

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In an era where globalization and technological advancements are rapidly evolving, various changes have emerged, including in the world of education. Currently, the focus in education is no longer limited to academic achievement alone. Education today must also prioritize the holistic development of students' potential, including self-awareness skills that help students identify their interests and talents from an early age. This plays a significant role in children's development. According to (Alhamdika et al., 2024: 16223), fostering children's interests and talents yields positive outcomes such as building self-identity, enhancing learning motivation, and contributing to social well-being.

However, in reality, many children aged 9–11 years still struggle to understand their interests and talents. Results from group interviews conducted with 20 students from two elementary schools in Sidoarjo Regency indicate that they lack understanding of their own interests and talents, evident in students' difficulty describing and sharing their interests and talents, as well as a tendency to mimic their peers' interests or talents. Interviews with teachers also revealed similar findings; some students have not yet demonstrated their interests and talents due to a lack of stimulation, particularly from their parents. Many children and adolescents experience confusion in determining the direction of their lives, including in the areas of education and career. This situation aligns with Giovanni Helmi Munif's statement in his article in *Warga Muda* (2024), which highlights that identity crises and confusion about life direction are common issues faced by the younger generation, primarily due to a lack of self-potential exploration starting from elementary school. This can occur due to a lack of self-understanding. This phenomenon is reinforced by a survey cited by *Good News From Indonesia* (2025), a study published by LinkedIn, in which 75% of young professionals aged 25 to 33 admitted to having experienced a quarter-life crisis, one of the causes of which is confusion regarding self-identity rooted in childhood, when individuals were not given the space to recognize their interests and talents.

According to the KBBI, talent refers to (1) a sign (indications that something will happen); (2) a foundation (intelligence, traits, and disposition) present from birth; (3) a mark; an impression; signs (such as scars and the like). According to Munandar (2020) in (Habsy et al., 2023: 242), talent is an innate ability as a potential that still needs to be developed and trained to be realized. Talent is a quality evident in an individual within a specific field of expertise, such as music, creative writing, mathematical aptitude, expertise in engineering, or other skills. (Yusfandaria, 2019: 62). Talent is a natural potential possessed by an individual that enables a person to excel in a particular field.

According to the KBBI, interest is the strongest inclination of the heart toward something; passion; desire. According to Wahyuni (2015) in Rista Yonanda et al. (2022: 27), interest is the acceptance of a relationship between oneself and something outside of oneself. The stronger or closer the relationship, the greater the interest. Interest can be defined as a person's inclination toward a specific activity or field that evokes feelings of joy and enthusiasm.

The process of self-discovery is a crucial foundation for designing a future aligned with an individual's character and potential. Self-discovery is a long-term process that cannot occur overnight. It involves continuous exploration supported by a conducive environment. During elementary school, particularly for children aged 9–11, the process of self-discovery becomes increasingly important. Children aged 9–11 are in a highly strategic developmental phase for beginning to recognize their interests and talents. The 9–11 age range is the pre-adolescent phase, during which children experience rapid cognitive, social, and emotional development simultaneously. Based on interviews with child psychologists, during this period children begin to engage in self-reflection but are still heavily influenced by their surroundings and feedback from parents, peers, and the community. Children in this age range undergo the process of identity formation, self-discovery, and the exploration of interests and talents—factors that significantly shape their readiness to face academic, social, and future life challenges.

According to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children at this age enter the "concrete operational" stage, where they begin to think logically and analytically and understand cause-and-effect relationships, though

still limited to concrete and visual matters. They also begin to show preferences for certain activities and are able to reflect on personal experiences, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the concept of interests and talents.

According to Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, children aged 9–11 are in the "industry vs. inferiority" stage, where they begin comparing themselves to others and develop a competitive spirit. During this period, if children successfully recognize and develop their potential, they will feel confident and motivated. Conversely, if they fail to recognize their potential and interests during this time, there is a risk of developing low self-esteem and a sense of failure. Children begin to build self-esteem, seek recognition from peers, and strive to find something unique about themselves within their community. At this stage, it is crucial to support children in feeling competent through the recognition of their own potential.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences introduced by Howard Gardner in the book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983) is the most comprehensive approach to identifying a child's potential. According to Gardner, human intelligence cannot be reduced to just one or two dominant aspects, namely linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence. According to Berliana & Atikah (2023) in Afnan et al. (2025: 626), Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences states that individuals possess at least nine distinct forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential—each reflecting diverse cognitive strengths and learning preferences. This theory opens up opportunities for children to recognize their potential more broadly, not limited solely to academic achievement.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences serves as a strong foundation for introducing and stimulating self-exploration in elementary school-aged children. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences explicitly states that intelligence is not measured solely by the ability to master logical and linguistic problems, but also encompasses the ability to recognize and manage oneself (intrapersonal), understand others (interpersonal), understand nature (naturalistic), and express oneself through art and movement (musical, kinesthetic, visual-spatial). Children will be given the opportunity to discover and develop their unique qualities and potential. The Multiple Intelligences approach encourages variety in learning experiences,

