

Interactive dynamics in the design process:
*'model' skills from the perspectives of the
client and the designer*

Yu Ming Timothy Chan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh
Napier University, for the award of Doctor of Business Administration.

November 2016

I declare that the work submitted in this thesis has not been used for any other degree or professional qualification and is the result of the student's own independent work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy Chan', written over a horizontal line.

Yu Ming Timothy Chan

Copyright Declaration

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of UK Copyright Acts as qualified by regulations of Edinburgh Napier University.

Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in or derived from this thesis.

Dedication

In remembrance of my late-brothers

James and Steve,

who both passed away from cancer during the course of this study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude and
thanks to

Dr Janice McMillan

And

Dr Gerri Matthews-Smith

for

their support, guidance and advice.

Most importantly because of their patience
and understanding throughout
my DBA studies.

I would like to thank Dr Christine
Donnelly for her advice and support.

Finally, I would like to thank the person
who has been non-stop nagging, moaning and
pushing me through this challenging journey.

Without him,

I cannot imagine that I would have reached the end of my journey.

My wee lamb

Alexander Gordon McLean

Timothy Yu Ming Chan

November 2016

Abstract: Interactive dynamics in the design process: ‘model’ skills from the perspectives of the client and the designer.

Increased concerns have been raised regarding the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry in China. Although this phenomenon persists, there have been limited research studies addressing the issue. The underlying causes of the lack of coherence remains, and the industry’s expectations remain unclear. Therefore, the overall aim of this study is to explore the interactive dynamics in client-designer relationships during the design process, in order to define the industry’s expectations on essential designer skills that will enable the closure of the gap between education and practice. In-depth interviews were conducted as the data collection method in this study. Twelve participants comprising six clients and six designers were selected under a purposive sampling procedure. Data collection, analysis and limitations of the study were explored. The current industry context was identified from the literature. Five broad themes were identified from the findings: *progression in design perceptions; interactive dynamics; power relations; client-designer relationship; and features in design process*. The inter-relationships between the current industry context and themes were examined and a framework for interior designer training and ‘model’ skills for interior designers are proposed, and the industry’s expectations and situated influences were identified that addressed the long standing knowledge gap between education and practice. The framework comprises three aspects of client-designer relationships that reflect different designer’s roles in the current industry context. The ‘model’ skills may serve as sets of criteria to support or examine the conditions. The framework and its ‘model’ skills could be adapted into strategic plans and developed into practical client-management techniques; this may help designers or organizations operating proactively, to be prepared to encounter either familiar or challenging situations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1. Rational to the research | 1 |
| 1.1.1. <i>Continuous demand in skilled interior design professional.....</i> | <i>1</i> |
| 1.1.2. <i>Undefined industry’s expectations.....</i> | <i>2</i> |
| 1.2. Definition of interior design practice and its process | 4 |
| 1.2.1. <i>Interactive Dynamics</i> | <i>5</i> |
| 1.2.2. <i>Justification of the HRD theory with reference to interactive dynamics concepts.....</i> | <i>7</i> |
| 1.3. Research Objectives | 9 |
| 1.4. Structure of the thesis..... | 9 |
| | |
| 2. CHINA INTERIOR DESIGN CONTEXT | 11 |
| 2.1. History and development of interior design industry in China.. | 12 |
| 2.2. The interior design education context..... | 13 |
| 2.3. Transitions in interior design environment | 15 |
| 2.3.1. <i>The landscape in supply and demand of domestic design workforce.....</i> | <i>16</i> |
| 2.3.2. <i>Transition in the supply of different levels of local interior designer</i> | <i>20</i> |
| 2.3.3. <i>Summary of Section 2.3.....</i> | <i>23</i> |
| 2.4. Transitions in cultural environment | 24 |
| 2.4.1. <i>‘Guanxi’ culture and transitions in organization values.....</i> | <i>24</i> |
| 2.4.2. <i>Transitions in the industry expectations.....</i> | <i>26</i> |
| 2.4.3. <i>Transitions in the market expectations.....</i> | <i>27</i> |
| 2.5. Chapter 2 summary | 29 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 3. | LITERATURE REVIEW | 30 |
| 3.1. | HRD orientation in China..... | 31 |
| 3.1.1. | <i>Definitions of HRD.....</i> | 32 |
| 3.1.2. | <i>Definitions of HRD in China.....</i> | 34 |
| 3.1.3. | <i>Summary.....</i> | 36 |
| 3.2. | Present HRD environment in China..... | 38 |
| 3.2.1. | <i>HRD at national level.....</i> | 39 |
| 3.2.2. | <i>HRD at organisational level.....</i> | 42 |
| 3.2.3. | <i>Organizational culture.....</i> | 44 |
| 3.2.4. | <i>Organizational behaviour.....</i> | 45 |
| 3.2.5. | <i>Relationships between individual and organizational culture and behaviour</i> | 47 |
| 3.2.6. | <i>Summary.....</i> | 50 |
| 3.3. | Client and designer relationship..... | 52 |
| 3.3.1. | <i>Behaviour and social practice & Communications</i> | 55 |
| 3.3.2. | <i>Power relations.....</i> | 57 |
| 3.3.3. | <i>Relationship management and knowledge learning process</i> | 58 |
| 3.3.4. | <i>Decision making and problem solving.....</i> | 61 |
| 3.3.5. | <i>Summary.....</i> | 62 |
| 3.4. | Current issues of the implementations of HRD in China..... | 65 |
| 3.4.1. | <i>Vocational training and shortage of skilled labour.....</i> | 65 |
| 3.5. | Current interior design profession requirements for designer skills in a Chinese context..... | 68 |
| 3.5.1. | <i>What does the designer do? – Design process.....</i> | 69 |
| 3.5.2. | <i>Professional knowledge</i> | 70 |
| 3.5.3. | <i>Technical expertise.....</i> | 72 |
| 3.5.4. | <i>Summary.....</i> | 74 |
| 3.6. | Current issues in interior design industry | 75 |
| 3.6.1. | <i>Short of skilled interior design professionals and internal training</i> | 75 |
| 3.6.2. | <i>Transitions in organization values</i> | 76 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 3.6.3. | <i>Design process and cultural issues</i> | 77 |
| 3.6.4. | <i>Current interior design profession requirements for designer skills in a Chinese context</i> | 78 |
| 3.7. | Themes identified through literature review..... | 79 |
| 3.7.1. | <i>Client and designer relationships</i> | 79 |
| 3.7.2. | <i>Theoretical model and concept of interactive dynamics</i> | 81 |
| 3.7.3. | <i>Situated influences</i> | 83 |
| 3.7.4. | <i>Lack of skilled professionals</i> | 84 |
| 3.7.5. | <i>Industry's expectations</i> | 86 |
| 3.8. | Chapter 3 summary | 87 |
| 4. | RESEARCH DESIGN | 89 |
| 4.1. | Research philosophy | 89 |
| 4.1.1. | <i>Research approaches</i> | 90 |
| 4.1.2. | <i>Reflections and evolvement</i> | 92 |
| 4.1.3. | <i>Current 'reality' of interior design industry in China</i> | 93 |
| 4.1.4. | <i>Defining epistemological position</i> | 95 |
| 4.2. | Methodological approaches | 98 |
| 4.3. | Choice of Research Method | 100 |
| 4.3.1. | <i>Adoption of individual in-depth interview method</i> | 100 |
| 4.4. | Data collection | 102 |
| 4.4.1. | <i>Sampling</i> | 102 |
| 4.4.2. | <i>Sampling for pilot study interviews</i> | 105 |
| 4.4.3. | <i>Sampling for main study interviews with interior design clients</i> | 107 |
| 4.4.4. | <i>Sampling for main interviews with interior designers</i> | 109 |
| 4.4.5. | <i>Ethical considerations</i> | 111 |
| 4.5. | Data analysis | 113 |
| 4.5.1. | <i>Preparation of raw data</i> | 115 |
| 4.5.2. | <i>Pilot study</i> | 116 |
| 4.5.3. | <i>Main study</i> | 118 |
| 4.5.4. | <i>Links between literature and findings</i> | 119 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 4.5.5. | <i>Limitation</i> | 120 |
| 4.6. | Chapter 4 summary | 121 |
| 5. | FINDINGS | 122 |
| 5.1. | Theme one: Progression in design perception..... | 123 |
| 5.1.1. | <i>Objective perspectives of the progression in interior design environment</i> | 124 |
| 5.1.2. | <i>Subjective perspectives of the progression in interior design environment</i> | 125 |
| 5.1.3. | <i>Summary</i> | 127 |
| 5.2. | Theme two: Interactive dynamics..... | 128 |
| 5.2.1. | <i>Positive impacts from interactive dynamics during the design process</i> | 128 |
| 5.2.2. | <i>Negative impacts from interactive dynamics during the design process</i> | 129 |
| 5.2.3. | <i>Summary</i> | 132 |
| 5.3. | Theme three: Power relations | 134 |
| 5.3.1. | <i>Hierarchy position</i> | 134 |
| 5.3.2. | <i>Reverse power transition</i> | 136 |
| 5.3.3. | <i>Merging position</i> | 137 |
| 5.3.4. | <i>Homogeneous position</i> | 138 |
| 5.3.5. | <i>Summary</i> | 139 |
| 5.4. | Theme four: Client-designer relationship | 141 |
| 5.4.1. | <i>Defined relations</i> | 142 |
| 5.4.2. | <i>Mutual relations</i> | 144 |
| 5.4.3. | <i>Ideal relations</i> | 145 |
| 5.4.4. | <i>Workable relations</i> | 146 |
| 5.4.5. | <i>Summary</i> | 149 |
| 5.4.6. | <i>Theme five: Features in the design process</i> | 151 |
| 5.4.7. | <i>Noteworthy features in a successful design project</i> | 152 |
| 5.4.8. | <i>Differences between designer and client perceptions on a good design project</i> | 153 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 5.4.9. Summary..... | 155 |
| 5.5. Chapter 5 summary | 156 |
| 6. DISCUSSIONS..... | 157 |
| 6.1. Themes identified through data analysis | 158 |
| 6.1.1. Theme one: Progression in design perception | 158 |
| 6.1.2. Theme Two: Interactive dynamics | 159 |
| 6.1.3. Theme Three: Power relations..... | 161 |
| 6.1.4. Theme four: Client-designer relationship..... | 164 |
| 6.1.5. Theme five: Features in the design process..... | 168 |
| 6.2. Relationship between themes from literature and data | 170 |
| 6.3. Patterns, links and interactions in the data | 171 |
| 6.3.1. Link one – Situated environment..... | 171 |
| 6.3.2. Link two – Current industry’s expectations | 174 |
| 6.3.3. Link three – Current design process..... | 177 |
| 6.4. A suggestive interior designer training framework..... | 179 |
| 6.5. ‘Model’ skills for interior designer | 184 |
| 6.5.1. Current industry context related skills..... | 184 |
| 6.5.2. Industry’s perceptions among current design process context | 186 |
| 6.6. Summary of Chapter 6 | 188 |
| 7. CONCLUSION | 189 |
| 7.1. Achievement of study aim and research objectives..... | 189 |
| 7.1.1. Overall aim of the study | 189 |
| 7.1.2. Research objective 1 | 189 |
| 7.1.3. Research objective 2 | 191 |
| 7.1.4. Research objective 3 | 192 |
| 7.1.5. Research objective 4 | 192 |
| 7.2. Limitations and areas for further research..... | 193 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 7.3. Contribution to professional practice and existing literature .. | 194 |
| References..... | 197 |
| Appendices..... | 208 |

List of Diagrams

| | |
|---|-----|
| DIAGRAM 2-1: AN INTEGRATED DIAGRAM IN STAGES OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATION AND THE CHANGE OF SUPPLY OF DESIGN WORKFORCES AGAINST THE ECONOMIC REFORM | 17 |
| DIAGRAM 2-2: THE CHANGES BETWEEN THE FOREIGN AND LOCAL INTERIOR DESIGN WORKFORCE AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT IN PHASES | 22 |
| DIAGRAM 3-1: THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT..... | 33 |
| DIAGRAM 3-2: INFLUENCE BETWEEN THE TRANSITION ENVIRONMENT AND HRD IMPLEMENTATIONS IN THE CHINESE TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY CONTEXT | 37 |
| DIAGRAM 3-3: THE CONCEPT OF INTERACTIVE DYNAMICS IN THE CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS | 82 |
| DIAGRAM 5-1: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES | 122 |
| DIAGRAM 5-2: FOUR STYLES OF POWER RELATIONS POSITIONS | 140 |
| DIAGRAM 5-3: DESIGNER’S SKILLS IN CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIPS..... | 150 |
| DIAGRAM 5-4: DESIGNER’S SKILLS IN DESIGN PROCESS | 156 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| FIGURE 2-1: SUPPLY AND DEMAND TRENDS OF LOCAL INTERIOR DESIGN WORK FORCE AND MARKET..... | 19 |
| FIGURE 5-1: THEME ONE – PROGRESSION IN DESIGN PERCEPTIONS | 123 |
| FIGURE 5-2: PERCEPTIONS ON INTERACTIVE DYNAMICS BETWEEN CLIENT AND DESIGNER DURING DESIGN PROCESS | 133 |
| FIGURE 5-3: FOUR SUB-THEMES OF CLIENTS’ AND DESIGNERS’ PERCEPTIONS ON CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIPS | 141 |
| FIGURE 5-4: CLIENT’S’ AND DESIGNERS’ PERCEPTIONS ON FEATURES IN DESIGN PROCESS | 151 |
| FIGURE 6-1: DISTRIBUTIONS OF INDUSTRY’S PERCEPTIONS ON ‘MODEL’ SKILLS IN CURRENT DESIGN PROCESS CONTEXT | 187 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| TABLE 3-1: HRD LITERATURE IN THE CHINESE CONTEXT AT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL..... | 43 |
| TABLE 3-2: CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES OF INTERACTIVE DYNAMICS IN THE CLIENT-DESIGNER COLLABORATION PROCESS..... | 81 |
| TABLE 4-1: OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE PILOT STUDY..... | 107 |
| TABLE 4-2: OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS FROM THE INTERIOR DESIGN CLIENT GROUP | 108 |
| TABLE 4-3: OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS FROM THE INTERIOR DESIGNER GROUP | 110 |
| TABLE 4-4: THE INDUCTIVE CODING PROCESS – ADAPTED FROM: THOMAS (2006, P242, TABLE 2) | 114 |
| TABLE 6-1: A SUGGESTIVE INTERIOR DESIGNER TRAINING FRAME WORK..... | 182 |
| TABLE 6-2: DESIGNER SKILLS AMONG THE SUGGESTIVE INTERIOR DESIGNER TRAINING FRAMEWORK | 183 |
| TABLE 6-3: ‘MODEL’ SKILLS FROM THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE CLIENT AND THE DESIGNER..... | 185 |

List of Appendices

| | |
|--|-----|
| APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL..... | 208 |
| APPENDIX 2: INFORMATION SHEET FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS | 216 |
| APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM | 218 |
| APPENDIX 4: INFORMATION SHEET – CHINESE VERSION..... | 221 |
| APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM – CHINESE VERSION | 222 |
| APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH CHINESE TRANSLATION..... | 224 |
| APPENDIX 7: INITIAL CATEGORIES TABLE – CLIENT GROUP (CHINESE VERSION) | 228 |
| APPENDIX 8: CONDENSED CATEGORIES TABLE – CLIENT GROUP (CHINESE VERSION) | 235 |
| APPENDIX 9: CONDENSED CATEGORIES TABLE – CLIENT GROUP (TRANSLATED VERSION) | 238 |
| APPENDIX 10: INITIAL THEMES IDENTIFICATION TABLES – CLIENT GROUP | 241 |
| APPENDIX 11: INITIAL CATEGORIES TABLE – DESIGNER GROUP (CHINESE VERSION) | 251 |
| APPENDIX 12: CONDENSED CATEGORIES TABLE – DESIGNER GROUP (CHINESE VERSION) | 258 |
| APPENDIX 13: CONDENSED CATEGORIES TABLE – DESIGNER GROUP (TRANSLATED VERSION) | 261 |
| APPENDIX 14: INITIAL THEMES IDENTIFICATION TABLES – DESIGNER GROUP... | 264 |

1. Introduction

1.1. Rational to the research

The Chinese interior design industry has experienced a wealth of changes in the past three decades (Ru, 2011). The fast pace of this development is clearly related to the major changes in the economic environment and government policies in China (Zheng, 2010). However, this dynamic transformation in the interior design industry has also led to a number of underlying problems within the industry.

1.1.1. Continuous demand in skilled interior design professional

Since the thirty years that the economic reform and open-door policy was first promoted, the changes in supply and demand in domestic workforces within the interior design industry has shifted from providing a semi-skilled workforce in the 1980's towards providing a highly-skilled workforce (Dong, 2010; Zheng, 2010). This transition in the supply of different levels of a domestic workforce was instigated by the progression in design education. It is reflected by a progressive transition in the interior design environment since the China open door policy highlighted the transition of progressive industry's expectations in various specific skilled professionals against the education provision among different stages of the interior design industry development. Although the current statistics also show that the current numbers of interior designers has reached six hundred thousand, there are still an insufficient number of skilled design professionals to cope with the industry demand (CIDA, 2011). Despite the above shifted trend showing a positive progression in the development of the interior design industry in China, it also instigates a disproportion between current interior design education provision and the industry expectations (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010).

With reference to the relationship between the transitions in the interior design environment and the government policy, a newly

launched policy of changing ‘Made in China’ to ‘Designed in China’ would encourage an economic growth and promote manufactory transformation (Jin, 2005; Liu, 2010). Therefore, further progression on the domestic interior designer’s ability could be predicted, and the gap between current interior design education provision and industry expectations could become even wider.

1.1.2. Undefined industry’s expectations

Meanwhile, in the current interior design context, there are growing numbers of non-interior design trained individuals who join the interior design practice (Li and Zhang, 2012). Although various registered interior designer certificates are in place to differentiate the levels of qualified interior designers, there are over 95% of practicing designers who consider the certificates to be irrelevant to their jobs, as reported from a recent statistic (Chen, 2010). Besides, there is still no regulation in place to restrict only certified interior designers being able to practice interior design in China. On the other hand, in reality, clients are not interested in designers’ certificates but rather they are interested only in their physical design works (Chen, 2010). Therefore, how do we know what the current interior design profession requirements are for designers?

From the evaluation of Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical assumptions on basic qualities of interior designers they suggested four essential areas of professional knowledge; Architectural Studies, Materialism Science, Interior Design Theory, and Art and Design Studies, appear to be required for a practicing interior designer in China. The three areas of professional expertise; Computer Skills, Manual Drafting Skills, and General Soft Skills, are essential for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process. However, apart from these theoretical assumptions, there is no empirical suggestion on essential designer skills from

neither study of the current interior design industry – design practitioners or the market – the clients. So, what is the current industry’s expectation on designer’s skills in current context?

Therefore, the knowledge gap lies within the lack of coherence between professional practice and education provision in defining the industry expectations.

1.2. Definition of interior design practice and its process

Interior design practice is generally defined to encompass a wealth of practical knowledge that covers problem solving, technical and aesthetic aspects to create its artefact (Behmanesh, 2015; Haddad, 2014). Despite its design orientated nature, the outcome of design is not solely dependent on this practical knowledge of the designer, but to a large extent on the collaboration between the designer and the client (Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013; Petermans *et al.*, 2011).

“The creation of innovative artefacts often requires the exploration and integration of dynamic and diverse knowledge from multiple domains, disciplines and contexts among specialists.”

(Sonnenwald, 1996, p. 277)

During the design process, a diversity of interaction between the designer and the client is acquired within this collaboration that influences the effectiveness in the decision making and problem solving process (Chiu, 2002; Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Sonnenwald, 1996), or else, to achieve and maintain a long term business relationship between organisations (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994). Thus, the designer no longer simply retains a role as an expert that deals with technical and aesthetic issues during the design process, but also acts as a representative of the design firm who liaises between clients and other parties to deliver a successful design solution.

1.2.1. Interactive Dynamics

During the design process, the dynamics that are evolved and within the client-designer interaction can be described as 'Interactive Dynamics', of which these comprise a variation of communication and action between the client and the designer (consultant) that control their mutual relationships, and how those relationships can change. In addition, these interactive dynamics can be continuously influenced by various characteristics that could manipulate the communication process, of which these include personal attributes, power relations, geographical and cultural aspects (Handley *et al.*, 2005; Lauche *et al.*, 2008; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013; Nikolova *et al.*, 2009).

Within this realm of the client-designer relationship, 'Interactive Dynamics' are critical in shaping a successful design in either a long-term or short-term situation (Bruce and Morris, 1994). Despite the large body of literature about design theory or specific technical knowledge and skills in the designer's expertise role, hardly any research has been conducted that explores empirically the nature of social practice that characterises the dynamics of the interaction among client-designer collaboration during the design process.

On the contrary, continuous concerns have been raised on the importance of the dynamics in client-designer collaboration relationships among various design disciplines and management consultancy literature. Common patterns were recorded that these interactive collaborations appear in relations to communication aspects and the decision making process. Client and designer roles and activities in the collaboration process are essential towards a successful design. According to architectural design and design studies literature, the dynamics of interaction appear to be promoting knowledge exploration and integration via communication (Chiu *et al.*, 2002; Shen *et al.*, 2013; Sonnenwald, 1996), and acknowledging the importance of

the power relations in the client and designer relationship (Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013) as a shared decision-making process which aims at a common decision (d'Anjou, 2001) that may enhance the ultimate design outcome.

On the other hand, interactive dynamics between the client and consultant have been vastly explored in order to seek an effective solution to maintain a sustainable business relationship with the clients, in particular within the realms of client-consultant interaction and relationship among management consultancy literature (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009; Handley *et al.*, 2005; Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994). Certain characteristics such as power relations, client-consultant expectations and behavioural aspects were explored, empirical analysis on dyadic interactions between both client-consultant relationships is still yet under-explored (Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Lauche *et al.*, 2008; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013), in particular the impact the business environment and culture have towards the consultant process. Thus far, limited interior design studies examine the dynamics on the interactive client-designer relationship during the interior design process, and neither do they explore the uniqueness of the interior design business environment. So, how do cultural influence and power relations constructed under a situated environment impact the client-designer relationship?

1.2.2. Justification of the HRD theory with reference to interactive dynamics concepts

The fundamentals of human resource development (HRD) focus individual and organisational training and development, which was considered the key to the process of improving organization's performances (Swanson, 1995). By applying the collaboration concepts from previous studies in various design disciplines and management consultancy literature, designer training could be seen as the core to the process of improving the performance of a design firm; the evaluation of the design firm's performance relies on whether or not designers would be able to deliver successful design outcomes, and maintain a sustainable client-designer relationship effectively via the client-designer collaboration (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009; Chiu *et al.*, 2002; d'Anjou, 2001; Handley *et al.*, 2005; Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994; Shen *et al.*, 2013; Sonnenwald, 1996).

While, as previously mentioned, interior design practice encompasses a wealth of practical knowledge that covers problem solving, technical and aesthetic aspects to create its artefact, the outcome of design could not be solely dependent on practical knowledge of the designer, but to a large extent on the collaboration between the designer and the client (Behmanesh, 2015; Haddad, 2014; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013; Petermans *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, it becomes essential for interior design personnel to gain understanding on the interactive dynamics among client-designer collaboration during the design process. This is in order to identify the essential designer's attributes and/or skills that need to be strengthened as to improve the designer's performance, and hence contribute towards the under-explored area of client-designer relationships in interior design studies.

Furthermore, Nikolova *et al.* (2009) conducted a study on an international technical consultancy firm and explored the social roles of the client and the consultant. Nikolova *et al.* (2009) argued that, whether the level of intersections between client's and consultant's expectations could generate mutual understanding of each other's actions, thus they concluded a mutual knowledge learning process that could contribute towards a successful working relationship.

Poulfelt and Payne (1994) also argued that the important issue in a professional client-consultant relationship is knowledge transfer, based upon mutual trust and ethical behaviour. They stressed that further research should be undertaken in order to understand more clearly the dynamics of the client-consultant [designer] relationships. In particular, how does the business environment and culture impact the collaboration process? According to Swanson's (1995, p.212) theory of HRD implementation, *a general model of HRD that connects HRD to other major business processes are influenced by and influence the total organisation and the environment in which it functions.* Designer training should, therefore, be compelled to integrate the significance among interior design process and its situated influences that might comprise the specific business environment and local culture. Hence, with further consideration on Swanson's (1995) theory that the context of the implementation is situated and is dependent on three dimensions: economics, political and cultural forces (Swanson, 1995).

Therefore, the overall aim of this study is to explore the interactive dynamics in client-designer relationships during the design process, in order to define the industry's expectations on essential designer skills that will enable the closure of the gap between education and practice.

1.3. Research Objectives

The research objectives for the study are as follows:

- To identify the underlying causes of the gap between the performance of the interior designer and the industry's expectation.
- To explore how the situated environment and culture have impacts on client-designer interactions and their behaviour during the design process.
- To gain understanding on the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer and their relationship during the design process, from the perspectives of clients and designers.
- To consider the essential elements that might enhance the designer's performance during the design process.

1.4. Structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of China interior design context provides background context of the development of interior design industry and education in their transitional environment. Chapter 3 provides a review of relevant literature. Given the volume and breadth of literature available it has been drawn from a number of distinctive academic fields, therefore the literature reviewed is necessarily selective. A justification for this approach is provided, with a wide range of topics from fields which include organisational and management studies, human resource development and education being addressed. Chinese language literature and public policy report comparisons are drawn on where relevant. Chapter 3 finishes with a summary of the emergence of broad themes to be addressed in the interviews.

Chapter 4, explains the design adopted for this study. The first section of the chapter covers the research philosophy, methodological approach and methods. The second section covers the implementation of the data collection technique, ethical considerations, and provides an outline of the analysis procedures. Limitations of the methodological approach are identified and discussed.

Chapter 5, provides a detailed account of the findings from the study. The themes, sub-themes and categories derived from the data analysis are described. These are: *progression in design perception, interactive dynamics, power relations, client-designer relationships* and *features in the design process*.

Chapter 6, is the discussion chapter and serves to present and locate the findings in the context of the literature. As the chapter develops, relationships between themes, and links and patterns in the data are revealed and examined. In particular in this chapter, a framework for interior designer training and 'model' skills for interior designers, are presented along with suggestions on their application.

2. China Interior Design Context

This session begins with the clarification of the history and development of the interior design industry with an overview of interior design education in China. It is then followed by a discussion on the transitions in interior design environment: 1) Transition in political environment that comprises the discussion of the landscape in supply and demand of the domestic design workforce; and 2) the transition in the supply of different levels of local interior designers over three decades since the China's open-door policy began. Thirdly, it is followed by the discussion of the transition in cultural environment, of which comprises the discussion on Guanxi' culture and transitions in organization values and transitions in both the industry and market expectations. Finally, it finishes with the justifications of the underlying problems between interior design education and the industry expectations.

2.1. History and development of interior design industry in China

The history and development of ‘interior design’ in China can be traced back to the development of the interior design profession in the United States of America (Zheng, 2010). ‘Interior design’ as an official independent profession in the United States dates back to 1931, with the establishment of the American Institution of Interior Decorators – the first national professional association for interior decorators in the North America. In 1936, the American Institution of Interior Decorators changed its name to the American Institution of Decorators (Piotrowski, 2002). Later in 1957, the National Society of Interior Designers was established and became the second national professional interior design association in the United States.

In the same year, ‘Interior Design’ as a discipline was introduced to China and the first ever Interior Design Department was established in Qinghua University – formerly the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts. However, even though ‘Interior Design’ as a discipline was introduced in China in the 1950’s, it was not developed nor exploited until China’s economic reform of the 1980’s (Dong, 2010; Luo, 2006). With the establishment of both the Chinese Building Decoration Association (CBDA) and the Chinese Interior Decoration Association (CIDA) by the government in 1984 and 1988 respectively, interior design as an independent profession finally gained recognition by the government. These two organisations encouraged the development of interior design education to move to a new level (Dong, 2010).

2.2. The interior design education context

China's modern design education began in the 1950s and underwent a reformation after 30 years of the closed-door policy in the early 1980s due to the desperate demand from the reformed economy. Nowadays, there are over eight hundred Chinese higher education institutes that provide interior design study (Zheng, 2010). With a rapid growing rate of 20% annually, the number of interior design professionals since 1990 has now reached over six hundred thousand, and is still growing (CIDA, 2010).

The initial stage of the interior design education development was highly associated with the mass introduction of foreign experts. This was based on the desperate demand in coping with the increasing markets demand by the under-developed interior design industry in the 1980s (Zheng, 2010). Besides, domestic interior design experts were pre-dominated by the domestic scholars within architectural and building backgrounds. These domestic experts, who worked simultaneously alongside the foreign experts, were representatives of the local partner of the investors, as well as representing the government as domestic 'interior design experts'. The prospect of working with foreign design experts provided scholars (experts) from Chinese domestic design institutes with the opportunity of gaining the most "up-to-date" design and project management knowledge since the open-door policy (Luo, 2006; Zheng, 2010). Moreover, these work exchanges not only contributed to the domestic design empirical knowledge towards interior design education, but they also formed the backbone for the development of interior design education (Dong, 2010).

In the second stage, after the initial development of interior design education in China during the 1980's, there was a sharp rise in the supply of a domestic supporting workforce within the industry in the 1990's. With the prediction that a further demand in the supporting

workforce would be needed under the positive prediction in the economic growth, growing numbers of Chinese vocational and higher educational institutions began to provide interior design courses which reached a record high (Zheng, 2010).

Developing under a rapid demand by the reformed economy, almost every higher education institution has set up their individual art and design courses (Peng, 2005). Design courses became an easy access to higher education. Large number of high school pupils with unsatisfactory performances in their main stream subjects turned to art and design subjects, in order to seek an alternative way to enter university by attending short term art courses (Peng, 2005). As a result, Art and Design subjects have become the most popular among pupil's selections due to the lower admittance requirements among other traditional subjects.

However, the education sector also faces a constant dispute. With the highest tuition fees and a significant demand in design courses, each Art and Design institution in China has become a profitable corporation, and its products are the defective graduates that were trained by the defective education production lines. Chinese modern design education became a rare gigantic bubble (Mathias, 2005). Besides, increased concerns have been raised regarding the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). Ru (2011) and Zheng (2010) comprehend previous studies that suggested the gap between current new graduates in interior design and the expectation of the industry appears to be in relation to the level and standard of their knowledge and skills (Peng, 2005; Xong, 2002).

2.3. Transitions in interior design environment

The changes of the interior design business environment lay on the changes of investment and government policy in China. With the rapid growth in the building and construction industry and the demand from the Chinese urbanization policies, ‘interior design’ was thrust into developing and to become an independent profession at a swift pace (Dong, 2010; Zheng, 2010). These changes could be categorised in relation to the demand of the market’s needs in the past three decades, and these were the initial demand of 1) high-end hotels’ attraction to foreign investment and their support for the promotion of the tourism in the 80s, 2) reformation of the workplace for high-end office buildings to promote new economies in major cities, and 3) the property market due to the mass urbanization (Dong, 2010).

Between the early 1980’s and the mid-1990’s, government policy was to attract foreign investment into the new “opened-door” China with major developments. The development of the Shenzhen Special Administration Region and later the modernisation of major cities such as Guangzhou and Shanghai led to a significant demand in the building and construction industries. Common phrases like *‘there were small changes every year and major changes in every three years to the Shanghai city skyline’* and *‘Shenzhen World Trade Building was built with the speed of completion of each floor in just three days’* captured the vigorous changes in those days (Dong, 2010; Luo, 2006). As a result, supplying sufficient interior design service providers for the newly erected buildings became immensely vital. Introducing foreign design companies was the immediate solution (Dong, 2010; Luo, 2006; Zheng, 2010).

2.3.1. The landscape in supply and demand of domestic design workforce

Since the 80s, the dynamics between the interior design education and its market demands were highly dependent on the supply of a domestic workforce to cope with the market demand (Zheng, 2010). The interior design market demanded all aspects design workforces to cope with the fast growing economy. With the limited domestic workforce resources, mass introduction of foreign design companies were introduced during the 80s (Luo, 2006). Not only did these contribute valuable local design empirical knowledge towards the interior design education in the initial stage of its development, but also promoted an annual 20% steady growth in a domestic design workforce over the following three decades (Dong, 2010).

The landscape of the supply between foreign and domestic design workforces was shifted and tilted according to the market demand. The initial demand for a compulsory foreign workforce in the market had slowly reduced to a moderate introduction of foreign senior designers and managers to domestic or joint-venture design firms; part of their duties was providing on-the-job training for domestic designers in the 90s (Dong, 2010; Luo, 2006). Thereafter, with the further increase in the supply of domestic design workforces from all aspects of the practice, the market demand shifted once more that only selective foreign design experts have been needed since the beginning of the 21 century (Luo, 2006). The different stages of the relations between interior design education and the change of supply of design workforces against the time line since China's economic reform as discussed above are presented in Diagram 2-1: An integrated diagram in stages of the relations between interior design education and the change of supply of design workforces against the economic reform.

