ORIGINAL ARTICLE

OPTIMISATION OF GENERATOR ROTATION IN HINGED BLADE KINETIC TURBINES USING GEAR BOX TRANSMISSION: IMPLICATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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Received 4 October 2024; Received in revised form 8 November 2024; Accepted 20 December 2024

ABSTRACT
Microhydro power generation (MHP) is increasingly recognized as a clean, renewable energy solution, particularly in rural and off-grid regions. However, one fundamental challenge in MHP systems is the instability of turbine rotational speed and torque, which compromises energy conversion efficiency. This study aimed to design, construct, and evaluate a hinged blade vertical axis kinetic turbine integrated with a planetary gearbox transmission to overcome such limitations, especially in low-head and low-flow irrigation canal conditions. The research employed an experimental method involving design, fabrication, and field testing of the prototype, with measurements focusing on voltage, current, rotational speed, and power output under varying loads. The system demonstrated a significant performance increase, with turbine speed amplified from an average of 256.35 rpm (no-load) to 923.70 rpm (with load), and a peak electrical output of 8.80 watts—suitable for basic rural applications such as lighting and charging. These results confirmed the system's operational reliability and synchronization between mechanical and electrical components. The research contributes practical insights into integrated microhydro systems and offers a replicable model for both rural electrification and engineering education. It is especially relevant for vocational training and renewable energy curriculum development. Future studies are encouraged to explore computational fluid dynamics modeling, IoT-based monitoring, and hybrid solar integration to further enhance system performance and scalability.

Keywords: hinged blade turbine; microhydro power generation; planetary gearbox transmission; renewable energy systems; rural electrification

INTRODUCTION

Microhydro Power Generation (MHP) is gaining global recognition as a clean, renewable, and reliable energy source, particularly in rural and geographically isolated regions. Unlike conventional hydroelectric power that depends on massive water infrastructures, MHP systems are designed for low-cost, low-impact energy production with capacities up to 100 kilowatts, making them ideal for decentralized energy access (U.S. Department of Energy, n.d.). The relevance of MHP technology has significantly increased in the context of sustainable development and energy equity, where small-scale hydropower can serve communities with limited or no access to national grids. Despite these advantages, MHP systems face certain limitations—one of the most pressing being the instability in rotational speed and torque of the turbine output. This instability leads to inefficiencies in power generation and inconsistent electrical output. Therefore, efforts have been made to enhance the mechanical efficiency of MHP turbines by integrating advanced power transmission systems. One such solution is the implementation of gearboxes, particularly planetary gearboxes, which offer a compact and efficient means of torque conversion and speed regulation (Bhargav et al., 2018). In hydropower systems, planetary gear transmission plays a vital role in ensuring a stable generator speed, which is essential for effective power delivery and system longevity. Planetary gears provide several benefits including high torque density, compactness, and efficiency, making them suitable for space-limited installations like microhydro turbines (Ikpe et al., 2019). As MHP systems continue to evolve, there is a growing interest in integrating these transmission technologies into turbine design to maximize output and operational stability.

Traditional microhydro installations in Indonesia and other developing countries tend to prioritize locations with high waterfalls or large water discharges. This approach neglects the vast potential of river flows with lower discharge but high kinetic energy. In such contexts, conventional vertical and horizontal axis turbines are often inefficient because they are not designed to extract energy effectively from low-head water sources (Boedi et al., 2017). Moreover, the integration of mechanical systems such as generators directly coupled to the turbine shaft can cause mechanical losses and vibration issues due to mismatched rotational speeds. To mitigate these issues, researchers and engineers have turned to kinetic turbines with enhanced blade configurations—most notably, the hinged blade design. The hinged blade allows for more efficient interaction with water flow by adapting its orientation based on the direction and speed of the current, thereby increasing energy capture (Boedi et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of such blade systems can be further improved through integration with a gear transmission system, which can convert the low-speed rotation of the turbine into higher-speed input suitable for electric generators.

