

THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND POWER RELATIONSHIPS IN CRITICISM OF THE FREE NUTRITIOUS MEAL PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS IN THE MASS MEDIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS BY MICHAEL FOUCAULT

Tukijo¹, Hari Bakti Mardikantoro,² Rustono³

Department of Language Education, Semarang State University, Semarang, Indonesia¹²³

Email: paktukijo17@students.unnes.ac.id¹, rustono@mail.unnes.ac.id²,
haribaktim@mail.unnes.ac.id³

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the discourse of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy in mass media reporting and its implications for the educational ecosystem. Textual analysis shows that the media is not merely a passive information channel, but an arena of ideological practice that reproduces the language of power. In the context of primary education, MBG is positioned as an absolute biological and cognitive prerequisite, rather than a mere health intervention. Nutritional fulfillment serves as a crucial foundation for students to absorb learning optimally in preparation for the 2045 Golden Generation vision. On the other hand, the dynamics of this discourse drive higher education to realize its function as an institution of critical literacy. Through academic oversight and evaluation of public policy, universities ensure that state programs remain accountable and free from the abuse of power. The synergy between nutritional fulfillment at the primary education level and critical reasoning at the higher education level ensures the realization of human resources who are physically healthy, as well as intellectually resilient and independent.

Keywords: Human Resources, New Knowledge, Golden Generation

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menginvestigasi wacana kebijakan Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) dalam pemberitaan media massa dan implikasinya terhadap ekosistem pendidikan. Analisis teks menunjukkan bahwa media bukan sekadar saluran informasi pasif, melainkan arena praktik ideologi yang mereproduksi bahasa kekuasaan. Dalam konteks pendidikan dasar, MBG diposisikan sebagai prasyarat biologis dan kognitif yang mutlak, bukan sekadar intervensi kesehatan. Pemenuhan gizi menjadi fondasi krusial agar murid dapat menyerap pembelajaran secara optimal guna menyongsong visi Generasi Emas 2045. Di sisi lain, dinamika wacana ini memacu pendidikan tinggi untuk merealisasikan fungsinya sebagai institusi literasi kritis. Melalui pengawasan dan evaluasi kebijakan publik secara akademis, perguruan tinggi memastikan program negara tetap akuntabel dan terhindar dari penyimpangan kekuasaan. Sinergi antara pemenuhan gizi di pendidikan tingkat dasar dan nalar kritis di tingkat tinggi ini memastikan terwujudnya sumber daya manusia yang sehat secara jasmani, sekaligus tangguh dan merdeka secara pemikiran.

Keywords: Sumber Daya Manusia, Pengetahuan Baru, Generasi Emas

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, everyone can easily access news. Along with digitalization, there are also many news channels used to produce news. There are conventional print media, as well as online digital media that can be accessed anytime, by anyone, and from anywhere. One of the media outlets that has been consistently productive is Tempo.

Tempo has also made significant contributions to journalism through a wide range of reliable, fair, and critical news content. Tempo's vision is to present independent, incisive news that is unaffiliated with the government. This clear stance has served as a counterbalance to the news landscape. As a result, news as a constructed discourse can become a source of new knowledge. Tempo fulfills a clear role in upholding truth and justice, including by boldly criticizing policies perceived as harmful to the public.

In line with this, coverage of the free nutritious meals policy (MBG) has been a widely reported government initiative. The initial aim of the MBG program was to address stunting and develop human resources in preparation for the "golden generation" of 2045. MBG is provided to students, pregnant women, toddlers, and breastfeeding mothers. However, the program has not been without criticism. A variety of sharp criticisms have been directed at the government, both from individuals and institutions.

MBG's budgetary and technical policies have long been subject to public criticism. The substantial budget has drawn significant attention, making critical attitudes toward MBG a factor that affects every policy decision. Various criticisms of the MBG have been voiced both directly and through various media outlets, including the mass media. The mass media does not merely produce news but is also sometimes caught up in the political dichotomy of power. Therefore, the news production aspect of the mass media needs to be examined and analyzed.

The use of text in MBG news stems from the process of language. Language serves as a practical tool for communication. The government communicates these policies through the language of power. This demonstrates that power generates knowledge.

Based on several studies indicating that text is a form of ideological practice, language, writing, diction, and grammatical structure are understood as choices that, when expressed, convey the meaning of a specific ideology in the context of winning public support¹, including the discourses produced in MBG news coverage.