This landscape of the supply between foreign and domestic design workforces also highlights the transition in the industry's expectations in various specific skilled professionals against the education provision among different stages of the interior design industry development.

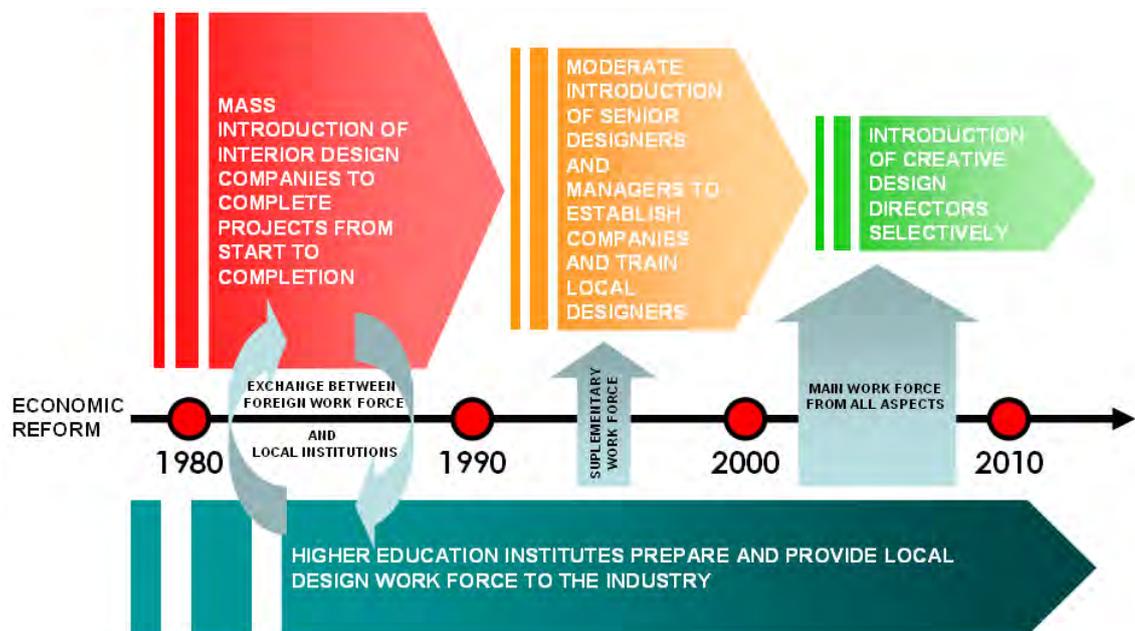


Diagram 2-1: An integrated diagram in stages of the relations between interior design education and the change of supply of design workforces against the economic reform

Summary

Therefore, by summarising the above discussion, the interior design environment is highly dependent on the political and economic environment in China and the supply of domestic design workforces often lag behind the market and industry demand even though a steady 20% annual growth since the China open-door policy. Although the current statistics also showed that the current numbers of interior designers has reached six hundred thousand, and is still growing (CIDA, 2011), there is still an insufficient number of design professionals to cope with the industry demand (CIDA, 2011). The landscape of interior design environment developed over thirty years since the economic reform is captured and illustrated in Figure 2-1: Supply and demand trends of local interior design work force and market. The significance of this landscape of interior design development over the three decades shares the insight of the integrated relationship between the economic policies, market demand and education, and how these might influence the future development of the interior design industry.

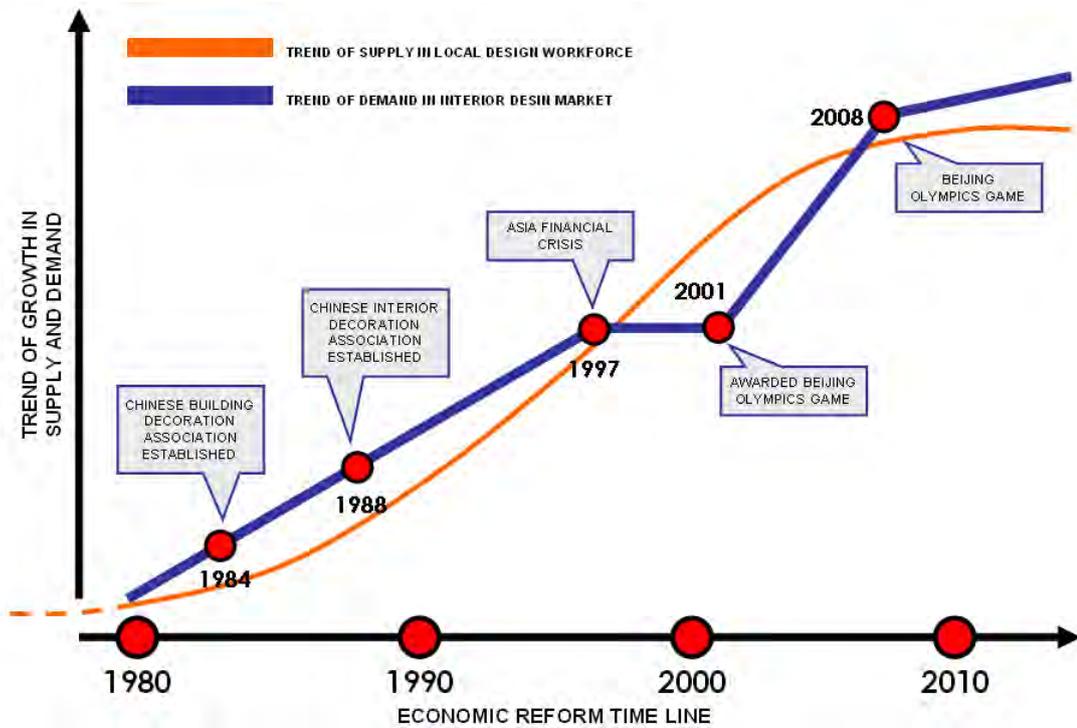


Figure 2-1: Supply and demand trends of local interior design work force and market

2.3.2. Transition in the supply of different levels of local interior designer

Since the thirty years that the economic reform and open-door policy was first promoted, the changes in supply and demand in domestic workforces within the interior design industry has shifted from providing a semi-skilled workforce in the 1980's towards providing a highly-skilled workforce (Dong, 2010; Zheng, 2010). This transition in the supply of different levels of a domestic workforce is instigated by the progression in design education. While levels of the domestic design workforce are related to its unique categories of the interior designer, and these categories of interior designers generally imply to their specific roles, professional involvement and years of experience in interior design practice. Designers are usually categorised under three major levels: supporting, intermediate, and senior (creative) levels. These levels of designers form a design workforce pyramid that reflects a general proportion between three categories of designers in an organisation structure; located on the apex of the pyramid is the senior (creative) designer level, and located at the bottom of the pyramid is the supporting designer level, and in between these two levels lays the intermediate designer level.

Supporting level – generally can be found under the title of design assistance, assistant designer, junior designer or project coordinator which depends on the areas of interior design service that the design firm provides. This level of designers is usually a fresh graduate, with experience of up to two or three years in relevant interior design practice. The role of supporting level designer often covers general documentation work such as presentation, drawing and specification preparation, site measurement and general supporting work for the rest of the design team.

Intermediate level – can generally be found under the title of interior designer or senior project coordinator which depends on the areas of interior design service that the design firm provides. This level of designers usually possesses from three to five years in a specific area of interior design practice. The role of intermediate level designer often includes specific design tasks and project coordination work with lower level designers. They are also involved in site inspection and meeting with various professional parties and report to senior designers or managers. In addition, they usually accompany senior designers in project presentation, but are seldom involved with the decision making process externally.

Senior (creative) level – can generally be found under the title of senior designer, principle designer, design manager or design director. This level of designers usually possesses at least seven to eight years' experience in specific design practice. The role of senior level designer generally involves design management both internally within the design firm and externally towards clients. General tasks include managing the design team, decision making and client management.

In the diagram, the progression and trends in supplying different levels of domestic interior design workforces are shown against the imports of foreign interior design workforces; from supplying as supplementary workforces in all levels between the 80s and 90s, it shifted to supply supporting team level in replacing the foreign workforces between 90s and the turn of the millennium. Then domestic designer workforces shifted to replace foreign workforces at the “intermediate designers’ level” between the years 2000 to 2010.

Summary

In summary, with reference to the transition in the interior design environment is highly related to the transition of the government policy. A new policy has been launched recently by the Chinese central government to promote the economic and manufactory transformation from 'Made in China' to 'Designed in China'. The restructuring in both designer training and design education has been undergoing (Jin, 2005; Liu, 2010). According to the shifted trend on the demand of different levels of designer expertise presented in Diagram 2-2: The changes between the foreign and local interior design workforce and their development in phases, along with an average growth of 20% annually in the supply of the interior design workforces as discussed previously, the future demand on the domestic interior design workforces could be predicted to have further progressed (CIDA, 2010). Domestic design workforce will eventually replace all foreign workforces and cover all levels of designer's expertise towards 2020.

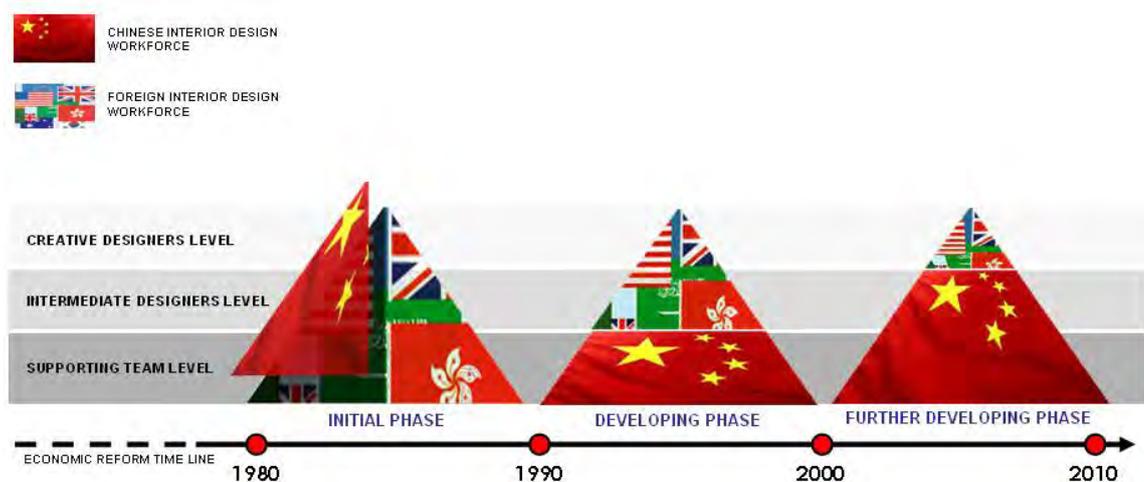


Diagram 2-2: The changes between the foreign and local interior design workforce and their development in phases

2.3.3. Summary of Section 2.3

The landscape of the interior design environment developed over thirty years since the economy has shared the insight of the integrated relationship between the economic policies, market demand and education, and how these could influence the future development of the interior design industry. With reference to the relationship between the transitions in the interior design environment and the government policy, a newly launched policy of changing 'Made in China' to 'Designed in China' would encourage an economic growth and promote manufactory transformation (Jin, 2005; Liu, 2010). Therefore, further progression on the domestic interior designer's ability could be predicted.

2.4. Transitions in cultural environment

2.4.1. 'Guanxi' culture and transitions in organization values

Operating businesses under these vague circumstances in the Chinese business market, business personnel follow a traditional but unique way, striving to increase the competitiveness and to ensure the success in gaining business, which is called "Guanxi". Operating businesses in China, "Guanxi" seems to be the term that almost all businessmen know of. What is "Guanxi"? As one popular saying in Chinese society puts it, "*Who you know is more important than what you know.*" "Who you know" refers to personal connections with the appropriate authorities or individuals (Yeung and Tung, 1996).

'Guanxi' culture

Yeung and Tung (1996) portrayed these connections, Guanxi, which is deep-rooted in Chinese society and influenced by the teachings of Confucius (551 – 478 B.C.). Park and Luo (2001, p.455) described Guanxi as "*a cultural characteristic that has strong implications for interpersonal and inter-organizational dynamics in Chinese society. It refers to the concept of drawing on a web of connections to secure favours in personal and organizational relations. Chinese people and organizations cultivate Guanxi energetically, subtly, and imaginatively, which governs their attitudes toward long term social and personal relationships. Guanxi is an intricate and pervasive relational network that contains implicit mutual obligations, assurances and understanding. It has been pervasive for centuries in every aspect of Chinese social and organizational activities.*" Whether viewing Guanxi as a strategy, network or relationship, of which it plays a critical part for businesses and their competitiveness in the market, modern Chinese society still operates within the realm of these countless social and business contexts (Park and Luo, 2001).

Transition in organization values

Under the great leap in the supply and demand in the interior design market, the rapid growth in the numbers of interior design firms, as a result, led to the increase in the competition within the industry. In order to increase the competitiveness over competitors, most interior design firms shifted their focus from techniques – what you know, to utilize ‘Guanxi’ – who you know, as their main marketing strategy (Yeung and Tung, 1996). In-depth design solutions became less irrelevant to secure projects, thus instant preliminary proposals could be sufficient to secure projects as long as the Guanxi was secured (Park and Luo, 2001; Yeung and Tung, 1996).

According to the CIDA’s report in 2010, this change of values from professionalism to profit orientation was captured and described as one of the key areas that caused the dysfunction in the interior design industrial structure. Hence, CIDA (2011) stressed that the interior design industry is merely in the developmental stage and the overall standard is still considerably inadequate in China. Critical problems such as non-ground-breaking design, a poorly regulated design industry, and a ‘cowboy style’ management system are identified as co-existing within the current state (CIDA, 2011). This has seriously restricted the further development of the industry. As a result, the interior design industrial structure is considered to be inconceivably dysfunctional, which is categorised in the following three areas:

- Production weighs heavy in construction but less in design and use of materials.
- Services weigh heavy in labouring but less in artistic and technological concerns.
- Valuation weighs heavy in profits but less in the concept and responsibility.

(CIDA, 2011)

These three areas have deviated from the core value of the industry itself and are causing an imbalance in the development and coordination of the industry, which will eventually cause inefficiency to its development (Tang and Chen, 2004; Wu *et al.*, 2005). While Chinese interior design organisations' values appear that have changed from professionalism to profit orientation, this transition in organisational value could not be interpreted thoroughly without overlooking its inseparable cultural characteristics in the business environment (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009; Lauche *et al.*, 2008) and the way how the interior designer operates in China. The necessity of knowing what an interior designer does during the design process could provide appropriate tools for problem-solving (Behmanesh; 2015; Haddad, 2014; Poldma, 2008).

2.4.2. Transitions in the industry expectations

Increased concerns have been raised regarding the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). Ru (2011) and Zheng (2010) comprehend previous studies that suggested the gap between current new graduates in interior design and the expectation of the industry appears to be in relation to the level and standard of their knowledge and skills (Peng, 2005; Xong, 2002).

Growing numbers of scholars argue that China's modern design education developed in the early 1980s and its development has undergone constant dispute. Chinese design education appears to be always lagging behind the design practice. The gap between the standard trained students and the expectation of the industry remains wide (Peng, 2005; Ru, 2011; Tang and Chen, 2004; Wu *et al.*, 2005; Zheng, 2010). The underlying problems of the current Chinese design education were suggested and they lie within two main areas; the insufficient number of design professionals to cope with the industry

demand and the industry's additional demands of higher design standards (Tang and Chen, 2004; Wu *et al.*, 2005; Zheng, 2010).

The deficiency of skilled professionals appears to be the increasing number of design graduates who decided to change their profession; they could neither get a job related to the discipline they studied, nor are they able to perform well enough to satisfy the needs of the design industry (Wu *et al.*, 2005; Xong, 2002). This lack of coherence would appear to be related to an inadequate teaching curriculum in domestic design education; which is currently primarily based on the traditional arts education teaching, rather than addressing the changes in learning and skills required to meet the needs of this fast growing industry (CIDA, 2011; Dong, 2010; Wu *et al.*, 2005; Xong, 2002). Despite this gap in provision, both the market and the design industry still have high expectations from new graduates of professional design in higher education (CIDA, 2011; Peng, 2005; Wu *et al.*, 2005).

2.4.3. Transitions in the market expectations

In addition, a major shift among interior design clients' attitude has also been evident over the last three decade. They have become more sophisticated in their knowledge of the design process (CIDA, 2011) and attitudes have shifted from focusing on tail-end products, gradually towards the understanding of the step-by-step design process (CIDA, 2011; Tang and Chen, 2004). These changes in the clients' behaviour first became evident in major cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, but have now proliferated gradually to the minor cities in China (Dong, 2010; Peng, 2005). Despite the above shifted trend showing a positive progression in the development of the interior design industry in China, it also instigates a disproportion between current interior design education provision and industry expectations (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010).

These issues highlight the inconsistency between art education teaching and learning provision and the ever changing needs of the industry. To address this gap design education needs to review and adapt the mode of the existing professional training and teaching curriculum in order to satisfy the needs of the industry (CIDA, 2011).

2.5. Chapter 2 summary

In summary, with reference to the discussions on the landscape of interior design development in section 2.3.1, the integrated relationship, between the economic policies, market demand and education, influences industry's expectations in various specific skilled professionals against the education provision among different stages of the interior design industry development.

From a broader aspect, the demand of designers could not solely rely on the figure without understanding the specific needs in the interior industry, as it is highly in relation to the situated environments. When the business environment changed, the market expectation would change accordingly to balance the needs. Hence, according to the decisions in section 2.3.2, the transition in the supply of different levels of domestic workforce is instigated by the progression in design education; the current industry's demand and expectation as captured by Peng (2005) and Xong (2002) could be seen to be varied as per portrayed by Ru (2011) and Zheng (2010) due to the progression of the transitional industry's expectations over time. Therefore, this can be justified that the transition of industry's expectations determines education provision. The underlying causes of the gap between the performance of the interior designer and industry's expectation is the inconsistency between art education teaching and learning provision and the ever changing needs of the industry.

Despite suggestions made by China Interior Decoration Association (CIDA) that the education sector would require changes to strengthen the interior design curriculum and its' contents (CIDA, 2011), it would appear that it is essential to gain understanding of both the current industry's and market's expectations on the essential designer's skills from both the clients' and designers' perspectives, in order to identify an adequate direction for future education provision.

3. Literature Review

This chapter presents a critical review of relevant literature drawn from a specific range of disciplinary areas, including the fields of Business Culture, Design Education, Human Resources Development, Managerial Philosophies, National Human Resources Development, Organisational Culture and Organisational Management. Given the focus of the study aim to identify the underlying causes of the gap between the performance of the interior designer and the industry's expectations in China, literature from Chinese language journals has also been utilised.

The literature review is presented in four main sections. Section 1 discusses Human Resources Development (HRD) in a Chinese context, including definitions of HRD in general and in the study context. Section 2 provides the present context of the HRD environment in China, defining the transitional environment influences towards the implementations of HRD policies at a national level, locating where situated influences impact on and relate to individual and organisational cultures and behaviours.

Section 3 presents current issues in the implementation of HRD in China, including issues of national vocational training and shortage of skilled labour. Section 4 reviews the context of the interior design industry in China, which includes a brief background of its development and the accompanying issues of the shortage of skilled professionals in both quantity and quality, the lack of coherence between education and market demands, and transitions of organisational values in the context of culture. In particular debate has been focused on the question have been raised on 'what does the designer do?' and the key aspects of the design process.

3.1. HRD orientation in China

When looking at internal training and organisational development in the interior design context in China, it is important to clarify the nature of the business and its environment and, the notions of internal training and organisational development.

Initially, the clarification of the notions of internal training and organisational development in interior design will be reviewed from the perspectives of Human Resources Development (HRD). This includes definitions of HRD in general and Chinese definitions of HRD. It will then be followed by the review of the present HRD environment in China and current issues of the implementations of HRD in China. Then it will be followed by the examination of the current issues in the interior design industry. Finally, it will end with a review of the identified themes and a chapter summary.

3.1.1. Definitions of HRD

Traditionally, scholars viewed HRD to be focused within *organisations* and on *individuals*; HRD was considered key to the process of improving an *organisation's performance* (Swanson, 1995). Similar notions were perceived in relation to the individual and/or organisation since the late 1960's, which include *training and development, career development* and *organisation development as the targeted recipient of HRD activities* (Chang, 2011). Using Chang's (2011) summary table of HRD definitions – The essence of HRD can be identified as comprising three key areas: the *individual, organisation* and *activities*. The above concepts are summarised and portrayed in Diagram 3-1.

Swanson (1995) argues that the essence of HRD relies on two major components – training and development and organisation development. The context of implementation is situated and is dependent on the three dimensions: *economics, political, and cultural forces* (Swanson, 1995).

“... a general model of HRD that connects HRD to other major business processes are influenced by and influence the total organization and the environment in which it functions.”

(Swanson, 1995, p.212)

Within the aspects of these influences from environment factors, scholars like Ke *et al.* (2006) and McLean and McLean (2001) explored further the implementation of HRD and the relationship between organisations and their environment.

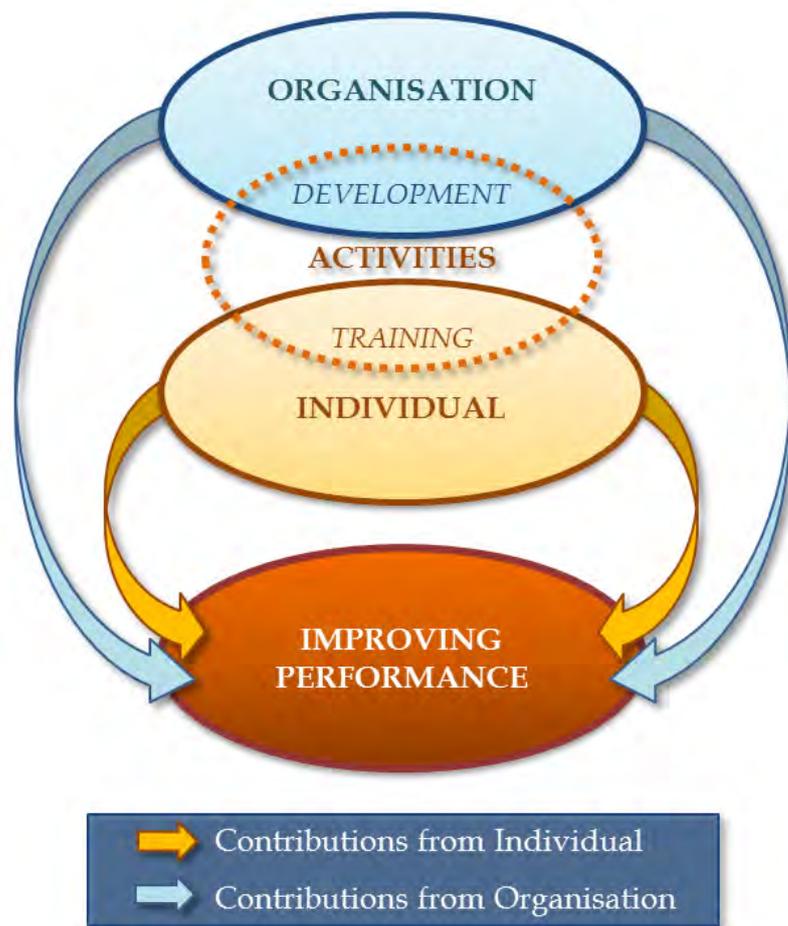


Diagram 3-1: The essence of Human Resource Development

3.1.2. Definitions of HRD in China

Increased demand in HRD implementations worldwide has been brought to the attention of many scholars who have started to explore and define global definitions of HRD. As a result, larger scale HRD definitions and implementations emerged and developed alongside microscopic definitions of HRD within organisational levels (Alagaraja and Wang, 2012; Cho and McLean, 2004; Li and Huang, 2011).

Yet, by putting this into the Chinese context perspective, what are Chinese definitions of HRD? What are the differences of HRD implementations in a Chinese context that made HRD in China different from other countries? These questions can only be answered by reviewing the following two perspectives: China's *economic context* and its *transitional economy*.

Economic context

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping, the current leader of China at that time, initiated the 'open-door' policy which has changed the economic environment of China; the present national policy changed from a reliance on state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and community agricultural activities, to promoting a mix of enterprise types and a more diverse economy (Chen and Feng, 2000; Zheng and Yang, 2009). While China's economy has undergone a steady growth since the economic reform of the late 1970's, it has become crucial for enterprises to achieve and maintain sustainable growth and development (Ke *et al.*, 2006), in other words, to improve organisational performance.

Historically, there was no concept of human resources in China until China introduced the open-door policy (Chen and Feng, 2000; Zheng and Yang, 2009). The only Chinese concept that can be considered as closely related to HRD was "Ren-Cai-Kai-Fa" – *human talent development*, which emerged during the late 1970s and early

1980s, which was later developed into the national human resource development (NHRD) in China (Yang *et al.*, 2004).

Transitional economy

The implementation of the open door policy also brought three main transitions to China, which were, transitions in economic, social and political structures (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2004; Zheng and Yang, 2009). These transitions form a complex environment that entangled with the implementations of HRD in China that has made HRD implementations unique in its context (Li and Nimon, 2008; Ke *et al.*, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Wang and Wang, 2006), which made the implementations of HRD in China differ from other countries.

This uniqueness of the economic context caused challenges to the implementations of organisational HRD and HRD policies in China, as evaluated among its *three* unique transition structures: *transitions in political, economic and social structures* as follows:

- *Transitions in political structure* improvised the changes from a centralised personnel system to a decentralised personnel system. Wide-ranging reforms have been implemented including reforms in state-owned enterprises, the public sector, government institutions, and education. These reforms are centred on the economy in particular, and the government is making efforts to decentralise its control in terms of promoting economic growth (Cho and McLean, 2004; Ke *et al.*, 2006).
- *Transitions in economic structure* initiated industrial reconstruction Chen & Zhang, (2003) and as a result, diverse forms of enterprises such as the state-owned enterprises, were commercialised and privatised, and multinational and foreign-funded enterprises began to emerge (Li and Madsen, 2009; Tsui *et al.*, 2006). These changes challenge the status quo of HRD in

China by demanding an increase in volume and diversity of human resources (Benson and Zhu, 2002; Dong, 2007).

- *Transitions in social structure* instigated the changes in social values and ideologies from Confucianism to Socialism then to Capitalism (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Wang and Wang, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2004). Thus, the conflict and convergence of three ideologies and cultural values remain an immense challenge to HRD in China.

3.1.3. Summary

In summary, the essence of the definition in human resources development can be concluded as follows. The aim of activities which take place between individuals and organizations is to improve performance of both the individuals and the organisations, which involves development and training activities from organisations and individuals respectively (Chang, 2011; Swanson, 1995). A broader aspect of HRD can be interpreted to include environmental factors, which influence how HRD is implemented (Ke *et al.*, 2006; McLean and McLean, 2001; Swanson, 1995).

The uniqueness of HRD in a Chinese context is in relation to the three main transitions of structure in China's transitional economy and these are transitions in economic, social and political structures (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2004; Zheng and Yang, 2009). Thus, these three transitional structures provoke challenges for businesses and the economy at both organisational and national levels. These challenges are:

- promoting economic growth,
- demanding an increase in volume and diversity of human resources, and

- understanding the conflict and convergence of social ideologies and cultural values

An illustrated diagram summarises these complex relations between the environmental factors and the notions of HRD in a Chinese context, as shown in Diagram 3-2

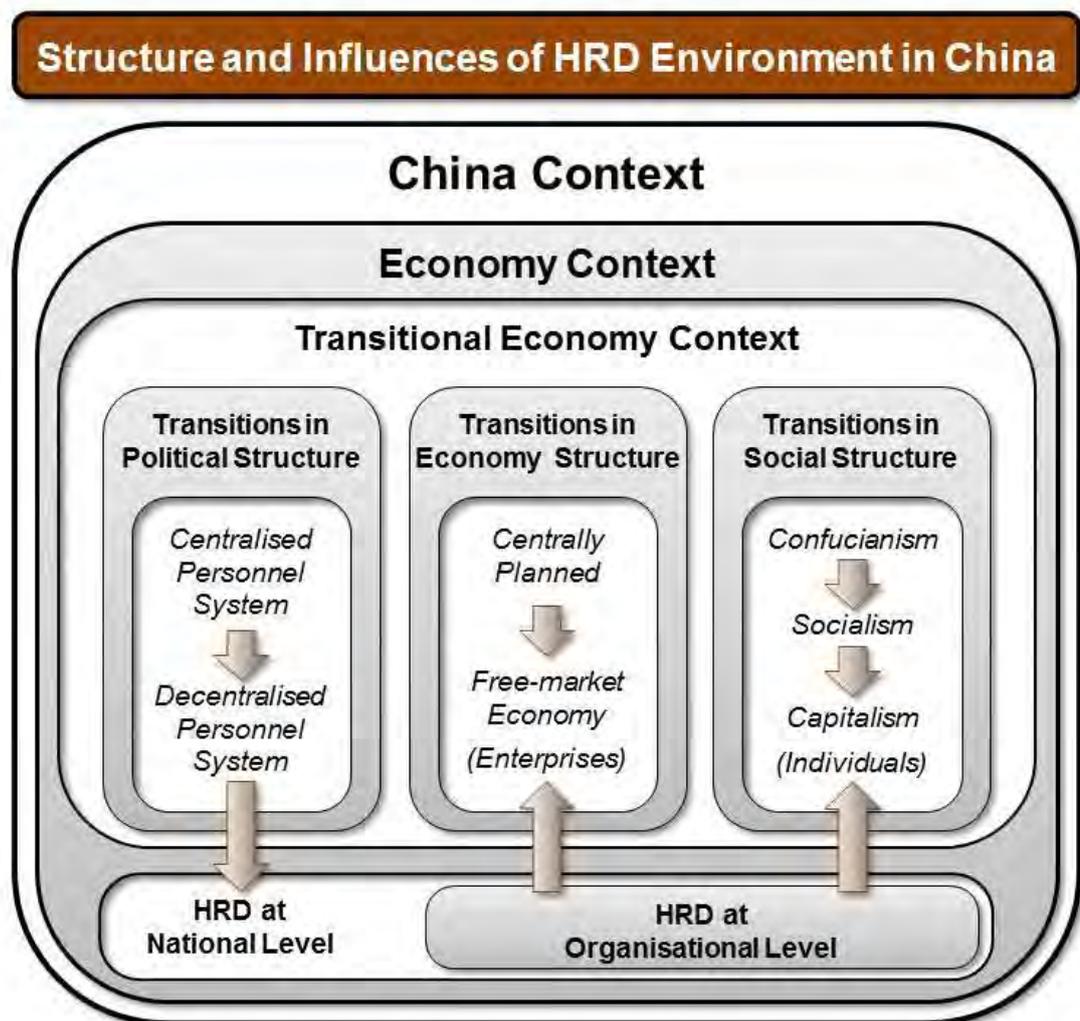


Diagram 3-2: Influence between the transition environment and HRD implementations in the Chinese transitional economy context

3.2. Present HRD environment in China

In this section, the focus draws on recent studies in the transitioning contexts of China from the human resource development perspective. With the combination of rapid changes in the economic environment, and the transition of the social environment and the 'unpredictable' political environment over the past thirty years (Chen and Feng, 2000), a growing number of studies have been carried out by scholars who have been drawn by their interest in these unique phenomena in China. Among these studies, there is also an increasing number of HRD literatures looking into the implementations of HRD in China.

In general, most studies that focused on discussing the implementation of HRD in China, often concentrated merely at its organisational or national level. For instance, traditional HRD scholars from North America generally viewed HRD at its organisational level, and their studies often focused on the *individual* in training development and career development; or on the *organisation* in organisational development as the targeted recipient of HRD activities (Cho and McLean, 2004; Li and Huang, 2011; McLean and McLean, 2001). While the studies that were carried out by their counterparts across Asia and developing countries, generally focused on the relationships between national HRD policies and HRD implementations in organisations instead (Alagaraja and Wang, 2012; Cho and McLean, 2004; Li and Huang, 2011).

In the next two sub-sections, an overview of HRD literature will be reviewed in relation to their focus areas in *HRD at a national level* and *HRD at an organisational level*. Common themes will be drawn respectively. The aim is to gain an overview of the present HRD environment in China and to develop common links between these studies.

3.2.1. HRD at national level

In this section, seven studies in the transitioning contexts of China from the human resources development perspective were reviewed. Common links were drawn based on the evaluations of the common grounds which these studies shared. A common thread was found that showed cultural aspects could affect the implications of a general [western] model of HRD on the organisational level in China (Wang *et al.*, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2004).

