

Design and Evaluation of A Mini Pocket Book for Parental Support in Early to Primary School Transition

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to design and evaluate a mini pocket book as a parental support tool to support children's transition from early childhood education (ECE) to primary school. **Method:** Employing a design-based research (DBR) approach, the study involved 100 parents, eight teachers, and three experts in iterative cycles of design, validation, and user testing. Data collection included surveys, focus groups, expert appraisals, and user feedback questionnaires. **Results:** Findings revealed that parents initially had a limited understanding of transition readiness but showed higher confidence and engagement after using the pocket book. Quantitatively, 85% of parents rated the guide as highly useful, and 78% reported increased confidence in supporting their children. Qualitative feedback highlighted cultural relevance, practical strategies, and reduced anxiety for both parents and children. **Novelty:** The pocket book strengthens family and school partnerships and illustrates how sociocultural learning principles enhance parental involvement. This tool serves as a replicable model for supporting family-centered transitions across contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from preschool (Early Childhood Education, or PAUD) to elementary school is a critical developmental stage that can significantly impact a child's social-emotional and academic trajectory [1]. Research shows that many children experience anxiety and reduced motivation during this transition, especially when support from their family environment is lacking [1]. In particular, insufficient parental support and guidance have been linked to heightened stress in children entering primary school [1], [2]. This underscores the urgency of strengthening family involvement to ensure children are adequately prepared and confident as they begin formal schooling. The research gap shows that the Existing studies focus primarily on teacher - or - school centered interventions. Few offer parent - focused, evidence based, and culturally contextualized resources. Therefore, this research fills that gap by designing and evaluating a pocket book for parents grounded in the family - school partnership and sociocultural learning theories.

Despite the importance of parents' role, existing transition interventions and programs have largely centered on schools and teachers, with relatively little attention to equipping parents[3]. Many parents feel confused or uncertain about how to help their child adapt from a play-based kindergarten setting to the more structured primary school environment[4]. Practical guidance for parents is limited [4], and accessible information

in “family-friendly” language is often lacking, leaving parents without clear strategies to ease their child’s adjustment [5]. In Indonesia, for example, the government has issued policies (such as *Permendikbud No. 1/2022*) to regulate the transition period, but in practice not all schools have implemented structured transition programs [6]. Similarly, other countries like Australia and the UK have introduced transition-to-school statements or initiatives, yet these tend to focus on institutional coordination rather than direct parent guidance [7]. Theoretically, this research integrates the family–school partnership framework [42] and sociocultural learning theory by Vygotsky [43], emphasizing that effective transitions occur through shared responsibility among children, parents, and schools. This gap in support for families highlights the need for an intervention specifically targeting parents. **Therefore, developing a dedicated “transition pocket book” for parents is seen as an urgent necessity**, providing a concise, user-friendly guide to help parents accompany their children through a positive and developmentally appropriate transition to elementary school [8].

Research Questions

This research project is designed to address the following four primary questions [9]:

1. What is the current level of understanding and involvement of parents in accompanying the transition of children from preschool to elementary school? [10]
2. What challenges and needs do parents face in their efforts to make this transition experience pleasant for the child? [11]
3. How can we design and develop a pocket book, based on parents’ needs, that effectively supports children’s transition from preschool to elementary school? [12]
4. How is the suitability and understandability of the pocket book’s content evaluated by experts and what are the initial responses of parent users to the pocket book? [13]

These questions focus on diagnosing the current situation (parental awareness and involvement), identifying specific needs and obstacles, creating a targeted solution (the parent pocket book), and evaluating the effectiveness and clarity of that solution through expert review and user feedback.