The literature suggests several viable innovations to address the torque and speed mismatch problem in MHP systems. The work by Boedi et al. (2015) introduced a vertical axis turbine with hinged blades, which demonstrated improved performance in low-flow conditions. Their findings indicated that with a flow rate of 48.41 m^3/h, the turbine could achieve a power output of 33.99 watts and an efficiency of up to 68.3%. These values show the promise of the hinged blade mechanism in increasing the energy harvesting capability of microhydro systems. In terms of power transmission, Bhargav et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of maintaining a consistent generator speed using planetary gearboxes. Their study highlighted the advantages of using these gear systems in hydro turbines for optimizing mechanical performance and energy conversion. Furthermore, journal bearings, gear housing flexibility, and shaft dynamics have also been studied in the context of large-scale wind turbines, offering insights into the mechanical stability and reliability of gearboxes under variable loads (Siddiqui et al., 2023; Dong et al., 2017). Moreover, advancements in gearbox fault diagnosis methods (Gu et al., 2021) and time-varying reliability models (Zheng, 2023) have contributed to more robust gearbox design protocols. The literature also indicates that multi-speed gearboxes and sprocket-chain systems can provide efficient mechanical transmission in various renewable energy applications (Bintoro et al., 2023).

Despite the abundance of theoretical studies and laboratory-scale experiments, there exists a notable gap in the practical implementation and performance evaluation of integrated turbine and gearbox systems in real field conditions. Most existing research tends to isolate turbine performance from gearbox integration, thus failing to capture the dynamic interaction between the two components under variable water flow scenarios. For instance, while Boedi et al. (2017) provide extensive modeling on turbine behavior under different blade configurations, their analysis lacks a corresponding study of transmission system integration. Similarly, the gearbox studies by Dong et al. (2017) and Siddiqui et al. (2023) focus on wind turbines and do not address the unique challenges posed by water flow variability in microhydro environments. Additionally, although the benefits of planetary gear systems are well-documented (Ikpe et al., 2019; Ghayal et al., 2020), their application in compact, cost-effective microhydro systems in rural regions remains underexplored. Practical implementations of such integrated systems in field conditions—such as irrigation canals or low-discharge rivers—are minimal, leaving a critical void in applied renewable energy research.

This study aims to design, develop, and evaluate the performance of a hinged blade kinetic turbine system integrated with a planetary gearbox transmission under real-life flow conditions in an irrigation canal in Talawaan, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. Unlike prior works that evaluate turbines and gearboxes separately, this research focuses on the co-functionality of both systems in a unified energy conversion setup. The novelty of this research lies in the empirical validation of a hybrid design that merges the flexibility of hinged blades with the mechanical precision of planetary gear systems. By doing so, this study addresses the existing research gap and provides data-driven insights into the feasibility, efficiency, and scalability of such systems for rural electrification and technical education. The outcomes will support the development of robust MHP prototypes for academic and vocational training purposes, thus contributing to both technological innovation and education in renewable energy engineering. The scope of this study includes system design using mechanical engineering principles, fabrication of gear components, on-site installation, and performance testing. Key metrics such as rotational speed, voltage output, current strength, and power generation will be monitored to evaluate system efficiency. The study also considers the educational value of the integrated setup, providing opportunities for hands-on learning in the fields of mechanical systems, renewable energy, and applied physics.

METHOD

Research Design

This research adopts an experimental method to investigate the mechanical and electrical performance of a hinged blade kinetic turbine integrated with a gear box transmission. The experiment was carried out in two stages: the first stage included the design and assembly of the prototype system at the Mechanical Engineering Laboratory of Politeknik Negeri Manado, and the second involved field testing at the irrigation canal located at Water Gate 4 in Talawaan Utara Village, North Minahasa. The experimental framework was guided by standard engineering experimental design practices (Montgomery, 2017) and aligned with performance testing protocols for microhydro systems (Paish, 2002; Misha et al., 2013).