Theoretically, the environmental factors that originated from China's unique cultures, organisation types and politics, provoked the differences between HRD in China and those in western developed countries. In particular, culture and ideology rooted in a strong collectivist cultural context, influenced HRD towards strong social and moral implementations in China (Yang *et al.*, 2004). In addition, social perceptions and cultural values changed within different generations; generational groups adapted different social perceptions and cultural values whilst growing up in different political, economic and social environments during the economic transition in China (Li and Nimon, 2008).

In Li and Nimon's (2008) study, a representational empirical model was suggested in relation to Yang *et al.*'s (2004) and Wang *et al.*'s (2005) theory on a *cultural environment* that influences social perceptions and cultural values, and it is crucial that they are adapted in the implications of a general [western] model of HRD on the organisational level in China. Furthermore, China's transitional environment in social, political and economic structures should be considered as the key role in relation to the current HRD issues and strategies within national HRD policies (Alagaraja and Wang, 2012; Ke *et al.*, 2006; Liu and Wall, 2005; Wang and Wang, 2006).

In Ke *et al.*'s (2006) theoretical study, an argument was built between the transitional environment and its influence towards establishing appropriate strategies on national HRD policies. Key findings suggested a high similarity between Yang *et al.*'s (2004) and Wang *et al.*'s (2005) theory on *cultural environment*. Though, Ke *et al.* (2006) preferred to focus on *human building capacity* within national HRD policies instead.

On the other hand, Liu and Wall (2005) just focused on the particular issues of the *human building capacity* in China's tourism industry. Even though local policy documents, official statistics and social implementations in HRD were reviewed to provide an overall background in the literature review, Liu and Wall (2005) still argued that national HRD policies should be reviewed and adapted to different local culture and economic needs.

Although China's transitional environment in social, political and economic structures should be considered as the key role in relation to the current HRD issues, according to Ke *et al.*, (2006, p.42), these critical issues can be reflected from: "*a slowly progressing education, science, and technology system; low capital input into human resources; inadequate training in general; and a shortage of skilled workers and high-level human resources*". However, the cultural environment remains as the key characteristic of the environmental influence towards local human building capacity concerns.

Summary

In summary, amid the above HRD literature with a Chinese context at national level, social implementations emerged as the key common theme. Not only could the notions of HRD be influenced by the environmental factors, with regard to political, economic and social environments in section 3.1.2, which is unique to China. This also influences the implication of HRD implementations and policies, which

included the individual, organisation and activities as discussed in section 3.2.1.

In this section, HRD at a national level emphasises the importance of the situated influences that impact the implementations of HRD which set out the milieu of the challenges in the national HRD in China.

Environmental factors provoke the differences between HRD in China and those in western developed countries, where culture and ideology are deep rooted in a strong collectivist cultural context that influenced HRD towards strong social and moral implementations in China (Alagaraja and Wang, 2012; Liu and Wall, 2005; Tsui *et al.*, 2006; Wang and Wang, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2004).

In addition, social perceptions and cultural values changed as generational groups adapted different social perceptions and cultural values whilst growing up during the economic transition in China (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Li and Nimon, 2008).

3.2.2. HRD at organisational level

In HRD studies, increasing numbers of scholars investigated implications in organisations under a cross-cultural environment. The awareness of specific local cultures in which the studies took place becomes increasingly important. Cultural issues revealed not only the key obstacles for HRD studies, but are also referenced in human resource management (HRM) studies. In Table 3-1, the themes of study in HRD at organisational level in a Chinese context, five out of seven studies reference cross-cultural issues.

Similar focus can be found in Björkman and Lu (1999) and Lee (1999) who investigated organisational behaviour with their study on *foreign owned enterprises* (FOE) in China. On the other hand, cross-culture as a situated background was referenced by Li and Madsen (2009). Their study focused on the inter-relationships between both individual and organisational on culture and behaviour within *state-owned enterprise* (SOE) in China. Finally, Tsui *et al.*'s (2006) study focused mainly on organisational culture across *different organisation types* in China, of which cross-cultural issues were referenced as an overall supporting background.

| Studies | Common Themes | | | | | Focusing enterprise(s) |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| | Individual's culture | Individual's behaviours | Organization culture | Organization behaviour | Reference to cross-culture | |
| Björkman and Lu 1999 | | | ○ | ◐ | ● | FOE |
| Chang 2011 | | | | ● | | ✗ Non-specified |
| Lee 1999 | | | ○ | ◐ | ● | FOE |
| Li and Madsen 2009 | ● | ● | ◐ | ◐ | ○ | SOE |
| Tsui <i>et al.</i> 2006 | ◐ | | ● | | ○ | SOE, FOE & PDE |
| Yang 2012 | | | ● | ◐ | ● | ✗ Non-specified |
| Yang <i>et al.</i> 2006 | | | ● | ◐ | | ✗ Non-specified |

Remarks:

Three types of general enterprises in Chinese context are: *State Owned Enterprise (SOE)*, *Foreign Owned Enterprise (FOE)* and *Private Domestic Enterprise (PDE)*

- Related background only
- ◐ Related theme
- Main theme
- ✗ Non-specified

Table 3-1: HRD Literature in the Chinese Context at Organizational Level

3.2.3. Organizational culture

Cultural influences are keys to the business and organisational operations in China, and these impact individual and organisational cultures and behaviours. These cultural influences come from the country's unique transitional context (Björkman and Lu, 1999; Lee, 1999; Li and Madsen, 2009; Tsui *et al.*, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Yang, 2012).

Tsui *et al.*'s (2006) quantitative research study focused mainly on *organisational culture* across different organisation types to investigate whether organisational culture varies among firms with different ownership structures and whether it relates to firm performance or employee attitudes. In this research study, random samples were gathered through structured surveys and coded for analysis for hypotheses testing. Results from these studies were then compared to results generated by previous studies.

Tsui *et al.* (2006) provided empirical evidence which showed organisation's performance to appear to be associated with organisational culture rather than the types of organisations: "*the outcomes of perceived firm performance and managerial attitudes were more systematically associated with the empirically derived organizational culture types than with the firm's ownership structure*" (Tsui *et al.*, 2006; p.369). There were limitations of this study mentioned by the authors, e.g. subjective reports of managers to describe organisational culture were used, however, objective indicators of culture may provide further insights of organisational culture from different firms in future studies. This paper provides a strong foundation as well as empirical evidence on the *organisational culture* which could be related to organisational performance among firms with different ownership structures in China.

3.2.4. Organizational behaviour

Cultural influences impacts on *organisational behaviour* were discussed by Björkman and Lu (1999) and Lee (1999) on different focuses of their studies. In Björkman and Lu's (1999) qualitative study, interviews were used to obtain data from managers across 65 manufacturing Chinese-Western joint ventures. Structural questionnaires were sent to collect data for analysis, in order to project and indicate general issues of human resource management (HRM) practice in foreign-owned enterprises in China.

There are difficulties in introducing and transferring western HRM ideas into the companies situated in China in both western owned and joint-venture organisations. Companies have to make compromises; the implementation of their policy making was adapted at least to some extent to the local conditions. Although this study focused on HRM practices, it indicates cross-cultural issues influencing the implementations of western management ideas into a local cultural context in China.

"... there is a high need to localize the methods used for selection and appraisal to fit local cultural values and norms. Companies also need to develop localized training programs to meet the specific needs for training in China."

(Björkman and Lu, 1999, p.322)

On the other hand, Lee (1999) focused on the business marketing and management in organisational learning for foreign investors in China. The market is in rapid transition and is regulated by constantly changing government policies and a unique cultural and business environment brought uncertainty and risk of doing business in China. In particular, it is important to learn about the unique Chinese culture and the country's complex business environment.

The conclusion that was drawn from both studies showed cultural influences impacts on organisational behaviour were significant. The sources of data were merely managers or business owners in China who lack significance in portraying a thorough picture of the current business environment in China. In order to gain further insights from a different spectrum of these influences, further review on the *relationships between individual and organisational culture and behaviour* were carried out in Li and Madsen's (2009), Tsui *et al.*'s (2006), Yang's (2012) and Yang *et al.*'s (2006) studies.

3.2.5. Relationships between individual and organizational culture and behaviour

What is culture? Yang (2012) defined culture as “*a complex set of beliefs, values, and social norms shared by a group of individuals. Here, culture is regarded as a complex system with three interrelated sub-systems: values, beliefs, and social norms*” (p.165).

Yang’s (2012) theoretical analysis study provided a framework for studying the major influences on *organisational behaviour* and *managerial practice*, by examining ideology in two major cultural components, values and beliefs, and their impact on organisational behaviour; the organisational transformations in private, state-owned, and foreign-owned enterprises need to be studied through the confluences of Confucianism, socialism, and capitalism.

Li and Madsen’s (2009) study focused on the individual’s *culture* and *behaviour* specified in the potential conflict between work ethic held by the studied workers and the performance driven nature of HRD from *state owned enterprises* (SOE), in particular workers between the ages of 35 and 55, who had significant experience with the SOE reform (15–30 years of working experience with SOE’s). Several characteristics were identified which showed the impacts of Confucian values among Chinese workers’ behaviour in their workplace and how these contradict the Western mentality of HRD implementation.

On the one hand, workers believe in the importance of harmony (Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006) and value the social network aspect of the workplace more than performance, as they do not believe in interfering when unethical issues are encountered, to avoid unwanted trouble. On the other hand, Confucian values also stress respect for the hierarchy, which is identified as demands on workers to obey directives from the management as shown in Li and Madsen’s (2009)

study. Li and Madsen (2009) concluded that the Confucian beliefs and values encourage the workers to behave cohesively as a team, but also to perform tasks to pursue recognition or favourable perceptions from the management. These deviate from the Western mentality of HRD and require individual accountability that is independent of the group, further argued by Li and Madsen (2009).

“... Eastern mentality guided by Confucian values often encourages collectivism and accountability of the group as a whole. Communist ideology, [on the other hand] further promotes the importance of belonging to an organization and a group, at the same time demising individuality.”

(Li and Madsen, 2009, p.185)

Confucian influence emphasises individual learning strategy, and this is reactive instead of proactive in the approach to achieve social balance among people and society. Therefore, when there is an encounter with different opinions to authority employees tend to hold back from challenging the authority as it could cause a breach in harmony (Yang *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, it may compromise the creativity and innovation of the workforce and potentially result in a compromised moral and ethical standard because of their reluctance to challenge the authority (Li and Madsen, 2009).

Moreover, Confucian influence on learning practice that emphasises knowledge arises in a linear way (Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006), of which this relies on memorisation and less attention to creative expression, critical thinking, and problem solving.

“First through memorizing to become familiar with the text, which then leads to understanding, and finally involves reflection and questioning.”

(Yang *et al.*, 2006, p. 349)

Yang (2012) proposed three models of organisations that can be traced to three ideological ideals which co-exist in China, and can explain the complexity of cultural influences towards HRD implementations in Chinese organisations. Therefore, Li and Madsen's (2009) findings can be summarised by applying Yang's theory, of which workers' individual behaviour were influenced both consciously and sub-consciously by:

- Cultural belief- Confucianism: workers believe in the importance of harmony and value the social network aspect of the workplace more than performance, as they do not believe in interfering when unethical issues are encountered to avoid unwanted trouble.
- Situated cultural environment – Communism: the importance of belonging to an organisation and a group, at the same time demising individuality.
- Performance driven work environment – Capitalism: the performance driven nature of HRD from state owned enterprises (SOE).

Yang's (2012) study provides a useful tool for building organisational theories and analysing managerial concepts that are unique to China. The conflicts and convergence of the three cultural ideologies among different age groups of workers and managers could relate to various organisational cultures. Confucian values were one of the dominant influences to form individual's and organisational culture values (Li and Madsen, 2009; Tsui *et al.*, 2006; Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006).

Yang *et al.*'s (2006) theoretical study drew attention to organisational development and Chinese culture, and suggested how these affect the human resources development in China. Apart from illustrating the current HRD issues, authors suggested the implication of a Confucian worldview for developing human resources. The

characteristics of Confucian values influenced individuals to perceive learning and teaching in a Chinese context (Li and Madsen, 2009; Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006). Confucian values influence moral beliefs that activate through interactions and performance in organisations.

3.2.6. Summary

Cultural influences are keys to the business and organisation operations in China, and these impact on individual and organisational culture and behaviour. These cultural influences come from the country's unique transitional context (Björkman and Lu, 1999; Lee, 1999; Li and Madsen, 2009; Tsui *et al.*, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006) – *situated cultural aspect*.

This section exemplified how this *situated cultural aspects* influences individual culture and behaviour. Individual behaviour can be influenced consciously and sub-consciously by the individual's cultural belief. Under Confucian influence, individuals believe in the importance of a harmonious workplace and value the social network aspect of the workplace more than performance. Other values include respect for the hierarchy which emphasises that the approach to learning is reactive rather than proactive. Therefore, when encountered with different opinions to authority, employees tend to hold back from challenging the authority as it could cause a breach in harmony (Yang *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, it may compromise the creativity and innovation of the workforce and potentially result in a compromised moral and ethical standard because of their reluctance to challenge the authority (Li and Madsen, 2009).

On the one hand, Confucian beliefs and values encourage the individual to behave cohesively as a team. On the other hand, influenced under the situated cultural environment is communist ideology, of which one of its values is *the importance of belonging to an*

organisation and a group, at the same time demising individuality (Yang *et al.*, 2006). These deviate from the Western mentality of HRD which requires individual accountability that is independent of the group (Li and Madsen, 2009).

Three models of organisations that can be traced to three ideological ideals co-exist in China. The impacts of these three ideological influences on organisational culture and behaviour can be found co-existing in a different pro rata base that is based on organisation types (Yang, 2012). These can explain the complexity of cultural influences towards HRD implementations in organisations in China.

3.3. Client and designer relationship

“The creation of innovative artefacts often requires the exploration and integration of dynamic and diverse knowledge from multiple domains, disciplines and contexts among specialists.”

(Sonnenwald, 1996, p. 277)

During the design process, the dynamics that are evolved and within the client-designer interaction can be described as ‘Interactive Dynamics’ of which these comprise a variation of communication and action between the client and the designer (consultant) that control their mutual relationships, and how those relationships can change. Within this realm of the client-designer relationship, ‘Interactive Dynamics’ are critical in shaping a successful design in either a long-term or short-term situation (Bruce and Morris, 1994).

Continuous concerns have been raised on the importance of the dynamics in client-designer collaboration relationships among various design disciplines and management consultancy literature. Common patterns were recorded that these interactive collaborations appear in relation to communication aspects (Chiu, 2002) and the decision making process (d’Anjou, 2001). Client and designer roles and activities in the collaboration process are essential towards a successful design (Sonnenwald, 1996). According to architectural design and design studies literature, the dynamics of interaction appear to be promoting knowledge exploration and integration via communication (Chiu *et al.*, 2002; Shen *et al.*, 2013; Sonnenwald, 1996), and acknowledging the importance of the power relations in the client and designer relationship (Alvesson *e. al.*, 2009; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013) as a shared decision-making process which aims at a common decision (d’Anjou, 2001) that may enhance the ultimate design outcome. Certain characteristics such as power relations, client-consultant expectations and behavioural aspects are explored and discussed in this section.

In this section, literatures that focus on client-designer/consultant collaboration that came from either ‘management consultancy’ or ‘other design disciplines’ were reviewed. Among these literatures, six aspects of client-designer relationship were identified and discussed. These aspects are: *behaviour and social practice, communications, power relations, relationship management, decision making and problem solving, and knowledge learning process*. The distributions of main research focus and influential outcome(s) of two groups of literature – Management/Design Consultancy and Other Design Disciplines – are illustrated in Table 3-2: Literature of Management/Design Consultancy and Other Design Disciplines in Client and Consultant/Designer Collaboration.

| | | RESEARCH FOCUS | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | | Behaviour and Social practice | Communications | Power relations | Relationship Management | Decision making and Problem solving | Knowledge learning process |
| RESEARCH STUDIES | | | | | | | |
| Management/ Design Consultancy | Alvesson <i>et. al.</i> (2009)* | ○ | | ● | ○ | | |
| | Bruce and Docherty (1993) | ○ | | | ● | | ○ |
| | Bruce and Morris (1994) | ○ | | | ● | | |
| | Handley <i>et. al.</i> (2005) | ○ | | ● | ○ | | ○ |
| | Nikolova <i>et. al.</i> (2009) | ● | | ○ | | ○ | ○ |
| | Poulfelt and Payne (1994) | ○ | | | ● | | ○ |
| Other Design Disciplines | Chiu <i>et. al.</i> (2002) | ○ | ● | | | ○ | ○ |
| | d'Anjou (2001) | ○ | ○ | ○ | | ● | |
| | Leisti-Szymczak <i>et. al.</i> (2013) | ○ | | ● | | ○ | |
| | Shen <i>et. al.</i> (2013) | | ● | | | | ○ |
| | Sonnenwald (1996) | ● | ○ | | | | ○ |
| <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main research focus in the study ○ Influential outcome(s) in the study * Discussion in relation to cultural and geographical issues | | | | | | | |

Table 3-2: Literature of Management/Design Consultancy and Other Design Disciplines in Client and Consultant/Designer Collaboration

3.3.1. Behaviour and social practice & Communications

During the design process, a diversity of interaction between the designer and the client is acquired within this collaboration that influences the effectiveness in the decision making and problem solving process (Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Sonnenwald, 1996). Chiu (2002, p.205) described this collaboration as *a deeper, more personal synergistic process, and its process involves negotiation, agreement, and compromise in order to achieve success.*

Sonnenwald (1996) argued that an important aspect of knowledge exploration and collaboration is communication – *human behaviour* as defined by the author. Individual's behaviour can be influenced by individual's role expectations from others during interaction between client-designer. By observing communication behaviour among design participants, it becomes clear the roles that emerge during the design process enable participants to mutually explore and integrate knowledge.

Shen *et al.* (2013), on the other hand, view client-designer communication as a knowledge transfer process, and argued that the efficiency of the interaction process may be decreased due to the limited experience of clients who may have a limited capacity in understanding drawings or reviewing design solutions. Technical documents – drawings or virtual space models – and computer communication systems were viewed as a means of 'communication'. Shen *et al.* (2013) identified and suggested that the UPOEM provided an alternative method to improve effectiveness of client-designer communication, which improved the client's understanding of the design drawings and their satisfaction during the design review stage.

Moreover, Chiu (2002) argued that the purpose of design collaboration is to share expertise, ideas, resources, or responsibilities, whether the designer is able to retain effective communication becomes

critical to the design process. Personal attributes that comprise negotiation, agreement, and compromise become essential for the designer to achieve success in client-design collaboration, which can be defined as a general process of collaborative design driven by decision-making.

Nikolova *et al.* (2009), on the other hand, viewed client-consultant interaction as a system of interwoven social practices in which the client shares equal status with consultants in constituting their project work. Client-consultant [designer] relationships are problem-solving systems that are geared towards the creation and application of knowledge. They further argued that the degree of innovativeness of consulting projects could have important effects on social roles of clients and consultants and power distribution through its influence on cognition and decision making, which could influence the problem-solving process.

In summary, client-designer relationships are problem-solving systems that are geared towards the creation and application of knowledge (Nikolova *et al.*, 2009). Personal attributes that comprise negotiation, agreement, and compromise become essential for the designer to achieve success in client-design collaboration (Chiu, 2002). By integrating Sonnenwald's (1996), Chiu's (2002) and Nikolova *et al.*'s (2009) discussions, therefore, client-designer relationships can be influenced by the degree of innovativeness of design projects, and at the same time, this degree of innovativeness has an impact on client and designer power relations and social roles which could influence individual's behaviour – the effectiveness of communication.

3.3.2. Power relations

Power relation is crucial to client-designer relationship as it often has impacts on individual's behaviour (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009). Often being found or portrayed by the client's dominant power position in client-designer interactions, the imbalanced power relations could result in diminishing the opportunity for constructive collaboration and co-creation in the design process (Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013).

Client position is important as it shapes the ways consultants and clients interact (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009). It is being constructed continuously under the provision of the client's situated environment – shifting cultural, institutional and personal factors. Alvesson *et al.* (2009) argued that the analysis of client position dynamics provides cues to understand how client-consultant relationships can be developed, maintained and/or threatened in relation to power relations.

At the same time, Leisti-Szymczak *et al.* (2013) explored the relationship of industrial designers and their clients in the co-design process from the designer's perspective, where power relation was considered a share, inherent consensus client-designer relationship. However, this power relation may be tilted when the designer's professional identity is under threat by the client's dominating position; general behaviour such as defence, coping and persuasion were adopted by the designer, in order to gain an equal ground of power relation with the client. According to Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*'s (2013) study, these interactions turned out to diminish the opportunity for constructive collaboration and co-creation in the design process.

Furthermore, Handley *et al.* (2005) suggested that conflicts of identity may inhibit consultants from delivering challenges in the way expected by the client. They argued that power relations could become dominant factors in the client-consultant relationship when the expectations – the norm – between the client and consultant disengaged.

In the Handley *et al.*'s. (2005) study, the client suggested a different power dynamics that influenced the actions taken by the consultant during the process. As a result, *the interventions were not heard because the consultant did not communicate them in a manner acceptable to the client executives in that context* (p.22).

Power relation, as a share, inherent consensus of the client-designer relationship (Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013) is crucial to the client-designer relationship as it often has impacts on individual's behaviour during the client-designer collaboration process (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009). The imbalanced power relations between the client and the designer could result in diminishing the opportunity for constructive collaboration and co-creation in the design process (Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013). Alternatively, a balanced power relation may also facilitate project completion and future business opportunities by establishing and maintaining degrees of trust in the client-designer relationship (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009).

3.3.3. Relationship management and knowledge learning process

Relationship management in the client and consultant relationship have been vastly explored in order to seek an effective solution to maintain a sustainable business relationship with the clients, in particular within the realms of client-consultant interaction and relationship among management consultancy literature (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009; Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994; Handley *et al.*, 2005; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994).

In Bruce and Docherty's (1993) study, the overall purpose of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of the client-design consultant relationship and its role in shaping the design process. Focusing on client-design consultant relationship management, Bruce and Docherty (1993) argued that main criteria must be met in order to develop long-term relationships, and these are (p.422):

- *effective design solutions must be forthcoming,*
- *there must be a personal chemistry of empathy between the two parties involved,*
- *there must be mutual trust and respect between client and designer,*
- *and they must understand each other in a deep and meaningful way.*

Long-term relationships promote a knowledge learning process that enable the designer to take a proactive role in problem solving; through long-term relationships with the client, the designer could utilise his skill and knowledge to produce effective design solutions. Besides, social and cultural awareness can be improved due to the on-going knowledge learning process between the client-designer, of which this contributes towards new design solutions reflecting cultural and social changes (Bruce and Docherty, 1993).

Bruce and Morris (1994), on the other hand, explored the characteristics of the client-design consultant relationship from the 'design suppliers and buyers' perspective based on Bruce and Docherty's (1993) concepts of the main criteria to develop long-term client-consultant relationships. The basis of these characteristics in successful relationships are commitment to and enthusiasm about the project, a sense of urgency, meeting deadlines, professionalism and understanding of commercial realities. Most importantly is respect and trust (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994).

Further characteristics evolved with the accumulation of the client and designer collaboration, which include rapport, expectations, trust, involvement, knowledge and cooperation. Most importantly, successful relationships tend to be characterised by high levels of trust and respect, rapport and involvement (Bruce and Morris, 1994).

Besides, Poulfelt and Payne (1994) also argued that an important issue in a professional client-consultant relationship is knowledge transfer, based upon mutual trust and ethical behaviour. Client's satisfaction upon the completion of a project requires a joint effort from the consultant and the client, of which both parties should be conscious on their expectations, roles and potential contribution during the whole collaboration process.

In summary, long-term relationships promote knowledge learning processes that enable the designer to take a proactive role in problem solving; through long-term relationships with the client, the designer could utilise his skill and knowledge to produce effective design solutions (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994). Most importantly, successful relationships tend to be characterised by high levels of trust and respect, rapport and involvement (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994).

Besides, social and cultural awareness can be improved by the on-going knowledge learning process between the client-designer, which contributes towards new design solutions reflecting cultural and social changes (Bruce and Docherty, 1993).

3.3.4. Decision making and problem solving

d'Anjou (2001) examined the relevance of three models of interaction from bioethical literature to help understand the client-designer relationship and the decision-making process in design. The three models to be considered are: the paternalistic model, the client-autonomy model, and the cooperation model.

d'Anjou (2001) argued that both the paternalistic and the client-autonomy models do not allow communication between the client and the designer; the relationship remains one-side instead of interpersonal and dialogical, *neither can foster conversations between client and designer. Rather, each model prevents thoughtful and considerate interaction between two individuals* (p.37). However, the cooperation model of interaction considers communication as central; it suggests that the design intentions can be best served through conversations between clients and designers. The aim of conversations between the client and the designer is a common decision, which should not be seen as the sovereign autonomy of the client or the designer. The decision-making process, therefore, should take place in an attitude of mutual trust and responsibility through a sincere dialogue in the interaction between the client and the designer in design practice.

3.3.5. Summary

The client and designer relationships are a complex interaction relationship interweaving with the six aspects of the client and designer relationship. Each of these aspects is also intertwined with each other to form unique but complex dynamics that construct an ever-changing client and designer relationship during the design process. Within this interactive dynamics, various characteristics appear to be essential to designers to manage their collaboration relationships with the clients.

One of the key aspects of the client and designer relationship during their collaboration process is communication, which is interwoven with and could have multi-influences towards the other aspects – individual's behaviour, social practice, decision making or problem solving – in client-designer relationships, and geared towards the creation and application of knowledge (d'Anjou, 2001; Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Sonnenwald, 1996). Personal attributes that comprise negotiation, agreement, and compromise become essential for the designer to achieve success in client-design collaboration (Chiu, 2002).

The characteristic of power relation, as a share, inherent consensus client-designer relationship, is crucial to the client-designer relationship (Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013). It has mutual influences between social behaviour practice and the decision making process respectively (d'Anjou, 2001), which has impacts on individual's behaviour during the client-designer collaboration process (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009). It could also cast either constructive or negative impacts on client-designer design on the decision making process, depending on the equilibrium of the power relations between the client and designer (d'Anjou, 2001; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the decision-making process should take place in an attitude of mutual trust and responsibility through a sincere dialogue in the interaction between the client and designer in design practice (d'Anjou, 2001). Future business

opportunities may also be facilitated by establishing and maintaining degrees of trust in client-designer relationship (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009).

Interactive dynamics between the client and consultant have been vastly explored in order to seek an effective solution to maintain a sustainable business relationship with the clients, in particular within the realms of client-consultant interaction and relationship among management consultancy literature (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009; Handley *et al.*, 2005; Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994).

Twenty one collective characteristics emerged from the literature in relation to five out of six aspects of client-designer relationships, where they were considered to be essential to client-designer collaboration during the design process. Although certain characteristics such as power relations, client-consultant expectations and behavioural aspects were explored, empirical analysis on dyadic interactions between both client-consultant relationships is still yet under-explored (Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Lauche *et al.*, 2008; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013), in particular the impact the business environment and culture have towards the consultant process. Thus far, limited interior design studies examine the dynamics on the interactive client-designer relationship during the interior design process, and neither do they explore the uniqueness of the interior design business environment. How cultural influence and power relations constructed under a situated environment impact the client-designer relationship is still yet to be explored.

By summarising the above discussions, a model of interactive dynamics in client-designer collaboration is suggested. Interactive Dynamics shed a light on the collaboration process in client-designer relationships that personal characteristics and attributes are essential in the client-designer relationship during the design process; these could not only enhance and maintain constructive relationships, they also gear to achieve success in client-design collaboration (Chiu, 2002),

to improve both client and designer knowledge learning process (d'Anjou, 2001; Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Sonnenwald, 1996), and to maintain a sustainable business relationship (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994).

3.4. Current issues of the implementations of HRD in China

After a period of a significant growth in the economy, many Asian countries began to have concerns on the *development of their skilled labour* force. Many scholars are concerned that China is experiencing *skilled-labour shortages* and facing a major overhaul of its efforts in developing a knowledge-based workforce (Benson and Zhu, 2002; Dong, 2007; Ke *et al.*, 2006; Li and Huang, 2011; Wang *et al.*, 2009).

3.4.1. Vocational training and shortage of skilled labour

In the past, Chinese enterprises relied on government allocations of workforces to meet their needs. Internal training became the main avenue to ensure the necessary skills that the enterprises needed (Björkman and Lu, 1999; Lee, 1999). With the existence of an external labour market, enterprises could decide whether to recruit externally or to provide international training for the existing workforce. It became clear that the national HRD policy was instrumental in the development of an external labour market (Benson and Zhu, 2002; Dong, 2007).

Benson and Zhu (2002) indicated Chinese organisations are currently facing 1) whether to recruit or to train skilled labour, and 2) the frustrations of training skilled labour could become more viable for their competitors, and 3) the problems of how to retain them. The result of this study showed the supply and demand of skilled labour among enterprises from different types of ownership. The decision of recruiting or training skilled labour depends on the availability of suitable workers in the external labour market and the financial capacity of the enterprises.

This study addressed the fundamental issue of the role of the national HRD policy as an instrument to provide external labour and with the support of evidence showed the continuous input from the government to improve and support developing skilled labour. However,

it appears that there is a lack of evidence about the communications and co-operation between the national HRD policy makers and the enterprises in the process of this development.

Dong's (2007) paper revealed the general situation in China's *vocational training* programme.

"China's vocational education fails to orient itself really toward trade organizations, lacking a clear and exact orientation; and the combination of enterprises and schools has not been veritably carried out, just a nominal one. The trades or enterprises that join the vocational education have not participated in the cultivation of talents throughout the whole process, failing to give timely and pertinent suggestions with regard to the teaching plan, courses setting and instruction contents, but merely taking in students to practice or taking part in the consultation of schools, in the name of the advisory committee" (p.113).

China's vocational education fails to orient itself toward trades and professions, and the flexible employment-oriented mechanism among specialities, courses and teaching remains to be established, which echoed key claims and findings in Björkman and Lu's (1999) study.

In addition, similarities on the shortage of skilled labour and lack of communications between HRD policy makers and organisations were shown in Wang *et al.*'s (2009) study. Wang *et al.*'s (2009) literature review showed that the national policies of HRD lack, accountability requirements, evaluation mechanisms, and defined implementation processes in China. The findings of the study indicated that, although given much attention at the national level, China's HRD policies and implementation have not been able to effectively respond to the challenges at the organisational and individual levels. A strong demand still exists for professional management skills for all Chinese business activities.

Ke *et al.* (2006) on the other hand, summarised previous research findings and presented tables in the study, 1) in order to portray current situations of China's NHRD and 2) to suggest strategies for increasing the contribution of HRD to economic, social, cultural, and political growth in China. This study provides the current status of the Chinese NHRD situation, and suggests complementary strategies in relation to the country's current problem.

Ke *et al.* (2006) suggested the top HRD priorities in China are to raise the education level nationwide and to train more high level human resources. Besides, HRD policy makers must address "*problems with regard to HRD that include (a) a slowly progressing education, science, and technology system; (b) low capital input into human resources; (c) inadequate training in general; and (d) a shortage of skilled workers and high-level human resources*" (p.42). This also provides an indication of a potential area which might need further research/study on HRD at organisation level: what are the procedures/advice in dealing with the current shortage of skilled labour other than waiting for the centralised mode of the NHRD programme by the government in China?

In summary, there are two ways for enterprises to address the shortage of skilled labour in China; 1) to rely on the central government to provide national HRD policies to address the issues through re-assessments in educational institutions and launching new vocational training programmes (Benson and Zhu, 2002; Dong, 2007; Ke *et al.*, 2006), and 2) to rely on buying skilled workers or making skilled workers by internal training (Björkman and Lu, 1999; Lee, 1999).

3.5. Current interior design profession requirements for designer skills in a Chinese context

Interior design is a refining process to architectural interior space. It is essential for an interior designer to possess the knowledge of architectural and art studies (Zhang, 2010).

In the current interior design context, there are growing numbers of non-interior design trained individuals who join interior design practice; individuals who came from civil engineering, arts and crafts design, project management, project estimation and construction backgrounds (Li and Zhang, 2012). Although various registered interior designer certificates are in place to differentiate the levels of qualified interior designers, there are over 95% of practicing designers who consider the certificates are irrelevant to their jobs; reported from a recent statistic conducted in major cities such as Beijing, Shengzhen, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Hangzhou (Chen, 2010). There is still no regulation in place to restrict only certified interior designers being able to practice interior design in China.

In reality, however, clients are not interested in designers' certificates but rather they are interested only in their physical design works (Chen, 2010). Therefore, how do we know what the current interior design profession requirements are for designers? There is a necessity to understand interior design profession requirements for certain skills and technical expertise in the current Chinese industry context.

In this section, it begins with a brief explanation of the meaning of the design process and an introduction of "what does the designer do?". Then it is followed by the explanation of two aspects of the designer's qualities, in which they were evaluated and examined by the integration of Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical assumptions on basic qualities of interior designers. These two aspects

are professional knowledge and technical expertise. In addition, there are four areas in the aspect of professional knowledge and three areas in the aspect of technical expertise, respectively.

