	Documentary contribution
00034-2024	Administrative rejection of a claimed benefit, appeal and subsequent judicial review; illustrates the importance of reconstructing procedural stages.
00562-2024	Subsequent judicial requirement associated with compliance; separates recognition from material satisfaction.
01284-2025	Judicial actions recorded in 2025 and a subsequent 2026 action; shows the need to distinguish the study period from later procedural developments.

Source: Prepared based on the documentary analysis of the original research.

4.4. Institutional implications of the findings

The comparison of interviews with documents allowed for the identification of three points of administrative control. The first was the initial verification of requirements and employment history; the second, the circulation of reports and decisions between departments; and the third, the settlement and execution stage of the awarded compensation. The presence of a favorable action at the second point did not necessarily guarantee compliance at the third. This distinction constitutes a management finding, in addition to its legal significance.

The lawyers' assessments of inactivity and the staff's observations regarding document review were not treated as incompatible positions. Verification may be necessary, and simultaneously, the circulation of the file may present intervals without useful action. The qualitative analysis did not allow for establishing how many days were attributable to each office, but it did demonstrate the importance of documenting these transitions.

As an operational summary of the findings, it is proposed to evaluate each procedure using a sequence of four questions: what action was necessary, which unit should have carried it out, what record proves its execution, and what stage remained pending after the decision. These questions are derived from the material studied and do not represent a protocol applied or experimentally validated in the entity.

Bozeman et al. (1992) link unnecessary bureaucracy to delays in carrying out organizational tasks. Although their study was conducted in research organizations and not in Peruvian educational institutions, it offers a conceptual contrast: the number of actions taken does not, in itself, indicate the quality of management; what is important is to know which actions were necessary, how much time they took, and what decision they made possible.

Herd and Moynihan (2025) point out that administrative burdens can hinder access to benefits even when the beneficiary meets the requirements to receive them. This observation guides the discussion of the cases studied: legal recognition and material implementation must be distinguished, because a favorable decision does not automatically guarantee the financial satisfaction of the claim.

5. Discussion

A primary consequence of the contrast between Inter-American standards and the findings of the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL Lamas) is the rejection of equating formal legality with effective protection. Compliance with established procedures, the preparation of reports, and the issuance of a resolution are necessary conditions for monitoring public action, but they do not, in themselves, allow us to conclude that the right has received adequate protection. In cases involving economic benefits, the time elapsed between the request, the decision, and the payment can substantially alter the effectiveness of the state's response.

The obligation to provide reasons for and notify a decision is not the same as the obligation to pay. An entity may correctly justify the recognition of a benefit and, despite this, face budgetary constraints or implementation difficulties. Precisely for this reason, legal analysis cannot automatically impute a violation of international law based on a generic delay: it requires identifying which body should have acted, which procedures were essential, what alternatives existed, and what concrete effects the delay produced.

The international dimension of the problem also does not transform the Inter-American Court into a standard instance for reviewing every labor case. The Inter-American system operates in accordance with its jurisdictional and admissibility requirements, including, as a rule, the exhaustion of domestic remedies. The contribution of international standards lies, first and foremost, in guiding the conduct of national authorities and the interpretation of existing protection mechanisms.

The testimonies of lawyers and officials reveal complementary perspectives. The former emphasize the principles of legality, the defense of the interested party, and the possibility of appeal; the latter detail the documentary verifications and the participation of technical and budgetary offices. This difference should not be confused with a contradiction regarding the obligation to resolve the matter: it allows us to observe that the actual duration depends on legal decisions and organizational conditions that must be evaluated together.

As a criterion for institutional evaluation, it is pertinent to differentiate between the time attributable to the actual complexity of the benefit, the time generated by actions of the applicant, and the time associated with periods of inactivity on the part of the entity. An individualized timeline would allow for a more precise examination of the reasonableness of the procedure than an isolated comparison with a regulatory deadline. The source materials do not allow for establishing general percentages of non-compliance or extrapolating the findings to all educational management units in the country.

The dialogue between Peruvian administrative law and international human rights law allows us to formulate a limited thesis: when processing enforceable labor benefits, timeliness is part of the legal quality of the state's response. This does not mean that every late payment is in itself an international violation; it means that the State must have objective reasons for the delays, mechanisms for informing the interested party, and effective remedies against unjustified inactivity.