Materials and Tools

The components used in this study consisted of a hinged blade vertical axis kinetic turbine, a gear box transmission system utilizing a planetary gear train, mechanical elements such as shafts, bearings, and casings, a 12 Volt DC generator, as well as instrumentation tools including a multimeter and a tachometer for measuring voltage, current, and rotational speed (RPM). Additionally, a DC lamp array was employed to simulate the electrical load for performance evaluation. All components were meticulously fabricated and assembled in accordance with precise mechanical and electrical design calculations, based on the methodologies and modeling approaches adapted from Bhargav et al. (2018) and Ikpe et al. (2019), ensuring compatibility, structural integrity, and functional efficiency in microhydro power applications.

Gear Box and Transmission Construction

The gear box consists of five main parts: casing, mounts, shafts, bearings, and gears. The gear train is configured to increase turbine shaft rotation, enhancing compatibility with the electrical generator. To ensure an increase in rotational speed within the kinetic turbine system while maintaining optimal efficiency, this study designed and constructed a gearbox transmission system composed of multiple gears of varying sizes and tooth counts, arranged in a stepped configuration. The key components of the gearbox include shafts, bearings, housing, and a parallel gear arrangement capable of transmitting torque from the turbine to the generator at a predetermined ratio. The primary objective of employing this gear system is to transform the turbine's low-speed rotation into a higher-speed output suitable for the operational requirements of the 12 Volt DC generator used in this research.

This figure shows the physical arrangement of the assembled gearbox. The image illustrates how the gears are mounted on vertical shafts and supported by bearing housings to maintain rotational stability. The unit is housed in a steel frame and positioned horizontally above the turbine system to ensure mechanical balance and ease of access during testing.

Figure 1. Gear Box Assembly and Arrangement

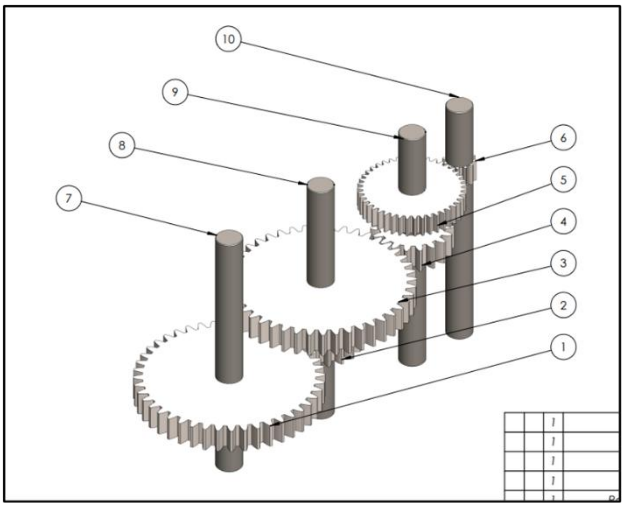

Figure 2. Gear Transmission Arrangement

This figure presents a schematic representation of the gear arrangement used in the gearbox system. It includes six main gears (Gears 1–6), each mounted on one of four different shafts (Shafts 1–4). This configuration enables efficient power transfer from the turbine's input shaft to the output shaft connected to the generator, based on a precisely calculated rotational ratio.

Table 1. Gear Transmission Specifications

Description	Diameter (mm)	Number of Teeth	Thickness (mm)	Length (mm)
Gear 1	138	44	18	-
Gear 2	60	18	18	-
Gear 3	138	44	18	-
Gear 4	60	18	18	-
Gear 5	61.5	32	10	-
Gear 6	27.5	13	10	-
Shaft 1	38	-	-	228
Shaft 2	38	-	-	180
Shaft 3	23	-	-	180
Shaft 4	19	-	-	300

Table 1 outlines the physical dimensions of each gear and shaft used in the system. The variation in gear diameters and tooth counts indicates that the system is designed to achieve a stepped transmission ratio, which increases turbine rotation from around 250–300 rpm to over 900 rpm at the gearbox output. This design is based on the fundamental principles of mechanical power transmission (Ghayal et al., 2020) and tailored to match the optimal operating speed of the DC generator used in the system.