¹Eriyanto, *Analisis Wacana Pengantar Analisis Teks Media* (LKis, 2005); Hartinie Hartinie, "Pengaruh Motivasi Ekstrinsik Dan Persepsi Siswa Pada Perpustakaan Sekolah Terhadap Hasil Belajar Bahasa Indonesia," *Diskursus: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia* 1, no. 3 (2020): 220–220,

Functionally, language is an arbitrary and universal tool for communication². Humans can express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings through language, both orally and in writing. To date, the functional definition of language has continued to evolve and is no longer merely a tool for human communication³.

Thus, language not only reflects verbal communication, but also has a deeper impact in related to the dynamics of power and ideological influence in society. Linguists who developed models of critical discourse analysis, including Michel Foucault, are discussed in an article titled Foucault's Discourse Analysis in Communication Studies Dhona⁴. Foucault is described as a French philosopher of knowledge who remains popular to this day. The methods and concepts developed in his work "The Archaeology of Knowledge" are not only widely applied but have also influenced various academic disciplines. In this work, Foucault explains his unique method, which differs from other theoretical discourse approaches.

<https://doi.org/10.30998/diskursus.v1i03.6689>; Monika Priastari dan Wika Soviana Devi, "Peningkatan Menulis Teks Fantasi Menggunakan Metode PJBL Berbantuan Media Bontang," *Metafora: Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa Dan Sastra* 8, no. 1 (2021): 65–65, <https://doi.org/10.30595/mtf.v8i1.10276>; Dasa Oktaviani Br Ginting dkk., "Analisis Kualitas Buku Teks Bahasa Indonesia Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar," *Kode : Jurnal Bahasa* 12, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.24114/kjb.v12i1.44399>; Zulfatul Maula dkk., "Efektivitas Metode Diskusi pada Pembelajaran Teks Berita pada Kelas VIII," *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* 10, no. 2 (2022): 224–224, <https://doi.org/10.24036/jbs.v10i2.117575>; Lindrawati, "Penyusunan Tes Keterampilan Membaca Teks Eksplanasi," *Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra* 1, no. 5 (2022): 561–72, <https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v1i5.131>.

²N. Afifah dkk., "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Interaktif Pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Kelas Iii Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Kiprah Pendidikan*, 2022, <https://kpd.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/kpd/article/view/24>; Akmal Akmal, "Penerapan Metode Pembelajaran Kooperatif Tipe Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI) untuk Meningkatkan Aktivitas dan Prestasi Belajar Bahasa Inggris di Kelas XI IPA 4 SMA Negeri 3 Dompu Tahun Pembelajaran 2019/2020," *Jiip - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2022): 51–61, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v5i1.384>; Siti Aisah dan Ismail Marzuki, "Implementasi Quantum Learning Upaya Meningkatkan Keterampilan Menulis Karangan pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Kelas III di Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kewirausahaan* 11, no. 3 (2023): 1000–1017, <https://doi.org/10.47668/pkwu.v11i3.955>.

³Annisa Aulia dkk., "Analisis Penerapan Pendekatan dan Model Pembelajaran Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia di Kelas IV Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar* 1, no. 1 (2023): 11–11, <https://doi.org/10.47134/pgsd.v1i1.106>; S. Aisyah dkk., "Bahan Ajar Sebagai Bagian Dalam Kajian Problematika Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia," *Jurnal Salaka* 2, no. 1 (2020), <http://journal.unpak.ac.id/index.php/salaka/article/view/1838>; Tekad Budiantoro dan Karolina, "Efektivitas Blended Learning Pada Mata Kuliah Bahasa Indonesia," *Jurnal Humaniora Teknologi* 8, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.34128/jht.v8i1.108>; Tri Budianingsih dan Nanda Lailatul Qadriani, "Analisis Kebutuhan Pengembangan Kolaborasi Metode Pembelajaran Bahasa," *JURNAL AL-AZHAR INDONESIA SERI HUMANIORA* 6, no. 1 (2021): 22–22, <https://doi.org/10.36722/sh.v6i1.471>; Teni Hikmatin, "Pengaruh Minat Baca dan Penguasaan Kosakata terhadap Kemampuan Menulis Cerita Pendek," *Diskursus: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia* 1, no. 3 (2020): 286–286, <https://doi.org/10.30998/diskursus.v1i03.6696>.

⁴Rustono dan H. B. Mardikantoro, *Kajian Wacana Kritis Model Michel Foucault (Materi 4)*, (Semarang), 2020.