The main contribution of the results is to show that administrative delays cannot be studied as a phenomenon separate from the design of the procedure. An action aimed at verifying length of service or the basis for calculating a benefit may be necessary and legitimate. However, repeated reviews without a clear purpose, referrals without follow-up, or the absence of a decision from the competent unit disrupt the relationship between means and ends. A reasonable timeframe does not eliminate controls; it requires that each control have an identifiable purpose and be carried out diligently.

This interpretation is consistent with the principle of official action established in Peruvian administrative law. The individual must fulfill their corresponding obligations, but cannot be obligated to perpetually pursue a case when the entity already possesses the necessary information to proceed. The fact that several departments are involved does not, in itself, suspend the institutional duty to act. Therefore, legally sound management requires identifying who receives, who reports, who decides, and who executes, as well as the reason why each intervention is indispensable.

The testimonies also encourage us to distinguish between a legal deadline and a reasonable deadline. The former provides a verifiable regulatory parameter; the latter requires assessing the specific circumstances and the significance of the delay. Confusing these two aspects leads to opposite errors. On the one hand, it could be argued that any deadline automatically constitutes a constitutional violation, even without knowing the reasons. On the other hand, it could be assumed that the lack of an express time limit allows for an unlimited duration. Neither of these positions is compatible with an administration subject to the rule of law. The conduct of the authority must be evaluated considering its actual possibilities for action, but also its organizational obligation. Material and budgetary limitations can explain certain stages, although they require demonstration and cannot be invoked in the abstract. In particular, when a request has already passed the verification of requirements and only the settlement or scheduling of payment remains, the explanation for the delay must refer to that specific stage. The economic nature of the claimed right makes a justification that allows the applicant to understand the status of their claim especially important.

The references made by some interviewees to the territorial conditions of decentralized administration raise a pertinent issue for public management. Accessibility, infrastructure, and available resources can affect effective service times. However, acknowledging these conditions does not mean reducing the guarantees of teaching staff based on their workplace. Rather, it imposes on the entity an organizational duty proportionate to the difficulties it is aware of and can anticipate. The reasonableness assessment must distinguish between unavoidable obstacles and those that could have been prevented through minimal coordination.

The analysis of the case files allows us to discuss another issue: the difference between declaratory and substantive protection. When a favorable ruling is issued, but the calculation or budgetary allocation remains pending, the affected party has a recognition that has not yet translated into financial compensation. This gap cannot be resolved by asserting that the procedure concluded upon issuance of the resolution. The usefulness of the public action must also be examined in terms of the continuity of the actions necessary to fulfill the recognized right, respecting the applicable powers and budgetary rules.

Case file no. 00562-2024 precisely demonstrates the importance of tracking the claim beyond the initial decision. The court order of January 2026, issued after the regional authorization of November 2025, reveals that further action was still required. However, methodological prudence prevents calculating a total delay attributable to a single office without examining the notification dates, prior requests, budgetary availability, and the powers of each department. The investigation provides an indication of pending enforcement, not a declaration of liability. Case law regarding reasonable timeframes helps avoid mechanical interpretations of these findings. Complexity, the actions of the authority, the conduct of the interested party, and the impact of the delay constitute criteria for analysis, not a list whose mere mention justifies any outcome. Its application requires reconstructing the facts and explaining why a period was necessary or excessive. The burden of argumentation increases when the right in question has a subsistence component and the authority is aware that the passage of time may reduce the practical utility of a favorable response.

Due process also requires that the interested party be able to participate effectively. If a documentary observation is not properly communicated, the subsequent delay may stem from a failure attributable to the entity and not from the applicant's inaction. Similarly, valid notification allows for the exercise of appeals and provides information on when deadlines begin. Electronic means can facilitate communication, but their use must comply with the corresponding legal requirements; a phone call or in-person guidance does not necessarily equate to formal notification of a decision.

In administrative practice, motivation and expediency are often presented as conflicting demands. The results suggest that they can reinforce each other. A reasoned decision identifies the determining documents, reduces uncertainty about the reasons for the ruling, and facilitates its oversight. An orderly sequence, in turn, allows that motivation to be built upon actions carried out in a timely manner. The problem lies not in dedicating time to justifying the decision, but rather in the file accumulating steps without a clear understanding of their usefulness in resolving the matter.

The findings offer specific institutional implications. The Local Education Management Unit (UGEL) can strengthen the monitoring of entry dates, document requirements, pending reports, and responsible units, especially in cases that have already received a favorable ruling. Likewise, the legal department can review the resolutions to ensure they include the background information and applicable regulations, while the administration and personnel departments coordinate the calculation and scheduling of payments. These measures are proposals derived from analysis, not interventions whose effectiveness has been experimentally proven.