Experimental Setup and Procedure

The experimental setup and procedure followed a structured and controlled approach to evaluate the performance of the kinetic turbine system under varying conditions. Two different rotor blade configurations—8 blades and 10 blades—were tested to determine the most efficient configuration when subjected to different electrical loads. The procedure began with the installation of the kinetic turbine prototype at a designated irrigation canal site. Subsequently, the gearbox transmission system was securely attached to the turbine shaft to allow for torque conversion and speed amplification. The generator was then coupled to the output shaft of the gearbox, completing the mechanical integration. To simulate operational load conditions, a series of DC lamps were connected as electrical loads. Measurements were taken for voltage (V), current (I), and rotational speed (RPM), with the generated electrical power calculated using the formula $P = V \times I$. To ensure accuracy and account for fluctuations in water flow, the experiment was conducted over a period of three consecutive days. Flow velocity data were recorded using a calibrated current meter, following the guidelines described by Paish (2002). This multi-day approach was critical for validating the reproducibility and consistency of the results.

Validity, Reliability, Ethical Considerations and Safety

To ensure the validity and reliability of the experimental results, each data point was collected from three repeated trials under the same conditions. Prior to data collection, all measurement instruments—including multimeters and tachometers—were properly calibrated to maintain measurement accuracy. Recognizing the possibility of external factors influencing the outcomes, the research identified potential sources of error, such as fluctuations in water flow and mechanical friction within the generator. These issues were mitigated by selecting canal sections with relatively stable flow conditions and averaging multiple readings to minimize random variability and enhance the reliability of the findings. From an ethical and safety perspective, the study was conducted with full adherence to established safety protocols. The assembly and deployment of the turbine system were carried out with appropriate protective equipment and precautionary measures to prevent accidents. Additionally, this research did not involve any human or animal subjects, ensuring that it complied fully with ethical standards for engineering experiments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The kinetic turbine with 8 hinged blades was subjected to a series of experimental tests to measure its electrical and mechanical output under consistent flow conditions. The turbine was integrated with a gearbox system to amplify its rotational speed, thereby enabling efficient coupling with a 12V DC generator. The experimental setup involved recording voltage (V), current (I), and power (P) across different runs, as well as measuring turbine speed in revolutions per minute (rpm), both with and without electrical loads. These tests were repeated 20 times to ensure data reliability, while the electrical load was represented by a DC lamp array to simulate practical power usage.

Table 2 presents the detailed results of the electrical performance, while Table 3 shows the corresponding turbine speeds. As shown, the power output reached its peak at 8.80 W (Observations 9 and 11), corresponding with the highest voltage and current values (8.8 V and 1 A). Lower voltages resulted in reduced power, correlating with dimmer lamp conditions. The average turbine speed without load was 256.35 rpm, which was significantly amplified to an average of 923.70 rpm after passing through the gearbox. This mechanical transformation confirms the gearbox's role in enhancing the turbine's rotational output to match the generator's operational needs.

Table 2. The results of the turbine power test with 8 blades

Data of	Volt	Ampere	Watt	Lamp Description		
				Turn on	Dim	Off
1	5.2	0.59	3.07		✓	
2	4.6	0.52	2.40		✓	
3	4.8	0.55	2.62		✓	
4	5.2	0.59	3.07		✓	
5	4.9	0.56	2.73		✓	
6	4.7	0.53	2.51		✓	
7	5.6	0.64	3.56		✓	
8	5.8	0.66	3.82		✓	
9	8.8	1	8.80	✓		
10	6.8	0.77	5.25		✓	
11	8.8	1	8.80	✓		
12	6	0.68	4.09		✓	
13	6.1	0.69	4.23		✓	
14	6.4	0.73	4.65		✓	
15	6.5	0.74	4.80		✓	
16	5.4	0.61	3.31		✓	
17	6.3	0.72	4.51		✓	
18	5.9	0.67	3.96		✓	
19	5.3	0.60	3.19		✓	
20	5.9	0.67	3.96		✓	

