PPSDP International Journal of Education
Volume 5 (1) 2026, 416-424
E-ISSN 2829-5196
P-ISSN 2830-3229
https://ejournal.ppsdp.org/index.php/PIJED

Management of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Elementary Schools: A Qualitative Study of Teacher Practices in Bengkulu City, Indonesia

Nova Asvio[1*], Dela Puspita Sari[1], Meli Astuti[1], Heny Friantary[1]
[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Famawati Sukarno Bengkulu, Bengkulu, Indonesia

*Corresponding author e-mail: novaasvio@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id

Received: 10 March 2026; Revised: 8 May 2026; Accepted: 11 May 2026;
Published: 11 May 2026

Abstract: This study examines the management of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program at the classroom level, focusing on planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation by second-grade teachers at SD Negeri 66, Bengkulu City. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, with data collected through observation, semi-structured interviews (n=8: 1 teacher, 1 principal, 6 students), and documentation over one semester. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. Findings reveal that MBG management remains largely informal and operational. Planning focuses on improving student nutrition and reducing breakfast skipping through coordination with food providers and nutritionists. Organizing involves teachers and students with flexible, spontaneous task division. Implementation proceeds through teacher-student collaboration in food distribution, adapted to provider arrival schedules. Evaluation is conducted through simple observation of student enthusiasm and food quality, with feedback provided to providers for improvement. While the program supports students' nutritional needs and demonstrates high student engagement, challenges persist in structured coordination, systematic documentation, and food quality control. This study contributes empirical evidence on frontline implementation of school feeding programs in Indonesia and recommends more systematic, documented management approaches at the school level.

Keywords: Elementary School; Free Nutritious Food; Program Management

Citation: Asvio, N., Sari, D. P., Astuti, M., & Friantary, H. (2026). Management of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Elementary Schools: A Qualitative Study of Teacher Practices in Bengkulu City, Indonesia. *PPSDP International Journal of Education*, 5(1), 401–415. https://doi.org/10.59175/pijed.v5i1.907

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Published by Perkumpulan Program Studi Doktor Pendidikan. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).



A. Introduction

Free Nutritious Meals is an initiative of President Prabowo-Gibran driven by the urgent need to address stunting and malnutrition rates, improve the quality of human resources towards Golden Indonesia 2045, and stimulate the people's economy. To regulate the governance of the Free Nutritious Meals program, the President launched Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 115 of 2025. This Presidential Regulation regulates the governance of the Free Nutritious Meals program. This Presidential Regulation regulates: a) the implementation of the Free Meals Program; 2) monitoring, supervision, control, evaluation, and reporting; and 3) funding and procurement of goods/services.

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) is one of the Indonesian government's strategic policies to improve the quality of human resources by fulfilling the nutritional needs of elementary school-aged children. This program is designed not only to address malnutrition but also to support improved concentration, attendance, and student learning outcomes in school. In its implementation, MBG plays a crucial role in creating optimal learning conditions because adequate nutritional intake has been proven to correlate with students' physical and cognitive readiness. However, the success of this program depends heavily on good management at the school level, particularly by teachers as the direct implementers in the classroom. This management includes planning, organizing, implementing, and continuously evaluating the program. Challenges faced in implementing MBG include limited facilities, coordination between parties, and suboptimal food quality control (Abdy, 2025).

The management of the MBG program by teachers in grade 2 of SDN 66, Bengkulu City, has its own characteristics because students are at an early stage of development that requires more attention in cultivating healthy eating habits and discipline during the activity. Teachers not only act as supervisors, but also as facilitators and educators who instill important values related to balanced nutrition and healthy lifestyle behaviors in students. In this context, the success of the program is not only measured by meeting students' nutritional needs, but also by changes in behavior and increased student awareness of the importance of nutritious food.

