

The Contradiction of the Free Nutritious Eating Policy and the Reality of Honorary Teachers

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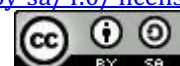
Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 21-04-2026 Approved: 20-05-2026 Published: 23-06-2026	<p>Background: This article aims to examine the imbalance in priorities between one of the government's flagship programs, the nutritious meals (MBG) program, and the reality of the welfare of honorary teachers in indonesia. On the one hand, the government allocates a significant budget to emphasize student nutrition in order to improve the quality of human resources towards the golden indonesia 2045.</p> <p>Objective: This study aims to analyze the contradiction between the policy of free nutritious meals for students and the reality of the welfare of honorary teachers, as well as assess its impact on the quality of education in indonesia</p> <p>Method: The research approach uses qualitative methods with literature studies, policy analysis, and in-depth interviews with honorary teachers in several school. Data was collected through official documents, news, and the direct experience of honorary teachers, then analyzed with thematic techniques to find patterns of contradictions and their implications.</p> <p>Findings and Implications: The MBG program benefits students in terms of nutritional intake but does not address the welfare problems of honorary teachers who continue to receive low salaries and lack social security protection. This policy imbalance has the potential to reduce the work motivation of honorary teachers and hamper education quality, as teachers experiencing economic hardship are unlikely to perform optimally.</p> <p>Conclusion: This study concludes that there is a real contradiction between the free nutritious food policy and the welfare conditions of honorary teachers.</p>
Keywords: free nutritious food; honorary teachers; education; public policy; welfare	

INTRODUCTION

Entering the transition era of Prabowo-Gibran's national leadership in 2024-2025, the Indonesian education world is faced with two major interrelated but seemingly contradictory discourses: the implementation of the flagship National Nutritious Food (MBG) program and the urgency of improving the welfare of honorary teachers. The actual phenomenon shows that the government allocates massive fiscal resources to the MBG program to reduce stunting rates and improve the quality of basic education. However, on the other hand, the operational backbone of schools namely honorary teachers

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is still trapped in a welfare crisis with wages often below the poverty line and uncertainty of employment status and high workload (Carney, 2022; Unesco, 2024)

This condition shows an imbalance in the direction of national education policy, where great attention to the aspect of fulfilling educator nutrition has not been fully accompanied by an equal commitment to improving the welfare of educators. In fact, the success of programs such as Makan Bergisi Nasional is not only determined by the adequacy of the nutrition received by students, but also by the quality of the learning process which is highly dependent on the role of teachers as the main facilitator. In this context, honorary teachers are in a vulnerable position because in addition to facing economic limitations, they also often experience psychological distress due to uncertainty of work status and lack of social protection (Greenier et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2020)

This has the potential to decrease teacher motivation, performance, and professionalism, which ultimately impacts the overall quality of education. Meanwhile, international literature in education studies shows that teacher welfare is associated with the quality of the learning environment (classroom process and student welfare). This confirms that education policies that only focus on student input interventions without strengthening the capacity and welfare of teachers risk reducing the effectiveness of the education system as a whole (Collie, 2021; Hascher et al., 2021; Viac et al., 2020).

In this context, the imbalance in budget allocation shows the potential for distortion of policy priorities, where short-term investment in the MBG program is more dominant than long-term investment in strengthening the teaching profession. An OECD study (2020) confirms that countries with high-performance education systems always place the welfare of teachers as a top priority in education policies. Thus, there is an important gap in the national literature, namely the absence of studies that specifically analyze the relationship between the expansion of national-scale social programs such as MBG and its implications on the distribution of education budgets, especially for honorary teachers.

Furthermore, this contradiction reflects structural problems in education governance, especially related to budget distribution and public policy orientation. When fiscal priorities are more directed to visible and short-term programs such as MBG, there is a risk of neglecting investment in the fundamental aspect of education, namely the welfare of educators. In fact, various international studies show that teachers are at the heart of educational transformation and must be supported professionally and socially." (Bank, 2022).

Thus, this inequality creates a paradox of education policy, namely that the state increases investment in the physical input of students, but has not paid commensurate attention to structural inputs in the form of teacher welfare. Therefore, a more critical and comparative study is needed to reassess the priority direction of national education policies so that there is a better balance between nutritional interventions, learning quality, and teacher welfare as the main foundation of a sustainable education system.

