

# A Children Design Workshop for Developing Self-Identity

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**Abstract:** In modern society, even school-aged children are forced into an extremely competitive environment. Nowadays, Korean children are suffering from the conformist education system without a chance to consider their own identity. As a result, children face obstacles in forming their unique vision during stages of adolescent development. Therefore, there is an urgent need to initiate a study about identity formation in an adolescent period.

The objective of the research is to develop a children design workshop which targets self-identity of school-aged using the concept of identity design. Research methods of this study consist of literature review and experimental study. First, identity development methods for 6~12 aged children are suggested by examining literature reviews of self-identity and identity development tools for children. Second, the children design workshop model was developed by applying the identity design concept and it is verified by a pre-test of eighteen children and three workshops.

The result of the study is that this children design workshop model is useful to find out their distinguished identities which differ from others. Moreover, even 6~7 aged children have an ability to understand and express their self-identity through a visual, intuitive approach of design. In conclusion, the process of identity design which focuses on considering distinctiveness and visualizing a unique characteristic is beneficial to develop 6~12 aged children self-identity.

This study, an alternative to understand and improve children identity before adolescent, is expected to enhance identity development for school-aged children.

**Key words:** *Children Design Workshop, Children Education, Identity Design, Self-identity*

## 1. Introduction

Since competition is strong nowadays, even school aged children are under high stress. It is kindergarten student before admitting into an elementary school are no exception. They receive private education demanding too much homework regardless of considering their interest and unique characteristics. However, it is beneficial to find out their identity early for leading a more meaningful and independent life. To help one's identity confusion of adolescence, starting education on self-identity is important from 6~7 aged children. Despite of this need, school aged period (6~12 years old) is concrete operational period (7~11 years old) among Piaget's cognitive development stages of children, which is difficult to express their opinions logically. Therefore, a visual and intuitive approach is effective to children's self-identity development. For this reason, the study's objective is

developing a children design workshop for enhancing their self-identity by examining literature reviews and experimental verification through design workshops.

## 2. Self- Identity

### 2.1 Definition of Self- Identity

‘Self’ describes a person’s essential being such as talents, characteristics, experience, goals, achievement, vision, creed, relation, hope etc. ‘Self-identity’ is a general self-perspective including changeable and temporary self-evaluation. The key of Self-identity, represented by various definitions as a multidimensional concept, is how harmonize each of these uniqueness and distinctiveness. Positive self-identity is enhanced when self-assessment coincides with others and self-perception maintain from past and present. On the other hand, negative self-identity is formed when this consistency or sustainability is weak. Self-identity suggested by Erikson is a flexible and developing concept according to a life cycle. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development explain eight stages, the person confronts and should complete. Each stage builds upon the successful completion of earlier stages. The challenges of stages not successfully completed may be expected to reappear as problems in the future.

### 2.2 Self- Identity of School-aged Children

Latency (5-12 years) of Erikson's stage theory is the fourth stage that children learn important cognitive and social skills for their life as the crucial stage of identity development. This is the time to encourage children to optimize their competence and motivate their potential to complete this stage’s significant virtue successfully. (Table 1)

Table 1. The eight Stages of Erikson's stage theory

Stage	Approximate Age	Virtues	Significant Relationship	Psycho Social Crisis
1	0–2 years	Hopes	Mother	Basic Trust vs. Mistrust
2	2–4 years	Will	Parents	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt
3	4–5 years	Purpose	Family	Initiative vs. Guilt
4	5–12 years	Competence	Neighbors, School	Industry vs. Inferiority
5	13–19 years	Fidelity	Peers, Role Model	Identity vs. Role Confusion
6	20–24 years	Love	Friends, Partners	Intimacy vs. Isolation
7	25–64 years	Care	Household, Workmates	Generativity vs. Stagnation
8	65-death	Wisdom	Mankind, My Kind	Ego Integrity vs. Despair

As above, since self-identity is the developing concept that should be explored and considered persistently, the process to grasp and examine self-identity is also various. Thus, finding self-identity out and developing is able to apply to catch one’s potential ability as well as their appearance. This is the reason why the study of self-identity is received attention to counseling psychology filed.

This study suggests five factors to find self-identity and it applies the design workshop developed by this research, using each branch of mind map as a design thinking method. (Table 2)

Table 2. Five Factors for Exploring Self-identity

Factor	Explanation	Mind Map Keyword
Distinctiveness	a person's looks and verbal/nonverbal feature to distinguish someone from others	-appearance -nickname
Competence	understanding one's ability and talents	-strong point -weak point
Future	the objective regarding future dream or job	-dream job -goal
Relationship	one's role and relationship with people and surroundings	-family -friends
Self-reliance	confidence about oneself and self-Directedness	-likes -dislikes

### 3. Identity Design

#### 3.1 Understanding of Identity Design

The first time that identity applied in the design field is known as Walter Margulies who worked at L&M(Lippincott & Margulies) from the 1960s to 1980s mentioned Corporate Identity. Early concept of identity design focused on graphic design such as logo and symbol, but recently many researches are interpreting identity widely including behavior, commination and mind as well as visual elements. Thus, even though identity is the word for human first, now it is explained for organization as Corporate Identity.