According to Foucault, power is not merely possessed but exercised/practiced within a space a sphere containing numerous positions that are strategically intertwined with one another. For Foucault, power is always accumulated through knowledge, and knowledge affects interests. According to Foucault, those who exercise power produce knowledge as the foundation of power itself. Knowledge functions as the power relation itself.

The mass media can be described as a vehicle for the aspirations and interests of the public. The mass media is viewed as an independent entity that presents a variety of current and factual news to the general public. The purpose of news reporting in the mass media is generally to provide factual, current, reliable, and independent information.

However, in reality, there are mass media outlets affiliated with certain political ideologies that produce news or discourse. The discourse produced by these media outlets through their reporting exerts a certain influence and generates a certain level of support. Thus, it is quite clear that the text is not neutral. There are always intentions and objectives being pursued through the text. According to Benmetan and Setyowibowo, news discourse is best analyzed through critical discourse analysis. In this process, one should not only focus on analyzing the language itself, but must also be astute in relating it to the context⁵.

Critical discourse analysis theory is relevant not only in the context of formal communication, but also in the practice of everyday life. In the context of social media, discourse analysis can be used to explain how ideologies and power relations are constructed through interactions among users⁶.

Thus, it can be understood that texts produced by the mass media give rise to or construct discourse. This constructed discourse holds power that is supported by various interests. Therefore, when analyzing news texts in the mass media, keen critical thinking is required to interpret the language of the mass media within its real-world context.

One relevant analytical approach for understanding the construction of mass media news is Foucault's model of critical discourse analysis. Foucault's model of critical discourse analysis is based on three key elements: discourse, history, and power⁷.

⁵Thomas Benmetan dan Bhekti Setyowibowo, "Media Dan Penciptaan Kepanikan Moral: Analisis Wacana Kritis Terhadap Pemberitaan Pandemi Covid-19 Di Tirto.Id," *Scriptura Jurnal Ilmiah Komunikasi* 11, no. 2 (2021): 105–15, <https://doi.org/10.9744/scriptura.11.2.105-155>.

⁶M. Al Fiqri dkk., "Analisis Wacana Kritis terhadap Film Munafik 2," *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam*, advance online publication, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.25078/anubhava.v2i1.1050>.

⁷H. R. Dhona, "Using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in Communication Studies," *Communication Spectrum* 9 (2020): 189–208.

In line with this, according to Rustono and Mardikantoro, discourse is not understood merely as a series of words or propositions in a text, but as something that produces other things (ideas, concepts, or effects)⁸. Knowledge is linked to power. Power is not defined in terms of “ownership,” which is a specific source of power. Rather, it is exercised within a specific sphere and across many interrelated positions, and is inherently individual in nature. Power is always accumulated through knowledge, and knowledge always has an effect on power. The exercise of power always produces knowledge as the basis of power. The control and shaping of obedient and disciplined individuals are manifestations of power that exist everywhere. Through discourse, individuals are not only defined but also shaped, controlled, and disciplined.

Next is a study by Reyza, F. A. titled “High Tuition Fees: House of Representatives Accuses Education Minister Nadiem Makarim of Commercializing Higher Education,” published on Tempo.com⁹. The results of this study demonstrate that presents a body of knowledge to critique the stance of the Ministry of Education regarding its lack of impartiality toward the poor. The media’s ideology is open and bold in criticizing the Ministry of Education’s stance, which favors the poor so they can access higher education.

Meanwhile, research by Rafillah, R. A. indicates that the state and social institutions actually perpetuate power inequalities through symbolic policies and repressive norms. Systemic transformation is necessary to achieve substantive justice¹⁰.

This analysis confirms that the state and social institutions attempt to perpetuate power. These efforts utilize symbolic policies and repressive norms to ensure that the public remains convinced and malleable. Policies enacted by the government should be designed to foster true justice. However, coercion sometimes occurs through power dynamics.

Meanwhile, a study by Ariadi, B., & Jatmiko, H. T. P., titled “A Critical Discourse Analysis of Michel Foucault’s Model in the Java Pos Newspaper: The National Commission on Human Rights Investigates the Wadas Village Incident,” provides a deeper understanding of how the discourse in the news text is constructed and influences readers’ social perspectives.

⁸Rustono dan Mardikantoro, *Kajian Wacana Kritis Model Michel Foucault (Materi 4)*.

⁹F. A. Reyza, “Analisis Wacana Kritis Model Michael Foucault dalam Berita Pada tempo. com:” UKT Mahal, DPR Tuding Menteri Pendidikan Nadiem Makarim Lakukan Komersialisasi Pendidikan Tinggi,” *Journal ComSosMed* 1, no. 2 (2024): 36–50.