Furthermore, this contradiction reflects structural problems in education governance in Indonesia, especially in terms of budget distribution and policy priorities. When fund allocation is more focused on short-term programs that are immediate and have tangible results, such as nutritious feeding, then there is the best risk of long-term investment in human resource development, in the education sector, especially teachers.

The problem arises when the priorities of the State Budget seem to be more inclined towards fulfilling student physical nutrition (MBG) while "welfare nutrition" for educators is ignored. In fact, the quality of education is not only determined by the physical readiness of students to absorb lessons, but also by the mental and financial stability of teachers. This inequality creates a paradox in which the state only invests in physical inputs (eating), but allows the input process (the quality of teaching influenced by teacher well-being) to remain fragile. Research in the field of education in general still separates the policy evaluation of free nutritious meal programs and the processing of human resources of educators as two different issues ([Antoninis et al., 2023](#)).

Many studies have focused on the impact of free nutritious feeding programs in schools on improved attendance, nutritional status, and academic achievement of students. International research by Bundy et al. (2018) explains that School feeding programs can help children get into school and help them stay there, increase enrollment and reduce absenteeism. Once children are in the classroom, these programs can contribute to their learning by avoiding hunger and improving cognitive abilities. In addition, Drake et al. (2020) Globally, there are 370 million children who receive school meals every day. Coverage is least in low-income countries, where the need is greatest and where the cost of the program is seen as high compared to the benefits to public health alone ([Donald A. , 2018](#); [Verguet et al., 2020](#)).

On the other hand, research on honorary teachers discusses more issues of recruitment of government employees with employment agreements (PPPK), low teacher salaries, high workloads, and uncertainty of employment status. In research by the OECD, ([2021](#)) it is affirmed that Compensation and working conditions are important for attracting, developing, and retaining skilled and high-quality teachers and principals. So that the welfare and salary level of teachers are important factors in maintaining the quality of education and the sustainability of the teaching profession.

Low teacher welfare can reduce the quality of learning and reduce the attractiveness of the educator profession in the long term. Research by Hutasuhut et al., (2025) also emphasizes that education plays an important role in improving the quality of life of individuals and the progress of a nation. The quality of education often depends on the quality of teachers. This will have an effect on the welfare of teachers and professional support is an important factor in improving the quality of education in Indonesia ([UNESCO, 2023](#)).

Empirically, the welfare condition of honorary teachers in Indonesia still shows serious inequality. National reports show that many honorary teachers

earn below the regional minimum wage standard and still face job status uncertainty. At the same time, the government allocates a very large budget for the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) as part of the human resource development strategy towards a Golden Indonesia 2045. This condition has given rise to a debate about the priorities of the education budget and distributive justice in public policy, especially related to the balance between investment in student needs and the welfare of teachers as the main implementers of education ([Horne, 2024](#)).

The authors found that previous research was still very limited in directly examining the fiscal contradiction between the magnitude of state intervention in the MBG program and the financial fulfillment of honorary teachers within a fair policy framework. Most of the research discusses social assistance programs for education and teacher welfare separately without looking at the structural relationship between the two. Therefore, this study is here to fill this gap by providing an empirical and critical analysis of how the priority of the state budget on nutrition-based programs can affect the sustainability of the welfare of honorary teachers as the main actor in the national education system.

The novelty of this article lies in a critical analysis of the relationship between the free nutritious meal program (MBG) and the problem of distributive justice of the education budget, especially on the welfare of honorary teachers in Indonesia. In contrast to previous research that highlighted the issue of honorary teachers from the aspects of personnel status, regulations and welfare in general, this article specifically examines the potential fiscal clash between the financing of the MBG program and the fulfillment of the economic rights of honorary teachers through an educational political economy approach. In contrast to previous research that focused on the social, political, and economic dynamics of honorary teachers and strategies for the struggle to improve their status and welfare in Semarang City, without discussing the state's fiscal priorities in Education policy ([Ngabiyanto, 2018](#)).

There were eight themes, namely (1) Having knowledge about the profession as a teacher, (2) Being happy in the field as a teacher, (3) Interested in the profession as a teacher, (4) Paying attention to the profession as a teacher, (5) Having the desire to become a teacher, (6) Striving to become a teacher, (7) Confident in choosing a profession as a teacher, (8) Feeling comfortable with the teaching profession. In addition, the study conducted by Gutser Siburian confirms that the existing remuneration policy is still not fully implemented properly, often hampered by budget constraints and complex bureaucracy ([OECD, 2023](#)).