3.5.1. What does the designer do? – Design process

It is fundamental to study what matters to the interior design profession through design research (Poldma, 2008), “... *understand design processes particular to interior designers, look at what happens when we make design decisions that impact on the well-being and perception of users, and work towards creating new knowledge specific to interior design*” (Poldma, 2008, pp. vii).

There are different connotations regarding the design process. It can be perceived as a sequence of actions towards a recognisable goal Blossom & Thompson (2005), whilst design is concerned in relation to the final product for new ways of improving human conditions (Vaikla-Poldma, 2003). It can also be interpreted as the integration of a service relationship between the designer and the served (Nelson & Stolterman, 2003).

By integrating the above definitions of the design process, the essence of the design process can be concluded as; the designer undergoes a series of actions in relation to a recognisable final goal/product to improve human conditions in new ways, which involves a complex ‘*service relationship*’ between the designer and the client.

On the other hand, according to Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical studies, there are two aspects of essential qualities in relation to the designer’s responsibilities during the design process, which could help to illustrate what interior designers do in China from a designer’s essential qualities point of view.

3.5.2. Professional knowledge

There are four essential areas of professional knowledge that appear to be required for a practicing interior designer in China. These are: Architectural Studies, Materialism Science, Interior Design Theory, and Art and Design Studies.

Four essential areas of professional knowledge

1. Architectural Studies – Due to the inter-relationship between interior design and architectural studies, the purpose of interior design is to define practical and effective space during its renovation process within a building. Therefore, designers should respect the design of the building, which requires designers to have professional knowledge on architectural structure, structural engineering and construction methods (Cui 2015; Li and Zhang, 2012). In particular the architectural language in communication; knowledge on technical terms and symbols in drawings allows designers to have effective communication with other professional parties, as well as the clients (Zhang, 2010).
2. Materialism Science – Under the rapid progression in science and technology, new materials can be invented and new installation methods become feasible in construction. Designers should maintain updated knowledge of the progression of material science (Cui 2015; Li and Zhang, 2012). By understanding and incorporating characteristics of new products or materials, and their construction or most up-to-date installation methods or techniques, designers should be able to enhance their design application during their creative process (Cui 2015; Zhang, 2010).

3. Interior Design Theory – Through the studied of architectural design and art history, designers gain understanding and knowledge on the development of different design styles, design principals and aesthetic appreciation from past examples (Li and Zhang, 2012; Zhang, 2010).
4. Art and Design Studies – Designers should utilise the principals of sculptured art and colour theories, and spatial design study to develop their artistic tastes, as well as their ability to predict future trends sensitively through their observation (Cui 2015; Zhang, 2010).

In summary, according to Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical assumptions on basic qualities of interior designers, these four essential areas of professional knowledge that appear to be required for practicing interior designers in China, who can be categorised in two separate designer training processes; the essential teaching curriculum in interior design study, and continuous professional knowledge learning process. Firstly, all four areas should be incorporate systematically under the teaching curriculum in interior design study, as the majority of knowledge appears to be learnt through a well-structured design education curriculum. Materialism Science, on the other hand, can also be incorporated into on-going professional learning development. Secondly, it appears that designers could benefit if Architectural Studies and Materialism Science are incorporated into continuous professional knowledge learning development in organisation training, due to their on-going evolving natures.

3.5.3. Technical expertise

Interior design, as a practice, comprises a multi-disciplinary collaboration work. It is essential for designers to possess various skills that allow him/herself to be able to express and communicate with other parties effectively (Chiu, 2002; Sonnenwald, 1996). There are three areas of professional expertise that are required for practice of interior design in China, of which they are essential for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process, and these are: Computer Skills, Manual Drafting Skills, and General Soft Skills.

Three essential areas of technical expertise

1. Computer Skills – For effectiveness in production and knowledge processing in a contemporary design environment, computer skills become, apparently, a must have integrated skill (Cui 2015). Designers should be experienced in utilising, various computer software, in order to process their daily routine at work. These include AutoDesk CAD, 3DMAX, LIGHTSCAPE, PHOTOSHOP and so on (Zhang, 2010).
2. Manual Drafting Skills – In a general design process, hand sketching techniques play a crucial part in developing design ideas, visualising designed space, and communicating with others. In particular when a designer communicates with the client on design concepts, styles or design feasibility, hand sketching techniques, appear to be an effective and efficient way of communication (Cui 2015; Zhang, 2010).
3. General Soft Skills – In general, face to face communication could provide designers subjective understanding of the client's demands, as well as providing a clear explanation of design solutions in return (Zhang, 2010). Besides, communication by other means; to coordinate – to structure and manipulate – design drawings,

sketches, pictures or other media in order to explain design concepts or ideas, and be able to bring forth one's ideas to clients effectively (Zhang, 2010). Sometimes, negotiation is essential when the designer faces disagreement from the client; the designer should be able to persuade the client or compromise in a professional manner (Cui 2015; Zhang, 2010).

In summary, according to Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical discussions on basic qualities of interior designers, these three areas of professional expertise appear to be essential for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process. Apart from hard skills such as computer and manual hand sketching techniques that could be seen as part of the traditional design education, the ability to transform these skills and techniques into communication could appear to be another form of transferable skills for designers. Other transferrable skills such as negotiation are also mentioned and this is an essential skill for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process (Cui 2015; Zhang, 2010).

3.5.4. Summary

From the evaluation of Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical assumptions on basic qualities of interior designers above, the four essential areas of professional knowledge can be categorised as the essential teaching curriculum in interior design study, and continuous professional knowledge learning process. The three areas of professional expertise, signifying designer skills such as computer and manual drafting skills, communication, negotiation and compromise, appear to be essential for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process. However, apart from these theoretical assumptions, there is no empirical suggestion on designer skills from both the current interior design industry and market studies. What is the current industry's expectation on designer's skills in current context?

Therefore, the objectives of this study seeks to gain in-depth understanding of both the current industry's and market's expectations of the designer required skills by exploring empirical analysis on dyadic interactions between both client-designer relationships.

3.6. Current issues in interior design industry

Human resources development in both national and organisational levels, are important to China. With the country's unique transitional economy and cultural context, HRD implementations recommendations should focus on the dilemma of transitional cultural aspects and their influences (Li and Nimon, 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2004). These cultural aspects include the country's situated culture – Confucian's belief and values, situated cultural environment – Communist values and mentality, and the economy driven capitalism (Yang *et al.*, 2004). These literature reviews on HRD provide an informative situated context for this study to explore how the situated environment and culture have impacts on client-designer interactions and their behaviour during the design process. It could be made clear by synthesising the literature reviews between the current problems of the interior design industry and the industry's situated context – China context. The summarised syntheses are concluded as follows.

3.6.1. Short of skilled interior design professionals and internal training

A shortage in the quantity of skilled interior design professionals as per market demands were a result of the transitional economy (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). Transitions on the supply of skilled interior design professionals changed from relying on foreign experts to locals due to the progression in national design professional training from educational institutions, but were also driven by the rapid growth under the market demands (Zheng, 2010). Conversely, according to a recent report, there is still a shortage in numbers of skilled interior design professionals as per market demands (CIDA, 2011).

In referring to the situated context, an overall shortage of skilled labour was caused by insufficient communication between HRD policy makers, organisations and industries (Wang *et al.*, 2009). Although the governing body CIDA (2011) stressed these issues in a recent report,

there are still extra issues to be overcome at a national level of HRD in China which could prove to be a time consuming process. These include (a) *a slowly progressing education, science, and technology system*; (b) *low capital input into human resources*; (c) *inadequate training in general*, as stressed by Ke *et al.* (2006). Moreover, as recent studies show, increased concerns have been raised regarding the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). While the gap between the standard trained interior design students and the expectations of the industry still remains wide (Peng, 2005; Xong, 2002), and these indeed need to be addressed through another means of supplying skilled interior design professionals by internal training.

3.6.2. Transitions in organization values

According to CIDA's (2011) report, Chinese interior design companies' values have changed from professionalism to profit orientation, this transition in organisational value could not be interpreted thoroughly without overlooking its inseparable cultural characteristics in the business environment (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009; Lauche *et al.*, 2008) and the way how the interior designer operates in China. However, there are evidences that show CIDA's (2011) claim could be the emphasis on the implementation of socialist's (communist's) organizational values.

In referring to the previous reviews, individual culture and behaviour could influence organisation culture and values (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009). Three ideological (Confucianism, socialism and capitalism) ideals co-exist, yet, in different emphases among organisations (Yang, 2012). Therefore, these three ideological ideals could also be traced within interior design companies in China. Under the situated environment, it has been recognised that certain Capitalist elements

such as the free market and financial incentives could not be eliminated since the economic reform (Yang, 2012).

Moreover, CIDA, the governing body of the interior design industry itself is a government organization and indeed retains a communist background; therefore, application of communist values on the development of the industry is inevitable (Dong, 2010). However, this transition in organisational value could not be interpreted thoroughly without overlooking its inseparable cultural characteristics in the business environment (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009; Lauche *et al.*, 2008) and the way how the interior designer operates in China. The necessity of knowing what an interior designer does during the design process could provide appropriate tools for problem-solving (Behmanesh; 2015; Haddad, 2014; Poldma, 2008).

3.6.3. Design process and cultural issues

According to the previous summarised connotations regarding the design process in section 3.5: What does the designer do? – The design process, one of the key aspects of the interior design process is the service relationship between the client and the designer (Nelson & Stolterman, 2003). As situated influences would have an impact on an individual's culture and behaviour where the individual's behaviour can be influenced consciously and sub-consciously by their cultural belief; could these influences affect an interior designer's behaviour during interaction with the client? Little research has been done in these areas and is still, yet to be explored.

From the evaluation of Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical assumptions on basic qualities of interior designers above, the four essential areas of professional knowledge can be categorised as the essential teaching curriculum in interior design study, and continuous professional knowledge learning process. The three areas of professional expertise, signifying designer skills such as

computer and manual drafting skills, communication, negotiation and compromise, appear to be essential for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process. However, apart from these theoretical assumptions, there is no empirical suggestion on designer skills from both the current interior design industry and market studies. What is the current industry's expectation on designer's skills in current context?

Therefore, the objectives of this study seeks to gain in-depth understanding of both the current industry's and market's expectations of the designer required skills by exploring empirical analysis on dyadic interactions between both client-designer relationships.

3.6.4. Current interior design profession requirements for designer skills in a Chinese context

According to Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical studies, there are two aspects of essential qualities in relation to the designer's responsibilities during the design process, which could help to illustrate what interior designers do in China from a designer's essential qualities point of view.

From the evaluation of Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical assumptions on basic qualities of interior designers above, the four essential areas of professional knowledge can be categorised as the essential teaching curriculum in interior design study, and the continuous professional knowledge learning process. The three areas of professional expertise appear to be essential for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process. However, apart from these theoretical assumptions, there is no empirical suggestion on designer skills from both the current interior design industry and market studies. The current industry's expectations on designer's skills in the current context remain to be explored.

3.7. Themes identified through literature review

In the context of the overall aim and objectives of the research study a number of themes emerged from the literature, that were considered as relevant to this study. Broad research questions were generated from these themes and these are also discussed in this context. These themes are *client and designer relationships*, *situated influences*, *lack of skilled professionals* and the *industry's expectations*.

Situated environment and cultural aspects constantly influence the individual's behaviour. These provoke the necessity for a clear perspective on the designer's part towards the current interior design process and its characteristics. An understanding of views is essential to establish the link between the above aspects and how the current lack of interior design professionals could be addressed. The persistence of the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry is instigated by the absence of the identification of the industry's expectations which remains to be explored.

3.7.1. Client and designer relationships

As a conclusion, the client and designer relationships are a complex interaction relationship interweaving with the six aspects of the client and designer relationship. Each of these aspects is also intertwined with each other to form unique but complex dynamics that construct an ever-changing client and designer relationship during the design process. Within this interactive dynamics, various characteristics appear to be essential to designers to manage their collaboration relationships with the clients.

Communication is the key aspect in client-designer relationships that could have multi-influences towards the other aspects – individual's behaviour, social practice, decision making or problem solving – in client-designer relationships, and geared towards the creation and application of knowledge (d'Anjou, 2001; Nikolova *et al.*,

2009; Sonnenwald, 1996). Personal attributes that comprise negotiation, agreement, and compromise become essential for the designer to achieve success in client-design collaboration (Chiu, 2002).

Power relation, as a share, inherent consensus client-designer relationship, is crucial to the client-designer relationship (Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013). It has mutual influences between social behaviour practice and the decision making process respectively (d'Anjou, 2001), which has impacts on an individual's behaviour during the client-designer collaboration process (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, the decision-making process should take place in an attitude of mutual trust and responsibility through a sincere dialogue in the interaction between the client and designer in design practice (d'Anjou, 2001). Future business opportunities may also be facilitated by establishing and maintaining degrees of trust in the client-designer relationship (Alvesson *et al.*, 2009).

Although certain characteristics were, empirical analysis on dyadic interactions between both client-consultant relationships is still yet under-explored (Nikolova *et al.*, 2009; Lauche *et al.*, 2008; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013), in particular the impact the business environment and culture have towards the consultant process which could reveal further essential relationship related characteristics. Thus far, limited interior design studies examine the dynamics on the interactive client-designer relationship during the interior design process, and neither do they explore the uniqueness of the interior design business environment. How cultural influence and power relations constructed under a situated environment impact the client-designer relationship is still yet to be explored.

3.7.2. Theoretical model and concept of interactive dynamics

Twenty one collective characteristics emerged from the literatures that focus on client-designer/consultant collaboration that came from either ‘management consultancy’ or ‘other design disciplines’, in relations to five out of six aspects of client-designer relationships, where they were considered to be essential to client-designer collaboration during the design process. These characteristics consist of a collection of personal attributes and skills which could be considered as a theoretical model of essential individual’s characteristics and attributes for interactive dynamics in client-designer collaboration. The characteristics and attributes in different aspects of client-designer relationships are summarised as shown in Table 3-3: Characteristics and attributes of interactive dynamics in the client-designer collaboration.

| Aspects of Client-designer Relationships | Characteristics |
|--|---|
| Behaviour and Social Practice | <i>Communication, agreement, compromise, social -role/position</i> |
| Communication | <i>Communication behaviour, communication methods</i> |
| Power Relations | <i>Persuasion, defence, negotiation, trust</i> |
| Relationship Management | <i>Empathy, mutual trust and mutual respect, mutual understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, cooperation, rapport, expectations, involvement (engagement)</i> |
| Decision-making and Problem-solving | <i>Mutual trust, responsibility, communication, sincere</i> |
| Knowledge Learning Process | N/A |

Table 3-3: Characteristics and attributes of interactive dynamics in the client-designer collaboration process

The six aspects of client-designer relationships are intertwined with each other to form unique but complex dynamics that construct an ever-changing client and designer relationship during the design process. The final goal of these interaction aspects is to serve the improvement of individual's knowledge Learning. This theoretical concept of interactive dynamics in the client-designer relationships during the design process is illustrated in Diagram 3-3: The concept of interactive dynamics in the client-designer relationships during the design process.



Diagram 3-3: The concept of interactive dynamics in the client-designer relationships during the design process

3.7.3. Situated influences

The essence of the definition in human resource development (HRD) can be concluded as follows: the aim of activities which take place between individuals and organisations is to improve the performance of both the individual and the organisation. This usually involves development and training activities delivered by the organisations to enhance individuals's ability (Chang, 2011; Swanson, 1995). A broader aspect of HRD can be interpreted to include environmental factors, which influence how HRD is implemented (Ke *et al.*, 2006; McLean and McLean, 2001; Swanson, 1995).

On the one hand, the uniqueness of HRD in a Chinese context is in relation to the three main transitions of structure in China's transitional economy and these are transitions in economic, social and political structures (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2004; Zheng and Yang, 2009) – identified as *situated environment*. On the other hand, cultural influences are keys to the business and organisation operations in China, and these impact on individual and organisational culture and behaviour, of which these were developed from the country's unique transitional context (Björkman and Lu's, 1999; Lee, 1999; Li and Madsen, 2009; Tsui *et al.*, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006) – identified as *situated cultural aspect*.

Individual behaviour is constantly under the influences of the conflict and convergence of the situated environment and cultural aspect, both consciously and sub-consciously. By implying this complex concept of influences towards the implementation of an internal training aspect of HRD in an interior design organisation in China, it provokes the necessity of an understanding of 1) the aspects of the current design process in China, and 2) the designer's behaviour during the design process.

3.7.4. Lack of skilled professionals

As a conclusion to section 3.6.1, the shortage in the quantity of skilled interior design professionals was a result of the transitional economy (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). Under the transitional context, and due to the progression in national design professional training from educational institutions not only did the supply of skilled interior design professional's change from relying on foreign experts to locals, but this was also driven by the rapid growth under the market demands (Zheng, 2010). Consequently, a shortage in numbers of skilled interior design professionals as per market demand has remained (CIDA, 2011).

From the evaluation of Cui (2015), Li and Zhang (2012) and Zhao (2010) theoretical assumptions on basic qualities of interior designers in section 3.5, essential designer's qualities were drawn into a total of 7 areas of professional knowledge and professional expertise. The four essential areas of professional knowledge can be categorised as the essential teaching curriculum in interior design study, and the continuous professional knowledge learning process. The three areas of professional expertise, signifying designer skills such as *computer and manual drafting skills, communication, negotiation and compromise*, appear to be essential for designers to enhance their collaboration work with other parties during the design process. However, apart from these theoretical assumptions, there is no empirical suggestion on designer skills from both the current interior design industry and market studies.

There are two possible ways to address the shortage of skilled interior design professionals in China. Firstly, relying on the central government to provide national HRD policies to address the issues through re-assessments in educational institutions and launching new vocational training programmes (Benson and Zhu, 2002; Dong, 2007; Ke *et al.*, 2006). Although the governing body CIDA (2011) stressed

these issues in a recent report, extra issues such as the dialogue between policy makers and the industry are still yet to be overcome which could prove to be a time consuming process (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2009). Besides, it would appear that it is essential to gain understanding of both the current industry's and market's expectations on the essential designer's skills from both the clients' and designers' perspectives, in order to identify an adequate direction for future education provision. Meanwhile, interior design organisations are urgently seeking another means of supplying skilled professionals by internal training (Björkman and Lu, 1999; Lee, 1999), as the second resort.

3.7.5. Industry's expectations

In addition, the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry still persists (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). As a consequence, the gap between the standard trained interior design professionals and their expectations from the industry still remains wide (Peng, 2005; Xong, 2002).

With reference to the discussions on the landscape of interior design development in section 2.3.1, the integrated relationship, between the economic policies, market demand and education, influences the industry's expectations in various specific skilled professionals against the education provision among different stages of the interior design industry development. This can be justified that the transition of the industry's expectations determines education provision. From a broader aspect, the demand of designers could not solely rely on the figures produced without understanding the specific needs in the interior design industry, as it is highly related to the situated environments. When the business environment changes the market expectation changes accordingly to balance the needs.

However, there is no clear picture of what the industry's expectations actually are, or that addressing of any issues on the design process could portray potential significance on enhancing the designer's professionalism. As a result, not only does this unchartered area remain unaddressed, but could also cause a deficiency in continuous professional development in China's interior design industry.

3.8. Chapter 3 summary

The aim of this study is to identify industry's expectations in the client-designer relationship during the design process, in order to close the gap between education and practice. The initiative of this study was instigated by the existence of a current lack of skilled professionals in the current interior design market (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). This lack of skilled professionals is the result of growing market demands (Zheng, 2010) due to the transitions of the situated environment.

Hence, there are underlying problems because of the existing gap between the standard trained interior design professionals and their expectations from the industry (Peng, 2005; Xong, 2002), which was caused by the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). According to the implementations of human resource development (HRD), there are two ways to address the shortage of skilled professionals; relying on central government to provide national HRD policies to address these issues, and/or by means of providing internal training within the organisations (Björkman and Lu, 1999; Lee, 1999). While a recent report showed that the governing body of the interior design industry, Chinese Interior Decoration Associate (CIDA), stressed that these issues and suggestions were made (CIDA, 2011). However, as argued by the many scholars, the fundamental issue lies within the insufficient communication between the industry and the policy makers (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Peng, 2005; Wang *et al.*, 2009; Xong, 2002).

According to the critical review of the literature, various areas instigating this lack of dialogue between the industry and policy makers, remain to be identified; there is a lack of clarification of the industry expectations, and a lack of identification in the design process (Poldma, 2008) in order to achieve the insights of the current industry context.

The current industry context comprises three main components: *situated environment*, *design process* and *industry expectations*. These three components are interlocked, constantly generating influences within each area to form a unique mechanism within the industry. From the human resource development perspective, the aim of providing internal training is to improve performance of both the individuals and the organisations (Chang, 2011; Swanson, 1995), of which there are mutual influences between the organisation and its situated environment that affect the implementations of HRD (Swanson, 1995). Therefore, the current industry context should be taken into consideration in order for both the organisation and national policy maker to develop an adequate training program or policy, in the interior design industry in China.

Therefore, there are questions to be raised: How could the situated environment have influence on both individual's behaviors and expectations during the design process? And what are the industry's expectations on the client-designer relationships during a design process?

4. Research Design

This chapter discusses the design adopted in this study. The first section of the discussion covers the research philosophy, methodological approach and methods.

The second section covers the implementation of the data collection method, the ethical considerations, and an outline of the analysis procedures. Limitations of the methodological approach are identified and discussed. Section 3.6 presents the summary of the chapter.

4.1. Research philosophy

“The theoretical framework as distinct from a theory influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. It is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. Without nominating a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design.”

(Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006, p.196)

When discussing the theoretical framework, paradigm or “worldview” Creswell (2008), different authors gave varied emphasis and sometimes conflicting definitions which at times led to confusion (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Authors like Creswell (2003) prefer to discuss the interpretive paradigm in terms of ‘knowledge claim’, while others might prefer in relation to research methodologies (Knox, 2004). Indeed, a paradigm is a matrix of beliefs and perceptions; there are power relationships and action implications inherent in paradigms (Kinash, 2006). Therefore, an understanding of these belief systems is essential. It opens researchers’ minds to different possibilities, of which it could enrich researchers’ skills as well as enhance their confidence in using an appropriate methodology (Holden and Lynch, 2004).

4.1.1. Research approaches

Many authors view 'positivism and interpretivism' as the main research approaches and they are often portrayed as polar opposites on the research design continuum. Each approach has its own philosophical positions which are based on the concepts of objectivism and subjectivism (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991).

Positivism is traditionally referred to as 'scientific method' or 'science research', which can be applied to social science in the tradition of natural sciences (Crossan, 2003; Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Positivists perceive that research studies can be conducted independently from what is being observed. The choice of what and how to study can be determined by objective criteria rather than their personal interests and beliefs (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991). Studies often proceed through formulated hypothesis and are then tested and measured through quantitative methods (Knox, 2004). Large sample sizes are usually required to be able to generalise regularities. Followed by predication, explanation and finally lead to understanding, of which positivism is considered to discover a universal truth. Alternatively, interpretivists consider knowledge can be established through the meanings attached to the phenomena studied while researchers interact with subjects being observed, of which interpretivism is to understand the interpretation of the meaning generated by humans' discourses.

However, some authors stress that the argument between positivism versus interpretivism no longer serves a useful purpose (Weber, 2004). *'Historically, the rhetoric of positivism versus interpretivism may be seen as a useful way of laying the foundations for change – of unseating the positivist hegemony and allowing newer, interpretive forms of research to grow and prosper'* (Weber, 2004, p. xii).

Different research and data-analysis methods have different strengths and weaknesses that provide different types of knowledge about the phenomena to be focused on. Moreover, different research methods have different strengths and weaknesses depending on one's existing knowledge about the phenomena (Weber, 2004; Knox, 2004; Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Researchers require a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods and data-analysis techniques; and understanding of the different sorts of knowledge to be obtained using different research methods. In Weber's (2004) view, the current longstanding positive versus interpretive rhetoric should serve as informing the purposes for obtaining this understanding instead.

4.1.2. Reflections and evolvement

Since 2003, the researcher has practiced interior design in a few international design firms where he was involved in the companies' strategic business development and design management, in Shanghai China. After two years exploring and observing the development of the design business in China, he began to run his own interior design business in Shanghai. Among his observations and involvement in the interior design business in China, he became aware that the rapid change in demand for designers not only caused an increase in the number of designers, but may also have created a downfall in the designers' qualities. The researcher began to question the existing *reality* of the Chinese interior design industry.

According to the CIDA's report in 2010, the interior design industry is merely in the developmental stage and the overall standard appears to be still considerably inadequate in China. Critical problems such as non-ground-breaking design, a poorly regulated design industry, and a poorly regulated management system are identified as co-existing within the current state (CIDA, 2011). According to Tang and Chen (2004) and Wu *et al.* (2005), these three areas have not only deviated from the core value of the industry itself, but are also causing an imbalance in the development and coordination of the industry, which could eventually cause inefficiency to its development.

Hence, the gap between the standard trained interior design students and the expectation of the industry is widening; caused by the increase in the demand of interior designers. In referring to Tang and Chen (2004, p.64), '*the existing problems of the current Chinese design education lie in two main areas; the insufficient number of design professionals to cope with the market demand and the market's additional demands of higher design standard*'. Tang and Chen (2004) and Wu *et al.* (2005) compared the curriculum of the design education

in China and the western world, and criticized the lack of coherence between the Chinese design education and the market demands (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010). However, these criticisms are merely a surface observation of the social phenomena. These phenomena cannot be simply defined and concluded as a true reality, according to constructivists' point of view that social phenomena are constantly generated and created between the interaction of the social actors and the society (Crossan, 2003; Jackson & Sørensen, 2010; Ryan, 2006).

4.1.3. Current 'reality' of interior design industry in China

In referring to the findings and arguments in the works of Peng (2005), Tang and Chen (2004), Xong (2002) and Wu *et al.* (2005), where scenarios (samples) were gathered through observations of the particular social groups and constructed into theoretical assumptions and their interpretations of the *reality*. These problematic issues of the lack of coherence between the Chinese design education and market demands could be improved and suggestions were made. However, in the researcher's point of view and being one of the participants within the specific social group, these suggestions are considered to be insignificant and too broad to be adopted in *reality*; neither did Peng (2005), Tang and Chen (2004), Xong (2002) and Wu *et al.* (2005) explain the cause of these phenomena, nor did they provide an understanding of their [*phenomena*] occurrence. Besides, the conclusions and suggestions made by Peng (2005), Tang and Chen (2004), Xong (2002) and Wu *et al.* (2005) and CIDA (2011) appear to be very much empirical, uninformed and causally orientated.

The researcher believes the reality exists independently and can be measured and observed, but he also believes that some part of reality exists beyond the observable – there are unseen structures at work in the world such as corruption, ambition, social status and profits etc. What is the *reality*? Consequently, the research begins to raise

fundamental issues in seeking a deeper understanding of the *reality*; what are the expectations from the interior design industry? And how does an interior design organisation improved designers' performance in meeting the market expectations?

Bhaskar's (1998) work conceived the existence of three realms of reality as shown in Alvesson & Sköldbberg, (2000, p 40); *'the notion of reality as consisting of three domains – the empirical, the actual and the real. The empirical domain includes that which we can observe – things that happen and exist according to our immediate experience. The actual domain is a broader one, and refers to that which transpires independently of the researcher or any other observer who might record it. Finally, the domain of the real includes those mechanisms that are productive of different events and other 'surface phenomena'*. It appears that there is a hint indicating the current reality of the interior industry, as described above, which can be categorized into three perspectives, 'domains' in Bhaskar's (1998) words; 1) *empirical domain* – the *reality* that the researcher had observed and experienced in his business, 2) *actual domain* – the *reality* that was described and portrayed by Peng (2005), Tang and Chen (2004), Xong (2002) and Wu *et al.* (2005) through their studies, and 3) the *domain of real* – the *reality* that the researcher is seeking which is beyond the observable; the underlying relations, structures, and tendencies that have the power to cause changes in the events and outcomes that occur in the interior design industry (Goski, 2013; Walker, 2017; Zachariadis *et al.*, 2013).

Apparently, the *reality* that the researcher searches for can be considered as a more complex matter than the first two realms of reality as categorized above. This *reality* does not conclusively embed in the understanding of the relationship between the market expectations and the provided services as the researcher previously questioned, but rather to be in exploring and understanding of the causes of the phenomena that were pointed out by Peng (2005), Tang and Chen

(2004), Xong (2002) and Wu *et al.* (2005) and CIDA (2011); how can these phenomena be influenced by the reality beyond observable? An ontological assumption has become clearer to the researcher; critical realist ontology has emerged – ‘*According to critical realism, the task of science is to explore the realm of the real and how it relates to the other two domains*’ (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p 40).

4.1.4. Defining epistemological position

In order to proceed towards a quality research study, defining and adopting an appropriate epistemological approach to the study becomes essential. According to Krauss (2005, p758-759), ‘*epistemology is intimately related to ontology and methodology; as ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it*’. By putting into a reflective perspective, the researcher’s epistemology can be described and can pose the following questions: What is the relationship between the knower – researcher and what is known – observable facts? How does the researcher know what he knows? What counts as knowledge?

In referring to the philosophical paradigm, the characteristics and differences between both sides of the paradigm lead to opposite methodological approaches. For instance, in the positivists’ side of the paradigm, the object of study is independent of researchers; knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena; facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon to examine its component parts.

An alternative view, the interpretivist’s view, is that knowledge is established through the meanings attached to the phenomena studied; researchers interact with the subjects of study to obtain data; inquiry changes both researcher and subject; and knowledge is context and time dependent (Crossan, 2003; Jackson & Sørensen, 2010; Ryan,

2006). Positivist describes there is the innate structure or pattern of reality, a reality of truth, and interpretivist's defined as ideas, the structures or pictures imputed to reality by people. Positivist's assumption of reality refers to external reality; on the contrary, interpretivist's assumption of reality refers to internal reality – there are multiple realities that exist as each individual experiences a different reality. Clearly, according to the researcher's ontological assumption, these two extremes are considered to be fallible and seemingly could not be related to the *reality* that he seeks to understand if by focusing on either one alone (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Clark, 2011; Krauss, 2005).

On the other hand, critical realists place a strong focus in theorizing and research informed on understanding causality, and explaining events in these phenomena (Goski, 2013; Zachariadis *et al.*, 2013). This movement from events to their causes, known as abduction, is contrasted with other common goals of research to describe, predict, correlate, and intervene (Clark, 2011; Krauss, 2005). Broadly speaking, issues such as a dysfunctional structure and incoherence between education and industry of interior design were captured as the phenomena in the current interior design industry in China, which is an existing reality – observable facts; and the undefined session of the underlying causes where the researcher is searching, critical realist refers these to the mechanisms of a 'deeper dimension' (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000).

Critical realism shares the interest of positivism in the objective world, patterns, generalization, and in finding causalities, but it also diverges from this tradition in claiming that the study of the observable is too superficial, as it disregards the unobservable mechanisms that produce the phenomena that positivists seek to measure and explain (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p40).

The ambition of critical realists is to discover the observable and unobservable mechanisms; phenomena can be generated with or without an agent (Goski, 2013; Walker, 2017; Zachariadis *et al.*, 2013). In other words, the critical realist observes the empirical domain by naming and describing the generative mechanisms that operate in the world and result in the events that may be observed. This inherent complexity that exists within the world of social scientists, thus posits a reality that may be considered real but fallible (Krauss, 2005).

Hence, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are seen as appropriate for researching the underlying mechanisms that drive actions and events. Methods such as case studies and unstructured or semi-structured in-depth interviews are acceptable and appropriate within the paradigm, as are statistical analyses, such as those derived from structural equation modelling and other techniques. With critical realism, the seeming opposition between quantitative and qualitative is therefore replaced by an approach that is considered appropriate given the research topic of interest and level of existing knowledge associating with it (Clark, 2011; Krauss, 2005; Smith, 2005).

4.2. Methodological approaches

There are limitations on tendency towards the extreme direction embedded in either side of the philosophical approaches; the positivist's and interpretivist's approaches, as stated above. The researcher also realizes and favours critical realism which offers an ontology that can conceptualize reality, support theorizing, and guide empirical work in the natural and human sciences (Goski, 2013; Walker, 2017; Zachariadis *et al.*, 2013) – it views reality as complex and recognizes the role of both agency and structural factors in influencing human behaviour (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Clark, 2011; Krauss, 2005). It can be used with qualitative and/or quantitative research methods. The appropriateness of quantitative or qualitative methods depends on the questions being asked or the issues being explored.

It becomes clear that by adopting a qualitative research one would be able to generate and facilitate the '*meaning-making process*' (Krauss, 2005). The complexity of meaning in the lives of people has much to do with how meaning is attributed to different objects, people and life events (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Smith, 2005). The data that will be generated and gathered could be useful in constructing a clearer picture of the current inconsistency within the practice of the interior design industry in China, which also could be able to generate knowledge that could lead to further action(s) to be taken by interior design practitioners or future research to be taken by other researcher(s).