In implementing the MBG program in grade 2, teachers need to develop a thorough plan to ensure activities run according to established objectives. This planning includes scheduling mealtimes, adjusting menus to students' nutritional needs, and managing time to avoid disruptions to the learning process. Furthermore, teachers need to organize the program by involving various parties, such as the school, parents, and other support staff, to ensure the program runs smoothly. Good organization will help clarify the division of tasks and minimize obstacles during program implementation. During the implementation phase, teachers play a role in supervising students' mealtimes, ensuring cleanliness, and guiding students in implementing good and proper table manners. This activity also forms part of the contextual learning process that can instill healthy habits from an early age. Furthermore, program evaluation is a crucial aspect that cannot be ignored because it allows teachers to

determine the program's success and identify any obstacles encountered during implementation. This evaluation can be conducted periodically through direct observation and feedback from students and related parties (Zekaria et al., 2025).

Managing the MBG program also requires effective coordination between teachers and the school to ensure the availability of supporting facilities such as hygienic eating areas, appropriate eating utensils, and timely food distribution. Furthermore, parental involvement is a crucial factor in supporting the program's success, particularly in fostering consistent healthy eating habits between the school and home environments. Teachers need to maintain good communication with parents to ensure the program's implementation aligns with parenting practices at home. In the context of learning, the MBG program can be integrated with other subjects, such as Physical Education, Science, and Pancasila Education, so that students not only receive nutritional benefits but also gain a broader understanding of the importance of health. Furthermore, the diversity of student backgrounds also presents challenges in program implementation, particularly related to differing food preferences and eating habits. Therefore, teachers need to have adaptability and the right approach to ensure all students can effectively participate in the program. Another crucial aspect is monitoring the quality and safety of the food provided, to minimize the risk of health problems. In this regard, clear operational standards are needed to guide the implementation of the MBG program in elementary schools.

Based on observations and interviews conducted at SD Negeri 66 in Bengkulu City, the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program in grade 2 still faces several management challenges. In the planning stage, although the program's objective was clear: to improve student nutrition and reduce the habit of snacking outside of school, technical planning, such as student readiness and activity planning, was not fully structured. In the organizational aspect, team involvement was still limited to homeroom teachers and students without a clear and scheduled division of tasks, resulting in a tendency for implementation to proceed spontaneously. Furthermore, in the implementation stage, although the program ran well and students showed high enthusiasm, there were still obstacles in the distribution process and coordination with food providers. Meanwhile, in the evaluation stage, evaluation activities were not carried out systematically and measurably, although there were efforts to convey obstacles to the kitchen regarding food quality. Therefore, further study is needed on how teachers manage the MBG program in grade 2, including aspects of planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of the program to ensure it runs more effectively and optimally.

Several previous studies have shown that nutritious meal programs in elementary schools aim to improve students' nutritional status (Zenebe et al., 2018), reduce the habit of skipping breakfast (Al Bashtawy, 2017; Christensen et al., 2019; Ni Mhurchu et al., 2010), and support students' health and concentration (Tanziha et al., 2025). Furthermore, research has highlighted the importance of teachers' roles in assisting students, coordinating program implementation, and establishing communication with food providers and nutritionists (Hayes et al., 2018). Other studies have also

discussed aspects of program implementation that involve collaboration between teachers and students in food distribution activities at school (Herwawan et al., 2026). Although this research has been extensively researched, no research has specifically examined MBG management at the elementary school level, including planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the MBG program, particularly by classroom teachers. Therefore, it is important to conduct research related to MBG management at the elementary school level.

B. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type that aims to reveal in depth the management of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) by second-grade teachers at SD Negeri 66, Bengkulu City. The study was conducted in the school environment with the main subject being the second-grade homeroom teacher and supporting informants such as students and school officials involved in the MBG program, selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data collection techniques were carried out through direct observation of program implementation, in-depth interviews to obtain information related to program planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation, and documentation as supporting data. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions continuously throughout the research process. To maintain the validity of the data, source triangulation techniques, time triangulation, and technical triangulation were used by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. The research procedure was carried out through the stages of preparation, implementation, data analysis, and systematic preparation of the research report. The following table shows indicators in compiling the instrument.