Based on these research gaps, this article offers a new perspective through the concept of "education budget cannibalism", which is a condition when the financing of national-scale populist programs has the potential to shift the fulfillment of the economic rights of millions of honorary teachers as the main actors of national education. Using an educational political economy approach, this study not only examines education policy normatively, but also

dissects power relations, state fiscal priorities, and its implications for social justice in the distribution of education budgets. The urgency of this research is important as the basis for policy recommendations so that the implementation of MBG does not cause new inequalities in the education sector and does not sacrifice the welfare of honorary teachers as the main driver of national education.

RESEARCH METHODS

In writing this article, the research method used is qualitative, namely document study. Qualitative research methods according to Al-Ghazaruty, 2009, as reported by Nilamsari Natalina, (2014), are research methods used to uncover problems, in the working life of the government, the private sector, the community, youth, women, sports, arts and culture, and others so that they can be used as policies for common welfare. Meanwhile, the dokomen study method is one of the data collection techniques in a qualitative mote to browse documents related to the theme and title of the article (Nilamsari Natalina, 2014).

The type of research in this article is descriptive qualitative research with a document analysis and policy analysis approach. This research focuses on the review of various official documents, regulations, policy reports, and academic literature that are relevant to the issues studied. The type of data correspondence used is non-empirical directly, that is, it does not involve interaction with respondents or informants through interviews, but uses secondary data in the form of written documents, scientific publications, government reports, and credible literature sources.

The research design used is an interpretive qualitative design, in which the researcher interprets the content of the document to understand the meaning, policy patterns, and socio-economic implications contained in the analyzed text. The location and subject of the research are not field (field research), so there is no geographical research location or research respondents. The research subjects in this study are policy documents, scientific articles, official government reports, as well as literature sources relevant to the research theme.

The research instrument in this study is the researcher himself (human instrument), who acts as a planner, data collector, data interpreter, and reporter of research results. In addition, document analysis sheets are also used as a tool in classifying and organizing data. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies, namely by searching, identifying, classifying, and reviewing various documents relevant to the focus of the research. This process includes searching literature from scientific journals, books, government policy reports, and valid and accountable electronic sources.

The data validation strategy is carried out through source triangulation, which is comparing various documents from different sources to ensure information consistency. In addition, credibility check techniques are also used by examining sources that have clear academic and institutional

authority. Thus, the methodological approach in this study is expected to be able to provide transparency in the research process, strengthen the validity of findings, and produce a more in-depth analysis that can be accounted for academically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basically, the Geratis Nutritious Eating (MBG) program was launched by the government as one of the strategic steps to improve the quality of human resources from an early age, especially in supporting the growth and development of students. This program is directed to answer nutritional problems and inequality of access to healthy food for students. However, in its implementation, this policy raises a number of contradictions, especially when it is associated with the reality of teacher welfare in Indonesia. There are several points that the author considers to be part of the contradiction to this MBG program, which are as follows.

MBG Program as an Ambitious Social Policy

Conceptually, MBG is a social welfare-based policy that has a long-term goal, which is to create a healthy generation towards the vision of a Golden Indonesia 2045. This program is also carried out in the midst of a budget efficiency program provided by the government to save state financial spending. However, this program was launched with such a fantastic budget. For 2026 alone, the budget allocation for the MBG program is Rp335 trillion. So there is a paradox in running this MBG program, because in the midst of the budget efficiency program, but instead this MBG program spends a budget that reaches hundreds of dollars.

This paradox raises critical questions about the consistency and rationality of government fiscal policies, especially in determining the scale of priorities in the public sector. On the one hand, the budget efficiency program is intended to reduce waste and ensure the proper use of state funds, but on the other hand, the large budget allocation for the MBG program shows the political courage to encourage massive social intervention.

This condition requires transparency, accountability, and comprehensive evaluation so that the program really has a significant impact on reducing stunting and improving the quality of education. Without a strong monitoring mechanism, there is a risk that the size of the budget is not proportional to the results achieved, and even has the potential to cause new inefficiencies in the management of state finances. Furthermore, the amount of investment in the MBG program must also be balanced with proportionate attention to other aspects of the education ecosystem, especially the welfare of honorary teachers who have been in vulnerable conditions. If not, then this policy has the potential to create new inequality, where interventions for students are massive, but support for educators as the main implementers of education is left behind.