¹⁰R. A. Rafillah, “Wacana Kuasa ala Foucault atas Peran Negara dan Institusi dalam Melanggengkan Ketimpangan Kuasa pada Anak Perempuan Korban Kekerasan Seksual di Pontang, Serang,” *JURNAL ILMIAH NUSANTARA* 2, no. 5 (2025): 01–22.

Furthermore, this study also provides insight into the role of the mass media in conveying information and public opinion regarding this issue¹¹.

Research by Priambudi, S. shows that Tempo.co tends to take a critical stance toward the implementation of the MBG program, highlighting issues of transparency, potential corruption, and environmental impacts. In contrast, Kompas.com tends to frame the program more positively, emphasizing its economic benefits and government support¹².

The study by Nurhadi, M. F., & Utami, S. P. T., “Representations of Power in Political Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of President Prabowo’s Interview on Kompas.com,” shows that the overarching theme of the discourse emphasizes fundamental development in the areas of food, energy, education, and health. The discourse structure is coherent, dominated by active sentences and the use of pronouns such as “I” and “we” to emphasize direct involvement and a sense of unity. At the micro level, strategies such as legitimization, metaphors, repetition, and euphemisms are frequently used to construct the image of a visionary, inclusive, and data-driven leader¹³.

It is very clear from this discussion that critical discourse analysis can dissect news texts constructed by the mass media. What is reported through the mass media influences public opinion regarding the incident in Wadas Village. This demonstrates that Michel Foucault’s model of critical discourse analysis provides an accurate and incisive analysis of these news reports.

Throughout 2026, there was extensive media coverage of the government’s priority program, the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) initiative, particularly regarding the procurement of electric bicycles. This study focuses on news discourse published in the mass media between March and April 2026, as criticism regarding the MBG electric bicycle procurement was particularly intense during this period. News coverage of the MBG electric bicycle procurement has captured the attention of the general public not only in *mainstream* media but also on social media.

¹¹B. Ariadi dan H. T. P. Jatmiko, “Analisis Wacana Kritis Model Michel Foucault Pada Surat Kabar Jawa Pos: Komnas HAM Usut Insiden Desa Wadas,” *Journal of Language Teaching Linguistics and Literature* 1, no. 01 (2023): 8–14.

¹²S. Priambudi, “Analisis Wacana Kritis Norman Fairclough Dalam Konstruksi Berita Makan Bergizi Gratis Pada Media Tempo. Co dan Kompas. Com” (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Amikom Purwokerto, 2025), <http://eprints.amikompurwokerto.ac.id>.

¹³M. F. Nurhadi dan S. P. T. Utami, “Representasi Kekuasaan Dalam Wacana Politik: Analisis Wacana Kritis Wawancara Presiden Prabowo di Kompas. Com,” *Bahtera Indonesia; Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* 11, no. 1 (2026): 211–29.

Kompas.com frames MBG in a positive light as a visionary policy that supports the second Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target, Zero Hunger, by emphasizing collaboration across sectors as well as infrastructure readiness. In contrast, Kumparan.com tends to take a critical stance by highlighting the President's use of personal funds, the lack of technical regulations, and the challenges of implementation particularly in 3T regions (underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost) (Pranandana, V. A. K., Haryanti, N., & Meifilina, A.¹⁴).

The news has been dominated by reports on the procurement of MBG electric bicycles and the government's efforts to clarify the situation. The intensity of the coverage regarding the MBG electric bicycle procurement indicates that power is seen as a productive force that shapes social conditions. In this context, power actually gives rise to a specific ideology, including policies regarding MBG.

The knowledge contained within discourse cannot be considered objective knowledge. Knowledge creates a label of truth for those in power by establishing specific criteria and procedures. Through this truth, those in power can control and manage the discourse that is disseminated. The production of discourse is controlled by those in power to manage certain interests in order to achieve specific goals (Jatmiko, H. T. P.¹⁵).

Furthermore, according to M. Foucault as cited by Jatmiko, power does not simply mean possessing it, but rather exercising or practicing it within a sphere where numerous positions are strategically intertwined with one another. For Foucault, power is always accumulated through knowledge, and knowledge influences interests. Meanwhile, according to Foucault, those in power produce knowledge as the foundation of power itself. Knowledge functions as a power relationship in and of itself¹⁶.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is no power without the production of knowledge, and no knowledge is produced without power. The focus of this study is to uncover the mechanisms of power in the coverage of the MBG electric bicycle procurement by the mass media outlet TEMPO, using Michael Foucault's model.

