

## Communication Skills Development as a Gen-Z Core Competency at SMKN 1 Cihampelas West Bandung, West Java Province

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**Abstract.** Generation Z (Gen-Z) are individuals born between the mid-1990s and 2000s. Middle school students are part of the Gen-Z group. As digital natives, Gen-Z often doesn't need technological assistance, considering they are already used to and familiar with technology. However, their ability to adapt to technology sometimes differs from their ability to communicate directly in public. By mastering public speaking, Gen-Z can build self-confidence and make good presentations to convey their ideas so that effective communication can be achieved, especially for SMKN 1 Cihampelas students whose main target after graduating is to enter the world of work immediately. Lack of self-confidence makes students feel embarrassed and afraid to speak in public. Therefore, it is necessary to improve communication skills, which aim to provide knowledge about Public Speaking, which will later help grow students' self-confidence in speaking in public, make it easier for them to adapt to the work environment, help them get support, get a job, and career, through public speaking training. The training stages consist of preparation, implementation, evaluation, and reporting. As a result of this training, participants are now equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively engage in public speaking and apply them in their future professional endeavors.

**Keywords:** Communication skills, gen-Z, SMKN 1 Cihampelas West Bandung, public speaking, training

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid technological development and globalization, competition in the world of work is increasingly fierce, so educational institutions need to produce superior talent in line with current market demands. In a report from The World Economic Forum in 2020, there was a skills gap in the skills needed by companies, and 94% of business leaders reported that they expected employees to have appropriate skills in the workplace, especially in the current digital era (The World Economic Forum, 2022). Furthermore, the World Economic Forum also launched the "Top 15 Skills in 2025" that job seekers are expected to have, such as abilities in critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-management, such as active learning, resilience, stress tolerance, and flexibility. Of the skills sought, all are rooted in the individual's ability to communicate orally and in writing.



**Figure 1.** To 15 skill in 2025

Source: (The World Economic Forum, 2022)

As producers of skilled workers, educational institutions must be able to produce superior talents that align with current market demands. Especially for Vocational High Schools (SMK) where every graduate is prepared to be able to work straight away. One of the challenges facing educational institutions today is that they are facing Generation Z (Gen-Z), who have distinctive characteristics and preferences. Gen-Z are individuals born between the mid-1990s and the 2000s (Çalışkan, 2021; Schlee et al., 2020)(Çalışkan, 2021; HR Glossary, 2023; Schlee, Eveland, & Harich, 2020). High school students are part of the Gen-Z group. Gen-Zers are very adaptive and responsive not only to digital technology but also to their work environment services (Szymkowiak et al., 2021)(Szymkowiak, Melović, Dabić, Jeganathan, & Kundi, 2021; Yousey, 2023). As digital natives, Gen-Z often does not need help with technology, considering that they are already used to and familiar with it (De Witte, 2022).

SMKN 1 Cihampelas is a vocational school founded in 2007 and operates on Jl. Sayuran No. 39 Mekarmukti Village, Cihampelas District, West Bandung. The vision of SMKN 1 Cihampelas is to become a quality vocational school at national standards whose graduates have good morals, can develop local excellence, and compete in the global market, having five skill competencies, namely Computer and Network Engineering, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineering, Electrical Power Installation Engineering, Accounting, and Institutional Finance as well as Office and Business Management.

The students at SMKN 1 Cihampelas are Gen-Z, who are technologically literate and have good knowledge of office management and business. However, they must also have practical and confident public speaking skills. Public speaking skills will be beneficial for students in facing situations in the world of work that involve interactions with colleagues, project presentations, problem-solving, or negotiations with business partners (Jean-Pierre et al., 2023; Novieyana et al., 2021). In the context of office management and business services, good speaking skills will help students convey their ideas, explain automation processes clearly, and influence others to support and adopt the solutions they offer (Astuti et al., 2021).