The goal of Identity Design is distinctiveness for differentiating one company form others. Logo and Symbol representing identity design also should distinguish from the name to visual expression for the effective legal force. Therefore, distinct and unique identity is useful to develop brand personality and customer communication.

Pepsi-coca's blue logo is an appropriate example to show a successful differentiation strategy. Pepsi-coca's logo (1898~) that is created 12 years later comparing to Coca-coca (1886~) got unique distinctiveness after using blue logo in 1950s. On this example, the most important point of corporate identity design is to get distinctiveness to recognize other brand personality, and lots of identity design is developed through various ways for this reason.



Figure.1 Donut Franchise's Logo

The important element for the corporate identity design is finding unique meaning of own brand and visualizing it to differentiate from others.

#### 3.2 Identity Design for School-aged Children's Self-identity

Identity derived from Latin 'ideneucus' -it means 'A person is definitely the person', highlights one's unique characteristics, and Identity Design is also meaningful when it is distinguished from others. Actually, the process to examine self-identity is in accord with the visualization process of Identity Design. An approach of self-identity, understood through diversified components such as appearance, behavior and competence, is a similar approach of Corporate Identity consisted of Mind Identity, Behavior Identity and Visual Identity. In conclusion, it is suggested

as one effective way to apply Identity Design for Self-Identity development. Especially, school-aged children (6~12 years) is easier to learn knowledge through images than letters because they are not familiar to an abstract concept. Thus, an intuitive and visual approach is useful for children to enhance thinking ability by direct experience. Although self-identity means Differentiated personality, in real life students is evaluated according to peer's state rather than respect for their uniqueness. To solve this social problem, thinking about their distinct personality is important and teaching the concept of identity design and suggesting the workshop to express their identity is necessary.

4. Children Design Education

Victore Papa-nek, who emphasized the importance of early design education, mentioned that Design is the powerful tool for human to create the surrounding environment and even oneself. For this reason, he insisted design education should be provided from kindergarten to high school, and the appropriate time to introduce the basic design education is about 6 years old.

The research by Dong-Jo Koo (2006) shows that many schools including the US, Germany, Italy, the UK and Japan provide early design education and organized early design education and social design learning are helpful to national competitiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to regard design as the basic education, not only for working level.

Visual language is the best universal language in contrast with a written language that should be learned. Children having a rich imagination are more familiar to visual language and can express their thought more creatively. Therefore, design education is appropriate for children and moreover it is valuable to communicate with others about their own personality.

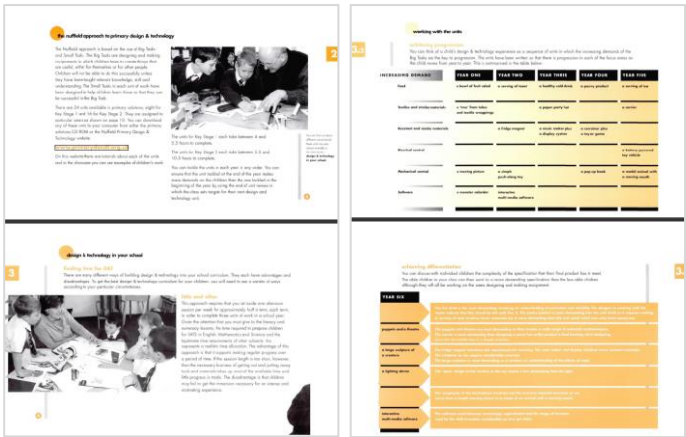


Figure.2 Primary solutions in design and technology of Nuffield  
UK has taught Design from pre-school to high-school as the compulsory education course since early 1900.

5. Identity Design Model for Self-identity Development of School-aged Children

The identity design model for school-aged children's self-identity development is based on the three steps visualization process of Rudolf Arnheim. In the first step 'Read', children think about their identity through 'Mind Map' and 'Emotion Timetable' and then the second step, they define themselves with one word or a sentence. Last third step, they decorate the 'Hope Box' to visualize their identity and communicate with parents and peers. (Figure.3)

The 'Hope Box' is a tool for expressing one's potential, interest and emotion as well as appearance. Children are able to find their hope out unexpectedly by this design workshop. The box is an effective object possible to be modified by various expressions. The design workshop applied this identity design model provides children with a variety of materials and encourage them to think freely. The model also can be used in case of participating with their parents or guardians. When the design workshop will be held with the purpose of interacting and understanding each other, parents or guardians can participate with their children. However, in that case, they should focus on children's position and situation, not theirs. In this regard, it is helpful to understand their son and daughters objectively and they can encourage children's identity establishment.

1. Understanding Self-Identity (Read)	2. Distinctiveness through Design Thinking (Imagine)	3. Visualization and Embracement (Visualize)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identity Design Concept</li> <li>- Mind map: brainstorming regarding self-identity focused of key words.</li> <li>- Emotion timetable: self-discovery through emotion stickers and speech bubble</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Self-definition: self-identity establishment by expressing one sentence about myself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hope Box: visualization applying formative elements</li> <li>-Presentation: acceptance from myself and others including parents</li> </ul>

Figure.3 Identity Design workshop Model for School-aged Children ('Hope Box')

Design includes the all design process as well as its visual results as an integrated work.