Despite applying qualitative methods to the study which would seem to be appropriate, there will still be a tendency of subjective interpretation in analyzing the collected data that might influence the results in the area of study (Clark, 2011), and the researcher's personal experience and his world's view could influence or misinterpret the collected data. The goal of a qualitative investigation is to understand

the complex world of human experience and behaviour from the point-of-view of those involved in the situation of interest. The researcher would be expected not to have a priori, well-delineated conceptualization of the phenomenon; rather, this conceptualization is to emerge from the interaction between participants and researcher (Krauss, 2005). Flexibility in design, data collection, and analysis of research should be applied to gain “deep” understanding and valid representation of the participants’ viewpoints (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Smith, 2005).

4.3. Choice of Research Method

Although there are a variety of methods which can be used in phenomenological-based research including interviews, conversations, participant observation, action research, focus group meetings and analysis of personal texts (Lester, 1999). Interviews are usually preferred as norm suggested by Williams (2007) and among other authors; using in-depth interviews as the data collection method can provoke understanding and interpretation of a participant's perception on the meaning of an event (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Williams, 2007).

4.3.1. Adoption of individual in-depth interview method

Qualitative interviews can often be categorized in many ways, but generally they are differentiated into unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and structured interviews (Harrell and Bradley, 2009; William, 2015; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). At one extreme is identical, mostly closed-end questions – structured interviews: where questions are fixed and are asked in a specific order generally closed to a survey. At the opposite extreme, is the fluid inquiry of focus groups – un-structured interviews: the researcher has a clear plan, but minimum control over the respondent's answers, free flow communication style interviews (Harrell and Bradley, 2009; William, 2015).

Structured interviews were discarded for this study as they often produce quantitative data. Also, unstructured interviews were also discarded for this study due to the nature of this study.

On the other hand, according to DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006), the characteristics of semi-structured interviews endorse issues such as predetermined open-ended questions interviews; allowing emerging questions from the dialogues between the interviewer and interviewee/s; mostly conducted only once with an individual or groups in a pre-

scheduled time and location outside of everyday events; and minimising situated-inference towards participant/s that could contaminate the gathered data (Pluciennik, 2015; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; William, 2015).

In consideration of the appropriateness for the interviewer to be able to penetrate deeply into social and personal matters, group interview/focus group is discarded; even though it allows interviewers to get a wide range of experience. However, due to the public nature of the process, this prevents delving deeply into individual social and personal matters as an individual in-depth interview is capable of (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; William, 2015). Therefore, the data gathering method of individual semi-structured in-depth interviews was adopted in this study.

4.4. Data collection

Because this study is to gain an understanding of the client and designer relationship during the design process, their roles and relationships are often nonverbal, or could be problematic for either party to fully articulate. In-depth interviews were therefore, considered to be an appropriate technique to elicit and document these perceptions that allowed this study to be built upon inductive reasoning and associated methodology (Williams, 2007).

In the interview, basic questions needed to be sufficiently focused in order to capture the commonly shared experiences about the topic. Part of the interview schedule included the following items and questions:

- What do you think makes an ideal designer/client relationship in terms of working together on a design project?
- What do you think makes a workable designer/client relationship in practice?
- What difficulties/differences do you think there might be between the designer's and the client's perceptions of how a good interior design project should run from its inception to its completion?
- What examples could you give which may be considered as a success in an overall interior design project?

4.4.1. Sampling

With the intention of minimising any researcher bias, potential participants were selected under a targeted representative category from the interior design market and industry. A purposive sampling was applied in this sample procedure under two participant groups; designer group and client group.

There are varieties of design specialties among interior design practices, and their operation procedures also vary depending on their scale and specialties. It is unlikely to be able to gather complementary experiences for comparison by random sample choices for the interior designer group. In order to maximise the relevant data to be obtained that shared common ground and experiences in events from the chosen samples, an alternative sampling consideration was applied. Priority was set by looking into projects that are generally operated under standardized procedures and controlled in the interior design process.

Within the interior design business, different scales and varieties of interior design projects can be commonly found, but not all interior design projects are operated under well-established standardised procedures that are provided by the client as this is what the large scale property developers do in China. In this set up, designers are required to work under standardized procedures that are pre-determined by the clients, in other words, all designers would have to work under a standardized or highly similar client's frame work in any property development interior design projects across China. In addition, both clients and designers, who have been involved in interior design projects in property developments share common experiences in specific structures and procedures, can provide the consistency of the data that this study pursues.

Under these circumstances, therefore, criteria were set to the selection of participants, who

- either come from, or possess varying interior design experiences for nation-wide developers in China, and
- possess a minimum of 5 years' experience as mentioned above and are currently in an active position.

In this study, an equal number of participants were selected; the groups of clients and designers intended to achieve a balanced data representation. The intention of this data collection method is to gather shared empirical data in the client-designer relationship and its role in shaping the design process along with the client's and the designer's perceptions of the design process, through in-depth interviews. Therefore, a total number of twelve focused samples were set in a combination of six participants from the client and designer group respectively.

Empirical data collection was performed in two phases, a pilot study and a main study. The aim of the pilot study – consisting of four in-depth interviews – was set to test:

- the procedures and feasibility of the research methods;
- the practicability of the coding and analysis framework;
- whether the expanse of the gathered raw data could generate significance.

The raw data from the pilot study were analysed to provide preliminary findings to review and enhance the initial interview schedule for the later eight in-depth interviews in the main study.

The main study, on the other hand, consisted of eight in-depth interviews, consisting of equal numbers of participants that were chosen for the two participant groups.

4.4.2. Sampling for pilot study interviews

In the pilot study, the same numbers of samples were selected from the participant groups in order to achieve a balanced data representation in the study; the overview of participants in the pilot study is shown in Table 4-1. With the intention of minimising any variables due to personal favours or differences in the overall design process, all samples were selected based on the participants who either came from, or possessed varying interior design experience for nationwide property developers in China, as discussed in Chapter 4.4.1 – Sampling .

In order to gain a variety of perspectives in this initial study, two participants were chosen from the client list of the researcher's interior design firm in Shanghai for the client group. One of the participants is an architect, who came from a central enterprise – Property Development Company in Shanghai; and the other participant is a trained landscape and environmental art designer, who came from a state-owned enterprise – property developers in Beijing. Both of the participants possess over 6 and 9 years' experience of active involvement in interior design projects respectively. These two interviews lasted for 50 minutes and 35 minutes, which covered four main themes: the progression of interior design; perceptions of role; relationship and design process; and the interactive dynamics between the client and designer.

Sample group

In the designer group, two designers were chosen from the designer connection list of the researcher's interior design firm in Shanghai; one participant is a senior designer of a Taiwanese owned interior design company in Shanghai and has over 14 years' experience in practicing interior design, involving different scales of interior design projects; including private residential, commercial, corporate offices and, public sector developments.

The second participant is a design team-leader of a Grade A registered interior construction company in Shanghai and has over 7 years' experience in practicing interior design, involving different scales of interior design projects; including private residential, retail and shopping malls, and public sector developments. These two interviews lasted 40 minutes and an hour, which covered five main themes: design education; training and professional development; the perceptions of role; relationship and design process; and the interactive dynamics between the client and designer. To maintain anonymity, participants in the client group are labelled C₁ and C₂; and participants in the designer group are labelled D₁ and D₂. Further details of the participants' background can be found in Table 4-1: Overview of participants in the pilot study.

| Partici- pants | Professional background | Company sector | Position | Experience * | Location |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------|
| C ₁ | Architect | Central enterprise | Project coordinator | 9 years | Shanghai |
| C ₂ | Landscape Architect | State-owned enterprise | Design Manager | 7 years | Beijing |
| D ₁ | Interior designer | Taiwanese interior design firm | Senior designer | 7 years | Shanghai |
| D ₂ | Interior designer | Ex-state-owned construction company | Design team leader | 14 years | Shanghai |

Note:

* indicates the participants who possess the years of experience involving interior design projects till the time of interviews took place.

Table 4-1: Overview of participants in the pilot study

4.4.3. Sampling for main study interviews with interior design clients

The main in-depth interviews with four interior design clients were chosen purposively from the client list of the researcher's design firm, with considerations including the years of experience involving interior design projects; their professional background; the coverage of property developers from different business sectors; and the geographical representation. All participants are not only knowledgeable in the interior design process under a standardized work procedure, but also supported by the differences of knowledge and experience that cover geographical and the nature of enterprises where they work. Hence, all participants had significant professional experience managing interior design projects at Chinese property development companies.

The participants came from a wide coverage of different business sectors: central enterprise, state-owned enterprise, and private enterprise. In addition, the combination of participants' professional background offers the coverage of justification from both technical and non-technical perceptions. To maintain anonymity, participants from the client group are labelled C₃ to C₆. Further details of the participants can be found in Table 4-2: Overview of participants from the interior design client group.

| Partici-pants | Professional background | Company sector | Position | Experience ** | Location |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|---|---------------|----------|
| *C ₁ | Architect | Central enterprise | Project coordinator | 9 years | Shanghai |
| *C ₂ | Landscape architect | State-owned enterprise | Design Dept. Manager | 7 years | Beijing |
| C ₃ | Non-design/ architectural background | State-owned enterprise | Engineering dept. Manager | 13 years | Nanjing |
| C ₄ | Interior Design Practitioner | State-owned enterprise | Project coordinator | 8 years | Nanjing |
| C ₅ | Non-design/ architectural background | Private enterprise | Marketing manager (Property sales division) | 5 years | Hangzhou |
| C ₆ | Architect | Private enterprise | Project coordinator | 6 years | Shanghai |

Note:

* represents the participants who participated in the pilot study.

** indicates the participants who possess the years of experience involving interior design projects till the time that the interviews took place.

Table 4-2: Overview of participants from the interior design client group

4.4.4. Sampling for main interviews with interior designers

The main in-depth interviews with four interior designers were chosen purposively from the designer connection list of the researcher's interior design firm in Shanghai, taking consideration of the years of experience in interior design projects; the coverage of interior designers from different business natures; the ratio of design personnel against the overall company size; designers' position; and interior design project coverage in China. All participants had significant professional interior design experience in Chinese property development projects. Moreover, they came from interior design departments of different aspects of a business professional nature, operating interior design projects across China. These details are displayed in Table 4-3: Overview of participants from the interior designer group.

Hence, all participants in the designer group possess 7 to 16 years' experience in interior design practice, but also have vast experience working in property development interior design projects across China. In addition, with the position held by participants, they all act as prime contacts and make front line negotiations with their clients on behalf of their company during the design process. To maintain anonymity, participants of the designer group are labelled D₃ to D₆. Detailed information of these participants can be found in Table 4-3.

| Partici- pants | Company sector | Company size** | Position | Experience *** | Projects coverage |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| *D ₁ | Taiwanese interior design firm | >20 | Senior designer | 7 years | Across China |
| *D ₂ | Ex-state-owned construction company | >20/40 | Design team leader | 14 years | Across China |
| D ₃ | Ex-state-owned construction company | >20/40 | Design team leader | 16 years | Across China |
| D ₄ | Ex-state-owned construction company | >20/40 | Design team leader | 13 years | Across China |
| D ₅ | American architectural firm | >20/40 | Intermediate designer | 8 years | Across China |
| D ₆ | Ex-state-owned construction company | >20/40 | Design team leader | 10 years | Across China |

Note:

* *represents the participants who participated in the pilot study.*

** *shows the size of interior design personnel/total company size.*

*** *indicates the participants who possess the years of experience involved in interior design projects till the time that the interviews took place.*

Table 4-3: Overview of participants from the interior designer group

4.4.5. Ethical considerations

Prior to the arrangement for in-depth interviews, authorisation for conducting the interviews was gained from chosen participants in both the pilot and the main study. With the consideration that all interviews were going to be conducted in the participants' first language – Chinese (*Mandarin*), all informative documents for the invitation for interviews were prepared in both research language and data obtaining language; in this case this was English and (*Simplified*) Chinese. Consent forms along with a copy of guide lines and the confidentiality of the use of the gathered data were sent to chosen candidates in advance, in order to provide significant time for potential candidates to make enquiries, should any arise. A bi-lingual document that consists of the explanation of the research purpose was also attached to the information package for all potential candidates. Interview arrangements were then set after receiving confirmation of participation from all chosen candidates.

Due to the limitation of articulating the full meaning from prepared English interview schedules even though they were carefully translated into Chinese, further procedures were taken that included the addition of extra Chinese footnotes put alongside the translated interview schedules to form the complete essence of the original English meanings. Hence, as a further precaution to avoid lost-in-translation, both original and translated versions of the interview schedules were put side-by-side so as to allow the researcher to gain immediate access when cross referencing was needed during the interviews.

In considering the unique relationship between the researcher and the participants, the choice of interview venue became essential. The majority of the interviews, therefore, were held in a third party facility that offered a neutral, calm and quiet environment with maximum privacy. These in-depth interviews were conducted and lasted from half

to one hour and a quarter, focussing on individual's reflections on client-designer interactive dynamics during the design process. Finally, all participants were informed that the interviews were going to be digitally sound recorded and consents were obtained before interviews were accomplished.

4.5. Data analysis

A primary objective of the evaluation was to identify the tendency of any hidden mechanism which could arise during the interior design process. General inductive approaches were implemented in the analysis process to explore in-depth client-designer perceptions of an interior design service and the critical factor to make a client perceive a quality design service. The purposes underlying the development of the general inductive analysis can be found as follows:

- *to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief summary format;*
- *to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research); and*
- *to develop a model about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data.*

(Thomas, 2006, p238)

The data analysis process was designed and divided into two sections: 1) initial data analysis was carried out by using the language of the gathered data - Chinese. 2) Once the raw data were categorised, they were translated into English for further analysis. In the second part of the analysis process, in order to minimise any data being lost-in-translation towards the whole analysis process, on-going cross referencing between categorised data in both languages was carried out. An overview of this inductive coding process is shown in Table 4-4. Detailed procedures are described as follows.

The Inductive Coding Process

| Initial reading of transcripts | Identify specific text segments related to objectives | Label the segments of text to create categories | Reduce overlap and redundancy among the categories | Create a model incorporating most important categories |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| 4 sets of transcripts | Many segments of text from each transcripts | Segments were labelled under interview questions (38 categories) | 17 categories | 5 categories |
| Analysis in Chinese | Analysis in Chinese | Analysis in Chinese | Analysis in Chinese then translated in English | Analysis in English, cross-reference with Chinese data |

Table 4-4: The inductive coding process - adapted from: Thomas (2006, p242, table 2)

4.5.1. Preparation of raw data

In the general data analysis procedure, there were two preliminary steps in preparing the raw data: 1) transcribing the interview recordings, and 2) validating the transcripts.

Firstly, digital records of interviews were transcribed into the language being conducted in the interview – spoken language Chinese (*Mandarin*) was transcribed into writing – *Simplified Chinese*. Then each individual transcript and its relevant digital record of the interview were sent to the relevant participant for consent.

After participants' confirmation on the transcripts was received, each transcript was re-arranged under and configured into a template based on the interview questions in the interview schedules, before re-submitting to the relevant participant to validate whether the contents of the template aligned with their opinions while the interview took place.

These general procedures were set up to safe-guard the preliminary data as accurate, thus to minimize any exploitation before translation procedures could take place. After receiving consents from all participants, these prepared raw data were ready for further analysis procedures.

Creation of categories

After receiving confirmation of the accuracy from the interviewees, the analysis commenced with a close reading of the text. Initial categories were created from actual phrases or meanings in specific text segments under the interview questions. To ensure these categorised data were fully representing the original points of view, the categorised data were sent to the relevant participants for comments and confirmation. These categories, then, were condensed by reducing overlaps and redundancies among them.

4.5.2. Pilot study

In the pilot study, two levels of the coding system were applied to extract findings from the interview transcripts. The interview questions were used as the initial framework to extract themes from the raw data, sorted under a coded template, which was based on research questions and the theoretical framework; consisted of five main themes: *progression in design perception, roles and power, result and compromise, progressive relationship, and interactive dynamics.*

Original quotations were extracted across four participants and were sorted and coded under the thematic framework. Then these original quotations were condensed into short phrases and were compared across similar phrases from all participants to form combined condensed categories under the above five main themes. Until this point, all analysis was conducted in *Simplified Chinese*.

These confirmed data were combined and formed into 17 condensed categories under continuing revision and refinement until key themes emerged. It was important that the use of language of the analysis remained in Chinese at this stage which maintained the consistency towards the overall essence of the gathered information. Once cross referencing and checking between the condensed categories and the prepared transcripts was performed, the coded condensed categories were then translated into *English* for further analysis.

Pilot study – analysis and results

The aim of the pilot study was to test the research methods in preparing for the main study. In-depth interviews were conducted in collecting data for the research objectives. Raw data was gathered, then were consolidate and filtered by an initial deduction approach that themes were extracted and coded for initial analysis process.

A general inductive analysis approach was used to condense and establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data. The quantity of four interviews is still considered to be insufficient to generate significant evidence in general at this stage but, the generated evidence was significant enough to indicate and suggest amendment was needed – additional interview questions were needed to cover additional areas of investigation that appeared insignificant in the interview schedule of the pilot study. Hence, the amended interview schedule was then used in the further eight interviews in the main study in order to gain a significant representation from both the clients and the designers.

The pilot study provided the opportunities to excise data gathering and analysis skills in a scaled-down research process; useful experience in 1) preparing the data collection process, 2) utilising different resources and techniques for the data analysis process, and 3) realising the actual time consumed. The pilot study provided satisfactory results of the appropriateness of the research method used and refinement of the interview schedule was needed to cover additional areas of investigation that appeared to be insignificant in the pilot study. Finally, findings in the pilot study would be consolidated along with the findings from the main study in the further analysis process.

4.5.3. Main study

The main in-depth interviews with four interior design clients and with four interior designers were conducted from February to March 2016. Two levels of coding system were applied to extract findings from the interview transcripts. The revised interview questions that were used in the main study were used as the initial framework to extract themes and categories from the raw data – all *twelve* interviews.

In comparison to the pilot analysis with only four interviews, the implementations of the coded template that was used in the pilot study analysis were challenged by trying to accommodate the vast amount of data that were generated from the raw data without the consideration of ditching valuable data. Therefore, the initial data categorising process in the main study was revised and conducted under two main sections – Clients' section and Designers' section.

All twelve in-depth interviews were transcribed, consolidated and filtered by an initial deduction approach; original quotations were extracted and then coded to form general categories under twelve interview questions as the initial analysis framework. To minimise any meaning being lost in translation, the sorting and coding process were conducted in Chinese. General categories were extracted once more to form condensed categories, which were then sorted under a colour coded template, which was based on research questions and in separated groups as previously defined.

It was important that the use of language of the analysis of both sections remained in Chinese at this stage which maintained the consistency towards the overall essence of the gathered information. Once cross referencing and checking between the condensed categories and the prepared transcripts were performed, the coded condensed categories were then translated into *English* to form two groups of

findings tables. The combine analysis was then conducted to relate and compare these two groups of findings in order to form a result in reflection to the set aims and the above analysing process.

4.5.4. Links between literature and findings

There were five main themes which emerged from the data elicited during the in-depth interviews with clients and interior designers. These five themes were presented based on the sequence of importance in influences and also in their relationship to each other. The themes are: *progression in design perception*, *interactive dynamics*, *power relations*, *client-designer relationships* and *features in the design process*. In addition to the main themes two of the themes have sub themes. There are four sub-themes under the theme of *client-designer relationships* and two sub-themes under the theme of *features in the design process*.

These themes were then revised in the context of the literature, where the relationship between the themes identified from the data and the themes identified from the literature will be compared and discussed.

First, the emerged themes in the literature were revisited in the context of the findings, and the findings presented in Chapter 5 were then set in the context of the literature. Three main themes relevant to this study were drawn from Chapter 3 – Literature review: *situated influences*, *lack of skilled professionals* and the *industry's expectations*. These were considered in the context of the findings.

Second, the data from the five themes from the findings were then presented from description into discussion, in order to identify patterns and inter-related influences between data, searching for coherence, consistency and inconsistency.

Third, the relationship of the identified themes and broad research questions as emerging from the literature and the data will be examined.

Following the identification of links between the data from the findings and the identified themes from the literature, a framework for interior designer training, and 'model' skills for interior designers were identified. An application of the framework and its 'model' skills, how these could be used in practice, and how these could be developed through further research were presented at the end.

4.5.5. Limitation

In referring to 4.4.1 Sampling, in order to achieve a consistency of the collected data, samples were restricted to a specific group of designers and clients. This procedure can be justified by the applied methodological approach and the areas of investigation as discussed in 错误!未找到引用源。 . However, this has sacrificed the findings by limited representativeness within a geographical perspective and varieties of the business nature, while compared to quantification methods.

Hence, an additional category from the education sector could also contribute to further insights in current development in interior design education in China. However, this has exceeded the scope of work for this study due to the limited time frame.

Further limitations will be discussed in the summarizing conclusion at the end of this thesis.

4.6. Chapter 4 summary

In this chapter, the first section has illustrated: 1) How a critical realist philosophy was adopted in this study, in section 4.1; 2) a phenomenological design was used to align with the particular sense of exploration in this study; and 3) a semi-structured in-depth interview was chosen as the data gathering method in this study.

The second section illustrated the implementation of the semi-structured in-depth interview data collection method and its procedures. Potential participants were selected under a targeted representative category from the interior design market and industry; a purposive sampling procedure was applied under two participant groups: designer group and client group. Twelve participants with equal numbers from both groups participated in in-depth interviews.

General inductive approaches were implemented in the analysis process to explore in-depth client-designer perceptions of an interior design process, client-design relations and the critical factor towards designer's expectations. The analysis procedure initiated with the transcription of the interviews and raw data were extracted and condensed into coded categories and findings tables for analysis and comparison. Attention was given to the procedures of when translation took place in order to maintain the consistency towards the overall essence of the gathered information. Hence, the overall research data collection and analysis process were summarized along with the links between literature and findings.

The next chapter gives an account of the findings and analysis of the proposed research design.

5. Findings

This chapter presents the five main themes which emerged from the data elicited during the in-depth interviews with clients and interior designers. These five themes are presented based on the sequence of importance in influences and also in their relationship to each other. The themes are: *progression in design perception*, *interactive dynamics*, *power relations*, *client-designer relationships* and *features in the design process*. In addition to the main themes two of the themes have sub themes. There are four sub-themes under the theme of *client-designer relationships* and two sub-themes under the themes of *features in the design process*. The inter-relationships of these five main themes are depicted in Diagram 5-1, below.

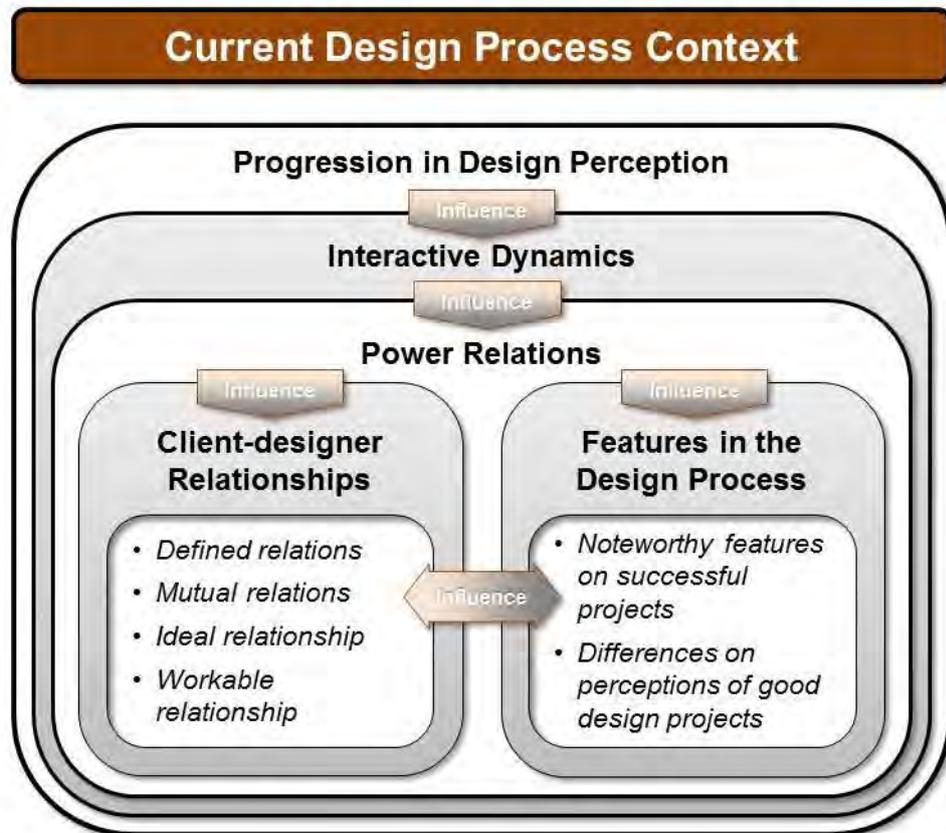


Diagram 5-1: Themes and sub-themes

5.1. Theme one: Progression in design perception

In this section, the changes of design perception within the interior design industry are presented through the findings that emerge from the participants' perceptions during the interviews. The overall interior design environment has progressed and is reflected in *objective* and *subjective* perspectives on both clients' and designers' perceptions.

Figure 5-1 below depicts both perspectives. The *objective perspectives* of the progression in the interior design environment are interconnected by the improvement in quality of life and how this influences the design awareness of interior design clients. On the other hand, the *subjective perspectives* of the progression in the interior design environment are associated with the refinement in design operations and work processes in association with the progression of local designers' abilities.



Figure 5-1: Theme One – Progression in design perceptions

5.1.1.1. Objective perspectives of the progression in interior design environment

Perceptions, the design awareness of the general public has improved objectively due to the improvement in quality of life (Participants C₁ & D₂). These changes are also associated with the progressed design awareness of interior design clients, as stated by participant D₂, *“Over the past decade, I think the change is that the design awareness of the general public has improved. Nowadays, many clients are still undergoing the changing of the perception process. An overall transformation [in perception] allows them to be able to accept the so-called professionals’ suggestions”*. In fact, according to the findings, clients have become more open-minded, pro-active and knowledgeable as a result of their improved living standards. Examples are comments in the following quotations:

“Many clients do not limit themselves to be in the country but travel abroad to gain and bring back knowledge and experience and to share with designers. Therefore, not only those clients have elevated their design awareness, but also encourage the designers, as you know not all designers can travel abroad. In fact, many of them cannot travel abroad.”

Participant D₂

“... in the past, they stayed silent when approaching something that they don’t know; maybe say a little then let the designer to carry on ... Nowadays, most of the clients have unique characters that designers need to cater and work for according to their ideas.”

“Nowadays clients are more knowledgeable. They will prepare and research via the internet to get relative information in advance, to provide convenience in our communication. They will provide a stack of information of what they want and discuss with the designers in order to speed up the design process.”

Participant D₃

5.1.2. Subjective perspectives of the progression in interior design environment

The improvement in the economy and living standards, changes and influences both the interior design operations and work processes, which in turn contributes towards the progression in the interior design environment. One of the participants described these relations as follows:

“Over the past 9 years of my interior design project involvement, I think the major change should be the design meticulous... it seems to me that the Chinese interior designs were basically copies or imitations of western interior design... In 2004, both economic strength and concepts of design were just starting... a relatively short cognition period, domestic interior designs were started with imitating foreign designs... in considering the concepts of interior design, owners mainly focus on functions... as long as they met the basic requirements... slowly our design level is catching up with foreign designers... with the improvement of the design level, new equipment and materials used has reached a higher standard... to those that may be needed comprehensive management has been strengthened towards the design requirement... these changes can be traced from the hand-over standard of properties as a start. ”

Participant C₁

In addition, the improvement in the interior design environment changed the way of cooperation between the client and the designer, and increased the demand of a higher standard in the quality of workmanship, subjectively (Participants C₁, C₅, C₆ & D₅). Examples of this area are presented in the following quotations taken from the interviews:

“The improvement of life leads to the changes of design concepts, including changes the way in cooperating with the designer.”

Participant C₅

“The design progress of each project has undergone the changes from being coarsen to refine.”

Participant C₆

“It could be the accumulation of experience, in particular in the design development area; there were many techniques and workmanship that were unable to be achieved in the past but have now become achievable.”

Participant D₅

Finally, the domestic designers’ ability has improved as a result of the progression in the interior design industry, which also reduces the performance gap between foreign and domestic designers. The examples of comment are as shown as follows:

“The overall interior design industry has progressed; the requirement in control complexity has increased. For those designs that require an integrated management have strengthen. The designers’ abilities elevated constantly.”

Participant C₁

“In recent years, domestic designers have progressed significantly. In the sense of ideas and concepts, the gap between foreign and domestic designers has been reduced.”

Participant D₄

5.1.3. Summary

The overall interior design environment has progressed, which is reflected by the *objective* and *subjective* perspectives on both clients' and designers' views this can be summarised as

- The progression of the interior design environment in China is highly related to the improvement of the economy and the changes in perception of living standards.
- With the improvement of wealth and progressive accessibility to foreign sources, the public gained knowledge on how to improve their living standards.
- The sources of this accessibility came from the following areas:
 - travelling abroad became easier,
 - the popularity of World Wide Web,
 - accessibility to foreign media, and
 - new technology and materials are easier to access.

The changes of perception of living standards have transformed the public from initially being satisfied on fulfilling basic requirements or functions, to aiming towards a higher standard of living. These changes in perception also transformed into higher expectations on interior designers due to the demand of a higher standard of comprehensive management towards the design requirement. The overall domestic designers' ability has improved as a result of the progression in the interior design industry, which also reduces the performance gap between foreign and domestic designers. As a result, the improvement in the interior design environment changes the way of cooperation between the client and the designer during the design process. The aspects of how these changes in client-designer cooperation influence the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer during the design process will be presented below in section 5.2 Theme two: Interactive dynamics.

5.2. Theme two: Interactive dynamics

In this section, the findings present both positive and negative impacts on the design process and the mutual perceptions on how the impact of interactive dynamics between the client and the designer could be influenced during the design process and the result.

5.2.1. Positive impacts from interactive dynamics during the design process

Remembering that the interviews were conducted with the participants in their native language some explanation is required in relation to how the material translates.

The phrase interactive dynamics – some participants referred it to *interaction* instead; in Chinese translation they are the same in Chinese characters as interaction. Perceptions, interactive dynamics between the client and the designer can improve the client-designer relationship and also improve an individual's understanding of the project in the design process that includes ice-breaking, improving understanding, trust and knowledge (Participants C₃, C₅, D₁, D₂ & D₄). The examples of this include

"It is definitely a bonus to a project with the client-designer interaction. Interaction means both parties will have a deeper understanding of the project. For example, what I can see is a bare shell property in the beginning of the project. When I received the design drawings, as a client, I still only see a set of drawings. However, more elements could be found after communicating with each other; therefore it will definitely be beneficial to the project."

Participant C₅

"Interaction is very helpful. I can understand what kind of person that the client is and what he likes by interaction. Sometimes when the designer's knowledge is insufficient in comparison to the client, the designer's knowledge will be improved via interaction with the client."

Participant D₂

"I think the majority of the development from interaction turns out to be positive as interaction could improve our trust and understanding. Different ideas can be share and made understood via interaction. As long as there isn't any corruption element involved, I don't think increase in communication could bring negative effect, it should be a positive to a project."

Participant D₄

There are also positive impacts that can enhance the design process as each interaction can ‘*bring improvement towards the ultimate design result*’ (Participant D₃). Design inspirations can also be generated through interaction (Participants D₁ & D₅). Not only can interactive dynamics between the client and designer secure the design process on the right track (Participant C₁) but also ensure problems can be solved in time (Participant C₄). As a result, a progressive design process can be secured (Participant C₆). In other words, the ultimate design result can be as near as what the client requested with interactive dynamics between the client and designer during the design process (Participants C₁, C₂, C₄ & D₃), therefore, ‘*a good design that both parties are satisfied with*’ (Participant C₂).

In addition, according to the designer group, interactive dynamics between the client and designer can ‘*generate additional values*’ (Participant D₁) during the design process; not only can the designer ‘*get to know what the client wants*’ (Participant D₃), but the designer can also have opportunities to demonstrate his/her communication and management skills during the design process (Participants D₂ & D₆).

5.2.2. Negative impacts from interactive dynamics during the design process

In relation to interactive dynamics between the client and designer during the design process, two main themes emerged in referring to negative impacts from these interactive dynamics; which can be categorised under *process orientation* and *individual conduct*.

Participants commented that over-active interactive dynamics between the client and the designer during the design process could diminish clear design direction (Participant C₁) and eliminate the designer’s enthusiasm (Participants C₄, C₅ & C₆). Besides, mutual misunderstanding could take place caused by ‘*homophones*’ (Participant

D₁) and ineffective communication performed by the designer during the design process (Participant D₂). These cause serious impacts on the design process. The examples of comment are shown as follows:

“Non-stop interaction could waste time. Various ideas can be generated through interaction which leads to a matter of ‘choices’. ‘Choices’ can easily distort the original thoughts that eventually lead to no idea.”