¹⁴V. A. K. Pranandana dkk., "Analisis Framing Pemberitaan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) Pada Media Online Kompas. Com dan Kumparan. Com," *Jurnal Media Akademik (JMA)* 3, no. 9 (2025), <http://jurnal.mediaakademik.com>.

¹⁵H. T. P. Jatmiko, "Mekanisme Kuasa Dalam Pemberitaan Kenaikan Bbm Dalam Surat Kabar Kompas Edisi September (Pendekatan Wacana Kuasa Michel Foucault)," *Journal of Language Teaching Linguistics and Literature* 2, no. 01 (2024): 34–41.

¹⁶Jatmiko, "Mekanisme Kuasa Dalam Pemberitaan Kenaikan Bbm Dalam Surat Kabar Kompas Edisi September (Pendekatan Wacana Kuasa Michel Foucault)."

The first step was to analyze the statements in the selected news articles. Foucault states that a statement is a function that allows a number of statements to be connected and to make sense¹⁷.

The functions of the statements analyzed will reveal how statements are repeated, paused, woven into discourse, and then used to construct knowledge¹⁸. There are four stages and functions analyzed, namely: (1) object formation; (2) subject formation; (3) concept formation; (4) strategy formation¹⁹.

According to Foucault, power analysis in discourse analysis focuses on how knowledge is produced—at the local, regional, and global levels²⁰. McHoul and Grace explain that although power analysis focuses on specific local or regional contexts, power is never localized to a particular place, nor is it owned by anyone. Power analysis in Foucault's theory focuses on how knowledge is produced as discourse.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative descriptive study. According to Moleong, qualitative research is used as an effort to understand, examine, and investigate phenomena in great depth before interpreting them and drawing conclusions within a clear context²¹.

This qualitative study was conducted using Michael Foucault's critical discourse analysis model. The main approach involved describing the core of the issue and interpreting the research subject and context to establish the main topic of discussion; it then presented data in the form of words and sentences, which were analyzed based on patterns that did not disregard the context, using an analytical model distinct from Michael Foucault's. The research data consists of excerpts from MBG news discourse in mass media published in February 2026, with the titles "House of Representatives Claims MBG Project Does Not Disrupt the Education Budget (2/5/2026)," "JPPI Refutes Claim That MBG Does Not Reduce the Education Budget (2/21/2026)," followed by "A Series of Criticisms Regarding the MBG Ramadan" (2/28/2026), and finally "National Top Story: Criticism of the MBG Ramadan, from Mahfud Md. to Pigai" (2/28/2026).

¹⁷Michel Foucault, *Arkeologi Pengetahuan*, Terj. Moehtar Zoerni (Qalam, 2002).

¹⁸Dhona, "Using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in Communication Studies."

¹⁹Foucault, *Arkeologi Pengetahuan*.

²⁰Dhona, "Using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in Communication Studies."

²¹L. J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif edisi revisi* (PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2013).

The reading technique was used to examine the entire text of the news articles. The researcher carefully and thoroughly read the presented text segments. The data were then recorded and classified based on the main theory used in this study. Next, the data were interpreted that is, analyzed using a critical discourse analysis framework based on Michel Foucault's model. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the results of the examination and analysis of the data from the news sources as a whole.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

News Text 1

The framing of the story in Tempo on February 5, 2026, at 3:25 p.m. WIB, titled "House of Representatives Claims MBG Project Does Not Affect Education Budget," presented a statement explaining the government's policy that the MBG budget does not reduce the education budget. However, Tempo developed the story into a follow-up report that was quite critical: "MBG Budget Challenged Before the Constitutional Court." The mass media constructed a narrative that highlighted criticism of the government. Tempo presented the House of Representatives' explanation of the budget but also created polarization by reporting that the MBG budget was being challenged before the Constitutional Court. This was directly explained in the body of the article. The following is a quote from the reported statement.

- (1) "This budget shift reduces fiscal space for more urgent educational needs, such as improving teacher quality, school facilities and infrastructure, educational assistance, and ensuring equitable access to education," he said. In the first year of the program, the government budgeted Rp 171 trillion for the MBG, to be allocated in stages. The National Nutrition Agency then received additional funding to implement the food distribution program.
- (2) "The MBG program absorbed Rp 223 trillion from the education budget."
- (3) "A lawsuit challenging the use of the education budget for the MBG program has been filed with the Constitutional Court."

