

Education Constraint: Artistic Interior Designer vs Interior Design Project Manager

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Abstract. There are several interior design organizations including ASID, BIDA, CIDA, IDEC and FIDER offer a definition of interior design and interior designers. However, NCIDQ defines professional interior designer as one who is qualified by education, experience and examination for the purpose of enhancing the function and quality of interior space. Therefore, there are a huge disparity of being an interior designer as an artist and interior designer as a project manager. The discrepancies are including the scope of work and the roles and responsibility of interior designer towards the project. An investigation with the aim to expose the truth behind the interior design education program in higher institution in Malaysia in producing artistic interior design or interior design project manager was conducted. This paper presents the finding from the interior design syllabus in higher institutions using the document analysis to analyze the data. A framework of interior design competencies will be drawn from the literature. Then a comparison between the interior design syllabus and the framework of interior design competencies will discover the holes within interior education in creating a future interior designer. Expectantly, the result will give a good impact on the relationship between higher education institutions and the interior design industry that should be strengthened in order to placing the young interior designers. The study also helps to formulate the new program and improve the curriculum for interior design education in a wider context.

1. Introduction

Confusion about the profession of interior design normally created by the interior design practitioners its own, programme offered, and education. The misunderstanding of these disciplines enables public to think that everyone can be an interior designer by creating a space with finishes, furniture, furnishing and artwork without any understanding of the drawing and structural works. These conceptions must and need to be redefined.

The term interior designer describes a professional approach to interiors that put more prominence on basic planning and functional design that decoration entails. Because of the way interior design has emerged as a profession and the complexity of the built environment, the field of interior design is overlap and supplements a variety of related professional areas (Binggeli, 2007). The term interior decorator is designated most widely used and understood by the general public

today. The title, which gained currency in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, applied to the large group of designers who were specialist in putting together interiors in various traditional styles such as Colonial: Louis xiv, xv or xvi; Tudor; Georgian and include Modernistic that it became popular to imitate (Pile, 2007). The term implies a focus on the decorative, ornamental and movable aspect of interior design including colour, furniture, rugs, and the fixed details of mouldings, panelling and similar small elements that can be introduced into an existing space with relative ease.

Although there are overlapping between interior design, interior architecture and interior decoration in the service provided, the distinction between these terms continues to grow. Interior designers are often called upon to decorate residential or commercial spaces with furnishings, accessories, antiques and artwork. Interior designer may also perform some aspect of interior decorating as part of their package of design services. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the task, roles and responsible of this profession to reject the confusion.

2. Task, Roles and Responsibility of Interior Designer

Responding to this problem, Wright (2006) has mentioned that the confusion about interior design profession also is creating uncertainty within design education in fact, some schools offered degrees in interior architecture clouds the issue even further. Wright stressed that students need to know how the professions differ and what the laws are in the various states that regulate the professions, to avoid unwittingly violating the law and possibly torpedoing their design career in the process. In addition to that, the fact that a number of practitioners within our own profession choose to call themselves "interior architects" without registered as architects, again, unfortunately, causes additional confusion.

Not to be confused with interior decoration and interior architecture, interior design is involves in a multitude of technical, analytical, creative skills and understandings of architectural elements. It is crucial to identify the roles and task of interior designer in order to reject the perception that interior designer is an interior decorator and similar to interior architect. It is also important in recognizing the skills and knowledge that vital for an interior designer.

Additional to this, Birdsong and Lawlor (2001) cited Veitch, Jackman, and Dixon (1990) that explained Interior designers educated to become creative professionals and added the role as an interior designer as the individual who analyze problems from many different perspectives; apply philosophies, theories, and results of empirical investigations; and synthesize and reshape information in the development of their design solutions. Wright (2006) explained all professional interior designers must meet the same minimum standards of competency, and all trained to provide a range of services that go beyond decoration. They must also address matters of function and space planning, as well as the safety and health of the occupants.

