

Optimizing Hard Skills and Soft Skills as Preparation for Work Readiness in SMK YMIK West Jakarta Students

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ABSTRACT

This community service activity focuses on improving the work readiness of 12th-grade students by strengthening hard and soft skills that are relevant to industry needs. The background of this activity is the existing gap between the competencies of vocational high school graduates and the demands of the job market, both in terms of technical skills and non-technical abilities like communication, work ethics, and teamwork. This program is carried out through several methods, including technical skills training according to the field of expertise, soft skills development workshops (communication, leadership, problem solving, and adaptability), job interview simulations, as well as guidance in preparing CV and portfolios. In addition, participants are also given insights into industry work culture and strategies for facing the recruitment process. The expected outcome of this activity is to improve students' overall competence, both in technical skills and personality, so that they are more confident and ready to compete in the workforce. With the optimization of both hard and soft skills, vocational school graduates are expected to become professional, adaptive workers with high competitiveness

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vocational education plays a strategic role in preparing human resources who are competent and ready to enter the workforce. Vocational High Schools (SMK) are one of the educational institutions designed to produce graduates who have technical skills (hard skills) in their field of expertise as well as non-technical skills (soft skills) needed by businesses and industries (DUDI). However, technological developments, industrial digitalization, and increasingly competitive job market competition require SMK graduates to have more comprehensive competencies to be able to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the workforce.

According to Susilo et al. (2026), hard skills and soft skills are basic competencies that are very important for someone to have before entering the workforce. Students' job readiness is influenced by their abilities Both technical skills (hard skills) and interpersonal abilities and character (soft skills) are important, and according to Handari and Tuwoso (2025), hard skills and soft skills are two competencies that complement each other in preparing vocational high school students to enter the workforce. Hard skills serve as the technical abilities needed to perform a job, while soft skills like communication, teamwork, and leadership become key factors in career success. Students who have good communication, teamwork, discipline, and adaptability skills tend to be more ready to enter the workforce, and mastery of technical competencies in their field helps students feel more

confident and prepared to meet job demands (Manik & Rahmadana, 2020). The success of an organization or company greatly depends on the work readiness of its workforce. Work readiness is the condition of physical, mental, knowledge, skill, and learning experience maturity that allows someone to carry out tasks effectively according to their chosen field (Muspawi & Lestari, 2020). Mastery of technical skills, supported by communication, teamwork, and adaptability, can boost graduates' readiness to face the job market (Setiawati & Mayasari, 2021). SMK YMIK West Jakarta is one of the vocational education institutions that focuses on developing students' competencies through skill-based learning. This school is committed to producing graduates who are ready to work, continue their education, or start their own business. Various learning programs, field work practices (PKL), and extracurricular activities have been carried out to improve students' skills.

SMK YMIK West Jakarta is a vocational education institution that focuses on developing students' skills through skills-based learning. The school is committed to producing graduates who are ready to work, continue their education, or start their own businesses. Various learning programs, field work practices (PKL), and extracurricular activities have been carried out to improve students' competencies. However, based on initial observations, discussions with the school, teachers, and some students, it was found that there is still a gap between the skills students have and the needs of today's job market. This gap is not only related to technical skills but also interpersonal abilities, which are one of the important factors in someone's career success.

Based on the results of identifying needs conducted together with the school, several main issues were found as follows:

1. The mastery of hard skills in line with industry needs is not yet optimal.
2. Low professional communication and presentation skills.
3. Students' lack of readiness for the job recruitment process.
4. Low problem-solving and teamwork abilities.
5. Lack of understanding of industry work culture.
6. Students' lack of confidence in planning their careers after graduation

These issues form the basis for carrying out the Community Service (PkM) activities, which focus on strengthening hard and soft skills to improve job readiness for students at SMK YMIK Jakarta Barat.

Based on the results of the situation analysis and problem identification with the partner, the Community Service (PkM) team offers a solution in the form of a program (1) improving hard skills based on industry needs. The solutions provided include job competency training according to the needs of the business and industrial world, introduction to digital technology and work productivity apps, training on how to prepare work administrative documents professionally and enhancing digital literacy and using technology in the workplace (2) strengthening soft skills and professional character. Activities carried out include effective communication and business communication training, leadership training, teamwork training, problem solving and critical thinking training and work ethics and organizational culture training and (3) job readiness training. This program includes preparing a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and job application letter, techniques for handling job interviews, psychotest and job interview simulations and creating a career plan.