Literature Review Summary

Transition research and developmental theory provide a foundation for this study. According to Piaget’s cognitive development theory, children around the age of transitioning to primary school are in the late preoperational or early concrete-operational stage, meaning they learn best through direct, hands-on experiences and concrete examples [14]. The study draws from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory [42] and Vygotsky’s socio-cultural learning principles [43], emphasizing that parental involvement is central to a child’s learning ecosystem. Previous research (2015–2025) indicates that when families actively collaborate with schools, children exhibit greater confidence and readiness. However, limited studies provide parents with user-

friendly tools that translate theory into daily practice. The present study integrates design-based research (DBR) and culturally responsive pedagogy to bridge this theoretical-practical divide. A known issue is the mismatch often observed between the child-centered, play-based learning in early childhood education and the more formal, academic approach in primary schools [15]. This discrepancy can make adjustment more difficult for children if not bridged appropriately. The *Pyramid of Learning* (or “Cone of Experience”) further suggests that foundational sensorimotor and social skills (at the base of the pyramid) support higher-level cognitive and academic skills [16]. In other words, when basic developmental needs are met and learning experiences are concrete and engaging, children are more ready and able to tackle complex tasks. These theoretical perspectives highlight that a successful transition requires methods that connect to the child’s developmental stage and prior experience – a consideration that informed the design of the pocket book content.

Empirical studies across various countries consistently emphasize the importance of family–school collaboration in easing the transition to formal education. When schools and families work in synergy, children tend to experience less anxiety and stress entering elementary school [17]. Transition programs that include parent orientations or activities have been shown to improve children’s adjustment by making expectations more consistent between home and school, and by helping parents reinforce school readiness skills at home [17]. Moreover, understanding the experiences of diverse and marginalized families is crucial, as these families might face additional barriers during school transitions [18]. Culturally responsive approaches – for example, incorporating local **traditional games** or community values into preparatory activities – can strengthen children’s sense of identity and comfort, thereby smoothing adaptation to the primary school environment [19]. Such findings underline that effective transition support must be inclusive and context-sensitive. However, despite broad agreement on the value of parental involvement, **most prior research and interventions have not produced practical guidance specifically for parents**. The focus has largely remained on school or teacher-led initiatives, meaning the pivotal role of parents has not been systematically addressed in practice [20]. This gap in the literature points to the novelty of the present study, which centers the parent’s role.

In the Indonesian context, as noted, there is policy recognition of transition support but uneven implementation [6]. Many children enter Grade 1 without any structured transition program, which puts the onus on families to manage the change. Studies indicate that in such situations, parents often lack the know-how to effectively prepare children, fueling the need for accessible guidance materials [5], [20]. One promising form of intervention emerging from previous early education research is the use of “**pocket books**” for parents. Pocket books – essentially small, portable guidebooks – can distill research-based practices into an easy-to-read format. They have been used successfully to disseminate parenting and teaching tips in early childhood settings. For instance, Ardini et al. [28] and others have shown that pocket books integrating simple language and culturally familiar examples (like local games or storytelling) significantly

enhance parental engagement in children’s learning activities [21]. By providing concise tips on child development stages and home-learning strategies, these booklets help parents become more competent and confident in supporting their young children [21]. Such evidence from prior studies provided inspiration for this project’s approach. In summary, the literature suggests that while children’s readiness for school is influenced by developmental and environmental factors, empowering parents with practical knowledge is a largely underutilized strategy. The current research builds on these theoretical and empirical insights to fill that void by creating a parent-centered transition guide.

Hypothesis

Based on the identified needs and gaps, the central hypothesis of this research is that **a collaboratively developed, user-friendly pocket book for parents will improve children’s transition outcomes by enhancing parental support**. In essence, the researchers assume that many parents currently lack adequate information and tools to facilitate a smooth transition (contributing to child anxiety and adjustment problems) [1]. By providing a targeted guide that addresses this deficiency, the project expects to increase parents’ involvement and confidence in the transition process, which in turn should reduce children's stress and boost their readiness for a positive elementary school experience [1], [22]. The pocket book is anticipated to serve as the catalyst for this change, if parents are equipped with clear, practical strategies and knowledge (tailored to the child’s developmental level and cultural context), then children will be better supported emotionally and academically as they enter primary school. This hypothesis is grounded in the notion that informed and empowered parents can significantly influence a child’s early educational trajectory, making the start of elementary school more enjoyable and successful for the child [22].