not merely teaching and learning activities that involve the transfer of factual knowledge. Every child is expected to engage in activities that support their dominant intelligence, yet they are still given space to develop their other intelligences. Children who learn in accordance with their intelligence style tend to understand the material more easily, are more active in the learning process, and are more confident in expressing themselves. According to Rahmah et al. (2025: 72–18), the application of Gardner’s theory in education, self-development, and social contexts can help create a more supportive environment for all individuals

Current learning approaches in elementary schools still tend not to fully and optimally accommodate the diversity of children’s intelligences. Conventional education today still tends to prioritize linguistic and logical-mathematical aspects and focuses solely on academic assessment through Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests—standard academic evaluations that tend to overlook the diverse potentials children possess. A challenge facing education in Indonesia is that many schools remain trapped in traditional teaching methods that emphasize memorization and exams (Rahmah et al., 2025: 7218). Interviews with elementary school teachers also revealed that the learning materials used are still limited to text-based resources such as textbooks and worksheets. Interactive learning materials require initiative and willingness from teachers and are limited in availability. Children are also frequently caught up in the pressure to achieve and the burden of academic assignments, which reduces the space for exploring their natural talents. Policies such as the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and Minister of Basic and Secondary Education Regulation No. 10 of 2025 regarding Graduate Competency Standards (SKL) emphasize the importance of character development, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and children’s independence as the primary goals of basic education.

Multiple Intelligences serves as a theoretical foundation that is not only relevant but also highly strategic to apply, particularly in educational media such as interactive children’s picture books. Interactive picture books combine text, visual illustrations, and interactive elements to create an active and enjoyable learning experience. Interactive picture books present narratives and illustrations, as well as features that encourage children to participate through motor, kinesthetic, or cognitive activities incorporated into the book. According to The New Oxford Dictionary of

English, interactive books function as learning tools that facilitate two-way information exchange between the book and the reader, enabling active participation in absorbing and processing messages.

An interactive approach, enhanced with visual cues and physical activities (such as pop-ups and quizzes), has a significant positive impact on children. Children's interaction with learning materials becomes more meaningful, thereby aiding improved memory retention (the ability to recall information). Additionally, this approach can foster self-directed learning motivation in children. Interactive illustrated books can accommodate diverse learning styles, creating a more flexible and enjoyable space for children to explore and discover themselves. According to Fitriana (2015) in Mutia Siregar et al. (2020: 831), interactive books are an appropriate learning medium for children because the material can be presented through play-based, enjoyable, and engaging concepts that capture children's interest. This is supported by findings from focus group interviews, where students demonstrated interest and enthusiasm when viewing interactive books. According to interviews with elementary school teachers, students can absorb learning effectively when instruction is delivered through interactive media, as students can actively participate.

Nevertheless, interactive books are still not widely available in schools. Observations conducted in schools indicate a lack of interactive books as learning media. School libraries do not yet provide interactive books that can be used by both students and teachers. Observations conducted at bookstores (Gramedia) and several e-commerce sites also show similar results. A number of previous studies on the development of interactive books for children have been conducted, but with different focuses and contexts than this study. Several studies, such as that conducted by Mutia Siregar et al., (2020) designed interactive books of the "participation" type to introduce various professions to early childhood students. The study by Bariyyah et al. (2021) developed a pop-up book about professions as a career guidance tool for fourth-grade elementary school students. Research by Siti Nurhalisah et al. (2024) designed a pop-up scrapbook on careers to enhance fifth-grade elementary students' career understanding. All three studies emphasized the introduction of professions and careers. In contrast, this design is aimed at self-exploration for children aged 9–11 years to identify their interests and talents, not merely the introduction of professions or careers. Additionally, the study by Rahimah & Izzaty (2018) designed a picture storybook to build self-awareness in early childhood (ages 5–6), focusing on social-

emotional aspects. In this design, the self-awareness being developed centers on aspects of personal potential. Research by Gulam Rasul et al. (2023) developed an interactive eGuide book to foster intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence in children aged 4–6 years using online media. The focus of this design is on print media that can be accessed without digital devices. Based on previous studies, there has been no design of an interactive illustrated book that specifically addresses the theme of self-exploration to identify the interests and talents of children aged 9–11 years. This design offers novelty in terms of theme, target age group, and the use of an interactive illustrated print book as the medium.