Table 1. Indicators of the MBG Program Management Interview Guide Instrument

No	Indicator	Interview Questions
1	Planning	a. What are the primary objectives of the MBG program in Grade II? b. How do you identify students' needs for the implementation of the MBG program? c. What activities are planned within the MBG program?
2	Organizing	a. Who are involved in the MBG program team in Grade II? b. How do you organize schedules and task distribution among team members? c. How do you ensure that each member understands their roles and responsibilities?
3	Actuating	a. How is the MBG program implemented in Grade II? b. What strategies are used to achieve the program objectives? c. How do you monitor students' progress during the program? d. What do you know about the MBG program? (students) e. What are your expectations of the MBG program? (students) f. What do you like about the MBG program? (students) g. Do you have any suggestions to improve the MBG program? (students)
4	Evaluation	a. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the MBG program? b. What indicators are used to measure its success? c. How are evaluation results utilized to improve the program in the future?

C. Results and Discussion

Planning of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) by Grade 2 Teachers

The management of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) by second-grade teachers at SD Negeri 66 in Bengkulu City begins with planning activities aimed at improving students' nutritional status and fostering healthy eating habits within the school environment. In its implementation, teachers first identify students' needs by coordinating with food providers and nutritionists to ensure the menus meet the needs of elementary school-aged children. Furthermore, teachers also conduct simple organizational activities by involving students in receiving and distributing the meals, which arrive daily at designated times.

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in grade 2 of SD Negeri 66 Bengkulu City focuses on improving student nutrition and reducing the habit of students skipping breakfast and frequently purchasing snacks outside of school. In determining student needs, teachers establish direct communication with nutrition experts from the MBG program so that students' nutritional needs can be adjusted to their conditions and established nutritional standards. In addition, MBG activities are scheduled from 9:00 to around 9:30, so that before that time, teachers and students have already prepared to receive food from the SPPG car. This planning process shows that teachers not only play a role as implementers in the classroom, but also as liaisons between the school and food providers to ensure the program runs according to student needs. Thus, the planning of the MBG program in grade 2 is more practical and operational, adapted to real conditions in the field.

In planning the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in grade 2 of SD Negeri 66 Bengkulu City, teachers also played a role in organizing student readiness before the food arrived so that activities could proceed in an orderly manner and not disrupt the learning process. Teachers provided instructions to students to prepare themselves, maintain cleanliness, and wait orderly for the food to be distributed. Coordination with the food provider was also carried out directly, especially regarding the schedule of food arrival and the possibility of shortages or problems with the menu provided. This shows that the planning and implementation of the program are not only administrative, but also operational in the classroom, involving direct interaction between teachers and students. Thus, the role of teachers is not only as instructors, but also as program managers who ensure that MBG activities run according to the objectives that have been planned at the class level.

Teachers also adjusted strategies to ensure effective activities tailored to the characteristics of elementary school-aged students. Food distribution was structured, with students sitting in their assigned seats, either directly by the teacher or alternately with the assistance of other students for greater order and efficiency. Furthermore, teachers endeavored to ensure that the MBG activities did not disrupt the learning process by scheduling implementation times, typically before recess or at a predetermined time. Coordination with the kitchen staff providing the food was also

crucial in ensuring the program ran smoothly, particularly if there were any deficiencies or issues with the menu.

Organizing of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) by Grade 2 Teachers

In the organizational stage of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in grade 2 of SD Negeri 66 Bengkulu City, the parties involved in the program implementation consisted of homeroom teachers and students, who collaborated in receiving and distributing food in the classroom. The task arrangement in the program implementation was not carried out through a fixed schedule, but was flexible and carried out together according to the conditions when the food from the SPPG car arrived at the school. Although there was no formal division of tasks, coordination still ran well because of the high enthusiasm of students in welcoming the arrival of the food so that they spontaneously participated in the activities. This shows that the organization of the program emphasized more on direct cooperation in the field between teachers and students without a complex organizational structure, but was still able to support the smooth implementation of the MBG program in the classroom.