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Participants: To test these ideas and develop the intervention, the study employed a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach within a transformative mixed-methods framework [23]. This approach was chosen for its strength in iterative, collaborative development of educational tools and its integration of both quantitative and qualitative inquiry.

This research employed the Design-Based Research (DBR) framework, involving iterative stages: **Analysis** → **Design** → **Evaluation** → **Refinement**. It is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Flow of the DBR Methodology

| Stage | Key Activity | Output |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Needs Analysis | Survey and interviews with parents and teachers | Identification of needs and challenges |
| 2. Design | Drafting the pocket book prototype | First prototype ready for validation |
| 3. Evaluation | Expert validation and small group trials | Feedback for improvement |

| Stage | Key Activity | Output |
|---------------|------------------------------|---|
| 4. Refinement | Revision based on evaluation | Finalized pocket book and evaluation report |

The flow of the DBR design is shown in figure 1.

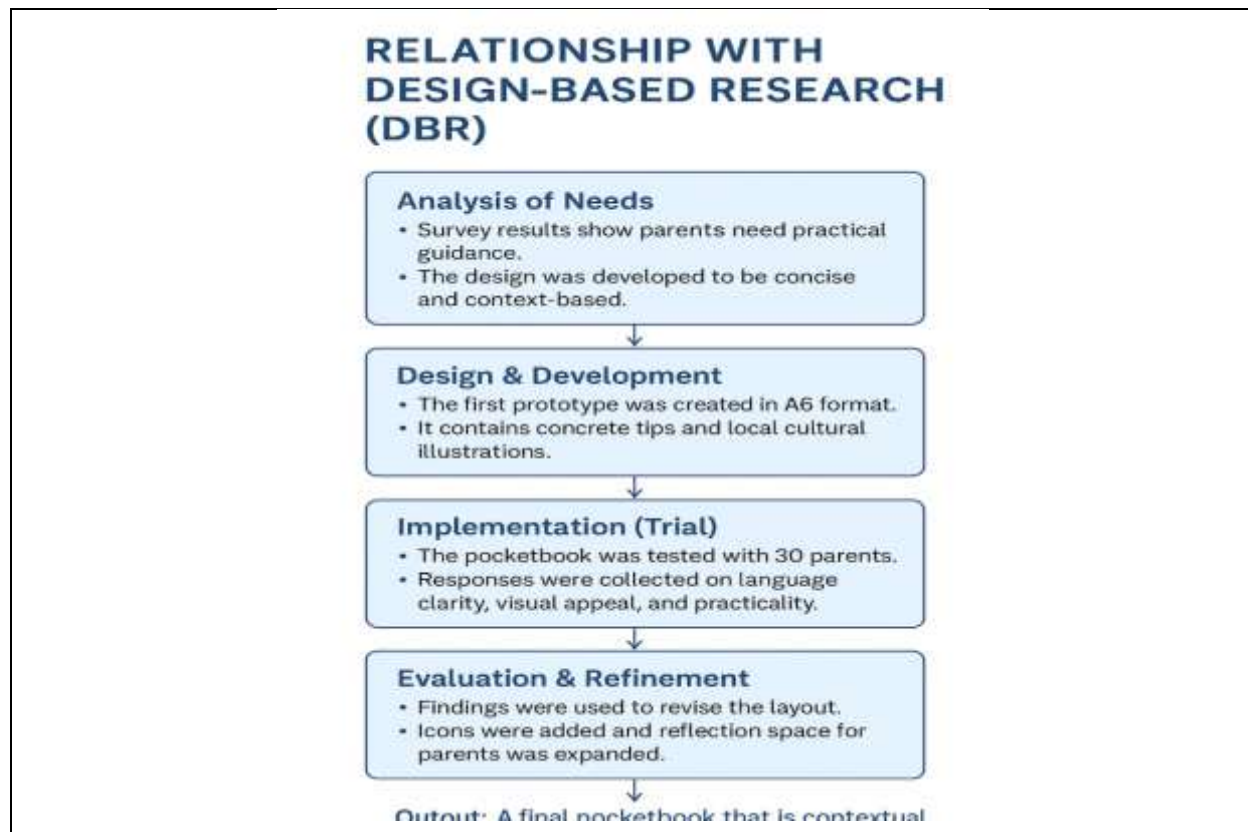


Figure 2. Flow of the DBR Methodology

The research unfolded in cycles of design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement, involving stakeholders at each step. A diverse group of participants was engaged to ensure the pocket book's relevance and effectiveness. **Parents (n = 100)**, who had children either in their final year of kindergarten or first two years of primary school were the main user group in the study [24]. They were selected from various backgrounds to represent the typical users of the pocket book. Additionally, **eight teachers** (four early childhood educators and four first-grade elementary teachers) participated, primarily to provide insights into the typical challenges and expectations during the transition from their professional perspective [25]. The project also consulted **three experts** - an early childhood education specialist, a child psychologist, and a media/design expert - who contributed to validating the content and design of the pocket book [26]. These experts and practitioners, together with the parent participants and the research team (including education researchers and illustrators), formed a collaborative network to co-develop and critique the pocket book through successive iterations. Ethical clearance was obtained from Universitas Negeri Gorontalo's Research Ethics Board. Data collection instruments included surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), expert validation

checklists, and post-implementation questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively (mean, percentage), while qualitative data underwent thematic coding and triangulation.