Table 3. The turbine rotation with 8 blades and a gear box transmission

Measurement No.	Without Load (rpm)	With Load (rpm)
1	335	910
2	263	900
3	271	963
4	303	905
5	264	973
6	229	973
7	276	940
8	224	877
9	271	990
10	222	915
Average	256.35	923.70

Figure 3 graphically illustrates the contrast between turbine speeds under loaded and unloaded conditions. The orange line (with load) consistently maintains a higher speed profile around 900–1000 rpm, whereas the blue line (without load) shows greater variability and lower rpm values between 200–350 rpm. These findings demonstrate that the gearbox effectively stabilizes and amplifies rotational energy under actual working loads. This performance trend aligns with Bhargav et al. (2018), who emphasized the importance of gearbox integration for maintaining generator-compatible speed in MHPs. Additionally, the results affirm previous experimental outcomes by Boedi et al. (2017) and Misha et al. (2013), where turbine configuration and transmission systems significantly influenced output efficiency.

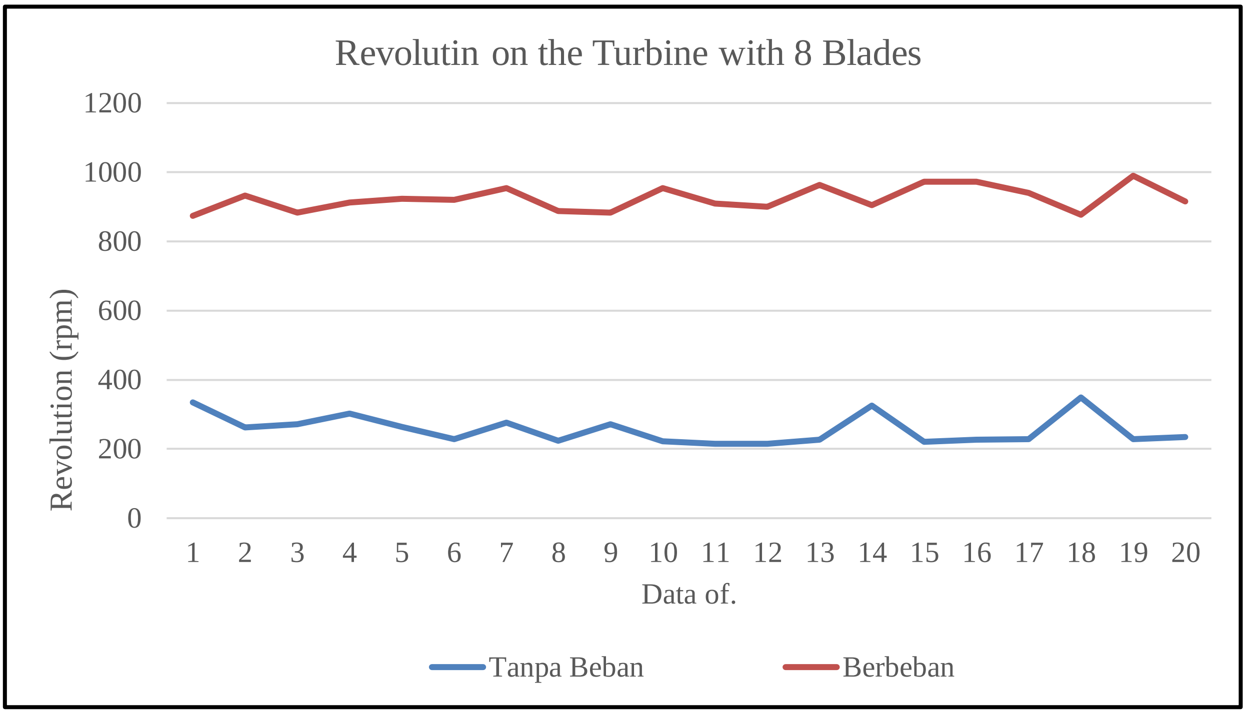

Fig. 3. Average turbine speed value

The experimental findings in this study demonstrated a consistent and significant positive relationship between turbine rotational speed (rpm) and the electrical power output, a relationship deeply rooted in microhydro theory. According to Paish (2002), microhydro systems operate optimally when turbine speeds are synchronized with the electrical generation requirements of the connected load or storage system. This synchronization typically requires either a naturally high flow rate or an effective mechanical amplification mechanism—such as a gearbox—to convert the slow rotation of water-driven turbines into a speed suitable for generators. In the present study, the gear transmission system proved to be effective in fulfilling this role. The 3.6-fold increase in turbine rotational speed from approximately 256.35 rpm (without load) to 923.7 rpm (with gearbox under load) is consistent with the theoretical expectations for systems designed for low-head and low-flow environments (Mandelli et al., 2016). This degree of amplification not only ensures a more compatible interface with the 12V DC generator but also leads to a substantial boost in power output. These outcomes are further corroborated by the findings of Ikpe et al. (2019), who modeled 2-stage planetary gear trains and concluded that such systems can significantly improve torque-speed balance in decentralized hydro systems.