Subjects featured in a news report on February 5, 2026, at 3:25 p.m. WIB titled "House of Representatives Claims MBG Project Does Not Affect Education Budget": in addition to a House of Representatives member from the FPKB faction, the report also featured the plaintiff in the MBG budget case before the Constitutional Court. Abdul Hakim, a member of the legal team from Dignity Law, represented the Taman Belajar Nusantara Foundation (TB Nusantara),

along with three students and a contract teacher, to the Constitutional Court. PR (House of Representatives). The parties featured in the news report include: the Government, the Taman Belajar Nusantara Foundation, the plaintiffs, and Abdul Hakim of the Dignity Law legal team. The following is an excerpt from the news report:

(4) "DPR Claims MBG Project Does Not Disrupt the Education Budget"

(5) "Abdul Hakim, a member of the Dignity Law legal team, said this step was taken to uphold the mandate of Article 31, paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution."

The speaker is a member of the House of Representatives who claims the budget is sound. This is intended to establish the legitimacy of the MBG. Meanwhile, Abdul Hakim's legal team is acting as the plaintiff and has the legal standing to challenge the MBG budget before the Constitutional Court.

Conceptual framework of the statement in the Tempo news article dated February 5, 2026, at 3:25 p.m. WIB, titled "House of Representatives Claims MBG Project Does Not Disrupt the Education Budget." It contains the following points: the MBG project does not affect the education budget; the education budget will exceed the 20 percent *mandatory spending requirement* stipulated by the Constitution; the use of the education budget for the MBG project broadens the definition of operational funding for education; and there are pay cuts for temporary teachers while the MBG budget is substantial. The following quote serves as evidence of these statements.

(6) "When this education budget is increased, it will exceed the 20 percent *mandatory spending requirement* stipulated by the Constitution," he said.

(7) "This budget shift reduces the fiscal space for more urgent educational needs, such as improving teacher quality, school facilities and infrastructure, educational assistance, and ensuring equitable access to education," he said.

Strategic positioning in a Tempo article dated February 5, 2026, titled "House of Representatives Claims MBG Project Does Not Disrupt the Education Budget." The large MBG budget would disrupt the core education budget. Therefore, clarifications and appropriate strategies were implemented to prevent further lawsuits and criticism regarding the MBG budget. These strategies were carried out by House of Representatives members to present a clear and transparent image regarding the MBG budget within the education budget line item. There were statements in line with the government's perspective to help the public and critics understand the MBG budget situation.

News Text 2

In an article published in Tempo on February 21, 2026, titled “JPPI Denies Claim That MBG Does Not Reduce the Education Budget,” the subject of criticism raised by JPPN concerns the large MBG budget. This is reflected in the following quote.

- (8) “JPPI National Coordinator Ubaid Matraji argues that allocating the MBG budget of Rp 223 trillion within the 20 percent education budget allocation in the 2026 State Budget actually reduces the scope of education funding.”
- (9) In the 2026 State Budget, the government has also cut spending, particularly on regional transfer funds (TKD). These funds are typically used for school operational assistance and special education allocation funds.

The subject formation in the Tempo news article dated February 21, 2026, titled “JPPI Denies MBG’s Claim That It Did Not Cut the Education Budget” refers to subjects as actors playing a role in the discourse, such as JPPI and Minister of Basic and Secondary Education Abdul Mu’ti. This is evident in the following news excerpt.

- (10) JPPI National Coordinator Ubaid Matraji
- (11) Minister of Basic and Secondary Education Abdul Mu’ti said that MBG did not reduce the education budget in his ministry."

The statement appeared in a Tempo news article on February 21, 2026, and was issued by Minister of Basic and Secondary Education Abdul Mu’ti in his capacity as Minister of Education and Culture and as a government representative. This effort was made to demonstrate that the MBG budget does not reduce the education budget. The hope is that the public will understand and accept this policy. This is reflected in the following quote.

- (12) Previously, Minister of Education and Culture Abdul Mu’ti stated that the MBG does not reduce the education budget in his ministry. He also noted that, in fact, the education budget will increase in 2026.

A strategic framework was outlined in a Tempo article dated February 21, 2026, titled “The Ministry of Education and Culture Implements a Communication Strategy.” This effort was part of a strategy to quell protests over the MBG budget. This is reflected in the following excerpt.