Therefore, the success of the Geratis Nutritious Meal (MBG) program is not only measured by the size of the budget or the number of beneficiaries, but also by the extent to which this program is integrated with a broader and more

equitable education policy. The IDEAS survey revealed that 74.3% of honorary teachers earn less than IDR 2 million per month. Furthermore, in this group, 20.5% received less than IDR 500,000 per month. This condition shows that the majority of honorary teachers are at a low level of welfare, which has the potential to have an impact on work motivation and the quality of learning in schools.

In addition, the Head of the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) Dadan Hindayana said that the free nutritious meal (MBG) program is a strategic step in welcoming the Golden Indonesia 2045. The World Bank emphasizes that research shows that teacher quality is the main determinant of children's learning and well-being. This shows that improving the quality of teachers is a key factor in improving the learning outcomes of students at various levels of education.

Polemic on the Use of the Education Budget

The government emphasized that the implementation of the MBG program does not reduce the education budget, in fact it is said to go hand in hand with improving the quality of education. However, the debate arises because the source of program funding is largely attributed to the education budget. As stated in the 2026 State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN), the budget allocation for education reached IDR 769.1 trillion and from the previous IDR 757.8 trillion. Part of this education budget is allocated up to 223 trillion for the Geratis Nutritious Meal (MBG) program.

This certainly raises concerns that education priorities are shifting from improving the quality of learning to non-pedagogical programs. In fact, there was a lawsuit to the Constitutional Court (MK) by an honorary teacher who assessed that the policy had the potential to reduce the portion of the pure education budget based on constitutional provisions by 20%. This criticism highlights the difference in government practices where this program is more social (nutritional fulfillment) and falls into the category of education. This is considered a form of "expansion of the meaning" of the education budget that obscures the main priorities of the education sector itself.

This situation emphasizes the existence of conceptual tensions in the management of education budgets, especially related to the boundaries between the education function and the social welfare function. Normatively, the education budget must be focused on improving the quality of learning, strengthening teacher capacity, providing facilities, and developing a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the times. However, when programs such as Nutritious Eating Geratis (MBG), which is substantially closer to health and social protection interventions, are included in education budgets, there is a shift in orientation that has the potential to obscure the sector's primary goals.

In the long run, this practice can lead to policy distortions, where the administrative achievement of a full allocation of 20% of the education budget does not fully reflect the real investment in improving the quality of education itself. Furthermore, this polemic also demands clarity on regulations and

operational definitions regarding what can legally be categorized as education spending. Without definite limits, governments have a wide scope to reevaluate budgets according to the interests of a particular program, which ultimately risks undermining the principle of public accountability.

Therefore, critical evaluation from various stakeholders, both legislative, academic, and civil society, is needed to ensure that budget policies remain based on the principles of fairness, transparency, and impartiality towards substantially improving the quality of education. Thus, this debate is not just a criticism of a program, but also a momentum to reorganize the direction of national education policy to be more consistent and long-term oriented.

The Reality of Honorary Teacher Well-Being

When the Geratis Nutritious Meal (MBG) program swallows a fantastic budget of up to hundreds of T, but on the other hand, the condition of honorary teachers in Indonesia is still concerning. Many of them receive very low salaries, even only hundreds of thousands of rupiah per month. Although the government stated that there was an increase in incentives for honorary teachers, for example around Rp. 400,000 per month, this amount is still very far from a decent welfare standard. One of them even dared to file a lawsuit related to the Mkan Nutrizi Geratis (MBG) program to the Constitutional Court (MK). His name is Reza Sudrazat, an honorary teacher who submitted an application for a review of Article 22 paragraphs (2) and (3) of Law Number 17 of 2025 concerning the State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (State Revenue and Expenditure Budget Law 2026) to the Constitutional Court (MK).

Reza assessed that the budget allocation for the Geratis Nutritious Meal (MBG) program has the potential to disrupt the system of appointing honorary teachers to become Civil Servants (ASN). In fact, various news published in many media shows that the salaries of employees of the Nutrition Fulfillment Unit (SPPG) are much larger than the salaries of the teachers themselves. As for the Jakarta area, the salary of honorary teachers ranges from Rp. 300,00-2,000.000, while the driver's salary for Geratis Nutritious Food (MBG) is Rp. 100,000 per day or Rp. 3,000,000 per month. This is considered not to provide a sense of justice for the community, especially for educators who are still honorary.