Instruments and Data Collection: A combination of instruments was used to gather data on needs, evaluate the pocket book, and answer the research questions. In the initial phase, parents responded to surveys and questionnaires that assessed their current understanding of the transition process and their involvement in preparing their child (addressing Research Question 1) [27]. These questionnaires included items on how often and in what ways parents engage in preparatory activities, as well as self-ratings of confidence in managing the transition. The teacher participants were interviewed to identify common challenges they observe in incoming first graders and to gather suggestions on what guidance parents might need (informing Research Question 2). For developing the pocket book (Research Question 3), iterative focus group discussions (FGDs) and workshops were held: parents shared their needs and preferences for content (e.g. topics they struggle with, formats they find accessible), and this user input directly shaped the pocket book's design. Once a draft pocket book was produced, **expert validators** used a content assessment checklist to evaluate the accuracy, relevance, and cultural appropriateness of the material [28]. Their feedback led to revisions in both content and format (for example, simplifying terminology or adding illustrations where needed). After expert validation, a *limited feasibility trial* of the pocket book was conducted with a subset of parent participants. In this trial, parents were given the pocket book to use over a certain period; afterward, their feedback was collected through structured questionnaires (measuring perceived usefulness, clarity, and attractiveness of the pocket book) and follow-up interviews or FGDs (to capture more in-depth reactions) [28]. Throughout these stages, observation notes and field notes were also compiled by the researchers to document how parents interacted with the pocket book in real-life settings (e.g. at home with their child, or in parent meetings).

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Data Analysis: The project adopted a mixed-methods analysis strategy, aligning with its transformative approach. Quantitative data from questionnaires and rating scales were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean scores, and percentages) [29]. This analysis provided an overview of trends such as the baseline level of parental involvement, and later, the degree of satisfaction with the pocket book. For example, the data analysis examined what proportion of parents felt *highly confident* about helping with the transition before and after using the guide, or which sections of the pocket book were rated most useful. These numeric summaries helped identify areas of strength and those needing improvement in the pocket book content (for instance, if any item received consistently lower usefulness ratings, it would be flagged for revision) [30]. On the qualitative side, interview and FGD transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis [31]. The researchers coded responses to uncover recurring themes and categories, such as