Participant C₁

“Increasing communication could lead to numerous changes; as a result this could eliminate the designer’s enthusiasm.”

Participant C₄

“Sometimes the developer forces the designer to work under an emotional hijack manner, “if your design cannot express the design direction that I gave you, I will terminate the contract”. Developers sometimes can be simple but crude. Therefore these manners affect the designer’s emotion. Because both parties should be in an equal status in this cooperation relationship with one whom pays and the other offers the labour. This developer’s strong position can destroy the designer’s enthusiasm in the design task. Then the designer will give up his will and follow everything the developer asked for. At that time, the design product will end up losing its spirit and become a design without any connotation”

Participant C₅

“Due to the Chinese language is very rich, the client might think that you did wrong caused by a slight change of tone. Sometimes misunderstanding could be caused by “Polyphone”. Besides, the designer might try to flatter the client by taking about his hobby. But the client couldn’t care less which turns flattery into antipathy.”

Participant D₁

“During the design and construction process, if the designer cannot detach himself, being impatient or over with-held his personal opinions, it will cause misunderstanding easily; without allowing the client to know your design purposes or reasons clearly and effectively, the client will be misled and may misunderstand that you did this for your own benefits.”

Participant D₂

Other negative impacts are also identified in relation to personal conduct. For instance, , during the interaction between the client and the designer, non-professional comments made by clients tend to distract the designer's work procedure and cause serious disruption towards the design progress (Participant D₅), as shown below.

"Some non-professionals (clients) will raise some weird comments that might over-turn the overall design concept and the whole design needs to be re-done. In particular after confirmation of the layout plan and design development work, they came up with a new idea that over-turns the original layout. Once the layout was forced to change, everything we've done is ruined and causes delay in the overall schedule seriously."

Participant D₅

Furthermore, unlawful personal-interests occurring during the design process could seriously damage the client-designer relationship and the final design result (Participant D₄).

Finally, the negative impacts from the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer, third party issues, such as senior director's personal preferences and beliefs are identified in causing unexpected conflicts and interferences towards the design process (Participant D₃), as shown below.

"There are lots of negative effects due to each director's preferences being different. Sometimes they insisted to put something to display which is totally out of place and made us headache. In addition, many clients believe in 'Fengshui'. Lots of restrictions and contradictions within the interior space, cost a fortune to build but are not appealing. We can only respect this as individual belief."

Participant D₃

5.2.3. Summary

By integrating participants' perception in the findings, interactive dynamics between the client and the designer can improve the client-designer relationship, but also improve individual's understanding of the project in the design process which in turn can enhance each other's trust and knowledge. Besides, interactive dynamics can enhance the design process that leads to improvement towards the ultimate design result. As a result, the ultimate design result can be as near as what the client requested.

Other positive impacts emerged from the perceptions of the designer group and can be identified as: 1) interactive dynamics can generate additional values during the design process and 2) provide opportunities for the designer to demonstrate personal strengths during the design process.

However, overactive interaction could diminish clear design direction and eliminate the designer's enthusiasm over the design process. Third party issues also cause negativity towards the design process that includes senior director's personal preferences and beliefs. Other negative impacts were found that involved client's non-professional comments and unlawful personal interests during the design process. The above integrated participants' perceptions are depicted in Figure 5-2: Perceptions on interactive dynamics between client and designer during design process.

Finally, during the client-designer interaction, certain power relations issues were reflected in participants' comments that provoke different hidden mechanisms towards client-design relationship. The details of these power relations and their relationship will be discussed next.

| Perceptions on interactive dynamics between client and designer during design process | | |
|---|--|---|
| Clients' perceptions | Mutual perceptions | Designers' perceptions |
| <p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diminish clear design direction • eliminate designer's enthusiasm | <p>Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The end result can be as near as what the client requested (get to know what the client wants) • Improve understanding, trust and knowledge client-designer relationship (ice-breaker) • Leads to an improvement in project development | <p>Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate additional values • Demonstrate personal strength to client <p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual misunderstanding (polyphone, ways of expression) • Individual conduct – non-professional comments (client) and unlawful personal interests' involvement. • Third party issues – big boss personal preferences and beliefs. |

Figure 5-2: Perceptions on interactive dynamics between client and designer during design process

5.3. Theme three: Power relations

Perceptions on power relations within the client-designer relationship, various themes of hidden mechanisms have emerged in relation to the power distribution during the design process. These identified themes have been categorized into four models of power relations: *hierarchy position*, *reverse power transition*, *merging position*, and *homogeneous position*, which will be presented in this section.

5.3.1. Hierarchy position

During the design process, a pre-set mentality that puts the client in a higher power position than the designer was commonly found in the data relating to both clients' and designers' perceptions on the client-designer relationship. The clients' group participants addressed this pre-set mentality as, "*with one side who pays and the other labour*" (Participants C₄, C₅ & C₆). In the designers' group, this power relation was portrayed as a buyer and seller tradition (Participants D₂, D₃ & D₄). This mentality fixation forms a *hierarchy position* within the client-designer relation. The power positions of the client and the designer maintained in a steady and parallel relationship where clients possessed power over the designers throughout the entire design process. Examples of such views are presented below:

"Sometimes the developer forces the designer to work under an emotional hijack manner, 'if your design cannot express the design direction that I gave you, I will terminate the contract'. Developers sometimes can be simple but crude."

Participant C₅

"This is the reason why I changed my work from designer to work in the client side. Between the 90's and 2000, clients had the final say (were in a strong position) and forced designers to accept whatever the decisions were."

Participant C₆

“The majority of clients will still hold the ‘right to speak’ than the designers do. It is almost a definite due to the client hires the designer to design; in particular there are different approaches from the clients towards overseas designers and local designers. Clients usually behave stronger in position towards local designers, and the power of ‘right to speak’ is stronger. Designers will be required to listen to the clients and turn their ideas into reality; this kind of unbalanced weight in power is very obvious.”

Participant D₄

In addition, geographical differences in the cultural aspects also played a significant role within this mentality fixation of a *hierarchy position*. As one of the participants commented, *“Through my experience, I think designers received more respect from clients in the southern region, particularly clients tend to trust designers and respect them. In contrast, in the northern region this is totally opposite. In the northern region clients are behaving like god, they believe everything should be under their command as they are the one who paid the bill.”* (Participant D₅).

5.3.2. Reverse power transition

In relation to the power relations, some participants in the clients' group commented that a *reverse power transition* takes place during the design process, where the power positions of the client and the designer eventually exchanged and reversed from the beginning to the end of the design process.

Designers were offered more power to develop the creative design process while the client took a coordinator role in the initial stage of the design process (Participants C₁, C₂, C₃ & C₅). However, when the client's ultimate goal is threatened during the design process, the transition of power will then be triggered; the client would act as a project executor instead of the initial role as a coordinator and the client's power position will be held above that of the designer. Such transition can be triggered at any time depending on the stability of the design progress, which includes the time schedule, the overall budget, the profits and the ability of the project designer (Participants C₂, C₃ & C₅). The examples of such views are presented below.

"Client's role as a coordinator to provide sufficient materials for the designer to commence the design process... [client] also has to coordinate varied parties such as architect, structural engineer and builders to support the designer's need or ideas."

Participant C₁

"client is service provider and designer is being served... designer could have peace of mind and be able to concentrate in the design work only if the client has prepared and completed all pre-project work so that designer will not be distracted by some other additional services. When encountering excellent designers, clients would usually accept what they presented and would strive for what they requested from the company accordingly, in response and respect of their design ability. However, some designers are 'smuggled goods' with poor design level and completely inexperienced, a compulsory full control would be needed."

Participant C₂

5.3.3. Merging position

In the findings, some participants in the designers' group commented that a *merging position* occurred during the design process, where the hierarchy power position between the client and the designer shifted, then merged to the same level during the design process.

This *merging position* shifts and tilts the power distribution between the client and the designer caused by the changes of the clients' mentality. These changes of the clients' mentality are categorised into two areas: the progression of design awareness over the years (Participants D₂) and the progression in the clients' understanding of the design process (Participants D₃ & D₄). The examples of evidence are shown as follows:

"In the past two decades, both the qualities of designers and clients have changed.

When I graduated...general public did have very strong subjective minds; they do not easily accept designers' suggestions. Almost 20 years passed, many clients have changed their perceptions. They become more acceptances towards designers' suggestions."

Participant D₂

"In the initial stage, client is still in a strong power position. However, by going through communication and interaction, the designer and client have reach a mutual understanding, then this power level will eventually shift towards designer slowly by understanding process. On the other hand, after a period of communication process, the client could realize that you are really concentrating to work for him in the project then the power level will shift a bit."

Participant D₄

5.3.4. Homogeneous position

In the findings of the perceptions of the power relation, participants commented on a *homogeneous position* during the design process, where the power positions of the client and the designer remained at the same level throughout the whole design process.

Interestingly, 50% of the participants commented that the power distribution between the client and the designer are “*absolutely balanced*” (Participant C₃). The power relation between clients and designers has progressed over time; the *hierarchy position* has been replaced by a *homogeneous position* (Participant C₅ and C₆). The examples below showed this progression.

“This power relationship changed from the hierarchy position where the client held power over the designer in the past, and has now changed into a balanced power position. It is because when they are equal, then they can communicate; when there is communication then work can be done better.”

Participant C₅

“Personally, I believe client and designer are equal; I offer my service to you and you are not any higher than me. I am not lower than you and also not higher than you. We are equal under mutual communication, exchange comments and the goal is to complete the project, and achieve a satisfying effect as well as the designer’s expectation. These are the things that the designer would like to have, that my design can satisfy the client. I think it is down to a profitable relationship which relies on work to work and person to person.”

Participant D₅

5.3.5. Summary

By integrating participants' perceptions in the findings, *four* styles of power relation positions were identified from the themes. These power positions are:

- *Hierarchy position* – the power positions of the client and the designer maintained in a steady and parallel relationship where clients possessed power over the designers throughout the entire design process.
- *Reverse power transition* – where the power positions of the client and the designer eventually exchange and reverse the beginning to the end of the design process. Such transition can be triggered at any time depending on the stability of the design progress.
- *Merging position* – where the hierarchy power position between the client and the designer shifted, then merged to be the same level during the design process.
- *Homogeneous position* – where the power positions of the client and the designer remained at the same level throughout the whole design process.

These four styles of power positions can still be found co-existing within the interior design industry in China. However, there are also findings that show the transitions of power relations from a hierarchy to a homogenous position in progression. This trend of progression is in relation to the progression in design awareness and knowledge among clients, geographical differences in the cultural aspects, and the progression in the overall design environment. An overview of these four models of the clients' and the designers' perception of roles and power distribution, and their progression are shown in Diagram 5-2: Four styles of power relations positions.

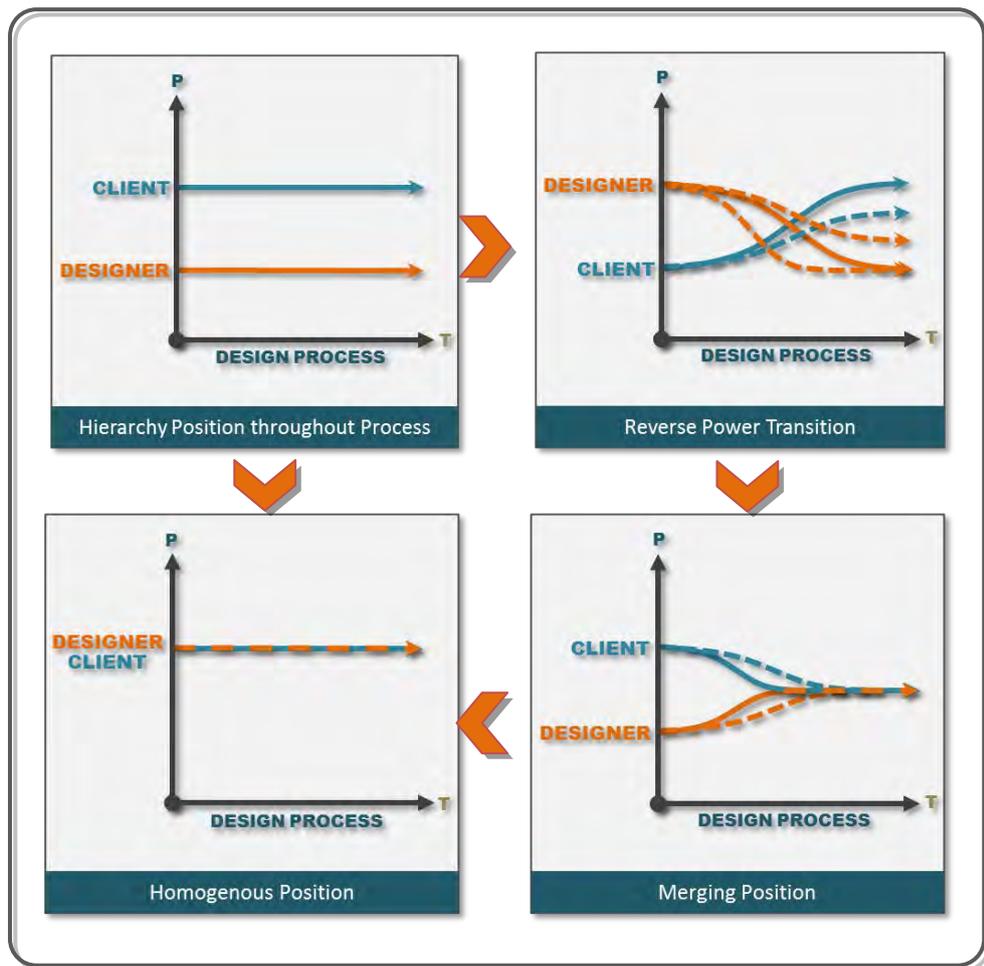


Diagram 5-2: Four styles of power relations positions

Finally, these hidden power relations appear to continuously influence both the client-designer relationship and the design process. Not only should these influences shape various models of relations among the client-designer relationships, but also contour how participants perceive their differences during the design progress. The details of how participants perceive the necessary designer skills to accomplish these influences towards client-designer relations and design process are illustrated in the next two sections.

5.4. Theme four: Client-designer relationship

In this section, the participants' perceptions on the four styles of relations among the current client-designer relationships, and the importance of necessary designer skills in synchronising with these relations are presented. These *four* styles of relations are *defined relations*, *mutual relations*, *ideal relations*, and *workable relations*, as shown in Figure 5-3: Four sub-themes of clients' and designers' perceptions on client-designer relationships. *Fourteen* designer's skills emerged from these four sub-themes in relation to the client-designer relationship. Among these designer's skills, *seven* of them emerged from clients' and designers' mutual perceptions. Together, these form the designer's a proposed conceptual 'model' skills in client-designer relationships.

| Four sub-themes of clients' and designers' perceptions on client-designer relationships |
|---|
| <i>Defined relations</i> |
| <i>Mutual relations</i> |
| <i>Ideal relations</i> |
| <i>Workable relations</i> |

Figure 5-3: Four sub-themes of clients' and designers' perceptions on client-designer relationships

5.4.1. Defined relations

In the findings of the participants' perceptions on *describe* relations among client-designer relationships, clients and designers were clearly evident on the individual's role that is based on "*supply and demand of needs*" (Participants C₁ & C₃) and/or "*serve and being served*" (Participants D₂ & D₅). Among these perceptions, there were two sub-themes that emerged from the participants' views on the roles of the designer: '*all round worker*' and '*guide*'.

In the designer's role as an '*all round worker*', participants believed the designer should have a thorough understanding of different tasks and possess a variety of professional knowledge in design work (Participants D₁, D₂ & D₄). In particular, transferable skills such as *coordination*, *management* and *communication* are essential to the designer's role. The examples of evidence are shown as follows:

"There are many different kinds of tasks in the interior designer's work, such as documentation, construction drawings, computer rendering and site coordination work. As a leader, externally, you need to face the client, attend meetings and be responsible for site coordination work. Internally, you are responsible for design management, coordinating and guiding assistants to complete the work on time whether it may be good or not in your management."

Participant D₂

"First of all, the design should fulfil the client's facility requirement, and then will be environment and ergonomics. In addition, also need to consider all these facilities to fulfil the national regulations, then to persuade the client. Sell your idea to client through communication."

Participant D₄

The designer's role as a '*guide*', was described by the participants who believed that the designer should take a '*leading role*' in the design process and be a '*good observer*', who can provide guidance to the client during the design process (Participants D₂, D₃, D₅ & D₆). Personal traits such as *confidence* and people skills such as *observation* and *empathy* are essential to the designer taking a leading role in the client-designer relationship during the design process. In particular, transferable skills

such as *leadership* and *communication* were most mentioned by the participants. The examples of comment are shown as follows:

“Designers should possess a sensitive observation ability; the ability that when you know your design direction might cause confusion to your client, you need to re-direct yourself to capture what the client wants. You will give your client a rough direction, and lead them to the area that you want them to understand. If you keep following where the client leads you to then you will be lost. They can only give you a rough idea and you need to integrate and analyse. Then you give them what you think they are looking for; the idea you think you have reached to the client’s expectation.”

Participant D₃

“The designer should be confident, bright and can hold a moderate conversation. Then the designer can slowly lead the client. Everything starts with leading (guiding).”

Participant D₆

In a broader sense, designers create their own work that needs to be close to the clients’ ideas. In fact, ideas were linked and interconnected from clients and designers when communication took place. In detail, not only should it satisfy to be my work, but also satisfy client’s requirements, and this is crucial.”

Participant D₆

In summary, clients and designers were clearly defined on the individual’s role under these *defined* relations. Two sub-themes that have emerged from the participants’ views on the roles of the designer are ‘*all round worker*’ and ‘*guide*’. Seven essentials designer skills emerged from these perceptions which are categorised under personal traits, people and transferable skills. These skills are *confidence, empathy, observation, communication, coordination, leadership* and *management*.

5.4.2. Mutual relations

In the findings of the participants' perceptions on *mutual* relations, the majority of participants' comments were focused on the characteristics of the client-designer relationship during the design process rather than on their roles. In contrast to *defined* relations, individual positions were considered less important or even treated as equal as discovered in the findings.

According to the findings, this mutual relationship is built on *nine* characteristics, which are *trust, respect, help, cooperation, friendship, understanding, empathy, communication* and *being complementary to each other* (Participants C₂, C₄, C₅, C₆, D₃, D₄ & D₆). In particular, *communication* was the key mutual characteristic identified from both the clients' and the designers' perceptions. The examples of evidence are shown as follows:

"With regards to the area of interior design, I reckon the most important part is that there is communication between the client and the designer. Communication is very important and gets to know what the client wants. Both sides should have what they need... I believe someone who can be communicated with relies on "understanding", like a partner. It may also evolve into friendship."

Participant C₅

"Firstly, I think there should be mutual trust between client and designer, and should have mutual respect towards each other. Trying to be in each other's position to gain understanding of things, such as budget control and what expected feelings are to the project. These things need to go through communication, non-stop exchange communication."

Participant D₃

In summary, there is a belief among the participants that people skills are essential for a designer to maintain a positive mutual relationship with the client during the design process, and these skills are: *trust, respect, understanding, cooperation, empathy and communication*.

5.4.3. Ideal relations

Unlike the two relations mentioned previously, an ideal client-designer relationship is constructed on the participants' reflections on their empirical experience. These reflections are comprised of their personal experience on and concluded from the progression in design perception, interactive dynamics and various power relations as lies within.

The participants' perceptions on client-designer relationship, *mutual respect* (Participants C₁, D₂, D₃, D₅ & D₆) and *trust* (Participants C₁, C₂, C₅, D₁, D₃, D₄ & D₅) are identified as the two main elements in an ideal client-designer relationship. One of the participant stated, "*Mutual respect - a collision between one's thoughts and ideas to the other; because each people's idea is not the same, then how does designer respect the client and put oneself into the idea to let client to accept you at the same time? It is a matter of skill; how to handle this relationship*" (Participants D₂). Another participant stated that, "*I believe the ideal client-designer relationship is based on trust. When I hand over the space to the designer it was a blank sheet... we need to put in lots of money for a project to complete, therefore "trust" is vital*" (Participants C₅).

Other elements that were identified from the findings also contributed to an ideal client-designer relationship, which are *dedication* (Participants D₁), *leadership* (Participants C₂), *friendship* (Participants D₂ & D₆), *understanding and recognition* (Participants D₄ & D₅), and *communication* (Participant D₄).

In addition, other criterions can be made to enhance the client-designer relationship: "*designers should be able to guide and direct clients during the design process*" (Participant C₃), and "*client's decision making should be more design orientated*" (Participant C₆).

In summary, personal traits and people skills are essential for designers to achieve and form an ideal client-designer relationship during the design process, and these skills are: *trust, respect, understanding, dedication, cooperation* and *empathy*. Transferable skills such as *leadership and communication* are also commented as essential to the designer towards an ideal client-designer relationship. Above all, trust and respect are the most essential.

5.4.4. Workable relations

Comparable to the above formations of the ideal client-designer relationship, a workable client-designer relationship is based on the participants' experience associating with the progression in design perception, interactive dynamics and various power relations, as opposed to being a projection from participants' empirical experience as shown in the ideal relations. These perceptions were concluded from their personal experience. Therefore, different emphases on designer skills are identified from participants in the clients and designer groups.

A prominent notation emerges from the client group participants' perception that "*compromise*" was considered to be important in a workable client-designer relationship (Participants C₃, C₄, C₅ & C₆).

Examples are shown as follows:

"The budget is set and we can only look for designer company under this budget. But my boss hopes to pay the lowest and get the best. The reality is you get what you pay for and we can't expect more from what we can get from the design company, and don't even attempt they can produce something that exceeds what can be expected. Under the circumstances only can accept and to persuade the boss to accept it, a form of compromise could be."

Participant C₄

"A workable client-designer relationship I believe a form of compromise would be needed under the process of trust, where the main direction and principle remain unchanged."

Participant C₅

“There are so many elements could discount what have planned, such as time schedule and budget. If the designer has to take everything on board we can only get 40% of what can be achieved. Therefore, the 20% of the differences is what we, as a client and designer, have to work together to persuade the company and different parties, in order to gain this 20% at the end.”

Participant C₆

Interestingly, in the designers group, *personal qualities* and *preferences of approach* are the two foundations that make a workable client-designer relationship. For *personal qualities*, designers should have ‘*wisdom*’ and be ‘*convincible in front of the client*’ (Participants D₁ & D₂). An example of evidence is shown as follows:

“When designers possess a certain level of professional knowledge and personal quality that he/she can perform as a professional efficiently while communicating with the client; this can increase the client’s acceptance and recognition towards the designer.”

Participant D₂

Besides, designers should also, “*have the responsibility of having consideration of others*” – think in the others position (Participants D₃ & D₄). In other words, according to the participants’ perception, the designer should possess the people skill of *empathy*. An example of evidence is shown as follows:

“...designers should consider for the client, help our clients to achieve what they want. At the end, every client became our friends. How can you manage to do your job if you stay in the opposition side? It is impossible. You need to capture what the clients’ want, which means you need to think in their position.”

Participant D₃

For the perceptions on the *preferences of approach*, ‘*direct and calm communication*’ is the key to a workable client-designer relationship (Participants D₄, D₅ & D₆). In other words, according to these participants’ perceptions, designers should possess the transferable skill of *communication*. Moreover, according to participants D₅ & D₆, other skills also emerged in association with *communication* skills as mentioned above, which are *negotiation* and *coordination* skills. The examples below demonstrate some of these views:

“When designers have an idea, the client should listen; complete the project under the client’s thoughts and requirements; designers should give feedback to client regarding which of the client’s ideas can or can’t be done. As I said before, it is a double aspect.”

Participant D₄

“You will be able to present and explain your comments and design ideas to the client. And the client will be able to raise his comments until both parties integrate together. If the client’s comment is un-reasonable I can argue and explain to him why this is un-reasonable in my debate. If reasonable I can accept and blend it into my design. It is a calm communication I would say.”

Participant D₅

“There are so many parties involved in a project and everyone has their own thoughts and you can’t please every single one of them. So, my ideal situation is to deal with one person only and hopefully become friends, get along well and to complete the project.”

Participant D₆

In summary, different emphases on designer skills were identified between the participants groups, where the client group participants’ emphasis focused on the importance of people skills, whilst transferrable skills were emphasised by the designer group. *Compromise* and *empathy* are the two essential people skills for designers to maintain a workable client-designer relationship during the design process. Transferable skills such as *communication*, *negotiation* and *coordination* are considered to be the essence in the designer’s approaches towards a workable client-designer relationship.

5.4.5. Summary

In relation to the importance of necessary designer skills among the clients' and designers' perceptions on a client-designer relationship, *fourteen* designer's skills are identified in synchronising with four sub-themes as mentioned above, they are *described* and *mutual* relations, and *ideal* and *workable* relations. These skills then are organized under *three* categories according to the generic characteristics of each skill and these categories are: *personal traits*, *people skills* and *transferable skills*.

According to the clients' perceptions, *five* people skills and *three* transferable skills were identified to be the designer's most essential skills in a client-designer relationship. However, according to the designers' , *thirteen* designer's skills are identified and categorised under the three skill categories; with *two* in personal traits, *five* in people skills and *six* in transferable skills respectively.

Among the above emerged designer skills, *seven* of them appear to be identified from mutual perceptions of both the client and the designer, and these skills are categorised as follows:

- *Four* people skills: *respect*, *trust*, *understanding* and *cooperation*
- *Three* transferable skills: *communication*, *management* and *leadership*

An overall view of the designer's skills in the client-designer relationship in relation to participants' perceptions is shown in Diagram 5-3: Designer's skills in client-designer relationships.

Designer's skills in client-designer relationships

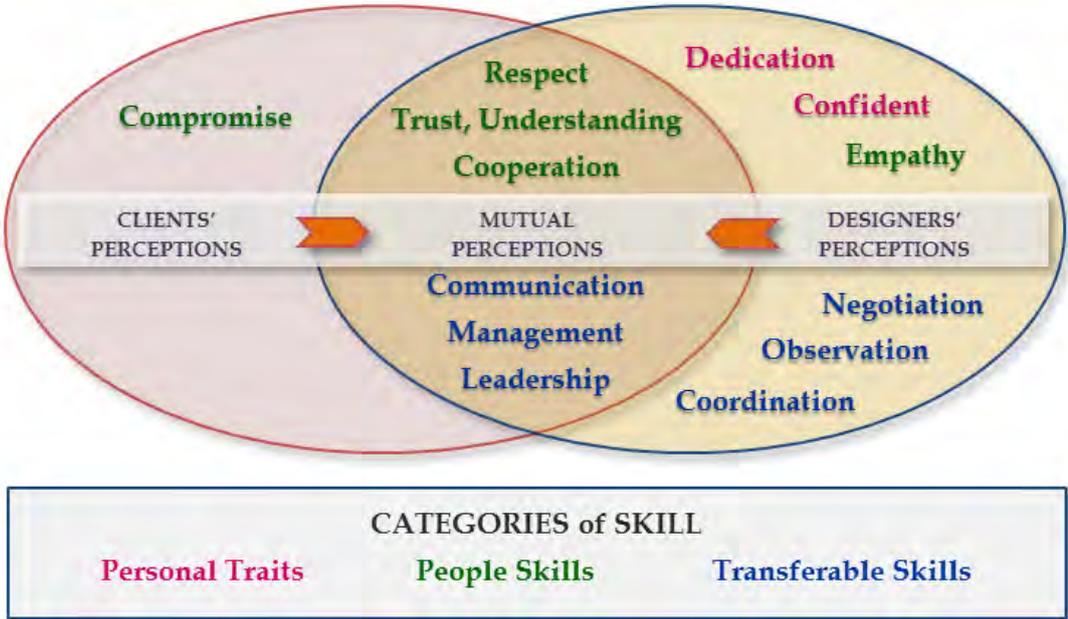


Diagram 5-3: Designer's skills in client-designer relationships

5.4.6. Theme five: Features in the design process

In this section, the findings present the clients' and designers' perceptions on the design process along two sub-themes, and the importance of necessary designer skills in synchronising with these themes. These two sub-themes are *noteworthy features in a successful design project* and *the perceptions of a good design project*, as shown in Figure 5-4: Client's' and designers' perceptions on features in design process. *Twelve* designer's skills emerged from these two sub-themes of the design process. Among these designer's skills, *seven* of them emerged from clients' and designers' mutual perceptions. Together, these form the designer's 'model skills' in the design process.

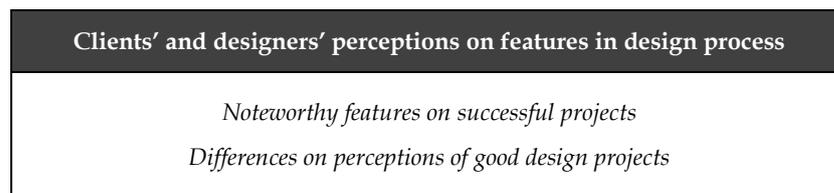


Figure 5-4: Client's' and designers' perceptions on features in design process

5.4.7. Noteworthy features in a successful design project

The participants' perceptions on the most noteworthy features of a successful design project are identified as the designer's personal qualities. These personal qualities contribute towards an overall success in the design process, and they are *collaboration, complimentary to others, dedication, consideration in the client's perspective, communication, deep understanding of local culture* and *patience*. In particular, the designer's dedication is perceived as the main contributing factor towards an overall success in an interior design project (Participant C₃, C₅, D₂ & D₄). The examples are shown below:

"When the designer works hard, s/he will do well, the characteristics of hard working, seriousness, continuous research and analyses."

Participant C₃

"You show the client your dedication to your job that is most important. In the client's perspective, if the designer works hard they will gain recognition or even understanding from the client."

Participant D₂

In addition, a successful design project is not necessary in relation to a desirable design result according to the findings. Most of the participants commented that the success of a design project relies on whether the ultimate result can be met in the end. Therefore, compromise can be made in order to meet the ultimate goal; design results can give way to cater to the end users' needs (Participants C₁, C₂, C₅ & C₆). Moreover, unsatisfactory factors in the final design result can be accommodated by the client, which is attributable to the recognition of the designer's dedication during the design process (Participant D₂). An example of evidence is shown as follows:

"Client will not be satisfied in anything anyway as everyone is different. Some clients are happy and satisfied by the recognition of designers' dedication. They are aware that there were objective reasons that caused some areas to be unsatisfied."

Participant D₂

There are other elements that contribute to the achievement of a successful project and they are the client's management ability and the contractor's ability (Participant D₄). An example of evidence is shown as follows:

"Client's management ability – for example, if there is a standardised procedure process in the client side, it will enhance the design process and will have a rather smooth dealing cooperation."

"Contractor's ability - a good and experienced contractor could convert designer's idea from drawing into reality efficiently and effectively. So it is very important to the construction stage."

Participant D₄

5.4.8. Differences between designer and client perceptions on a good design project

It would appear the differences between the designer's and the client's perceptions of a good design project are identified under *divided concerns on the project results*, and *compromise on differences during the design process*.

The differences of perceptions of a good design project are due to divided concerns on the project results between clients and designers. For instance, designers are concerned as to whether the final design effects can meet their design expectations (Participants C₂, C₄ & D₁), while clients are concerned as to whether or not the final results can stimulate a better sale with design effects being less important (Participants C₁, C₂, C₄ & D₂). The examples of are shown as follows:

"Interior design project can be portrayed as a movie, artistic movie may win many awards but end up performs poorly in the box office. In contrast, a commercial movie may not win any award but performs well in the box office ...it may not be an award winning design, but when it helps good sales in the market, that is essential."

Participant C₁

"The definition of a successful project would be when buyers made their purchases in their first visit."

Participant C₂

"In each stage, they aren't concerned whether the time spent on discussions and changes had exceeded within the planned schedule, they still expect the designer to provide each stage result on time. The only thing designers can do is to try their best to complete each task within the non-changeable time schedule."

Participant D₁

"However, practically speaking, the project is important, and that is why compromise is important. No matter what kind of design, the first priority is to cater for the demand. The designer could provide his/her service when there is a demand. At the end, the client would not be bothered to consider what you want to achieve. As for the client, the most important thing is the final result."

Participant D₂

It is possible that the above differences can be resolved by compromise during the design process, providing the main principle is unchanged (Participants C₁, C₄, C₅, C₆, D₁, D₂ & D₃). Furthermore, communication is the foundation of client-designer cooperation; differences can be resolved between the client and the designer in the design process through negotiation and communication (Participant C₃, D₄ & D₆). The examples of are shown as follows:

"What is your idea you need to tell me; I have difficulty in this area I will have to inform you. We have to have cooperation in work."

Participant D₄

"When differences arise I believe it is down to self-consciousness. Everything can be sorted via discussion and communication."