This condition shows that there is a serious structural inequality in public policy in the field of education, especially in terms of appreciation of the teaching profession as the main actor in the learning process. When educators who have the responsibility to shape the quality of human resources are actually in a vulnerable economic position, then; This not only has an impact on the welfare of each teacher, but also the quality of education as a whole. Low income and uncertainty of work status have the potential to reduce the motivation, loyalty, and professionalism of honorary teachers in carrying out their duties. In the long run, this situation can hinder efforts to improve the quality of national education, because the quality of learning is largely determined by the conditions and capacity of educators themselves (Toropova et al., 2021).

More deeply, the difference between the size of the Geratis Nutritious Meal (MBG) program budget and the lack of attention to the welfare of honorary teachers strengthens the public perception of injustice in the distribution of state resources. Therefore, strategic and comprehensive steps are needed from the government to reorganize the priorities of the education budget, by ensuring that improving the welfare of honorary teachers becomes an integral part of the education reform agenda. Without a real commitment to improve the concept, various flagship programs such as Geratis Nutritious Meals (MBG) are feared to be unable to have a maximum impact, because they are not supported by adequate quality and welfare of educators.

Additional burden for teachers

In addition to welfare issues, the Geratis Nutritious Eating (MBG) policy also has an impact on increasing teachers' workload. In some cases, teachers are appointed as the person in charge of implementing the Geratis Nutritious Eating (MBG) program in schools. In fact, the responsibility of teachers is heavy where they must be able to have 4 competencies in teaching and educating students, namely professional competence, pedagogic competence, personality competence and social competence. The addition of responsibilities outside of the pedagogical function is considered to interfere with the teacher's focus and reduce the quality of learning.

This condition shows that the implementation of the Geratis Nutritious Eating (MBG) program has not fully considered the workload and professional capacity of teachers as educators. When teachers are burdened with administrative and operational tasks in their main functions, there is an excessive workload that can have an impact on the effectiveness of the learning process in the classroom. In situations like these, teachers are not only required to teach and educate, but also have to manage additional programs that consume time, effort, and attention. As a result, the quality of pedagogical interaction between teachers and students has the potential to decrease, which can ultimately affect student learning outcomes.

In addition, policies that place teachers as technical implementers of non-pedagogical programs also reflect a lack of a clear separation of roles in the education system. Ideally, a program like Geratis Makan Nutrizi (MBG) is supported by special personnel or related parties outside the teacher, so that it does not interfere with his main duties as an educator. The government needs to ensure that every education policy is only implemented and remains oriented towards strengthening the role of teachers, not adding to the burden that has the potential to reduce the overall quality of education.

Inadequate Educational Facilities

The Geratis Nutritious Meal (MBG) program is carried out with a national budget that is so sophisticated reaching hundreds of thousands. But on the other hand, there are still many schools throughout Indonesia that still lack educational facilities such as proper classrooms. For example, what happened to the school in Gunungkidul 5 classrooms of the Kepek 1 State Elementary School (SD) was damaged and students were forced to study in the Mussala.

This is one of hundreds or even thousands of cases that occur in various regions in Indonesia where there are still many schools that do not have educational facilities. The quality of learning will certainly be disturbed if students study in uncomfortable conditions and atmospheres. In some cases, some are even forced to carry out the Teaching and Learning Activities (KBM) process under a tree due to the lack of classroom facilities. This case occurred in one of the schools in West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT).

This condition shows that there is a real inequality between the amount of the state budget allocation and the reality on the ground, especially in the fulfillment of basic education facilities and infrastructure. When schools are still grappling with the limitations of classrooms, learning facilities, and other supporting infrastructure, the effectiveness of the learning process certainly cannot take place optimally. An inappropriate learning environment not only impacts students' comfort, but also affects their concentration, motivation, and achievement of learning outcomes. In the long term, this condition can widen the gap in the quality of education between regions, especially between urban areas and remote areas (Bank, 2022).