An interactive children’s picture book can encourage children to experiment or try various activities—such as art, language, and mathematics—through stories, games, or reflective activities that invite them to think and reflect within the book. Through features like a diary, reflective questions, and decision-making activities embedded in the story, this medium provides children with opportunities to explore themselves. Illustrations and narratives can build emotional connections in children, develop their imagination, and help them identify with characters in the story. Through reflective experiences with characters or activities presented in the story, children can better understand themselves to recognize their preferences, interests, and talents.

Interactive picture books also serve as a supportive tool for parents and teachers to aid children’s self-exploration process. By analyzing a child’s intellectual tendencies, parents can provide appropriate support by providing appropriate learning materials or involving the child in relevant extracurricular activities. This medium can also be used by teachers as a tool to create a more personalized and engaging learning process. This work not only contributes to the field of visual communication design but also has a tangible impact in the realm of education and child development. By applying Multiple Intelligence theory, this book is intended to be an inclusive, effective, and enjoyable educational tool to help children aged 9–11 years understand themselves and identify their interests and talents.

1.2 Problem Identification

1. Many children aged 9–11 have not yet come to know themselves and lack a sufficient understanding of their own potential and tendencies. This is reinforced by the results of focus group interviews conducted with 20 fourth-grade

elementary school students and interviews with elementary school teachers.

2. According to research conducted by LinkedIn and published in Good News From Indonesia (2025), 75% of young professionals aged 25 to 33 reported having experienced a quarter-life crisis, with one of the causes being confusion about their identity that stems from their childhood.
3. Currently, the learning materials available in elementary schools tend to be conventional and monotonous. The challenge facing education in Indonesia is that many schools remain trapped in traditional teaching methods that emphasize memorization and exams (Rahmah et al., 2025: 7218). Teaching methods in elementary schools are still dominated by traditional approaches (lectures), resulting in the use of learning media being far from optimal (Wulandari et al., n.d., 2024: 22). This is further evidenced by observations conducted in schools and interviews with elementary school teachers, which indicate that the learning media used remain limited to textual materials such as textbooks and worksheets. Interactive learning media require initiative and willingness from teachers and are limited in nature.
4. Current learning media still tend to focus on linguistic and logical-mathematical aspects (Rahmah et al., 2025). This is evidenced by an interview with an elementary school teacher who stated that the school has not yet been able to optimally facilitate students' interests and talents, due to the limited availability of extracurricular activities or programs that support the development of students' interests and talents.
5. Interactive illustrated books have not yet been specifically developed to help children aged 9–11 explore their interests and talents. Based on observations conducted at elementary schools, bookstores (Gramedia), and e-commerce sites, there are currently no interactive illustrated books designed to help students discover themselves.

1.3 Problem Statement

Based on the problem identification outlined above, the following research question is formulated.

“How can we design an engaging interactive illustrated book on identifying interests and talents for children aged 9–11?”

1.4 Scope of the Problem

1. The design of this interactive illustrated book is intended for children aged 9–11 years, tailored to the concrete operational stage of cognitive development as described by Jean Piaget and the psychosocial stage of industry versus inferiority as described by Erik Erikson. This book is designed to support children’s cognitive and psychosocial development in an appropriate manner.
2. Self-concept consists of many aspects, namely the physical self, emotional self, social self, mental/intellectual self, and value/spiritual self. This book will focus solely on the intellectual self—specifically, recognizing one’s own interests and talents.
3. This book is designed based on Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences theory and aims to help children understand themselves, particularly by identifying their interests and talents. This book is not intended to measure or assess a child’s talents, but rather to serve as a medium to facilitate their self-exploration and self-reflection in an enjoyable way.
4. The medium is designed as an interactive illustrated book in print format. This book does not include any digital formats, including game-based digital applications or online learning platforms. The book’s content focuses on self-exploration activities. The content does not address clinical or therapeutic psychological aspects. Additionally, it does not cover all materials found in the formal education curriculum.

1.5 Design Objectives

1. To provide an engaging interactive illustrated book as a learning tool that aligns with children’s cognitive and psychosocial developmental stages and supports the process of exploring their potential.
2. To help children aged 9–11 get to know themselves, particularly in identifying their interests and talents, through an engaging medium.
3. To encourage children’s active engagement through an interactive illustrated book designed to stimulate and develop the various types of intelligence they possess during the process of self-exploration.