The administrative burden also has a distributive dimension. Herd and Moynihan (2018) explain that the demands of learning, compliance, and psychological strain can limit effective access to public benefits. This perspective allows us to interpret the repeated requests from teachers as an additional processing cost, without assuming that all applicants have experienced identical difficulties or turning interviews into quantitative measurements.

In another study, Moynihan et al. (2013) show that the design of procedures can act as a barrier to accessing benefits, even when the substantive right exists. The parallel with the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL) should be understood as a conceptual comparison and not as an equivalence between the benefit systems examined. In the local results, the distinction between recognition, settlement, and payment allows us to pinpoint where the burden of monitoring faced by the beneficiary is concentrated.

The study has limitations that must be made explicit. It worked with a qualitative sample of ten interviewees and with documentation from files that does not always allow for reconstructing all the dates necessary to measure a delay. The information does not allow for establishing general percentages of non-compliance, calculating average times for the entire entity, or demonstrating causality between each organizational deficiency and a legal violation. Nor is it appropriate to attribute acts of corruption based on an isolated opinion. The value of the

results lies in the reasoned identification of patterns and legal tensions that are susceptible to subsequent verification.

Consequently, the research supports a central idea: the administrative delays must be examined throughout the actual process of the claimed right. The case file is not merely a succession of documents, but a legal relationship in which the State must provide a well-founded and useful response. Verification of requirements, the reasoned decision, and the execution of the recognized right are distinct stages, but none can remain separate from the general duty of administrative diligence.

The discussion on institutional innovation culminates in a proposal for case file traceability. The record of each action must distinguish the date of entry, the responsible unit, the required documentation, the moment of decision, and the stage of compliance. This is not to claim that the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL) already has such a system, but rather to formulate a practical consequence of the difficulties described by the interviewees. An accessible sequence of actions would help identify whether the delay is due to verification of the benefit, a lack of coordination, or budget execution.

The approach of Bovens and Zouridis (2002) is useful for situating this proposal within the debate on administrative technologies. The authors explain that computerization transforms the arena where discretion is exercised and raises new demands for control. Therefore, a monitoring tool should not be reduced to simply transferring procedures to the digital environment; it requires clear rules of accountability, review mechanisms, and protection of the applicant's rights.

The research does not measure average processing times, approval rates, or the effects of a technological intervention. Its contribution is analytical: it identifies points in the procedure where better organization can prevent applicants from experiencing uncertainty about the status of their application. Implementing this proposal would require a subsequent study comparing complete files before and after any organizational changes.

6. Conclusions

A reasonable timeframe in procedures related to teachers' labor rights is not simply a matter of formally meeting a deadline. Its assessment requires understanding the complexity of the request, the actions of the interested party, the decisions made by the authority, and the consequences of any delay on the claimed right. The interviews examined show a consensus on the need to verify documents and coordinate areas, along with differences of opinion regarding when a delay can be considered unjustified.

The review of files related to the Lamas Local Education Management Unit (UGEL) revealed that the recognition of a right and its payment can be separated by subsequent calculation, authorization, and execution procedures. This finding does not imply that all files exceeded a legal deadline: in several cases, the available documentation does not provide sufficient grounds to support that conclusion. It does, however, demonstrate the importance of examining the continuity of the process until the right is effectively fulfilled.

Motivation, notification, and official action are interconnected guarantees. A comprehensible decision allows for verification of its basis; valid communication enables a defense; And a continuous process prevents the interested party from bearing the consequences of institutional disorganization. Within this framework, file tracking, the identification of responsibilities at each stage, and coordination between staff, legal counsel, and administration emerge as areas for improvement that warrant further evaluation.

The contribution of this study is to propose an interpretation of the reasonable timeframe based on the actual effectiveness of administrative action, without confusing the observed delay with a legally established infraction. Future research could reconstruct complete series of files, record the dates of each action, and compare the duration of procedures according to the type of benefit, with the aim of more accurately evaluating the causes of the delay and its effects on teaching staff.

Authors' Contributions

Rosa Elena Arévalo Guerra: original research, information gathering and analysis, manuscript writing and revision. Anacristina Mego Reátegui: original research, information gathering and analysis, manuscript writing and revision. Rubén Santisteban Seclén: methodological guidance, legal analysis, critical review, and academic editing of the manuscript. All three authors are listed as responsible for the submitted version.

Data Availability

Interview records are subject to confidentiality, and access to administrative and judicial files is subject to applicable restrictions.

Ethical statement

The research in question includes informed consent and confidentiality measures for the interviewed participants.

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