Activities were carried out by involving collaboration between the teaching teacher, homeroom teacher, and students in the process of distributing the food provided daily. The program implementation began when the food from the SPPG car arrived at school, then the teacher arranged for students to sit in their respective places to receive the food in an orderly manner. The strategy used by the teacher was to distribute the food directly to the students' desks or alternately from front to back, so that the distribution process could run more orderly and not cause chaos in the classroom. In addition, the teacher also coordinated with the kitchen providing the food to report any deficiencies or obstacles in the menu provided, so that improvements could be made in the next implementation (Widodo *et al.*, 2020: 5).

Actuating of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) by Grade 2 Teachers

During the implementation phase, MBG activities were carried out routinely, with teacher-assisted meal distribution in the classrooms, and were conducted in an orderly manner to avoid disrupting the learning process. This process demonstrated that teachers play a crucial role as the primary managers of the program at the classroom level, despite limitations in the more formal organizational structure.

Evaluating of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) by Grade 2 Teachers

During the evaluation phase of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in second-grade students at SD Negeri 66 in Bengkulu City, teachers conducted simple and ongoing assessments based on direct observation of classroom activities. The evaluation was conducted by observing the students' high level of enthusiasm in welcoming and participating in daily MBG activities, which is one of the main indicators of the program's success. Furthermore, teachers also observed the quality of the food received by students, especially if there were any obstacles such as

vegetables that spoil easily or fruit that rots quickly. These findings were then not only recorded internally but also conveyed to the food providers or the MBG kitchen for improvement in the next implementation. Thus, the evaluation in this program is practical and based on field experience that occurs directly in the classroom (Hamzah, 2020).

Meanwhile, obstacles in implementing the MBG program mostly arose from technical aspects, particularly related to the quality and durability of food supplies, which were sometimes suboptimal upon delivery to schools. This situation necessitated teachers to be more proactive in coordinating with food suppliers to prevent similar issues from recurring in the future. Furthermore, limitations in the still-simplified management system also posed a challenge, as evaluations had not been formally conducted and properly documented. Nevertheless, these obstacles were overcome through intensive communication between the school and the MBG provider, allowing the program to continue running and benefit second-grade students.

The results of the teacher evaluations were also used as a basis for improving the implementation of the MBG program going forward. Teachers reported any findings in the field, such as poor menu quality or the presence of perishable food ingredients, to the food providers so that adjustments could be made immediately. This follow-up process demonstrated that evaluations did not stop at the assessment stage but also served as feedback to improve the quality of program services. Furthermore, limited time for classroom activities also presented a challenge, as the program had to be adjusted to fit within a busy learning schedule. However, through good coordination between teachers and providers, these obstacles were minimized, ensuring that the MBG program continued to run smoothly and positively impact second-grade students.

The evaluation also demonstrated that the success of the Free Nutritional Meals (MBG) Program is determined not only by food availability but also by the coordination process between the parties involved. Second-grade teachers served as the primary liaison between students and food providers, conveying various inputs that emerged during the program's implementation. The providers' prompt response to school reports was a key factor in the program's sustainability. However, challenges persisted regarding the consistent quality of the menu provided, necessitating greater attention to food quality control. This situation suggests that a more structured evaluation of the MBG program is necessary to ensure that any issues can be properly documented and serve as a basis for ongoing improvement.

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in second-grade students at SD Negeri 66, Bengkulu City, also emphasizes the development of positive habits in students by regularly consuming healthy foods. Teachers indirectly provide contextual learning to students about the importance of maintaining cleanliness before and after meals, as well as cultivating orderly behavior when receiving and consuming food together. This activity is part of character education integrated with the school program, so that students not only receive nutritious food but also acquire the values of discipline and

responsibility. Throughout the process, teachers also observe the development of student attitudes over time, particularly regarding enthusiasm, independence, and healthy eating habits in the school environment. Thus, the MBG program not only functions to meet nutritional needs but also serves as a means of social learning and character development for students in lower grades (Gurning, 2023).