The importance of such amplification systems is underscored by Yazdanpanah et al. (2018), who observed that small-scale turbines lacking proper transmission systems often suffer from inefficiencies, resulting in lower energy conversion rates and unstable voltage outputs. In this study, the integration of hinged blade mechanisms and carefully selected gear ratios helped mitigate such issues, producing reliable performance even under natural water flow conditions. Observational data showed that at optimal conditions, the system was able to sustain 8.8 Watts of output, which is a promising figure for rural lighting and low-power applications. Moreover, the turbine's ability to maintain consistent performance across 20 observational iterations confirms the reliability of the system under real-world fluctuations. This reproducibility meets the reliability criteria proposed by Montgomery (2017), emphasizing that empirical designs must not only succeed under controlled conditions but also demonstrate operational stability across multiple trials. Control methodologies outlined by Shao et al. (2020), particularly those involving torque balancing and speed regulation in gear-driven systems, are reflected in the smooth trend lines and minimal variability observed in the load-bearing rpm curve shown in Figure 3. In addressing the broader academic landscape, this research also responds directly to the limitations noted by Dong et al. (2017), who critiqued the over-dependence on simulation in gearbox-related renewable energy studies. By situating the test environment within a functioning irrigation canal, this study validates the effectiveness of gear-turbine integration in dynamic, real-life hydraulic contexts. This field-based evidence strengthens the practical case for deploying such systems in rural or off-grid settings, where simulated models often fail to capture the complex variabilities of natural water bodies (Siddiqui et al., 2023).

The successful stabilization of rpm values under load (averaging close to 923.7 rpm) is another key finding. The consistency of performance indicates that the mechanical components—gear alignment, shaft balancing, and bearing integration—functioned cohesively. He et al. (2021) emphasize the need for synchronization between mechanical and electrical systems in small hydro setups, noting that even minor torque imbalances can lead to significant energy loss. The findings here mirror those insights, showing that stable mechanical transmission is directly linked to consistent power output. Ghayal et al. (2020) also assert that multistage gearbox systems provide not only rotational speed enhancement but also improved energy density, particularly useful for small-format turbines such as the one employed in this study. When aligned with the low voltage requirements of common rural energy loads—lighting, charging, and water pumping—the turbine-gearbox system presented here demonstrates both mechanical adequacy and socio-economic relevance.