As a key component to ensure the successful project, the interior design project manager exists to assist the project organisation to achieve the project goals and objectives. From this perspective, the knowledge and skills of interior design project manager can be consider as the most crucial element of the whole interior project from design to implementation. Functioning as a project manager for the interior works and collaboration with other stakeholders, demand certain qualities of project manager that can utilise all resources to the project. Views that associates the

interior design project manager to the production and the execution of the interior works is including project: project planning, problem solving, time management; client: consultation and negotiation; implementation: coordination, integration, managerial skills and communication; contract and legal knowledge; technical knowledge; and administration and business skills found to be the most chronic theme.

In solving design problems, interior designer have to the power to make people feel positive in their surroundings through the process to turn an empty interior into a functionally effective and aesthetically pleasing environment requires a number task by the interior designer. Interior designer develops drawings and documents to ensure the design concepts properly turned into reality. This sequence called the design process.

In whatever version that came out from these, the process is still the same and the project will go through this to execute it. NCIDQ (2003) defined phases of interior design process that are widely accepted, which is Programming, Schematic Design, Design development, Contract document and Contract Administration. The other view on the interior design process according to Pile (2007) is depending on the size of the project and the designer-client relationship. It will determine the steps that are necessary in an interior project. For example, a simplest project like a renovation of a single room may hardly require any formal organization of work and contrasting to a larger interior projects such as a healthcare project, will require client approval of design decisions and will involve with more organization and systematization. Therefore, Pile outlined the steps for these kinds of large projects that involving many spaces and serving many people, orderly working methods are essential. The flowchart stated according by the stages consists of Project Beginnings, Programming, Concept development, Design development, Design implementation, Project Supervision and Post Completion.

However, from the literature, the work development process of interior design can be put into this diagram (fig 1). This diagram will elaborate in detail the roles and duties of a professional interior design to the project.