2. METHOD

The Community Service Program (PkM) was carried out using the Participatory Training and Empowerment method, an empowerment approach that involves active participation from partners in all stages of the activities. This method was chosen because it suits the characteristics of partners in the vocational education sector, aimed at preparing graduates who are ready for work.

The activities focused on the main issues, specifically in the field of human resource (HR) management, including strengthening soft skills, work readiness and developing students' professional character. Through these areas, it is hoped that students of SMK YMIK West Jakarta will have more comprehensive competencies, enabling them to compete in the job market.

Activity Implementation Stages

1. Preparation and Coordination Stage

In the initial stage, coordination is carried out between the PkM team of Mercu Buana University and SMK YMIK West Jakarta to align perceptions regarding the goals, targets, schedule, and the type of activities that will be carried out. Activities at this stage include meetings with the school principal and supervising teachers, identifying participants' needs, preparing training modules, preparing the activity schedule and determining the participants of the activities. The output of this stage is a program plan that matches the partner's needs.

2. Problem Identification and Needs Analysis Stage

This stage aims to get an overview of the students' actual condition regarding hard skills, soft skills, and work readiness. The methods used include Observation, Interviews, Questionnaires. The results of the needs analysis become the basis for preparing training materials.

3. Activity Implementation Stage

The area of concern is Strengthening Soft Skills and Work Readiness. The main problem found is still the low ability in communication, leadership, teamwork, and readiness to face the job recruitment process. The solution provided is carried out through activity (a) professional communication training includes verbal and nonverbal communication, presentation techniques, communication in the workplace, and basic public speaking with the interactive lecture method and (b) work Readiness Training includes preparing a Curriculum Vitae (CV), making a job application letter, job interview techniques, and workplace professional ethics through workshops, interview simulations, and individual mentoring. The goal of this activity is to improve students' readiness to enter the workforce.

4. Evaluation Stage

Evaluation is carried out to measure the level of success of the program, including evaluating participant satisfaction through questionnaires and the relevance of the material to participants' needs, with a success indicator of at least 80% of participants completing the activities and at least 75% of participants being able to properly prepare a CV and job application letter.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service activity was carried out on April 22, 2026, at SMKS YMIK Joglo, West Jakarta, in the form of a direct socialization activity with 12th-grade students about the importance of soft skills and hard skills as preparation for work, as well as how to create an attractive CV for job applications with the topic of the importance of soft skills

besides hard skills in the workplace, providing understanding on how to develop both soft and hard skills, how to create a systematic CV, and giving insights and knowledge about the working world. After the outreach and practice were done, the Community Service Team (PKM) held a discussion and evaluation session. Participants were given the chance to ask questions and share the challenges they face in developing soft skills, improving hard skills, and creating an attractive and professional CV, and the PkM team provided feedback and solutions that could be applied directly.

After the discussion session, an evaluation session was conducted through a questionnaire distributed to participants as target partners. The questionnaire was expected to provide feedback to the PkM team on the solutions offered to partners' problems, whether the presenters were able to give insights and understanding on topics relevant to the partners' needs, as well as the partners' expectations for follow-up activities.

Results achieved (1) increased participants' understanding of the importance of balancing soft skills and hard skills in the workplace, (2) gained information on how to develop soft skills and hard skills, (3) added knowledge on how to create a systematic CV for the job recruitment process, (4) participants showed enthusiasm and interest in joining further training in the future, and (5) around ± 35 participants actively took part in this socialization activity.



Figure 1. Implementation of Activities

4. CONCLUSION

From the results of this community service activity, we can draw the following conclusions: (1) in improving hard skills based on industry needs through job competency training according to the needs of the business and industrial world, introduction to digital technology and work productivity applications, training in professional work administration document preparation, and increasing digital literacy as well as the use of technology in the workplace. This is done with the aim of enhancing graduates' abilities in using technology and work-supporting applications and improving their technical readiness before entering the workforce.

(2) in improving industry-based soft skills through effective communication and business communication training, leadership training, teamwork training, problem-solving and critical thinking training, as well as work ethics and organizational culture training. This is done with the aim of improving graduates' communication skills, fostering self-confidence in interactions, and developing professional character and a good work ethic in teamwork and problem-solving.

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