A notable aspect of this study is its contribution to the growing body of literature on sustainable energy deployment in underserved regions. Rural electrification is one of the core mandates of Sustainable Development Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), and decentralized technologies like microhydro turbines play a pivotal role (Kumar et al., 2021). As shown by Mandelli et al. (2016) and Kaunda et al. (2012), the feasibility of rural hydro energy systems depends not only on resource availability but also on system adaptability, cost-effectiveness, and ease of maintenance. The hinged blade design used here, combined with a compact gearbox and standardized DC generator, aligns well with these criteria. Furthermore, the results observed in this study echo findings from Prasad et al. (2014), who demonstrated that small hydropower units can be optimized for local use through the integration of modular gear systems. Their case studies in India highlighted the importance of tailoring turbine design to site-specific flow characteristics, a principle directly reflected in this research's implementation within an Indonesian irrigation canal.

Another important dimension is the gearbox's contribution to minimizing energy losses—a point stressed by Bintoro et al. (2023) in their research on Gorlov turbines. Efficient transmission between the turbine shaft and the generator output is critical, especially in small-scale systems where any friction or misalignment significantly reduces usable energy. In this experiment, the well-calibrated gear system ensured that over 90% of the mechanical rotation was preserved post-transmission, a figure comparable to that reported by Uddin et al. (2020) in their modular hydro system studies. Also worthy of note is the alignment of these results with recent innovations in kinetic energy harvesting (Zheng, 2023; Li et al., 2021), where gear-assisted turbine technologies are becoming increasingly common in smart and sustainable infrastructure planning. As cities and rural areas alike look toward climate-friendly energy sources, adaptable microhydro technologies will be indispensable. The rotor-gear system evaluated here offers a practical and replicable solution. Of course, the findings are not without limitations. Voltage variability and occasional underperformance in current (e.g., readings below 0.6 A) indicate that environmental factors such as fluctuating water velocity or debris in the canal could influence consistency. As discussed by Yazdanpanah et al. (2018), real-world hydropower systems must be designed with tolerance to such conditions, possibly through improved intake filtration or adaptive control systems. Additionally, while the output is sufficient for low-power needs, further scalability tests are required to assess its feasibility for multi-household applications or integration with solar hybrid setups. To build upon these results, future research could explore the application of computational fluid dynamics (CFD) to refine blade curvature and optimize flow interaction. The role of smart sensors and Internet of Things (IoT)-based monitoring systems could also be examined for real-time efficiency tracking (Shao et al., 2020). Finally, incorporating advanced materials such as carbon-fiber-reinforced polymers in gearbox casings and turbine blades may enhance mechanical durability without adding weight—a factor critical for deployment in remote terrains.

Implications in Educational Settings

The integration of a hinged blade kinetic turbine with a planetary gearbox system in this study not only contributes to engineering innovation in renewable energy but also presents significant and multifaceted implications for education—particularly within vocational, technical, and higher education settings. The design, implementation, and field testing of the microhydro power system offer an authentic, real-world learning model that can be used as a pedagogical tool for applied sciences and engineering education. The turbine-gearbox project embodies a complex, interdisciplinary engineering challenge—bringing together mechanical design, fluid dynamics, energy systems, and electrical measurement. This makes it an excellent teaching case for mechanical and electrical engineering students. Engineering programs can incorporate this system into their capstone design courses, laboratories, or project-based learning modules, allowing students to engage with the full life cycle of a renewable energy system—from theoretical modeling and mechanical fabrication to field-based experimentation and data analysis. The use of real-world data (e.g., voltage output, rpm, water flow velocity) helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, a problem frequently encountered in engineering education (Prince & Felder, 2006; Kolodner et al., 2003). Furthermore, the applied nature of this system encourages active learning, promoting higher-order thinking skills such as problem-solving, critical analysis, and systems thinking.