- (13) “If there is a perception that the MBG program is cutting the education budget, we firmly state that this is not true. The President’s education program continues to be implemented to the best of our ability,” said Mu’ti during the Coordination Meeting on the Implementation of the MBG Program in East Java on Thursday, February 19, 2026.

News Text 3

The subject of the article in Tempo published on February 28, 2026, titled “A Series of Criticisms Regarding the Ramadan MBG.” The focus of the article is the Ramadan MBG and its meal menu. Various parties have protested the MBG during Ramadan, citing an inappropriate menu. This is evidenced by the following excerpt from the news article.

- (14) “In some places, the MBG Ramadan menu has been met with protests because it is seen as consisting only of cheap snacks.”
- (15) The offerings from President Prabowo Subianto’s flagship program have been criticized for not including expiration dates
- (16) “Some people have protested, saying the contents (of the MBG menu) aren’t quite right. I’ve already asked the Regional Secretary to immediately summon the person in charge of the MBG program,” said Sultan in Yogyakarta on Thursday, February 26, 2026.
- (17) “There have been numerous complaints from residents regarding the menu, which is considered inadequate to meet the nutritional needs of the beneficiaries.”

Subjects featured in a Tempo news article dated February 28, 2026, titled “A Series of Criticisms Regarding the MBG Ramadan Menu.” Various parties served as subjects who provided clarifications and explanations regarding the widespread protests against the MBG menu during Ramadan. One of them is Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, the mayor of Surakarta. Both are local public officials who provided explanations, confirmations, and clarifications to BGN regarding the MBG menu. This was done by the local government as the representative of the government implementing the MBG program. This is reflected in the following excerpt from the news article.

- (18) Sultan HB X also instructed those in charge of the program to improve the composition of the meals.
- (19) “We’ve received many complaints from residents. There are menu items that are considered inappropriate for children at school. That’s why we sent a letter requesting an evaluation,” Respati told reporters in Solo on Thursday, February 26, 2026.

The structure of the statement in the Tempo article dated February 28, titled “A Series of Criticisms Regarding the Ramadan MBG,” contains statements or claims regarding the MBG menu made by the Governor of DIY and the Mayor of Surakarta.

- (20) The Sultan also requested that public concerns regarding the lack of clarity on the price per serving be addressed immediately through concrete measures to ensure transparency regarding the value of the items distributed.
- (21) A number of complaints regarding the MBG menu during Ramadan have also been recorded on the Solo City Government’s official complaint platform, the Surakarta Complaint Service Unit (ULAS).

Tempo reported on this statement as a counterbalance to the information and criticism regarding MBG. The statement was issued by a local official who received complaints that the MBG menu was inappropriate. The official took action to ensure the relevant parties immediately addressed residents' complaints. This is the type of statement issued by the government.

The strategic framework is outlined in a Tempo article dated February 28, 2028, titled "A Series of Criticisms Regarding the MBG Ramadan Menu." The government implemented a strategy to quell the wave of protests over the MBG menu during Ramadan. These efforts were carried out by the government through the Governor of DIY and the Mayor of Surakarta. Evidence of this strategic framework in the article is found in the following excerpt.

- (22) Sultan HB X also instructed those in charge of the program to improve the food composition
- (23) "We've received many complaints from residents. There are menu items that are considered inappropriate for children at school. That's why we've written a letter requesting an evaluation," Respati told reporters in Solo on Thursday, February 26, 2026.

Both parties formulated **a strategy** to quell and reduce the wave of protests against the MBG menu during Ramadan. This was done not only for the government but also for the public, so that MBG could improve its menu offerings. In addition to the government's strategy, Tempo also gave greater prominence to the protests in its reporting. For example, it highlighted the numerous MBG protests in the Lumayang area, featuring various parents who were participating in the protests.

News Article 4

The subject matter of a news article in Tempo published on February 28, 2026, at 9:23 a.m. WIB, titled "Top National News: Criticism of MBG, from Ramadan to Mahfud Md. to Pigai." The article discusses MBG's policies. The Human Rights Minister considers the widespread criticism of MBG to be a violation of human rights. Mahfud Md. responded to the article.

- (24) Former Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Mahfud Md., highlighted Human Rights Minister Natalius Pigai's statement regarding opponents of government projects as human rights violators.

The subject “ ” appears in a Tempo article published on February 28, 2026, at 9:23 a.m. WIB, titled “National Top Stories: Criticism of MBG Ramadan and Mahfud Md. toward Pigai.” The article features former Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Mahfud Md., who criticized the Minister of Human Rights.