In addition, this phenomenon also shows that the development of education has not been completely evenly distributed and still leaves classic problems unresolved. Therefore, the government needs to balance new innovative programs with the fulfillment of basic basic education needs. Priorities to improve school infrastructure, provide adequate facilities, and equalize access to education must be an integral part of national education policies. Without taking this aspect seriously, various flagship programs such as Geratis Nutritious Eating (MBG) have the potential not to have a maximum impact, because they are not supported by a decent and conducive learning environment for students.

Policy Contradictions: Between Priority and Implementation

The main contradiction in this policy lies in the imbalance between the priority of human development through students and the neglect of educator well-being (Sapphire Phoenix, 2025). On the one hand, the state seeks to improve the quality of generation through nutrition interventions. However, on the other hand, teachers as the main actors of education still face various limitations, both in terms of economy and profession.

This condition ultimately confirms that the direction of education policy is not entirely based on a comprehensive and sustainable approach. When interventions are focused on short-term, measurable outcomes, such as student nutrition, there is a risk of ignoring the fundamental aspect that actually determines the quality of education in the long term, namely the quality and well-being of teachers. In fact, the success of human development is not only determined by a healthy physical condition, but also by a quality educational process, which is highly dependent on the competence, motivation, and welfare of educators.

This inequality has the potential to have a chain impact in the education system, where attention to the welfare of teachers can have implications for a decrease in the quality of teaching, a weakening of student character

formation, and a decrease in the competitiveness of graduates in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to rearrange the direction of policies that not only focus on people's programs, but also prioritize fundamental reforms that touch on aspects of welfare, professionalism, and protection of educators. With this approach, education development is expected to take place more fairly and proportionately, and be able to answer long-term challenges in realizing quality human resources.

Implications for Education Quality

The inequality between the Geratis Nutritious Eating (MBG) policy and the welfare of honorary teachers has the potential to have an impact on the overall quality of education. Teachers who are not well-off tend to experience decreased work motivation, limited competency development, and the risk of side jobs that interfere with professionalism. If this condition continues, then the big goal of the Geratis Nutritious Eating (MBG) program to create a superior generation is actually hampered, because the quality of education is not only determined by nutritional factors, but by the quality of teaching (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

This condition shows that the quality of education is the result of various interrelated factors, not solely determined by interventions in one aspect only. When attention to the welfare of teachers is ignored, efforts to improve the quality of human resources through programs such as Geratis Makan Nutriizi (MBG) become less than optimal. Teachers who are under economic and professional pressure tend to have limitations in innovating, developing learning methods, and giving maximum attention to students. This certainly has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

In addition, in the long run. This situation can cause a decrease in the interest of the younger generation to pursue the teaching profession, because it is considered not promising in terms of welfare. If not addressed immediately, this has the potential to create a crisis of qualified educators in the future. Therefore, improving the quality of education should be seen as a holistic effort, which includes meeting the basic needs of students as well as strengthening the role and well-being of teachers as the main actors in the education system. Thus, the big goal of creating a superior generation is not just a discourse, but can be realized in a real and sustainable way. This inequality also has the potential to widen the gap in the quality of education between regions and between schools, especially between regions that have adequate resource support and regions that are still lagging behind. As a result, innovation in the learning process is hampered and the quality of educational services received by students is uneven.

On the other hand, the economic pressure experienced by honorary teachers can also affect their focus and commitment in carrying out their main duties as educators. When energy and attention are divided to meet the needs of life, the optimization of the teacher's role in guiding, educating, and shaping students' character becomes less optimal. Therefore, improving the quality of

education cannot be balanced with efforts to improve the welfare of teachers. Without serious attention to the condition of educators, various strategic programs such as Geratis Nutritious Meals (MBG) are at risk of not achieving their main goals optimally and sustainably.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that a real contradiction exists between the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy and the welfare conditions of honorary teachers in Indonesia. The quality of education is not solely determined by student nutritional interventions, but is equally shaped by the professional well-being and economic stability of teachers as the primary actors in the learning process. When the MBG program receives a massive budget allocation while honorary teachers continue to earn wages below the regional minimum and face uncertain employment status, a structural inequality emerges that risks undermining the very educational goals the program aims to achieve.

Further empirical research using quantitative and qualitative data across regions is recommended to examine the causal relationship between nutrition intervention policies, education budget distribution, and teacher welfare. Legal analysis of education budget regulations in relation to distributive justice principles is also needed. This study contributes a critical perspective on the necessity of integrating the MBG policy with comprehensive efforts to strengthen educator welfare as the foundation for improving the quality of national education.

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