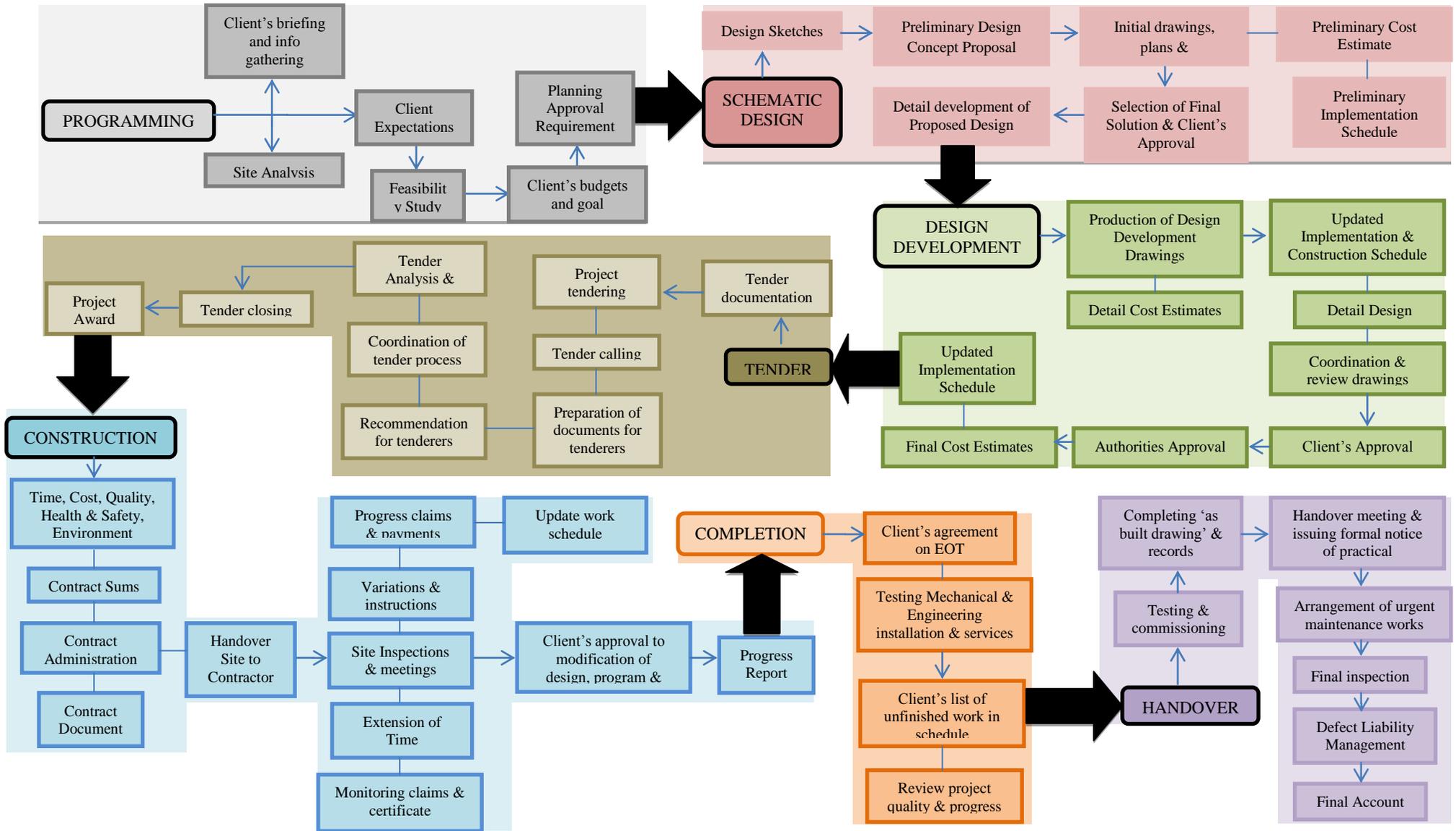


Fig 1: The work Development Process for the Professional Interior Design

Illustrated from above, it stated that the scope of work in interior design has expanded tremendously. The task and duties of a professional interior designer drawn in the conceptual framework as shown in figure 1. The framework shows that to be a professional interior designer, one must acquire knowledge not only in design, but in business and how to organize people. In order to have a wider skills besides design, interior designer ought to occupy themselves with related knowledge that can be gained during academic years or experiences during practices. As the built environment of the present day has grown in complexity and diversity, the realm of the interior has become a profession in its own right. While an interior designer works alongside other consultant such as architects, engineers and construction managers, in many cases today projects handled independently by a new breed of professionals: interior architects. These are creative professionals who not only plan and design public, commercial, recreational, institutional and domestic buildings, but also qualified and responsible for the management and implementation of such projects.

3. Interior Design Project Implementation

Interior design project is similar to any project in construction industry. Fig 2 describes the scope of interior design within construction projects. The implementation process was the same from inception that involved the feasibility study through design and entering the tender process. These continue with the phase of construction until handover and lastly maintenance. This process is reflecting to the management of the whole interior project.

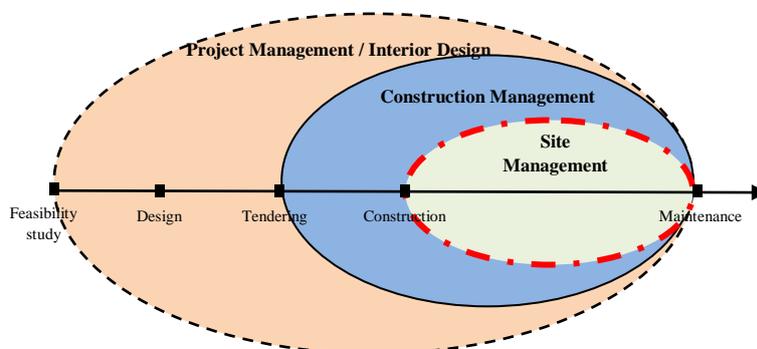


Fig 2: Scope of Interior Design in Construction Industry

Therefore, interior designer must accomplish wider knowledge in achieving successful interior project. According to fig 2, the artistic and creativity only comes in the design phase. The creativeness and imagination of interior designer has pulled out to achieve the client's objective and according to their needs. Here, the designer might be involved in the process of creating functional space without neglecting the aesthetic value of each proposed design and concept. However, the development of the project to become reality has to be considered. The artistic with the aesthetic spaces cannot be stopped during the design phase. It must be continued through construction and until the handover of the project to the

client. Fig 2 also described the process after design stage in order to complete the project including tendering, construction and maintenance.