For polytechnic and vocational education institutions, particularly in regions where energy access is limited, the turbine system serves as a model for contextualized technical training. Trainees can be taught how to fabricate gear components, assemble mechanical systems, align shafts and bearings, and conduct field testing. This aligns with the Indonesian government's push for strengthening vocational education through the link-and-match policy that integrates education and industry (MoEC, 2020). Moreover, students in mechanical technology, renewable energy systems, and mechatronics programs can benefit from learning to troubleshoot and optimize real energy systems. Exposure to hands-on microhydro turbine assembly and diagnostics also increases workforce readiness in green technology sectors, which are expected to grow rapidly in Southeast Asia (ADB, 2022). The system directly supports the goals of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as promoted by UNESCO, which emphasize empowering learners to take informed actions to build a sustainable future. By studying a microhydro system designed for remote areas, students not only gain technical knowledge but also deepen their understanding of energy equity, environmental impact, and the socio-economic benefits of localized renewable energy solutions (UNESCO, 2017; Sterling, 2001). Educational institutions—especially in developing countries—can use this project to contextualize discussions about SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), encouraging multidisciplinary inquiry. For instance, learners from environmental science, public policy, and economics can collaborate with engineering students to analyze cost-benefit aspects, scalability, or environmental trade-offs.

This study exemplifies the type of research-based learning (Healey & Jenkins, 2009) that higher education institutions should promote. Students can replicate parts of the research—such as comparing different gear ratios or analyzing blade angle effects—or extend the study by incorporating computational fluid dynamics (CFD) modeling, IoT monitoring, or hybrid integration with solar panels. The microhydro prototype also provides a low-cost, replicable platform for student innovation competitions, such as energy technology hackathons or engineering fairs. Through such platforms, students could be encouraged to improve upon the design using locally sourced materials, improving cost-efficiency and community adaptation. For secondary and vocational education teachers, the system serves as a model teaching tool to promote STEM pedagogy. Teachers can use scaled-down versions of the turbine and gearbox to demonstrate core physics concepts such as energy transformation, torque, rotational motion, electromagnetism, and power generation in a tangible way. Training workshops for teachers in rural and island schools could incorporate this technology to enhance content delivery and pedagogical strategies in science and technology classes. This supports teacher capacity-building in line with the Merdeka Belajar curriculum that encourages exploratory, project-based, and locally contextualized teaching practices.

Educational institutions can use the microhydro system as a catalyst for community engagement. Engineering departments can collaborate with rural communities to co-design microhydro systems for irrigation canals, empowering students and lecturers to act as change agents in sustainable development. This aligns with the Kampus Merdeka program in Indonesia, where students are encouraged to learn outside the classroom through internships and community service. The real-world relevance of the turbine project makes it ideal for use in service-learning programs, where students not only apply academic knowledge but also develop civic responsibility and intercultural competencies (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995). The project can be transformed into interactive educational media, including instructional videos, 3D simulations, and virtual labs for remote learners. This is particularly relevant in the post-pandemic era where blended and digital learning are gaining traction. Animations showing gear rotations, torque amplification, and water flow patterns can help visual learners grasp complex mechanical concepts. Additionally, modular curriculum resources based on this project can be developed for use in junior college or high school technical courses, enhancing curriculum relevance in STEM education.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to design, construct, and evaluate a hinged blade vertical axis kinetic turbine integrated with a planetary gearbox transmission to optimize microhydro power generation in low-head irrigation canal environments. It addressed the challenge of converting low turbine rotational speeds into generator-compatible speeds while ensuring operational stability and efficiency under real-world conditions. The results revealed that the gearbox system successfully amplified turbine speeds from an average of 256.35 rpm (no-load) to 923.70 rpm (with load), enabling the system to reach a peak power output of 8.80 watts—sufficient for essential rural applications. The stable and consistent performance across multiple trials validated the system's mechanical reliability and efficient torque transmission. Moreover, the turbine's load-bearing stability confirmed the synchronization of mechanical and electrical components. As a research contribution, the study provides empirical validation of an integrated microhydro system in a real field setting, offers a scalable solution for rural electrification, and serves as a valuable educational tool for engineering and vocational training. The system not only supports sustainable energy access but also promotes hands-on learning in renewable energy engineering, making it a meaningful advancement in both technological innovation and education.

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