Public speaking training involves developing the ability to speak in public confidently and effectively (Maspuroh et al., 2023). This skill is not only crucial in the context of formal presentations but also in everyday situations such as communicating with colleagues, conducting negotiations, or leading team meetings. Speaking well and convincingly can help students articulate their ideas, influence others, and build strong relationships in the workplace. Public speaking training can also help students at SMKN 1 Cihampelas, especially in office management and business venture study programs such as Gen-Z, overcome anxiety and increase self-confidence. Many individuals from this generation face challenges in public speaking, such as nervousness, fear of other people's judgment, or difficulty conveying ideas. Gen-Z can overcome these obstacles through proper training and developing strong speaking skills (Bodie, 2010).

Furthermore, public speaking skills also provide a competitive advantage in today's fast-paced and communicative work world. Gen-Z who have good speaking skills can stand out among their competitors and more easily get the career opportunities they want. This ability is an added value sought by companies who want employees who can communicate effectively and present themselves professionally. Considering the importance of public speaking training in preparation for entering the world of work, providing training aimed explicitly at Gen-Z becomes very relevant. With appropriate training, Gen-Z can hone their public speaking skills, increase their self-confidence, and increase their chances of success in their careers.

Based on the description of the problem above, activities are needed that can overcome anxiety and increase the self-confidence of students at SMKN 1 Cihampelas, so this activity aims to provide training that can improve speaking skills and confidence in speaking in public, with the following scope: Provide knowledge about the basic concepts of public speaking, Provide knowledge about methods of public speaking, and Provide knowledge about verbal and non-verbal communication.

## 2. METHOD

A method is used to achieve specific goals (Sugiyono, 2017). From this definition, the implementation method can be interpreted as an activity carried out in a certain way to achieve a predetermined target. This program uses participatory methods and training at SMKN 1 Cihampelas Jln. Sayuran No.39 Desa Mekarmukti, Kec. Cihampelas, Kab. Bandung Barat 40757, on August 16, 2023, at 08.00-12.00 WIB, and 40 students in the XII grade as participants. The stages of the program can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1.** The stages of the program

<b>A. Preparation</b>	
1. Pre-Survey	Identify partners problems
2. Team formation	Adjusted to the type of expertise to solve partner problems
3. Proposals	Offering solutions & activity funds
4. Coordination	Brainstorming the Team & Partners program
5. Tools & Materials	Purchase and rental of equipment and creation of activity materials
<b>B. Implementation</b>	
Training	Activities carried out through training, discussion and question and answered (2 x 60 minutes)

### C. Evaluation

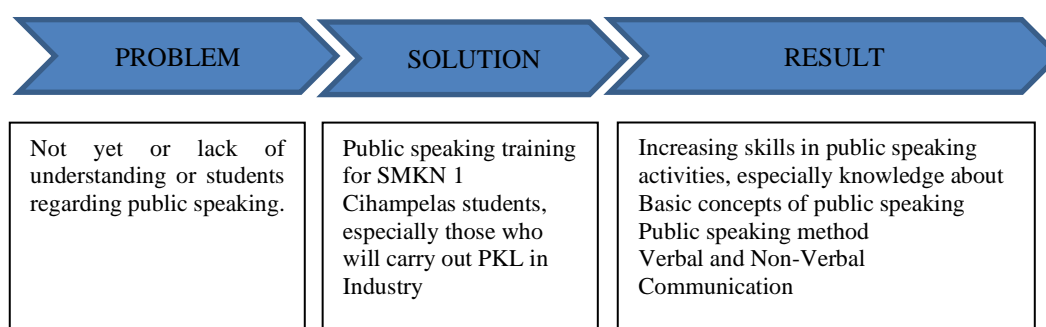
The success indicators of the training activities are identified, and the success of the activities is measured by comparing these indicators before and after the training. Positive changes in partners (training participants) following program implementation serve as indicators of program effectiveness.

### D. Reporting

Report preparation is conducted to provide responsibility for program implementation and for subsequent release.