## 6. Verification of 'Hope Box' Children Design Workshop

'Hope Box', a design workshop for children, was user-tested and was conducted three times with children between ages of 6-12 and their parents. Due to the in-depth interview of a user-test(pre-test), the workshop is assisted in adjusting the length each steps and to decide the how much parental involvement should be incorporated into it.

'Hope Box' is offered as a three-hour workshop and the number of participants is flexible though in some cases it might require a few helpers according to the participants' size. Even though parents can be present at the workshop, they should not work with the child because he or she can feel a psychological pressure. Parents can interact with their children after the children present their 'Hope Box'. When communicating with their children, parents should use 'I- message', generally expressed as a sentence beginning with the word 'I', instead of 'you-message'. Thomas Gordon coined the term "I message" in the 1960s while doing play therapy with children and explained the concept to his book for parents, Parent Effectiveness Training (1970).

The first workshop was held at Yonsei University (Song-do) on Oct. 20 (2012) with 9 children (9~11 years old) and one parent. It was a chance for parents to observe their children's identity. As for children, it was an opportunity to explore their identity and express themselves in public.

The second workshop was held at V-gallery of Vatech S&C corp. on Dec. 12 (2012) as a kind of talent donation with Boram Doong-ji's children (6~13 years old) and their two guardians. There was no problem to participate with various ages together; however because young kindergartener have difficulty in writing, one instructor assisted them to explain and express their thoughts and feeling.

The difference between first and second workshop is whether parents participated in the workshop or not. As a result, it is recommended that parents or children's guardian join their children who would benefit from their care and constant instruction. (Figure.4) Moreover, since Korean parents who are influenced by the Confucian culture tend to force their opinions rather than respect children's identity, it is a good chance to change their prejudice and demanding attitudes. However, it is not appropriate that one parent or guardian care over two children, one to one is the best.

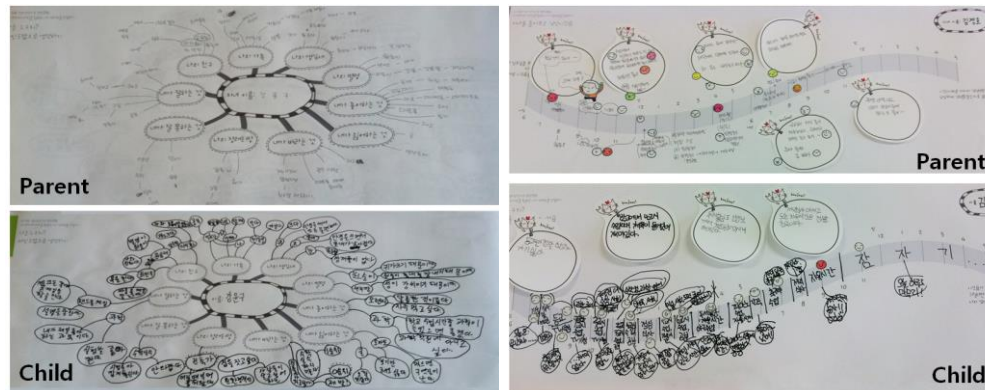


Figure.4 Mind map(Left) and Emotion timetable(Right) Comparison with Children

Parents can find out their children is an independent individual and will coach their children to develop their identity (distinctiveness, talent, interest etc.)

\*comparing a parent and a child is only for parents, not share with their children.

The third workshop was for nine children and their children of Saemmul community church on Feb. 22 (2013). Since this workshop progressed for family, siblings participated together and the age gap also exists. However, serious problem is not founded.

After each workshop is finished, a questionnaire survey was conducted. The common result through these workshops is 'Hope Box' could be a useful tool to search for one's identity. Beyond expectation, children don't have a chance to consider their identity for a long time and parents also have no time to communicate with their children, regarding their children's dream and vision.



Figure.5 'Hope Box' Presented by Participants

## 7. Conclusions

Three Identity design workshops for self-identity development of School-aged children were held including pre-test. In the first stage, the workshop instructor presents about what is identity design and the importance of distinctiveness in the identity design, so that children can understand what they are going to do through the workshop. In the second stage, children think about self-identity by themselves and write about their family, friend, favorite things and things that they do not like on the Mind Map format which instructor provide. In the third stage, the instructor provides participants with Emotion-timetable which is designed in order to know participant's feeling about their daily activities. They write about their each activity what they usually do daily in a week and put emotion-stickers that show children's emotion when they do each activity. Through these stages, they identify themselves in a word or sentence. And then they visualize their identity in a box which is named 'Hope Box'. In the last stage, children present one by one about the word that identify themselves and their own hope box in front of others include their parents. Through whole process of the workshop, children could find their distinctiveness which is different from others. In conclusion, the Identity Design method can be applied for children to find their distinctiveness.

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