common parental **challenges** (e.g. “child has anxiety about new school routine”), **perceived benefits** of the pocket book (e.g. “the tips are easy to apply daily”), and **suggestions for refinement** (e.g. “include a schedule template for practice”). Using open coding and iterative categorization, dominant themes were extracted that addressed Research Question 2 (challenges/needs) and provided context for interpreting the quantitative results [31]. Triangulation was a crucial part of the analysis: data from different sources (parents, teachers, experts) and different methods (survey, interview, observation) were compared to ensure consistency and validity of the findings [28]. For instance, if parents reported a certain challenge, teacher interviews and expert opinions were checked to see if they echoed or explained that issue, adding credibility to the finding. The timing of data collection was also staggered (needs assessment at the start, feedback after prototype, etc.), allowing *time triangulation* to observe changes or improvements over the course of the project [32]. By interpreting the results collaboratively with participants (e.g. discussing preliminary findings with a parent advisory group), the research ensured that the conclusions drawn truly resonated with real needs and avoided researcher bias [33]. Overall, this rigorous analytical approach provided both quantitative indicators and rich qualitative context to answer the research questions comprehensively.

Key Findings and Outcomes: During the **needs analysis phase**, it became evident that parents had a generally low to moderate understanding of how to effectively support the preschool-to-primary transition. Many parents were unsure about what specific skills their child should have before entering Grade 1, and how to foster those skills at home. This finding reinforced earlier evidence from the literature that parents often lack accessible information on transition readiness [5]. Common challenges reported by parents included: managing their child’s feelings of anxiety or clinginess when starting school, dealing with the more academic demands of primary education (e.g. homework, sitting still in class), and establishing new routines (like waking up earlier or wearing a uniform). These challenges align with what teachers observed – for example, teachers noted that some children struggled with self-regulation and independence at the start of primary school, which could be alleviated if parents knew how to practice those skills beforehand. The project used these insights to directly shape the pocket book’s content. The needs analysis revealed that most parents focused primarily on academic readiness, neglecting socio-emotional and behavioral aspects. After using the pocket book, parents demonstrated increased awareness of holistic readiness. Survey data indicated that 85% of parents rated the guide as ‘very useful’ and 78% reported greater confidence in helping their children prepare for school. Teachers confirmed observable improvements in children’s adaptability, particularly in self-regulation and independence. The discussion situates these results within sociocultural theory, suggesting that collaborative parent–

school engagement fosters more consistent learning expectations and smoother adaptation. The pocket book's integration of traditional games, storytelling, and local cultural values enhanced its acceptance and effectiveness among users.

The **developed pocket book** is a compact guide that addresses the needs identified. It contains clear explanations of key developmental milestones and readiness indicators for children entering elementary school, written in non-technical language for parents. It also offers practical strategies and tips for parents to implement at home. For instance, to tackle children's anxiety, the book suggests gradual familiarization activities (such as visiting the new school environment with the child, or reading storybooks about starting school) and positive encouragement techniques. To bridge the pedagogical gap between preschool and primary school, the pocket book provides examples of playful learning activities that relate to basic academic skills e.g. using counting games, storytelling, or simple science experiments so that learning in Grade 1 feels like a continuation of earlier play-based methods. Importantly, the content is enriched with **local cultural values and examples**: traditional children's games and folklore are highlighted as tools for learning, and advice is given on how to blend cultural practices with modern educational expectations [34]. By including culturally familiar references, the guide ensures relevance for parents and children in the community, making the transition experience more relatable and enjoyable. This approach follows evidence that traditional play can strengthen children's character and ease adaptation [19]. The pocket book's design is highly user-centric it is concise (to respect parents' time), illustrated (to enhance engagement and clarity), and organized in a step-by-step format. Parents can quickly find sections on emotional preparation, academic preparation, health and self-care (e.g. managing snack time or bathroom routines at school), and spiritual/moral readiness, reflecting a holistic view of school readiness. The pocket book design as shown in figure 2.





Figure 2. Pocket book prototype (mockup) images.

After the pocket book was drafted, **expert evaluation** confirmed that the content was valid and comprehensive. The early childhood education expert vetted the developmental information to ensure consistency with established educational standards and curricula. The child psychologist reviewed sections on emotional readiness and parenting strategies, affirming that the advice was psychologically sound and age-appropriate. The media/design expert provided feedback on the layout and language, helping to refine the guide so that it was engaging and easily understood by a lay audience. For example, based on expert input, certain jargon terms were replaced with everyday language, and more visuals were added to demonstrate activities. This validation step was crucial in ensuring the pocket book met high quality standards and was credible in the eyes of both professionals and parents [35].