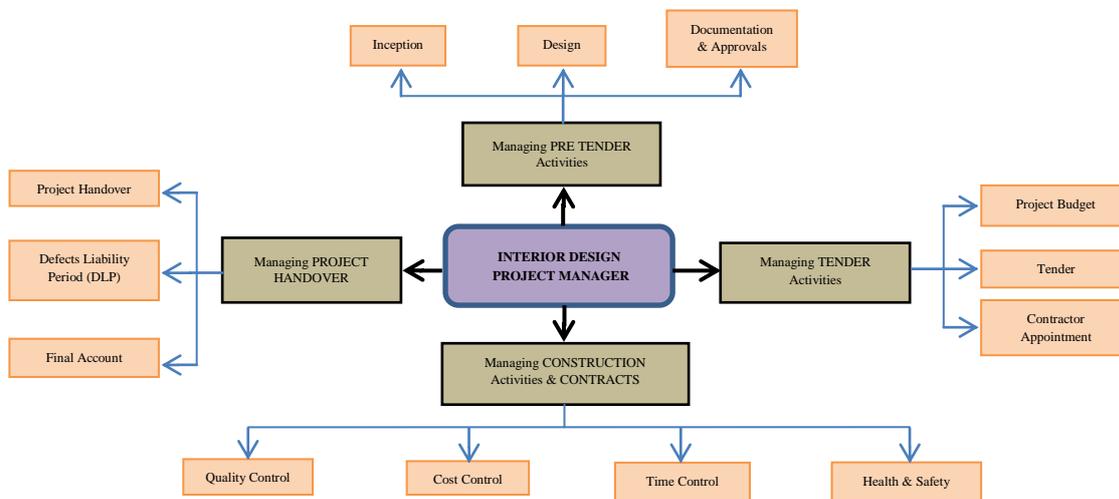


Fig 3: the activities of interior design in managing interior project

Therefore to ensure the completion of the project, a project manager has to come in to handle the project. Interior design project is similar to any construction project which interior design project manager is responsible to the overall project from inception till project handover (fig 3). To manage interior project the individual must begin from managing the pre tender activities which are inception, design, documentation and approvals. These will follow the management of tender activities that include the project budget, tender process and contractor appointment. When the construction begins, it is important to manage the construction and contract activities involving the quality, cost and time control and health and safety. It does not stop there, where it continues in managing the final part of the project which is managing project handover.

4. Methodology

An extensive review of interior design, project management and the competency of interior design project management were conducted. There are many authors discussed the needs and the significant of interior design in producing a functional space according to their creativities. Only a few of the same researchers argued on the interior design professionalism as well as project management in interior design. For the purpose of this study, the interior design work development process was used to compare with the current education in the higher institutions. Four (4) higher institutions that offered interior design education were identified for this study. The curriculum structures were then used in comparing it with the framework of interior design competency.

5. Interior Design Education in the opposition to Interior Design Project Implementation

Interior design project is similar to any construction projects that need to focus on the implementation stage to ensure the completion of the project. On the other hand, design cannot be deny being the most important element for realization of the concept and client's objectives to the project. To ensure the completion of the project, the knowledge of the implementation stage including management is more significant to the project. With the expectation of knowledge among interior designers, project will successfully complete within the duration, quality and budget. For that reason, what is the preparation for young interior designers in expanding the knowledge within the education program? This can be seen by the investigation of this study towards producing an artistic or a manager for interior design industry.