- (25) “However, it’s also important to remember that any government that manages the country unprofessionally is also violating human rights,” said Mahfud.
- (26) Human Rights Minister Natalius Pigai stated that those who wish to abolish the MBG project, Kopdes Merah Putih, or Sekolah Rakyat are effectively opposing human rights.

The statement appeared in a Tempo news article published on February 28, 2026, at 9:23 a.m. WIB, titled “Top National News: Criticism of the MBG, from Ramadan to Mahfud Md., Directed at Pigai.” The government, through the Minister of Human Rights, responded to various criticisms of the MBG, the People’s School, and the Merah Putih Cooperative, dismissing them as human rights violations. The reasoning is that these programs are pro-people and aimed at the people’s welfare.

Strategic maneuvers outlined in a Tempo news article published on February 28, 2026, at 9:23 a.m. WIB, titled “Top National News: Criticism of the MBG Ramadan Program and Mahfud Md.’s Remarks to Pigai.” The article details various efforts and strategies employed by the authorities to control protests against the MBG program, such as the strategy implemented by the Minister of Human Rights as follows.

- (27) Human Rights Minister Natalius Pigai stated that those who wish to abolish the MBG project, Kopdes Merah Putih, or Sekolah Rakyat are effectively opposing human rights. His reasoning is that these projects favor the people and are in line with human rights principles.

This effort was made to explain to the protesters that they should not interfere with programs that support the people. Interfering with such programs constitutes a violation of human rights. However, Mahfud Md also addressed this issue in the following quote.

- (28) The context of human rights violations is not limited to civil and political aspects. It also encompasses other aspects, such as economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights.

Analysis of Power

After conducting a functional analysis of statements made regarding four news articles on Tempo.com, a mechanism of power exercised by the government in relation to the MBG policy was identified. There was an exercise of power by authorities, including the head of the

BGN, the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, the Governor of DIY, the Mayor of Surakarta, and the Minister of Human Rights. These parties represent the authorities implementing the MBG program. Knowledge is produced by those in power to quell various criticisms of the MBG, ranging from the budget to the MBG curriculum.

The information conveyed took the form of an explanation that the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program does not reduce the core education budget; that the government has cut regional transfers; and, regarding the exercise of power, demonstrated its concern by immediately sending a letter and summoning the relevant parties. These actions were carried out as a new form of information dissemination by those in power. This includes a statement by the Minister of Human Rights labeling those who disagree with the MBG program, the Red and White Cooperative, and people's schools as human rights violators. These narratives are produced by the government to quell criticism of the MBG program and perpetuate its agenda; upon closer examination, the discourse surrounding the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) policy is intrinsically linked to basic education as a biological and cognitive prerequisite. At this level, ensuring adequate nutrition is not merely a health intervention but a fundamental foundation that enables students to focus and absorb learning to the fullest, thereby building intellectual capacity from an early age toward the vision of the Golden Generation 2045.

Furthermore, in the realm of higher education, the dynamics of criticism directed at the MBG budget and the analysis of texts as discourses of power resonate strongly with the three pillars of higher education. Higher education is called upon to serve as a forum for critical literacy that cultivates agents of change capable of dissecting political dichotomies, monitoring public policy, and safeguarding intellectual independence ensuring that the implementation of government programs remains accountable and serves the interests of the people.

Ultimately, this discourse highlights the mutually reinforcing cycle of human development between these two levels of education. Basic education serves as a space for affirmative implementation to ensure the physical and cognitive readiness of the next generation, while higher education plays the role of an intellectual force that oversees and evaluates the effectiveness of the policy itself against potential abuses of power, thereby creating human resources who are not only physically healthy but also critical and independent in their thinking.

CONCLUSION

Based on a critical discourse analysis of TEMPO news articles from February 2026 regarding the MBG program, it turned out to be a topic of significant media interest. The MBG program is implemented by the government to improve human resources. However, various criticisms regarding the budget and the program's components became the subject of intense coverage in TEMPO. Of the four news stories in TEMPO, two provided clarifications in the form of statements by members of the House of Representatives and the Minister of Education and Culture that the MBG budget was secure and did not reduce the education budget. In the next two stories regarding the MBG menu, the Ministry of Education and Culture sought to reassure the public that the MBG menu was appropriate and of good quality. The fourth article featured a statement by the Minister of Human Rights accusing the critics of violating human rights. Tempo emphasized the critical elements in these four articles, bolstering them with sources of protest from MBG recipients to convince readers.

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