Participant D₆

5.4.9. Summary

In relation to the importance of necessary designer skills among the clients' and designers' perceptions on the design process, *twelve* designer's skills were identified in synchronising with two sub-themes as mentioned above, and they are *noteworthy features in a successful design project* and *the perceptions of a good design project*. It was reported that designer's people skills and personal traits are key features that contribute towards an overall success in the design process, and these skills are, *empathy*, *compromise* and *dedication*. In particular, *dedication* and *compromise* are considered to be the most noteworthy features in a successful design project.

For the perceptions of a good design project, there are clear divisions between the designers' and the clients' perceptions. This division relies on the different assumptions on the final result of the design project, where designers are mostly concerned with the design effect and clients are mostly concerned as to whether the final result will stimulate a good sale. Therefore, '*compromise*' becomes essential during the design process to ensure both concerns can be merged in the end. Designers should possess the people skill of *compromise* and transferrable skills of *communication* and *negotiation* in order to achieve a good design project.

Other designer skills are also identified which include *self-motivation*, *cooperation*, *trustworthiness*, *expression*, *management*, *coordination* and *leadership*. An overall view of the designer's skills in the client-designer relationship in relation to participants' perceptions is shown in Figure 5-4: Client's' and designers' perceptions on features in design process.

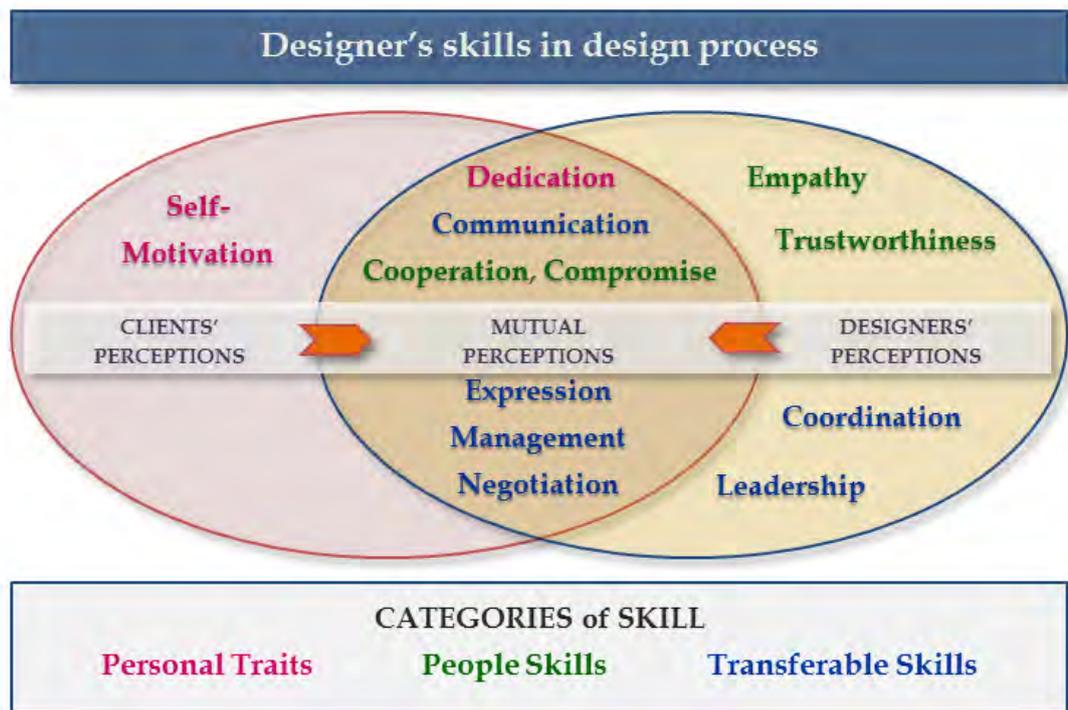


Diagram 5-4: Designer's skills in design process

5.5. Chapter 5 summary

In this chapter, the findings of the research study have been presented. A thematic approach was taken to data analysis, and the broad themes and sub-themes have been illustrated. The identified themes were *progression in design perception*, *interactive dynamics*, *power relations*, *client-designer relationships* and *features in the design process*. In Chapter 5, these themes will be revised in the context of the literature, where the relationship between the themes identified from the data and the themes identified from the literature will be compared and discussed.

6. Discussions

In this chapter, the emerged themes found in the literature will be revisited in light of the findings, and the key findings presented in Chapter 5 will be set in the context of the literature. Three main themes relevant to this study were drawn from Chapter 2 – Literature review: *situated influences*, *lack of skilled professionals* and the *industry's expectations*. These will be considered in the context of the findings.

In addition, five broad themes were identified through data analysis and were presented in Chapter 5: *progression in design perception*, *interactive dynamics*, *power relations*, *client-designer relationship*, and *features in the design process*. The data from these five themes will be presented from description into discussion, in order to identify patterns and inter-related influences between data, searching for coherence, consistency and inconsistency.

Hence, the relationship of the identified themes and broad research questions as emerging from the literature and the data will be examined.

Following the identification of links between the data from the findings and the identified themes from the literature, a framework for interior designer training, and 'model' skills for interior designers will be presented. The chapter will also provide suggestions on the application of the framework and its 'model' skills, how these could be used in practice, and how these could be developed through further research.

6.1. Themes identified through data analysis

Five broad themes were identified through data analysis, and these have been described in Chapter 5. These themes are *progression in design perception*, *interactive dynamics*, *power relations*, *client-designer relationship*, and *features in the design process*. The first three themes are considered as transitions in the interior design environment, how it activates the changes in industry expectations, and how this triggered the changes in operations during the design process within the interactive dynamics, cultural issues, power relations influences and designer behaviour.

The remaining two themes shape the insights of the current design practice through the relationship between the client and the designer during the design process. These include the importance of professional skills and people skills orientated perceptions on the designer's ability, the current industry's expectations, the current difficulties and facts during the design process on the designer's capability, and the essential designer's qualities and skills to address the differences of the industry's perceptions on the value of the design process.

6.1.1. Theme one: Progression in design perception

The first theme identified the interior design environment in its current context, reflected from the primary data which were gathered from the comments on the markets, clients and operations and designers within the industry in China. The current understanding of the interior design service from both the clients and the designers can be concluded as; the overall interior design environment has progressed, which is reflected by the *objective* and *subjective* perspectives on both the clients' and the designers' perceptions.

The objective progression in design perception was identified by the changes of perception of living standards which have transformed the public from initially being satisfied on fulfilling basic requirements or functions, to aiming towards a higher standard of living. These changes in perception also transformed into higher expectations from interior designers due to the demand of a higher standard of comprehensive management towards the design requirement, which was identified as the subjective progression. The improvement in the interior design environment has changed the way of cooperation between the client and the designer during the design process.

6.1.2. Theme Two: Interactive dynamics

The second theme identified the important impacts of interactive dynamics between the client and the designer on the design process. These impacts are presented through the effects on the design process from a positive and a negative perspective. Further sub-themes are identified via a cultural aspect and a performance aspect perspective, which are included.

Positive impacts

From the positive impact perspective, interactive dynamics can improve the client-designer relationship and mutual understanding of the project in the design process which in turn can enhance mutual trust and knowledge. Most importantly, interactive dynamics can enhance the design process that leads to improvement towards the ultimate design result, which can be as near as what the client requested.

Other positive impacts emerged from the perceptions of the designer group and can be identified as: 1) interactive dynamics can generate additional values during the design process and 2) provide opportunities for the designer to demonstrate personal strengths in

communication, negotiation and management skills during the design process.

Negative impacts

However, from the negative impact perspective, overactive interaction could diminish clear design direction and eliminate the designer's enthusiasm over the design process. Third party issues also cause negativity towards the design process which includes senior director's personal preferences. Other negative impacts that were found involved the client's non-professional comments and unlawful personal interests during the design process.

Cultural orientations

From the cultural aspect perspective, there are underlying individual cultural values that influence the designer's behaviour towards interactive dynamics (Li and Madsen's, 2009). Designers tend to take a reactive approach towards the hierarchy when encountering non-professional comments, requests or disagreement from the hierarchy (clients or senior directors). Compromise is often the solution to achieve a harmonious relationship during the design process. This harmonious relationship is often considered as maintaining and securing future business, or even a personal relationship network – Guanxi network (Participants D₂, D₃, D₄ and D₅).

Performance orientations

From the performance aspect perspective, interactive dynamics is considered as productive, and brings improvement in the design process. Not only can interactive dynamics between the client and the designer secure the design process on the right track (Participant C₁) but can also ensure that problems can be solved in time (Participant C₄). As a result, a progressive design process can be secured (Participant C₆), and bring improvement towards the ultimate design result (Participant

D₃). Design inspirations can also be generated through interaction (Participants D₁ & D₅) and improve creativity towards the design and its process. Finally, the designers can take a pro-active approach by demonstrating individual practical and professional skills; individual performances can be improved through accumulating experience during the interactive dynamics (Participant C₁, C₃, C₆, D₁, D₂, D₃, D₄ & D₅).

6.1.3. Theme Three: Power relations

Four models of power relation positions were identified in the theme of *power relations*. These four models of power positions co-exist within interior design companies used in the study. These power positions are:

- *Hierarchy position* – the power positions of the client and the designer maintained in a steady and parallel relationship where clients possess power over the designers throughout the entire design process.
- *Reverse power transition* – where the power positions of the client and the designer eventually exchange and reverse from the beginning to the end of the design process. Such transition can be triggered at any time depending on the stability of the design progress.
- *Merging position* – where the hierarchy power position between the client and the designer shifts, then merges to be at the same level during the design process.
- *Homogeneous position* – where the power positions of the client and the designer remain at the same level throughout the whole design process.

It has been identified in the analysis that the transitions of power relations from a hierarchy to a homogenous position is in progress. This trend of progression is highly related to the cultural aspects of

geographical differences, progression in design awareness, and knowledge among clients during the design process; the designer's performance versus the client's expectations, the transition of design awareness among clients and the progression in the designer's ability.

Cultural aspects on geographical differences

From the data it was evident that during the design process, a pre-set mentality that puts the client in a higher power position than that of the designer was commonly found in both the clients' and the designers' perceptions on the client-designer relationship. The clients' group of participants addressed this pre-set mentality as, "*with one side who pays and the other labour*" (Participants C₄, C₅ & C₆). In the designers' group, this power relation was portrayed as a buyer and seller tradition (Participants D₂, D₃ & D₄).

Despite that the identified hierarchy position came from the pre-set mentality of buyer and seller tradition, the concepts of these positions or roles and the underlying causes of the behaviour between clients and designers could be highly related to the influence that came from situated cultural aspect. In such case, these could be a constant influence of Chinese traditional values – demanding respect to the hierarchy of Confucian values.

Moreover, transitions in the environment among early developed areas such as the capital city of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and the coastal cities contribute to the geographical differences in cultural aspects. The situated environment of these areas is different from other less developed areas of China, of which the influences from economic transitions are therefore different. These involve a chain reaction on the perception of design awareness and the manner of the interior design process, as described in section 6.1.1 and 6.1.2.

Transition in design awareness among clients during design process

During the design process, the changes in the clients' mentality to shift and tilt the power distribution between the client and the designer were identified as a merging position model. These changes in the clients' mentality are caused by the progression in the clients' understanding of design operation during the design process (Participants D₃ & D₄), of which there was an underlying context of a progressed design awareness over the years (Participants D₂), described as the situated transitional environment.

Designer's performance verses the client's expectation

The interconnections between the designer's performance and the client's expectation were identified in this theme. During the design process, the project control initiative on whether or not to release more control power to designer is highly dependent on the designer's ability – performance to reach the client's expectations. When the designer's performance is considered to be satisfactory – capable to perform assigned duties, the designer sustains the project control power. Otherwise, the client will take control in order to secure the corporation's ultimate goal in the project. The transition of power control can be triggered at any time depending on the stability of the design progress, which includes the time schedule, the overall budget, the profits and the ability of the project designer (Participants C₂, C₃ & C₅).

Progression of design awareness among client and progression in designer's ability

A significant number of participants considered the power distribution between the client and the designer as equal. The situated environment factors which are comprised of the transitional individual cultural values and transitional economy set the essential criteria for improvement in the design process. Besides, this situated environment factor also influences the progression of design awareness on the client's perceptions and the progression in the designer's ability. These are the two main contributing factors for a balanced power relationship. As a result, this equal power relationship – homogenous positions as described above, could result in enhancing both the designer's performance and a better design result.

6.1.4. Theme four: Client-designer relationship

The essence of, what does the designer do, will be discussed in the theme of the client-designer relationship, of which four models of relations among the current client-designer relationships were identified. These *four* models of relations are *defined*, *mutual*, *ideal*, and *workable relations*.

The first two relations illustrated some insights of the current design practice through the relationship between the client and the designer during the design process. Firstly, the positioning of both the client's and the designer's role revealed the importance of a professional skill orientated perception on the designer's ability during the design process. Secondly, the *mutual relations* model revealed a people skill orientated perception on the designer's ability that was identified to be essential for a designer to maintain a positive mutual relationship with the client during the design process.

The *ideal relations* model contoured the current industry expectations – the expectations from both clients and designers on the essential designer’s capability; a proactive approach towards achieving an ideal client-designer relationship was identified.

Finally, the *workable relations* model concluded the current difficulties and facts during the design process, and what the designer’s ability would be expected to achieve in a workable relationship with clients in the present context.

Professional skill orientation

Clients and designers generally possess the perception of defined relations within the client-designer relationship, of which the positioning of roles were most mentioned. Clearly, among these perceptions of the designer’s role, the participants’ focus was on the most needed designer’s professional skills instead of focusing on the details of professional knowledge.

Among the defined relations, transferable skills of *coordination*, *management* and *communication* were identified to be essential to the designer’s role during the design process. Personal traits such as *confidence* and people skills of *observation* and *empathy* were also identified as being essential to the designer while taking a leading role in the client-designer relationship during the design process. In particular, transferable skills such as *leadership* and *communication* were most mentioned by the participants.

A clear illustration of an interior designer role during the design process was therefore identified. Transferable skills of *coordination*, *leadership*, *management* and *communication* were identified as essential designer’s skills that could enhance the designer’s performance during the design process.

People skills orientation

In the *mutual relations* model of the client-designer relationship, participants focused on the characteristics of the client-designer relationship during the design process rather than on their roles. In contrast to *defined* relations, individual positions were considered less important. People skills were identified as being essential to the designer in maintaining a positive mutual relationship with the client, in order to achieve a harmonious working relationship during the design process. These people skills are: *trust, respect, understanding, cooperation and empathy*. In particular, from both the clients' and the designers' perceptions, *communication* was identified to be the key mutual characteristic and skill of the designer.

Current industry expectations

Unlike the two relations mentioned previously, an ideal client-designer relationship is constructed on both the clients' and the designers' reflections on their empirical experience. These reflections combined and concluded their personal experience through the progression in design perception, interactive dynamics and various power relations as lies within. Therefore, these can be collaborated with the current industry's expectations towards the designer's essential skills on a working relationship between the client and the designer during the design process.

According to the data analysis, significant suggestions show that *mutual respect* and *trust* are the two main elements in an ideal client-designer relationship. Other criteria concerning the current industry's expectations of the designer's skills are identified as *dedication, leadership, friendship, understanding and recognition, and communication*.

Current difficulties in the design process

Different to the ideal client-designer relationship, a workable client-designer relationship is based on the clients' and the designers' empirical experience associated with the situated environment, as opposed to being a projection from their empirical experience as shown in the ideal relations. These perceptions concluded that the current difficulties and facts during the design process along with a projection on what could be a reactive approach within the designer's ability would be expected from the industry. As a result, various designer skills become essential to the designer in order to achieve a workable relationship with clients in the present context. Different emphases on designer skills are then identified as follows.

Within the current interior design situated context, various objective facts could underlie a compromised working process; these include the project time schedule, budget, project management and the contractor's ability. In order to deal with this situated context of a compromised working process, the designer is expected to possess certain identified people and transferable skills. Therefore, *compromise* and *empathy* are two essential people skills for designers to maintain a workable client-designer relationship during the design process. Transferable skills such as *communication*, *negotiation* and *coordination* are considered to be the essence in the designer's approaches towards a workable client-designer relationship.

6.1.5. Theme five: Features in the design process

Perceptions on the design process, both clients and designers value the importance of the designer's individual personal qualities over his/her accountability. These personal qualities contribute towards an overall success in the design process, and they are *collaboration, complimentary to others, dedication, consideration in the client's perspective, communication, deep understanding of local culture and patience*. In particular, the designer's dedication is identified to be the main contributing factor towards an overall success in an interior design project. Moreover, unsatisfactory factors in the final design result can be accommodated by the client, which is attributable to the recognition of the designer's dedication during the design process, as stated, "*Client will not be satisfied in anything anyway as everyone is different. Some clients are happy and satisfied by the recognition of designers' dedication. They are aware that there were objective reasons that caused some areas to be unsatisfied*" (Participant D₂).

The differences of perceptions of a good design project are due to divided concerns on the project results between the clients and the designers; designers are concerned as to whether the final design effects can meet their design expectations, while clients are concerned as to whether or not the final results can stimulate a better sale with design effects being less important. These differences can be viewed as caused by the situated transitional values context. According to Yang (2012), these concerns can reflect the situation cultural environment influence on both the clients' and the designers' behaviour; designers' are concerned that their design results and achievement can be viewed as influenced by the Capitalist ideology of individualism and professionalism; clients' concerns are whether or not the final design can generate a good sale and this can also be viewed as influenced by the Capitalist ideology of profit orientation.

However, the above differences can be resolved by compromise during the design process, providing the main principle is unchanged. In other words, compromise from both parties can keep a harmonious working relationship in order to be able to achieve the final goal. Therefore, the act of 'compromise' can be traced to the value of Confucian ideology – to achieve harmony.

In summary, due to the differences of perceptions on both clients and designers within the features of a design process, a combination of various skills are needed for a designer, in order to master these differences during the design process. These skills are *dedication, communication, cooperation, compromise, expression, management and negotiation.*

6.2. Relationship between themes from literature and data

Three themes were identified in the literature review, and these are situated environment, design process and industry expectations. These three themes form the three key components of a *current industry context*. These three components are interlocked, constantly generating influences within each area to form a unique mechanism within the industry. Five themes were identified from the data and they shared a circle of a constantly regenerating system. Each theme on its own generates a situated influence towards the others that form an interlinked relationship of a *current design process context*.

The inter-relationship between the current industry context and current design process context are identified to be interlinked by three main aspects of the designer's aptitude; behaviour, skill and performance. Among these aspects of the designer's aptitude, behaviour could influence skills and performance.

6.3. Patterns, links and interactions in the data

As identified in the literature review, the current industry context comprises three main components: *situated environment*, *design process* and *industry expectations*. These three components are interlocked, constantly generating influences within each area to form a unique mechanism within the industry. In the following, the data from the findings are linked, discussed and presented among these three components of the current industry context.

6.3.1. Link one – Situated environment

According to the data, four areas of situated environment are identified: 1) Progression in design perception, 2) Cultural orientations, 3) Transition of design awareness among clients and progression in designer's ability, and 4) Ideology and conflicts. Among these four areas a pattern of chain reaction influences is formed, and this provokes different impacts on the design process.

Progression in design perception

On reflection of the *objective* and *subjective* perspectives on both clients' and designers' perceptions, the overall interior design environment has progressed. The objective progression is reflected by the changes in perception of living standards within the transition in the economy. These changes in perception also transformed into higher expectations from interior designers due to the demand of a higher standard of comprehensive management towards the design requirement, such as general issues in new technology in building and materials (Cui 2015; Zhang, 2010), which was identified as the subjective progression. This can be linked to the relationship management aspect of the client-designer relationship interactive dynamic model.

The improvement in the interior design environment has changed the way of cooperation between the client and the designer during the design process; clients have become more open-minded, proactive and accepting towards designers compared to the past; designers' abilities have progressed (Cui 2015; Li and Zhang, 2012; Zhang, 2010). In referring to the *situated environment*, individual's behavior is constantly under the influences of the conflict and convergence of the situated environment and cultural aspects, both consciously and sub-consciously, where in HRD context this refers to transitional environment (Ke *et al.*, 2006; Yang *et al.*, 2004; Zheng and Yang, 2009).

Cultural orientations

During the interactive collaborations with the clients, designers tend to take a reactive approach towards the hierarchy when encountering non-professional comments, requests or disagreements from the hierarchy (clients or senior directors). This is in relation to the *power relations* aspect of the client-designer relationships in section XX. According to Leisti-Szymczak *et. al.* (2013), this is often found or portrayed by the client's dominant power position in client-designer interactions; the imbalanced power relations could result in diminishing the opportunity for constructive collaboration and co-creation in the design process. Handley *et. al.* (2005) suggested that conflicts of identity may inhibit consultants from delivering challenges in the way expected by the client. They argued that power relations could become dominant factors in the client-consultant relationship when the expectations – the norm – between the client and consultant are disengaged.

The concepts of these positions or roles and the underlying causes of their behaviour are highly related to the influence that came from situated cultural aspects; a constant influence of Chinese traditional

values, demanding respect towards the hierarchy of Confucian values (Li and Madsen, 2009; Wang, *et al.*, 2005; Yang, *et al.*, 2004).

Moreover, transitions in the environment also contribute to the geographical differences in cultural aspects. The situated environment (Ke *et al.*'s, 2006; Li and Nimon, 2008) on early developed areas is different from other less developed areas of China, of which the influences from economic transitions are therefore different. These involve a chain reaction on the perception of design awareness and the manner of the interior design process. In general, *compromise* is often the solution to achieve a harmonious relationship during the design process (Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006). This harmonious relationship is often considered as maintaining and securing future business.

Progression of design awareness among client and progression in designer's ability

The situated environment factors which comprise the transitional individual cultural values (Björkman and Lu's, 1999; Tsui *et al.*, 2006), and transitional economy (Chen & Zhang, 2003), set the essential criteria for improvement of the design process. Besides, these situated environment factors also influence the progression of design awareness on the client's perceptions and the progression in the designer's ability, and these are the two main contributing factors for a balanced power relation between the client and the designer during the design process. As a result, this equal power relation could result in enhancing both the designer's performance and a better design result. Poulfelt and Payne (1994) described this as knowledge transfer; client's satisfaction upon the completion of a project requires a joint effort from the designer and the client, of which both parties should be conscious on their expectations, roles and potential contribution during the whole collaboration process.

Ideology and conflicts

The differences of perceptions of a good design project are due to divided concerns on the project results between the clients and the designers. These differences can be viewed as caused by the situated transitional values context (Yang *et al.*, 2004; Wang *et al.*, 2005). According to Yang (2012), these concerns can reflect the situation cultural environment influence on both the clients' and the designers' behaviour; designers' are concerned that their design results and achievement can be viewed as influenced by the Capitalist ideology of individualism and professionalism; the clients' concerns are whether or not the final design can generate a good sale, and this can also be viewed as influenced by the Capitalist ideology of profit orientation. Therefore, situated environment could provoke the differences and conflicts between the client and the designer during the design process.

6.3.2. Link two – Current industry's expectations

According to the data, three areas of industry expectations are identified, 1) Client's expectation in relations to the designer's performance, 2) expectations portrayed by both clients and designers, and 3) expectations associated with the situated environment.

Client's expectation in relations to designer's performance:

During the design process, whether or not the designer should be offered more control power from the client is highly dependent on whether the designer's performance reaches the client's expectations. When the designer's performance is considered to be satisfactory, capable of performing assigned duties, the designer sustains the project control power. Otherwise, the client will take control in order to secure the corporation's ultimate goal in the project; power relations could become dominant factors in the client-designer relationship when the expectations – the norm – between the client and consultant are disengaged (Handley *et al.*, 2005).

Expectations portrayed by both clients and designers:

The expectations from both clients and designers on the essential designer's capability, which can be portrayed as a proactive approach towards achieving an ideal client-designer relationship was identified. Significant suggestions show personal attributes such as people skills are essential in the client-designer relationship. *Mutual respect* and *trust* are the two main elements in an ideal client-designer relationship. According to the theoretical assumptions of interactive dynamics, mutual trust and mutual respect are located at the centre of the client-designer relationship, which could contribute towards *decision-making and problem-solving* (d'Anjou, 2001), and the *relationship management* (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013) aspects of client-designer relationships. Other criteria concerning the current industry's expectations of the designer's skills are identified as *dedication, leadership, friendship, understanding and recognition, and communication*.

Expectations associated with the situated environment:

The current difficulties and facts in the design process were concluded through the analysis the association between the clients' and the designers' empirical experience, and the situated environment. A reactive approach within the designer's ability would be expected from the industry. Consequently, the designer is expected to possess certain identified people and transferable skills. Consequently, *compromise* and *empathy* are the two essential people skills for designers to maintain a workable client-designer relationship – in harmony (Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006) during the design process. Transferable skills such as *communication*, *negotiation* and *coordination* are considered to be the essence in the designer's approaches in relation to the *power relations* and the *relationship management* aspects of client-designer relationships, which are geared towards a workable relationship with clients in the present context (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994; Handley *et al.*, 2005; Leisti-Szymczak *et al.*, 2013; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994).

6.3.3. Link three – Current design process

Two areas of current design process are identified, which highlight the essentials of the designer's skills as per the industry's expectations, and they are *work process orientated* and *relationship orientated*.

Work process orientated design process

The positioning of both the client's and the designer's role revealed the importance of a *work process orientated* perception on the designer's ability during the design process. Clients and designers generally possess the perception of defined relations within the client-designer relationship, of which the positioning of roles were most mentioned. Clearly, among these perceptions of the designer's role, the most needed designer's professional skills were considered more important than focusing on the details of professional knowledge.

While transferable skills were identified to be essential to the designer's role during the design process, personal traits and people skills were identified to be essential to the designer while taking a leading role in the client-designer relationship during the design process. According to Bruce and Docherty (1993), these main criteria must be met in order to develop long-term relationships (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994). In particular, transferable skills such as *leadership* and *communication* were most mentioned by the participants. A clear illustration of an interior designer role during the design process was therefore identified. The transferable skills of *coordination*, *leadership*, *management* and *communication* were identified as essential designer skills that could enhance the designer's performance during the design process.

Relationship orientated design process

In the *mutual relations* model of the client-designer relationship, participants focused on the characteristics of the client-designer relationship during the design process rather than on their roles. People skills were identified to be essential to the designer in maintaining a positive mutual relationship with the client according to the *relationship management* aspect of client-designer relationships in section 6.3.2, these people skills could enable the designer to achieve long-term client-consultant relationships (Bruce and Docherty, 1993; Bruce and Morris, 1994; Poulfelt and Payne, 1994), and a harmonious working relationship (Yang, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2006) during the design process. These people skills are: *trust, respect, understanding, cooperation and empathy*. In particular, *communication* was identified to be the key mutual characteristic and skill of the designer from their mutual perceptions.

6.4. A suggestive interior designer training framework

In the current interior designer industry context in China, it has become clear that both the organisation and national policy should develop an adequate training program or policy. The three components of the current industry context – *situated environment, current industry expectations, and design process* – were integrated and discussed along with the five themes identified in the data, as discussed in section 6.1 Relationship between themes from literature and data. Through the empirical analysis of the client and designer perceptions on the interactive dynamics in the design process, a suggestive interior designer training framework on the Current Industry Context as shown in Table 6-1: A suggestive interior designer training framework, therefore, is defined which comprises three components of the current industry context: *situated environment, current industry expectations, and design process*.

Situated environment

Situation environment has influence on clients' and designers' perceptions and behaviour, of which the impacts can vary geographically. Not only does this influence different designer's approaches towards the design process, such as behaviour, roles and power, but also influences the industry's expectations.

Current industry's expectations

The current industry's expectations are identified under three orientations: *performance, relationships and situated conditions*.

- *Performance orientation* – a higher designer's performance can earn more respect from the client, through which the designer can gain more control power during the design process.

- *Relationships orientation* – essential designer’s aptitudes to achieve ideal client-designer relationships; a pro-active approach towards the design process that requires different skills: *dedication, leadership, friendship, understanding and recognition, and communication.*
- *Situated conditions* – when facing unchangeable facts and/or restricted conditions during the design process, a reactive approach is needed for the designer to manage effectively, of which the designer is expected to possess the relevant skills: *compromise and empathy* in people skills, and *communication, negotiation and coordination* in transferable skills.

Design process

Design process is identified under the orientation of work process and relationship.

- *Work process orientation* – both clients and designers often value the designer’s roles higher than the designer’s professional knowledge. Under these perceptions, the designer is recommended to possess certain skills to enhance personal abilities on his/her role in the design process. Transferable skills of *coordination, leadership, management and communication* were identified as essential designer’s skills that could enhance the designer’s performance during the design process.
- *Relationship orientation* – positive mutual relations with the client is essential to achieve a harmonious working relationship during the design process, of which the designer is recommended to possess people skills of *trust, respect, understanding, cooperation and empathy.* In particular, *communication* was identified to be the key mutual characteristic and skill of the designer, from their mutual perceptions.

Within the above suggestive interior designer training framework, sixteen designer skills were therefore identified from the findings under the five themes from section 5.4: *professional skill orientation, people skill orientation, current difficulties in the design process, and features in the design process.*

These sixteen designer skills are then presented along with themes from the current design process context and their relevance towards the *Current Industry Context*, as shown in Table 6-2: Designer skills among the suggestive interior designer training framework.

This framework may serve as an indicator of the current interior industry's expectations on designer's aptitudes, and this may help interior design organisations to gain an overall knowledge that sixteen compulsory designer skills, in relations to the current design process context and current industry context, would be expected by both the industry and the market demand. These could also help interior designer organizations to address the current gap between the standard trained interior design professionals and their expectations from the industry, in order to improve performance of both the individuals and the organisations (Chang, 2011; Swanson, 1995). In addition, these suggestive frameworks may help in proving empirical data for interior design policy makers and scholars to address the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry; thus this may assist in promoting a continuous professional development in interior design organizations in the future.

A Suggestive Interior Designer Training Framework

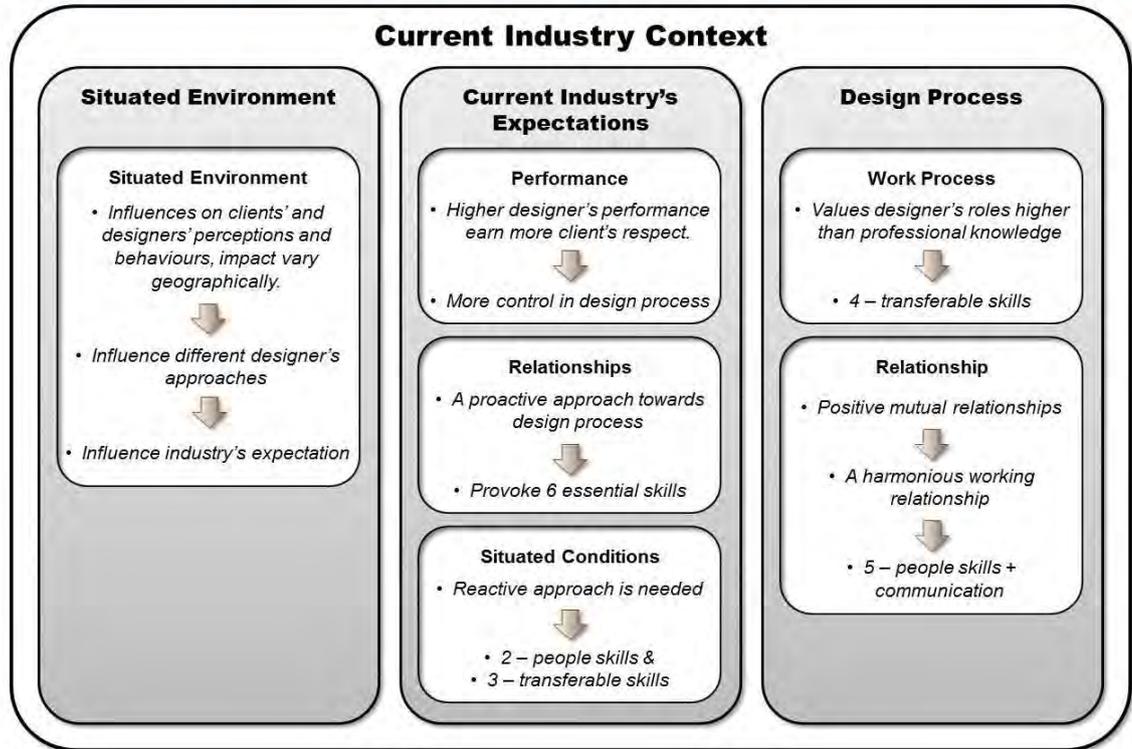


Table 6-1: A suggestive interior designer training frame work

| Current Design Process Context | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Designer skills | Professional skill orientation | People skill orientation | Current industry's expectation | Current difficulties in the design process | Features in the design process | Current industry context related |
| | Personal Traits | | | | | |
| <i>Confident</i> | √ | | | | | DP |
| <i>Dedication*</i> | | | √ | | √√ | IE, DP |
| <i>Self-motivation</i> | | | | | √ | DP |
| People Skills | | | | | | |
| <i>Compromise*</i> | | | | √ | √√ | SE, DP, IE |
| <i>Cooperation*/**</i> | | √√ | | | √√ | DP |
| <i>Empathy</i> | √ | √ | | √ | √ | SE, DP, IE |
| <i>Respect**</i> | | √√ | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| <i>Trust**</i> | | √√ | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| <i>Understanding**</i> | | √√ | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| Transferable Skills | | | | | | |
| <i>Communication*/**</i> | √√ | √√ | √√ | √√ | √√ | SE, DP, IE |
| <i>Coordination</i> | √ | | | √ | | SE, DP, IE |
| <i>Expression*</i> | | | | | √√ | DP |
| <i>Leadership**</i> | √√ | | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| <i>Management*/**</i> | √√ | | | | √√ | DP |
| <i>Negotiation*</i> | | | √ | √ | √√ | SE, DP, IE |
| <i>Observation</i> | √ | | | | | DP |
| Remarks: Three areas of focus among current industry context: Situated Environment (SE), Design Process (DP), Industry's Expectations (IE). √ represents perceptions from either client or designer √√ represents perceptions from both client and designer * represents designer's skills in client-designer relationships ** represents designer's skills in design process | | | | | | |

Table 6-2: Designer skills among the suggestive interior designer training framework

6.5. 'Model' skills for interior designer

Among these *sixteen* identified designer skills, there are only *twelve* skills that were identified from both clients and designers. Therefore, after removing the non-mutual suggested skills, the remaining skills become the representations of 'model' skills for the designer and are identified as follows: Personal trait is *dedication*; People skills are *compromise, cooperation, respect, trust and understanding*; transferable skills are *communication, expression, leadership, management and negotiation*, as shown in Table 6-3.