As seen in figure 4, the finding shows that there was a 'gap' in educating future interior designer. In top of that, the finding also proves that education program producing an artistic interior designer comparing to interior design project manager. Interior design industry cannot deny the existence of other stages besides programming, schematic design and design development for an interior designer to handle. A paradigm of being an artistic interior designer must be shifted and lifted up plus open to the changes for new challenges in creating a functional space.

Entering the Tender stage (fig 4), the 'gap' start to occur meaning interior design education does not focus and emphasize on the implementation of the project. Same goes to the construction stage that comprised the largest activities in the whole project that involved and performed by various parties. Yet the knowledge in the construction stage less highlighted in the curriculum structure of interior design education. This pattern of the syllabus was imposed without knowing the importance of other stages of the project. The understanding of completion and handover stage also not include in the syllabus (table 1).

From the explanation above, it is deniable that interior design is merely design and concept. The interior design industry must encourage shifting the paradigm of professionalism to the next level. Research development must be encouraged in order to expose the industry to the needs of knowledge and skills that crucial for the industry. The research development also might help the industry to remould interior designer with the significant knowledge and skills by providing the correct training for interior designers. Here, the roles of professional bodies have to take an action towards these issues and their responsible to provide this knowledge among the members.

From this investigation, clearly the industry supplies the artistic interior designer contrast to the needs of the industry that require the interior designer plus with management knowledge to manage the project. Therefore, reformation of the syllabus structure in the higher institution must be considered in order to provide a future interior designer according to industry demand.