Source: Authors, 2023

Problem solving framework offered:



**Figure 2.** PkM problem, solution, and result

There are several implementation methods used in program implementation, namely:

1. Training: The program begins with the presentation of training materials regarding public speaking and has been adapted to the needs of partners, consisting of:

**Table 2.** PkM program materials

No	Speakers	Program Materials	Tools & Materials
1.	Suci Fika Widyana	Basic concept of Public Speaking	Papers, <i>Kahoot</i> , Video and presentation slides
2.	Senny Handayani S	Public Speaking methods	
3.	Ali M. Rezza and Asarekha Adjane A	Verbal and Non-Verbal Communications	

Source: Authors, 2023

2. Discussion: Following the presentation, a dialogue takes place in the form of an exchange of questions and answers between the presenter and the attendees. Discussions were conducted to enhance participants' comprehension of the offered content. Through conversations, training serves as more than just a means of knowledge transfer; it also facilitates the exchange of experiences and the resolution of difficulties faced by partners.
3. Indicator of success: The PkM partner is SMKN 1 Cihampelas, and the training participants are 40 students. Partner participation in this PkM program includes:
  1. The process involves formulating the problem, creating the program, scheduling activities, and implementing the program till the evaluation stage of the activities.
  2. Take an active role in training activities.
4. Evaluation method: Program evaluation is carried out to determine the results and achievements of the planned program implementation. This assessment is conducted by juxtaposing the partner's state prior to program implementation with their state after program implementation. The program evaluation is presented in the following table, providing a comprehensive breakdown.

**Table 3.** Evaluation program

<b>Programs</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Instruments</b>
Public Speaking Training	Participants' understanding of the training material	Increased understanding of the basic concepts of public speaking, public speaking methods, non-verbal communication, and barriers to public speaking	1. Observation 2. Interview 3. Questionnaire

Source: Authors, 2023

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The programs carried out on August 18, 2023, took place in the multimedia room of SMKN 1 Cihampelas Jln. Sayuran No.39, Mekarmukti Village, Cihampelas District, West Bandung 40757, from 10.00 am until 12.00 pm, with the implementation of activities consisting of preparation, implementation, and evaluation. All stages of activities have been carried out 100%. The number of participants who attended the training was 31 people (78% of the initial target of 40 participants). At the beginning of the training activity, participants were asked to fill in a pre-test link containing ten questions about public speaking. The pre-test was conducted to measure the extent to which participants knew about the training material. The pre-test results will be compared with the post-test results at the training session's end.

Following the completion of the pre-test, the subsequent stage involves the delivery of the information by four presenters. Dr Suci Fika Widyana presented the first material regarding the basic concept of public speaking. This first material discusses the importance of good communication skills, especially public speaking. Public speaking is the biggest fear of the top ten fears, besides the fear of death, darkness, and heights. This basic concept material also explains things that can hinder communicators when they speak in public, including anxiety, lack of self-confidence, mental blocks, and limiting beliefs. Apart from that, communicators also need to understand the types of audiences. The aim is so that communicators can anticipate obstacles that may occur or arise when communicating with their audience. At the end of this discussion, tips and tricks for public speaking are also explained.

Dr. Senny Handayani Suarsa delivered the second material regarding public speaking methods. This section explains public speaking methods, such as storytelling, impromptu, memoriter, manuscript, and using notes, as well as the differences and advantages of each method. The strategy for delivering public speaking using the GAIDAC method (Greeting, Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, and Closing) is also explained.

Verbal and Non-verbal communication is the third material in this training, delivered by Dr. Ali Muhamad Rezza and Asaretkha Adjane Annisawati, MBA. This material consists of elements in verbal communication (such as articulation, audibility, diction, fluency, intonation, pace, pitch, volume, rate, tone, and stressing) and non-verbal communication (such as smile, posture, forward lean, territory, and touch, eye contact, and head nodding). Apart from that, appearance needs to be paid attention to and is a form of non-verbal communication. Do not forget the explanation about "listening," which is a form of non-verbal communication often ignored, so it must be trained well. In this session, examples and videos were also provided regarding verbal and non-verbal communication forms.