4. Provides a supportive tool for parents and teachers to help children recognize their own potential through effective collaboration among children, parents, and teachers.

1.6 Benefits of the Design

1. Fostering self-awareness and self-confidence in children aged 9–11 through the exploration of interests and talents, presented through enjoyable and reflective learning experiences using visual approaches and interactive activities appropriate for the child’s developmental stage
2. Providing effective educational learning materials for the development of children’s character and potential. The content in this book encourages children to reflect on themselves, enabling them to cultivate intrinsic motivation and develop a positive attitude toward the learning process.
3. To provide learning materials that are more adaptable to the diversity of children’s intelligences as a complement to conventional learning systems that tend to focus solely on academic aspects. This is achieved by offering a variety of interactive activities that stimulate diverse intelligences in children.
4. Serving as a reference source for the application of developmental psychology theory and visual communication design in the creation of educational media. By integrating Jean Piaget’s cognitive development theory, Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, and educational design approaches, this book demonstrates how psychology and design can synergize to produce media that is not only visually engaging but also pedagogically meaningful—that is, effective in supporting children’s learning processes.

1.7 Design Framework

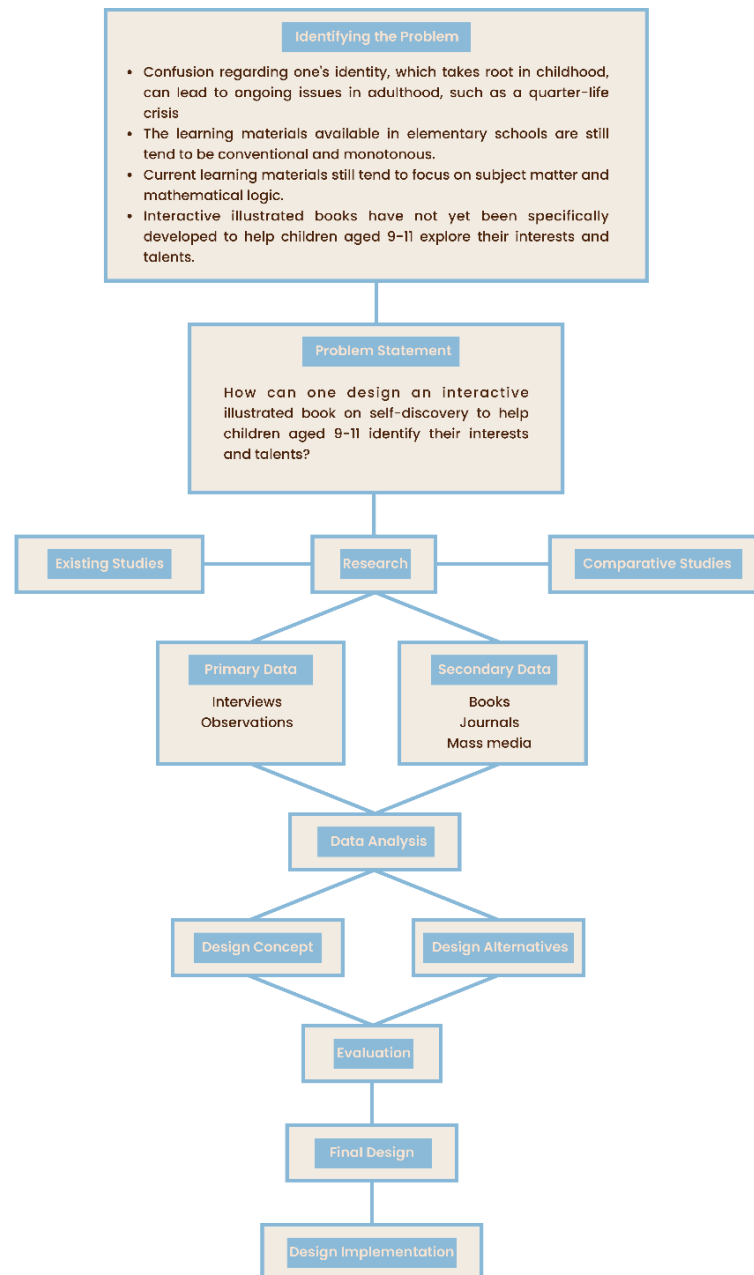


Figure 1.1 Design Framework

(Source: Personal Data, 2025)