D. Conclusions

Program management has been implemented through planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating stages, although it is still simple and operational at the classroom level. In the planning stage, the MBG program aims to improve student nutrition and reduce the habit of skipping breakfast and buying snacks outside of school, with the support of coordination with food providers and nutritionists. In the organizing stage, program implementation involves homeroom teachers and students with a flexible division of tasks and is carried out spontaneously according to field conditions. Furthermore, in the implementation stage, MBG activities run well through cooperation between teachers and students in the food distribution process that is adjusted to the classroom situation and supported by coordination with the kitchen provider. In the evaluation stage, teachers conduct simple assessments based on student enthusiasm and food quality, and convey various obstacles to the provider for program improvements.

E. Acknowledgement

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the completion of this study, including the school administrators, teachers, and students of SD Negeri 66 in Bengkulu City for their valuable participation and support.

References

Abdy, I. (2025). Perception Triangulation: Comparative Analysis of Teachers', Parents', and Students' Evaluation of the Free Nutritional Meal Program in Elementary Schools in Pakis District, Malang Regency Iwan. *Joyful Learning Journal*, *14*(4).

ALBashtawy, M. (2017). Breakfast eating habits among schoolchildren. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, *36*, 118–123. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2017.05.013

Christensen, C. B., Mikkelsen, B. E., & Toft, U. (2019). The effect of introducing a free breakfast club on eating habits among students at vocational schools. *BMC Public Health*, *19*(1), 369. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-6701-9

Gurning, F. P. (2023). Implementation of The School Children's Nutrition Program Policy Through Elementary School Teachers' Supervision. *Journal of Telenursing (JOTING*, *5*, 3963–3973.

Hamzah. (2020). The Effect of Diet on the Nutritional Status of Hamzah Elementary School Children. *Jurnal Keperawatan Muhammadiyah Alamat Website:* http://journal.um-surabaya.ac.id/index.php/jkm pengaruh, 5(2)

Hayes, D., Contento, I. R., & Weekly, C. (2018). Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior, and School Nutrition Association: comprehensive nutrition programs and services in schools. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, *50*(5), 433–439. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2018.03.001

Herwawan, J. H., Tasijawa, F. A., Rehena, Z., & Nindatu, M. (2026). Impact and implementation issues of the free nutritious meal program in the Maluku Islands: Perspectives from students, teachers, and implementers. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2026.2630180

Ni Mhurchu, C., Turley, M., Gorton, D., Jiang, Y., Michie, J., Maddison, R., & Hattie, J. (2010). Effects of a free school breakfast programme on school attendance, achievement, psychosocial function, and nutrition: a stepped wedge cluster randomised trial. *BMC Public Health*, *10*(1), 738. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-10-738

Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 115 of 2025 Concerning Governance for the Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (2025).

Tanziha, I., Ekayanti, I., & Ahmad, A. (2025). The impact of a free nutritious meal program on elementary school students' concentration levels. *AcTion: Aceh Nutrition Journal*, *10*(3), 790–800. https://doi.org/10.30867/action.v10i3.2737

Widodo, T. W., Utami, C. D., Nuraisyah, A., Taufika, R., Dora, R., & Dewi, C. (2020). Increasing the knowledge of students of SDN Glagahwero 02 Kalisat District about the importance of consuming nutritious vegetables. *Darmabakti Jurnal Pengabdian dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat 01*(April), 6–9.

Zekaria, E., Travelancya, T., Kiromi, I. H., Islam, U., & Hasan, Z. (2025). The Role of Teachers in Educating Children About the Importance of Balanced Nutrition at RA Raudlatul Hasan. *Journal of Education Research*, *0738*(3), 575–582.

Zenebe, M., Gebremedhin, S., Henry, C. J., & Regassa, N. (2018). School feeding program has resulted in improved dietary diversity, nutritional status and class attendance of school children. *Italian Journal of Pediatrics*, *44*(1), 16. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13052-018-0449-1