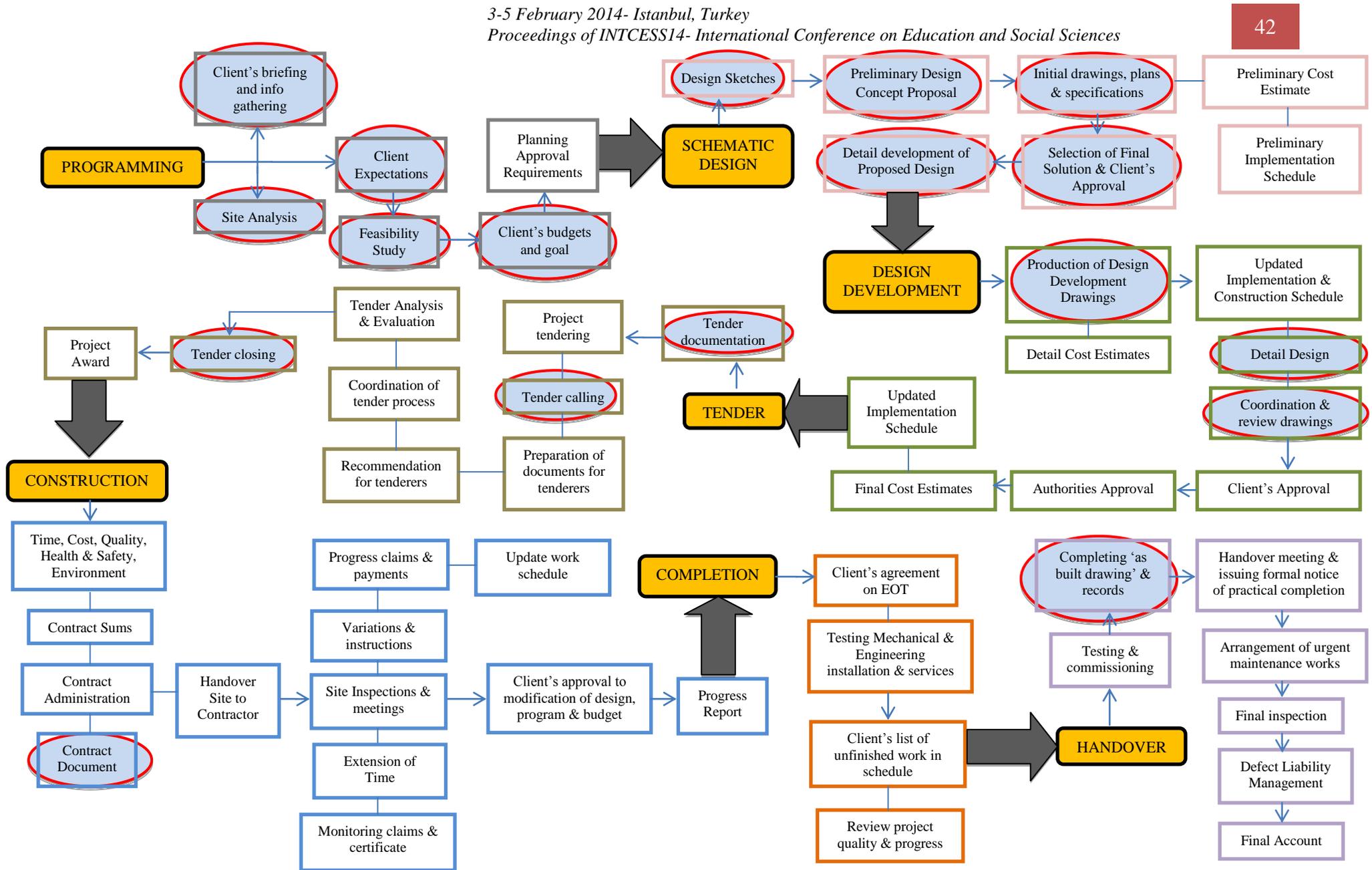


Fig 4: The comparison between Professional Interior Design work development process with the interior design curriculum structure

Interior Design Project Management Competencies – by stages		Interior Design Curriculum
Programming	Client's briefing & info gathering	learned
	Site analysis	learned
	Client expectation	learned
	Feasibility study	learned
	Planning approval requirement	Not included in the curriculum
	Client budget & goal	learned
Schematic Design	Design sketch	learned
	Preliminary Design Concept Proposal	learned
	Initial drawings, plans & specifications	learned
	Preliminary Cost Estimate	Not included in the curriculum
	Preliminary Implementation Schedule	Not included in the curriculum
	Selection of Final Solution & Client's Approval	Not included in the curriculum
	Detail development of Proposed Design	learned
Design Development	Production of Design Development Drawings	learned
	Detail Cost Estimates	learned
	Coordination & review drawings	learned
	Detail Design	Not included in the curriculum
	Updated Implementation & Construction Schedule	Not included in the curriculum
	Client's Approval	Not included in the curriculum
	Final Cost Estimates	Not included in the curriculum
Tender	Updated Implementation Schedule	Not included in the curriculum
	Tender documentation	learned
	Project tendering	Not included in the curriculum
	Tender calling	learned
	Preparation of documents for tenderers	Not included in the curriculum
	Recommendation for tenderers	Not included in the curriculum
	Tender closing	learned
Construction	Tender Analysis & Evaluation	Not included in the curriculum
	Project Award	Not included in the curriculum
	Time, Cost, Quality, Health & Safety, Environment	Not included in the curriculum
	Contract Sums	Not included in the curriculum
	Contract Administration	Not included in the curriculum
	Contract Document	learned
	Handover Site to Contractor	Not included in the curriculum
	Variations & instructions	Not included in the curriculum
	Progress claims & payments	Not included in the curriculum
	Update work schedule	Not included in the curriculum
	Site Inspections & meetings	Not included in the curriculum
Extension of Time	Not included in the curriculum	
Completion	Monitoring claims & certificate	Not included in the curriculum
	Progress Report	Not included in the curriculum
	Client's agreement on EOT	Not included in the curriculum
	Testing Mechanical & Engineering installation & services	Not included in the curriculum
	Client's list of unfinished work in schedule	Not included in the curriculum
	Review project quality & progress	Not included in the curriculum
	Testing & commissioning	Not included in the curriculum
	Handover meeting & issuing formal notice of practical completion	learned
	Arrangement of urgent maintenance works	Not included in the curriculum
Final inspection	Not included in the curriculum	
Defect Liability Management	Not included in the curriculum	
Final Account	Not included in the curriculum	

Table 1: the comparison in table form

6. References

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