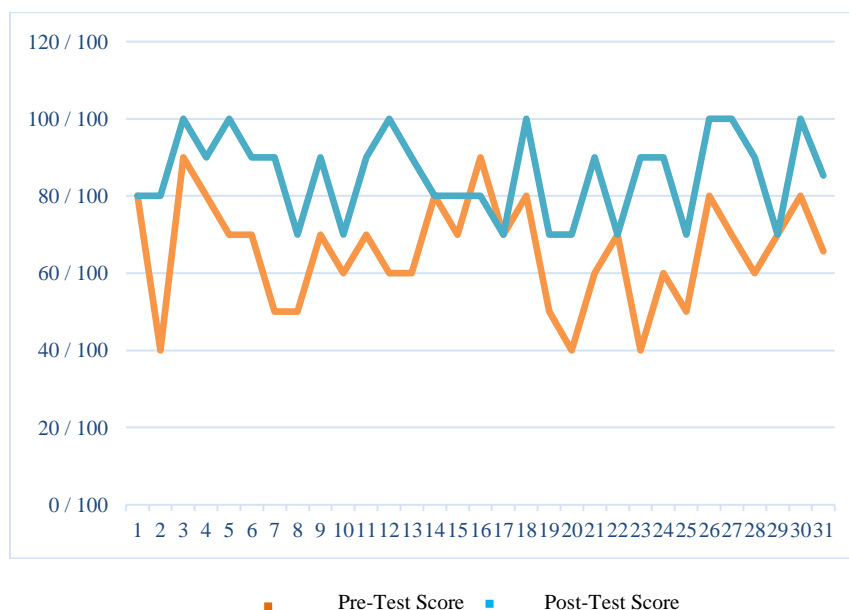
After all the material has been presented and discussions have been held with the training participants, the next step is to carry out the post-test. Next, the pre-test and post-test data were processed and analyzed using descriptive analysis.

**Table 4.** Descriptive analysis

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Modus</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Pre-Test	31	40	90	66	70	14.06
Post-Test	31	70	100	85	90	11.37

Source: Authors, 2023

Based on the output in Table 4, Descriptive Analysis shows that the average score in the pre-test results is 66, while the average score in the post-test results is 85. The score that appears most frequently in the pre-test is 70; in the post-test, it is higher, namely 90. It showed that the participants' abilities increased after the training, namely by 30%. The following data details the results of the pre-test and post-test for training participants:



**Figure 3.** Comparison result pre-test and post-test  
Source: Authors, 2023

The graph depicted in Figure 3 illustrates the successful implementation of the PkM program on public speaking. This is evidenced by a notable enhancement in participants' comprehension and expertise, enabling them to effectively apply and utilize the acquired knowledge. Consequently, both the participants and SMKN 1 Cihampelas, as collaborators in this training program, have benefited from the program's outcomes.





**Figure 4.** Training situations



**Figure 5.** Photo session after training activities

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The PkM Team's activities have shown that the implementation of public speaking training successfully achieved the desired outcomes. These outcomes include an enhanced comprehension of public speaking activities, encompassing fundamental concepts, methods, and verbal and non-verbal communication. As a result of the training, participants are now equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively engage in public speaking and apply them in their future professional endeavors. 31 students from SMKN 1 Cihampelas, located in West Bandung, participated in the implementation of the PKM program. The stages of PkM activities are divided into (1). The preparation stage consists of preliminary activities to identify needs, problems, and partners; the grouping of expert teams; preparation of proposals; team and partner coordination; tools and materials; (2). The implementation phase consists of training through discussion and question and answer; (3) Evaluation of the program by comparing the conditions of the partners before and after the training. (4). Reporting is the preparation of accountability reports, and all stages of activities have been carried out 100%. Four presenters, accompanied by three students from the University of Logistics and International Business, gave the subject. During the training, partners are actively involved in the entire program, from formulating problems to the activity evaluation stage. The output of PkM activities was achieved at the end of the training program. Participants' knowledge of several indicators in service activities has shown an increase.

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