The **limited user trial** of the pocket book yielded encouraging results. Parents who reviewed and used the pocket book reported that it was **easy to understand** and packed with useful advice. Many parents particularly appreciated the real-life examples and tips – they commented that the scenarios described in the book (such as a child reluctant to go to school) felt very familiar, and the suggested solutions were practical and effective. Quantitatively, feedback forms from the parents indicated a high level of satisfaction: on average, parents gave positive ratings on items such as “the language of the pocket book is clear,” “the tips in this book are useful for me and my child,” and “I learned new strategies from this pocket book.” In fact, a majority of participants agreed that after reading the pocket book, they felt more confident in how to handle their child’s transition to school. Qualitatively, recurring themes in parent feedback included **increased**

confidence (“I now feel I know what to do to get my child ready”), **reduced anxiety for both parent and child** (“We’re both more excited than nervous about school now”), and suggestions to disseminate the pocket book to other parents and even preschools (indicating a perceived broader need for such a resource). Any minor criticisms or suggestions (such as requests for more examples of daily schedules, or adding a short section on healthy sleep habits) were noted and incorporated into a final revision of the book. By iterating on this feedback, the final version of the pocket book became more refined and user-approved.

In summary, the project’s key deliverable is a **validated parent pocket book** that directly addresses the research questions. It effectively encapsulates strategies for parents to support a child’s transition and has been crafted with input from its target users to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. The process of developing and testing this guide provided valuable findings: it demonstrated that parents are eager for such information and, when given the right guidance, they can play a proactive role in making their child’s entry into elementary school a positive experience. The research thus not only produced a practical tool ready for limited implementation, but also generated evidence that a parent-centered approach can fill the long-standing gap in transition support[36]. It is expected that by using this pocket book, parental involvement will increase and children will enter elementary school with greater readiness and confidence, making the early school experience more enjoyable for them [22].

The pocket book prototype was validated as culturally relevant and user-friendly. Expert ratings showed high content validity ($M = 4.7/5$). Parents reported increased confidence ($M = 4.6/5$) and clarity in supporting school transition. Children exhibited lower anxiety levels and smoother adaptation based on teacher feedback. The summary could be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Parental Responses by Domain

| Domain | Indicator | Pretest Mean | Posttest Mean | Improvement (%) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Emotional Readiness | Ability to manage anxiety | 3.2 | 4.5 | +40.6% |
| Academic Readiness | Support for early literacy/numeracy | 3.5 | 4.6 | +31.4% |
| Behavioral Readiness | Independence and routine discipline | 3.1 | 4.4 | +41.9% |
| Communication Skills | Parent-child discussion quality | 3.4 | 4.7 | +38.2% |

These improvements indicate strong positive responses toward the pocket book’s usability and its contribution to enhancing parents’ readiness for the transition process.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : Findings confirm that equipping parents with targeted guidance improves family and school collaboration and children’s transition outcomes. The improvement in parental efficacy aligns with ecological and socio-cultural learning frameworks, emphasizing the interconnectedness of home and school environments. The iterative DBR process ensured that parental voices directly informed product refinement, strengthening user relevance. **Implication :** The study extends to policy implications, suggesting the integration of family-centered materials into early childhood curricula and recommending cross-sector collaboration among schools, teacher education institutions, and community organizations. The development and evaluation of the “Mini Pocket Book” offer a family-inclusive model for educational transitions that can be scaled up for broader use. **Limitation :** The study's limitations include its context-specific approach in Indonesia, and while the pocket book showed positive initial results, long-term impact and scalability require further validation. The focus on a specific community might limit generalizability to other regions or cultures. **Future Research :** Future research may adapt the pocket book digitally for broader accessibility, allowing real-time interaction and multimedia learning modules. Expanding longitudinal assessments and exploring the effectiveness of the tool in diverse educational systems would provide valuable insights into its broader applicability and sustainability.

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