6.5.1. Current industry context related skills

In the 'model' skills from the perceptions of the client and the designers, a compulsory of all twelve model skills are categorised in relation to the design process, as shown Table 6-3: 'Model' skills from the perceptions of the client and the designer. On the other hand, there are eight out of twelve skills categorised under the focus of industry expectations in the current industry context, of which this indicates there is around two thirds of the total numbers of the designer 'model' skills that are most sought after from a designer by the industry. The distribution of these skills is in relation to the focus of *people skill orientation, current industry expectation and features in the design process*.

Furthermore, there are three 'model' skills which are categorised under the focus of situated environment, and there are around a quarter of the total numbers of the 'model' skills which are relevant to the designer in dealing with matters with the situated environment concern and mainly focus on *current difficulties and features in the designer process*.

| Designer skills | Current Design Process Context | | | | | Current industry context related |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Professional skill orientation | People skill orientation | Current industry's expectation | Current difficulties in the design process | Features in the design process | |
| Personal Traits | | | | | | |
| <i>Dedication*</i> | | | √ | | √√ | IE, DP |
| People Skills | | | | | | |
| <i>Compromise*</i> | | | | √ | √√ | SE, DP, IE |
| <i>Cooperation*/**</i> | | √√ | | | √√ | DP |
| <i>Respect**</i> | | √√ | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| <i>Trust**</i> | | √√ | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| <i>Understanding**</i> | | √√ | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| Transferable Skills | | | | | | |
| <i>Communication*/**</i> | √√ | √√ | √√ | √√ | √√ | SE, DP, IE |
| <i>Expression*</i> | | | | | √√ | DP |
| <i>Leadership**</i> | √√ | | √√ | | | DP, IE |
| <i>Management*/**</i> | √√ | | | | √√ | DP |
| <i>Negotiation*</i> | | | √ | √ | √√ | SE, DP, IE |
| <p>Remarks: Three areas of focus among current industry context: Situated Environment (SE), Design Process (DP), Industry's Expectations (IE). √ represents perceptions from either client or designer √√ represents perceptions from both client and designer * represents designer's skills in client-designer relationships ** represents designer's skills in design process</p> | | | | | | |

Table 6-3: 'Model' skills from the perceptions of the client and the designer

6.5.2. Industry's perceptions among current design process context

The distribution of the industry's perceptions on the current design process context indicates a general perspective on each skill category. The calculation on the density is the total number of identified skills divided by the number of skill categories, times five themes. Among these indicative distributions of perceptions, three skill categories share an average percentage of between 40% and 50%. The industry's perceptions on a general designer's 'model' skills therefore can be suggested as evenly distributed on personal traits, people and transferable skills, with a tentative less emphasis on the skill in personal traits among the current design process context.

Moreover, the distribution of the industry's mutual perceptions on the current design process context indicates the different emphasis on each skill category. The calculation on the density is the total number of identified mutual skills divided by the number of identified 'model' skills. Among these indicative distributions of mutual perceptions, a clear division on emphasis of each category of skills is suggested. People skills and transferable skills share a percentage of 90% and 85% respectively. The industry's perceptions on essential designer's 'model' skills therefore can be suggested focusing on people skills and transferable skills. The least essential among these three categories of skills is personal traits, which only shares 50%. These distributions of the industry's perceptions on 'model' skills in the current design process context are illustrated in Figure 6-1: Distributions of industry's perceptions on 'model' skills in current design process context.

| Descriptions | Calculation methods | Personal traits | People skills | Transferable skills |
|---|---|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Density of perception among current design process context in relations to skill categories | $\frac{\sqrt{+}\sqrt{\vee}}{\text{Number of skills times five themes}}$ | $2/5 \approx 50\%$ | $10/25 = 40\%$ | $13/25 \geq 50\%$ |
| Density of mutual perceptions among current design process context in relations to skill categories | $\frac{\sqrt{\vee}}{\sqrt{+}\sqrt{\vee}}$ | $1/2 = 50\%$ | $9/10 = 90\%$ | $11/13 \approx 85\%$ |

Figure 6-1: Distributions of industry’s perceptions on ‘model’ skills in current design process context

In conclusion, according to these indicative suggestions from this study, *twelve* ‘model’ skills for the designer from the industry’s perspectives on both expectation and design process context are identified and these skills are: Personal trait is *dedication*; People skills are *compromise, cooperation, respect, trust* and *understanding*; Transferable skills are *communication, expression, leadership, management* and *negotiation*. Among these three categories of ‘model’ skills, people skills and transferable skills of the designer are essential and are most sought after in the industry’s expectations on designer’s skills in the current design process context.

6.6. Summary of Chapter 6

In this chapter, the themes from both the literature and the data have been reviewed and discussed. Patterns and inter-related influences between data were also informed. From this discussion, *a framework for interior designer training* and *'model' skills for interior designer* are proposed. The framework and its 'model' skills consolidated the participants' perceptions herewith the broad research questions that emerged from the literature, thus binding both knowledge and practice. The framework for interior designer training and its 'model' skills have the potential to make an original contribution towards both knowledge and organisation training in the interior design industry. It has been developed through the analysis and interpretation of primary data in the context of a specific range of literature review that inform the complex and interlocking system of influences in the interior design industry in China.

This framework and its 'model' skills may serve as an indicator of the current interior industry's expectation on designer's essential skills. Application of the framework and its 'model' skills may help interior design organisations to develop their own internal designer training program based on their situated context in order to; close the current gap between the standard trained interior design professionals and their expectations from the industry; and improve performance of both the individuals and the organisations (Chang, 2011; Swanson, 1995). On a broader aspect, among the education sector, by applying the framework and its 'model' skills as an indicator from the current industry to inform further research studies, which may help to address the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010), and promoting a continuous professional development in China's interior design industry. Finally, the aim and objectives of the study which have been addressed will be examined, and conclusions will be drawn in the final chapter

7. Conclusion

7.1. Achievement of study aim and research objectives

This chapter considers the extent to which the study achieves its aims and objectives, the acknowledgment of the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with the acknowledgment of the contribution to professional practice and existing literature.

7.1.1. Overall aim of the study

The overall aim of this study was to identify industry's expectations in the client-designer relationship during the design process, in order to close the gap between education and practice.

This was achieved through a critical review of relevant literature to identify the underlying causes of the gap between the performance of the interior designer and the industry's expectations; primary data collection from interior design clients and designers, and through the analysis of interview data; through the collaboration and synthesis of the identified themes from the literature review and data from the findings; the framework for interior designer training, 'model' skills for interior designers and suggestions on the application.

7.1.2. Research objective 1

Research objective 1 *was to identify the underlying causes of the gap between the performance of the interior designer and the industry's expectation.*

Firstly, through the critical review of the Chinese Context, the integrated relationship – between the economic policies, market demand and education – influences the industry's expectations from various specific skilled professionals against the education provision among different stages of the interior design industry development. Therefore, this can be justified that the transition of the industry's

expectations determines education provision. In the theoretical sense, the underlying causes of the gap between the performance of the interior designer and the industry's expectations is identified as the inconsistency between art education teaching and learning provision, and the ever changing needs of the industry.

Secondly, theoretical analyses were conducted on both client-designer relationships and current profession requirements for the interior designer, to address and explore the client-designer working relationships in general, and the definition on professional requirements in the current interior design industry in China at a theoretical base. These have set the foundation for the later part of this study. The theoretical underlying causes of the gap between the performance of the interior designer and the industry's expectations is an unclear definition of the client-designer relationship during the design process that leads to the displacement in expectations from both the industry and the education. This absence of knowledge of the current interior design process and the industry's expectations were then addressed and explored during data collection and analysis and some of the underlying causes are identified in the study findings.

The suggestive interior designer training framework which addresses this gap between the performance of the interior designer and the industry's expectations could be influenced by situated environment, which may be caused by cultural, personal belief, political and economic environments. Besides, the impacts can vary geographically.

7.1.3. Research objective 2

Research objective 2 *was to explore how the situated environment and culture have impacts on client-designer interactions and their behaviour during the design process.*

This was achieved by the emergence of the *current industry context* in the suggestive designer training frame work, of which there are three main components; *situated environment, current industry's expectations, and design process*. This defines how the situation environment has influence on clients' and designers' perceptions and behaviour, of which the impacts can vary geographically. Not only does this influence different designer's approaches towards the design process, such as behaviour, roles and power, but also influences the industry's expectations.

Situation environment was identified as having influence on clients' and designers' perceptions and behaviour, where the impacts can vary geographically. Not only does this influence different designer's approaches towards the design process, such as behaviour, roles and power, but also influences the industry's expectations.

The suggestive interior designer training framework provides suggestions for interior design organization to address these situated influences.

7.1.4. Research objective 3

Research objective 3 was *to gain understanding on the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer and their relationship during the design process, from the perspectives of clients and designers.*

This objective was achieved through the collection and analysis process of the primary data from interior design clients and designers interview data. Hence this was covered by the emergence of five themes that were identified from the clients' and the designers' perceptions.

Five themes were identified from the data and they shared a circle of a constantly regenerating system. Each theme on its own generates a situated influence towards the others that form an interlinked relationship of a *current design process context.*

7.1.5. Research objective 4

Research objective 4 was *to consider the essential elements that might enhance the designer's performance during the design process.*

The introduction of the framework for interior designer training could be adapted and serve as an indicator of the current interior industry's expectations on designer's aptitudes, and this may help interior design organisations to gain an overall knowledge that sixteen compulsory designer skills, in relations to the current design process context and current industry context, would be expected by both the industry and the market demand. These could also help interior designer organizations to address the current gap between the standard trained interior design professionals and their expectations from the industry, in order to improve performance of both the individuals and the organisations (Chang, 2011; Swanson, 1995).

Besides, the introduction of a theoretical model in client-designer collaboration can inform the absence of knowledge of the client-designer collaboration in interior design study.

7.2. Limitations and areas for further research

Even though the overall aim and objectives were achieved, there are still limitations to this study both from the chosen research design and from the research outcome.

In this study, selected samples covered a variety of businesses, company sizes, locations of enterprises, and participants' professional backgrounds. This has been limited to a specific interior design category group, which might further limit the representativeness within geographical perspectives and varieties of the business nature. Future research could be benefited by including different categories of interior design practice and a geographical reasoning concern. In particular, an additional category from the education sector could also contribute to further insights in current development in interior design education in China.

Another limitation to the study is considered to be the inadequate availability of literature in current interior design practice and its design process (Poldma, 2008), in particular those in relation to interior design practice in China. Therefore, this has limited the description of the current state of the interior design context which was then solely established by the gathered primary data from the findings. However, this also contributes towards this study's originality.

7.3. Contribution to professional practice and existing literature

The framework – The Current Industry Context comprises three aspects of client-designer relationships, where each aspect reflects different designer's roles:

- 1) Situated Environment – addresses the aspects of cultural, geographical and economic influences that have an impact on both client and designer behaviour which includes power relations, customs and beliefs.
- 2) Current Industry's Expectations – addresses the aspect of relationship management in relation to Performance, Relationships and Situated Conditions.
- 3) Design Process – addresses the aspect of project management, such as meetings, presentations and/or marketing.

The 'model' skills serve as sets of criteria to support or examine the conditions. Each aspect of client-designer relationship in The Current Industry Context can be operated and adapted either collectively or independently. By utilizing this framework and its 'model' skills may help designers or organizations operating proactively, and being prepared to encounter either familiar or challenging situations.

Suggestions to professional practice: For domestic interior design markets, this framework could be adapted into strategic plans catering for cross country marketing, design and client-management, in particular effective presentation techniques and meeting management; preparing the designer to encounter potential situated influences towards the client-designer collaboration in relation to various local cultural customs, beliefs, political or economic environments.

This framework could also be adapted in a reversed manner when encountering foreign corporate clients in China. Designers may be able

to assist foreign clients to understand the differences in the design process and expectations due to the situated environment having influences on an individual's behaviour, in order to enhance the client-designer relationship.

The framework for interior designer training and its 'model' skills have the potential to make an original contribution towards both knowledge and organisation training in the interior design industry in China. For a contribution towards existing literature, this has been developed through the analysis and interpretation of primary data in the context of a specifically ranged literature review that informs the complexity and interlocking system of influences in the interior design industry in China. This study fills the exiting gap in the literature, in the area of interior design process orientation, to develop the situated environment influence on behaviour in interior design, and industry expectations towards enhancing interior design education.

For contributions towards professional practice, this framework and its 'model' skills may serve as an indicator of the current interior design industry's expectations on the designer's essential skills. Application of the framework and its 'model' skills may help interior design organisations to develop their own internal designer training program based on their situated context in order to; close the current gap between the standard trained interior design professionals and their expectations from the industry; and improve performance of both the individuals and the organisations (Chang, 2011; Swanson, 1995).

On a broader aspect, within the education sector, by applying the framework and its 'model' skills as an indicator from the current industry to inform further research studies, which may help to address the lack of coherence between interior design education and its industry (Ru, 2011; Zheng, 2010), and promote a continuous professional development in China's interior design industry.

Suggestions within the education sector: This framework and its 'model' skills may be developed or incorporated into the interior design curriculum, focusing on client-designer management, which may suggest specifics such as design communication or presentation techniques.

Finally, future case studies on client-designer relationships will be suggested by utilising the concept of interactive dynamics in client-designer relationships during the design process into the framework and its 'model' skills, to explore the further possibilities to develop strategic plans for client-designer management.

References

- Alagaraja, M. and Wang, J. (2012). Development of a National HRD Strategy Model: Cases of India and China, *Human Resource Development Review*, **11**, 4, 407–429.
- Alvesson M., Kärreman D., Sturdy A., and Handley K. (2009). Unpacking the client(s): Constructions, positions and client-consultant dynamics, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, **25**, 253-263.
- Alvesson, M. and Sköldbberg, K. (2009). (Post-) Positivism, Social Constructionism, Critical Realism: Three Reference Points in The Philosophy of Science, *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Behmanesh A. (2015). Process of Interior Designing: A Case Study, *MAGNT Research Report*, **3**, 4, 125-131.
- Behmanesh A. (2015). Process of Interior Designing: A Case Study, *MAGNT Research Report*, **3**, 4, 125-131
- Benson, J and Zhu, Y. (2002). The Emerging External Labor Market and the Impact on Enterprise's Human Resource Development in China, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 13, 4, 449–466.
- Bhaskar, R. (1998). *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*. Routledge: Abingdon.
- Björkman, I. and Lu, Y. (1999). The Management of Human Resources in Chinese-Western Joint Ventures, *Journal of World Business*, **34**, 3, 306–324.

- Blossom, N., & Thompson, J. A. (2005). New Knowledge or artefact? *Published proceedings of the 4DED Doctoral Education in Design Conference, Phoenix, AZ.*
- Bruce M. and Docherty C. (1993). It's all in a relationship: a comparative study of client-design consultant relationships, *Design Studies*, **14**, 4, 402-422
- Bruce M. and Morris B. (1994). Managing external design professionals in the product development process, *Technovation*, **14**, 9, 585-599.
- Chang, X. (2011). Problems and Suggestions on Human Resources Development of China Enterprise, *Management and Service Science*, Wuhan, 12-14 Aug. 2011, 1-4.
- Chen W. Z. (2010). Something worthwhile to talk on interior design qualifications, *Modern Decoration*, **5**, 20-21
- Chen, B. and Feng, Y. (2000). Determinants of economic growth in China: Private enterprise, education, and openness, *China Economic Review*, 11, 1-15.
- China Interior Design Association (2011). *Suggestions addressed to the problems being raised in the development of domestic interior design industry nationwide during the 'Twelve Five-year Plan'*, Beijing, China Interior Design Association.
- Chiu M. L. (2002). An organizational view of design communication in design collaboration, *Design Studies*, **23**, 2, 187-210.
- Cho, E. and McLean, G. N. (2004). What We Discovered about NHRD and What it Means for HRD, *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6, 382-393.

- Clark, A. M. (2008). Critical Realism, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications. [online] Available from: <http://www.sage-ereference.com/view/research/n87.xml> [Accessed 8th April 2012].
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Sage: London
- Crossan, F. (2003) Research philosophy: towards an understanding, *Nurse Researcher*, **11**, 1, 46-55.
- Cui C. (2015). Analysis of the responsibilities and qualities of contemporary interior designers, *Art Panorama*, **12**, 138-139
- d'Anjou P. (2011). An Ehtics of Authernticity in the Client-Designer Relationship, *The Design Journal*, **14**, 1, 28-44
- DiCicco-Bloom, B. and Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The Qualitative Research Interviews, *Medical Education*, 40, 314-321.
- Dong C. (2010). The History Study of Interior Design Art for New Era 30 years, *Northeast Normal University*, 2010.
- Dong, Y. (2007). The Research on the Strategy of Human Resource Development and Vocational Education Development in China, *The Bridging Role for the Future, Human Resource Development, 2007 Global HR Institute Forum*, **II**, 7, 105–119.
- Easterby-Smith, M.; Thorpe, R.; and Lowe, A. (1991). *Management Research*, Sage: London.
- Goski P. S. (2013). “What is Critical Realism? And Why Should You Care?”, *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews*, 42, 658

- Haddad R. (2014). Research and Methodology for Interior Designers, *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 122, 283-291.
- Handley K., Sturdy A., Clark T., and Fincham R. (2005). Client-consultant relations and the role of challenge, *OKLC*, 1-24.
- Harrell M. and Bradley M. (2009). Data Collection Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Group, *RAND Corporation*, Santa Monica, CA
- Heron, J. & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm, *Qualitative Inquiry*, **3**, 3, 274-294.
- Holden, M. T. and Lynch, P. (2004). Choosing the Appropriate Methodology: Understanding Research Philosophy. *The Marketing Review*, 4, 397-409.
- Jackson R. and Sørensen G. (2010). *Introduction to international relations: Theories and approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Jin Y. P. (2005). From “Made in China” to “Invented in China”: A Significant Strategic Transformation, *Zhong Guan Cun*, **9**, 116-118
- Ke, J., Chermack, T. J., Lee, Y. H. and Lin, J. (2006). National Human Resource Development in Transitioning Societies in the Developing World: The People’s Republic of China, *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, **8**, 1, 28–45.
- Kinash, S. (2006). Paradigms, methodology & methods, *Bond University: Australia*, Retrieved October, 5, 2011.

- Knox, K. (2004). A Researcher's Dilemma – Philosophical and Methodological Pluralism, *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, **2**, 2, 119-128.
- Krauses, S. E. (2005). Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer, *The Qualitative Report*, **10**, 4, 758-770.
- Lauche K., Bohemia E., Connor C., and Badke-Schaub P. (2008). Distributed collaboration in design education: practising designer and client roles, *J. Design Research*, **7**, 3, 238-258
- Lee, J. S. Y. (1999). Organizational Learning in China, *Business Horizons*, January-February, 37-44.
- Leisti-Szymczak A., Liikkanen L. A., Laakso M., and Summanen I. (2013). Let Me Do My Job – Industrial Designers' Experiences of Client Collaboration, *Co-Create 2013*, June, 445-456.
- Lester, S. (1999). An Introduction to Phenomenological Research, *Taunton UK, Stan Lester Developments*, [online] Available from: <http://www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmelthy.pdf>. [Accessed 2nd June 2016].
- Li G. and Zhang W. X. (2012). Elementary discussion on the basic qualities of contemporary interior designers, *Mass Literary Magazine*, **12**, 138-139
- Li, J. and Huang, J. (2011). A review of the Ninth International Conference of the Academy of Human Resource Development (Asia Chapter) in Shanghai, China: workplace learning and sustainable development for individual, organization and society, *Human Resource Development International*, **14**, 4, 493-502.

- Li, J. and Madsen, J. (2009). Chinese workers' work ethic in reformed state-owned enterprises: implications for HRD, *Human Resource Development International*, **12**, 2, 171–188.
- Li, J. and Nimon, K. (2008). The important of recognizing generational differences in HRD policy and practices: a study of workers in Qinhuangdao, China, *Human Resource Development International*, **11**, 2, 167-182.
- Liu G. Z. (2010). From Made-in-China to Design-in-China Study of Design Innovation Mechanism, *Design*, **10**, 39-43.
- Liu, A. and Wall, G. (2005). Human Resources Development in China, *Annals of Tourism Research*, **32**, 3, 689–710.
- Luo, X. L. (2006). Discussion in Interior Design Profession Education Reform in Higher Education, [online] Available from: <http://www.studa.net/xueke/090206/11163949.html>, Accessed: 23rd July 2012.
- Mackenzie, N. and Knipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, Methods and Methodology, *Issues In Educational Research*, **16**, 2, 193-205.
- McLean, G. N. and McLean, L. (2001). If we can't define HRD in one country, how can we define it in an international context?, *Human Resource Development International*, **4**, 3, 313–326.
- Nelson, H., & Stolterman, E. (2003). *The Design Way: intentional change in an unpredictable world*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Educational Technology Publications.

- Nikolova N., Reihlen M., and Schlaphfner J.-F. (2009). Client-consultant interaction: Capturing social practices of professional service production, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, **25**, 289-298.
- Park, S. H. and Luo, Y. (2001). Guanxi and Organizational Dynamics: Organizational Networking in Chinese Firms, *Strategic Management Journal*, *22*, 455-477
- Peng, L. (2005). China Modern Arts and Design Education Rethink: Current Situation and its Problem of the Design Education to a Large Manufacturing Country, [online] Available from: http://www.dolcn.com/data/cns_1/article_31/paper_311/pgen_3119/2005-11/1132878386.htm, Accessed: 6th November 2011.
- Petermans A., Van Cleempoel K., and Vanrie J. (2011). Tacit Knowledge in Interior Architecture: Interior Architects on the Designer – Paying Client – User Client Relationship, *Diversity and unity: Proceedings of IASDR2011, the 4th World Conference on Design Research, 31 October – 4 November, Delft, the Netherlands*, 1-9.
- Pluciennik T. A. (2015) CRICH Survey Research Unit Methodology Bits, 4, 1-2
- Poldma, T. (2008). Interior Design at a Crossroads: Embracing Specificity through Process, Research, and Knowledge, *Journal of Interior Design*, **33**, 3, vi-xvi.
- Poulfelt F. and Payne A. (1994). Management Consultants: Client and Consultant Perspectives, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, **10**, 4, 421-436.

- Ru, C. P. (2011). History and Prospect of Art and design education in China, *Online Education*, 2011, **36**, [online] Available from: <http://www.qikan.com.cn/Article/wldz/wldz201136/wldz20113604.html>, Accessed: 7th July 2012.
- Ryan, A. B. (2006). Post-Positivist Approaches to Research, *Researching and Writing your thesis: a guide for postgraduate students*, 12-26.
- Shen W., Zhang X., Shen G. Q., and Femando T. (2013). The User Pre-Occupancy Evaluation Method in designer-client communication in early design stage: A case study, *Automation in Construction*, **32**, 112-124.
- Smith, M. L. (2005). Overcoming theory-practice inconsistencies: Critical realism and information systems research, *Information and Organization*, 16, 191-211.
- Sonnenwald, D. H. (1996). Communication roles that support collaboration during the design process, *Design Studies*, **17**, 3, 277-301.
- Swanson, R. A. (1995). Human resource development: Performance is the key, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **6**, 2, 207-213.
- Tang, B. and Chen, Z. (2004). Thinking about Chinese Modern Design Education, *Journal of Nanhua University (Science and Technology)*, **18**, 4, 64-84.
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data, *American Journal of Evaluation*, **27**, 2, 237-246.

- Tsui, A. S., Wang, H. and Xin, K. R. (2006). Organizational Culture in China: An Analysis of Culture Dimensions and Culture Types, *Management and Organization Review*, **2**, 3, 345–376.
- Vaikla-Poldma, T. (2003). *An Investigation of Learning and Teaching Processes in an Interior Design Class: An Interpretive and Contextual Inquiry*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, McGill University, Montreal.
- Walker T. (2017). Approaches to Critical Realism: Bhaskar and Lonergan, *Journal of Critical Realism*, 16, 2, 111-127
- Wang, G. G., William, J., Rothwell and Sun, J. Y. (2009). Management development in China: a policy analysis, *International Journal of Training and Development*, **13**, 4, 205-220.
- Wang, J. and Wang, G. G. (2006). Participation in Management Training in a Transitioning Context: A Cast of China, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **7**, 14, 443-473.
- Wang, J., Wang, G. G., Ruona, W. E. A. and Rojewski, J. W. (2005). *Confucian values and the implications for international HRD*, Human Resource Development International, **8**, 3, 311-326
- Weber, R. (2004). The Rhetoric of Positivism Versus Interpretivism: A Personal View, *MIS Quarterly*, **28**, 1, iii-xii.
- William A. (2015). Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. 10.1002/9781119171386.ch19.
- Williams, C. (2007). Research Methods, *Journal of Business & Economic Research*, **5**, 3, 65-72.

- Wu, H., Tian, H. and Liu, Y. (2005). Research on Mutuality between Artist Designing Education and Market Practice, *Packaging Engineering*, **26**, 4, 189-190.
- Xong, W. (2002). On Current Design Education, *Journal of Southern Yangtze University (Humanities & Social Sciences)*, **1**, 3, 110-112.
- Yang, B. (2012). Confucianism, socialism, and capitalism: A comparison of cultural ideologies and implied managerial philosophies and practices in the P. R. China, *Human Resource Management Review*, **22**, 165–178.
- Yang, B., Zhang, D. and Zhang, M. (2004). National Human Resource Development in the People's Republic of China, *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, **6**, 297–306.
- Yang, B., Zheng, W. and Li, M. (2006). Confucian View of Learning and Implications for Developing Human Resources, *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, **8**, 3, 346–354.
- Yeung, Y. M. and Tung, R. I. (1996). Achieving Business Success in Confucian Societies: The Importance of Guanxi (Connections), *Organizational Dynamics*, **24**, 3, 54-65.
- Zachariadis M., Scott S., and Barrett M. (2013). Methodological Implications of Critical Realism for Mixed-Methods Research, *MIS Quarterly*, **37**, p.1-25
- Zhao Y. J. (2010). The basic qualities of contemporary interior designers, *New Vision Art*, **5**, 20-21.
- Zheng, H. and Yang, Y. (2009). Chinese private sector development in the past 30 years: Retrospect and prospect, *The University of Nottingham China Policy Institute*, Discussion paper 45, 1–20.

Zheng, S. Y. (2010). China Contemporary Interior Design Development Seminar, *organized by China Interior Decoration Association on 21 October 2010*, [online] Available from:
<http://wenku.baidu.com/view/39c9bd29647d27284b735141.htm>
, Accessed: 15th July 2012.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Application for ethical approval

| BUSINESS SCHOOL RESEARCH INTEGRITY APPROVAL FORM |
|--|
| Section 1 – Research details |
| Name/s of researcher/s: Timothy Yu Ming CHAN Date: 14 th December 2015 Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Student - Matriculation number: 40072393 Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Title of project Interactive dynamics between client and designer in interior design practice in China: <i>Understanding key characteristics in the partnership process</i> |
| <u>Aim of Research</u> Seeking to understand the client/designer dialogue process to enhance the practice and education of the client/designer interaction. <u>Objectives</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To explore the influences that may be brought up in client/designer interaction and how this may affect the design process.2. To identify key characteristics of the client/designer dialogue from both the client's and the designer's perspective at an initial set-up, maintenance of the relationship and delivery of project stages.3. To enhance understanding of dialogue through identification of the key characteristics from the clients/designers' perceptions of the design process, their roles and relationship.4. Outcome: Key characteristics can be developed as a set of business initiatives for interior design practitioners, which can be further developed and applied in:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interior design firms: |

- Improving efficiency in the design progress: transforming client-designer's relationship from an inactive to a pro-active state; initiatives such as initial enquiry, project planning and progress negotiation in unexpected changes.
- Improving productivity: help in improving designers' emotional intelligence towards unexpected changes
- Interior design education:
 - Apprehending the essence of an actual business environment: understanding what the designer does and how they deal with the client during an on-going design process.
 - Developing a supplementary curriculum in addition to the main stream artistic and process orientated training; training focusing on the awareness of the interactive relationships between the client and the designer in a business environment.

Details of the research methods to be used, please consider all of the following in your response:

- a. how the data will be collected (please outline all methods e.g. questionnaires/focus groups/internet searches/literature searches/interviews/observation)
- b. data collection tools to be used (e.g. Survey Monkey)
- c. where the data will be gathered (e.g. in the classroom/on the street/telephone/on-line)
- d. who will undertake the data collection if not the lead researcher detailed in section 1 (list all involved)
- e. how the data sample will be selected (e.g. random/cluster/sequential/network sampling)
- f. the criterion for an entity to be included in the sample
- g. how research subjects will be invited to take part (e.g. letter/email/asked in lecture)
- h. how the validity and reliability of the findings will be tested
- i. if applicable, please attach a copy of the questionnaire/interview questions (for student researchers, please include notification of approval of the questionnaire from your supervisor)

The overall purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the client-designer relationship and its role in shaping the design process and the client's and the designer's perceptions of the design process. Their roles and relationships are often nonverbal, and this could lead to be problematic for either party to fully articulate. In-depth interviews are, therefore, considered to be an appropriate technique to elicit and document these perceptions.

A primary objective of the evaluation is to identify the tendency of any hidden mechanism which could arise during the interior design process (domain of real) – the reality. General inductive approaches, therefore, should be considered as the most appropriate methods for exploring, in-depth client-designer perceptions of an interior design service and the critical factor that makes a client perceive a quality design service.

Sampling procedures

With the intention of minimising any variables due to personal favours or differences in the overall design process, potential participants will be selected under a targeted representative category from the industry – standardised procedures are well established among interior design projects in large scale property developments in China. Therefore, criterion are set to the selection of participants who

- either came from, or possessed varying interior design experience for nation-wide developers in China, and
- possess a minimum of 5 years experience as mentioned above and are currently in an active position.

In this study, the same numbers of participants will be selected from the groups of clients and designers with the intention of achieving a balanced data representation in the study. Therefore, eight participants will be selected in total, four participants from the client group and four participants from the designer group respectively.

Data collection method and ethical considerations

Semi-structured interviews are proposed to collect primary data from selected participants. Selected participants will be contacted through email(s) or phone call(s), where appropriate. Once authorisation for conducting the interviews is gained from the selected participants, interviews will then be arranged. Consent forms will be sent to individuals, along with a copy of the guide lines and the confidentiality of the use of the gathered data, to provide sufficient time for participants to make enquiries should any arise. In order to provide ease for participants, all documents will be prepared in both English and Chinese (their first language) to provide extra assurance. A bi-lingual document that consists of the explanation of the research purpose will be

attached to the information package for all participants.

All interviews will be conducted in the participants' first language – Chinese (Mandarin). There could still be limitation in articulating the full meaning from the prepared interview schedules even though they were carefully translated. Extra procedures will be applied, including varied Chinese footnotes being added to establish a complete essence of the original English meanings alongside the translated interview schedules. As a further precaution to avoid lost-in-translation, both the original and translated versions of the interview schedules will be put together so as to allow the researcher to gain access for cross referencing purposes during the interviews.

In considering the unique relationship between the researcher and the participants, the choice of interview venue is essential. Interviews, therefore, will be held in a venue suggested by the participants or in a third party facility that offers a neutral, calm and quiet environment with maximum privacy. Participants will be informed that an estimated average of 30 to 45 minutes interview session will be held and focussed on designer/client reflections on their interactive dynamics during the design process. Interviews will be digitally sound recorded once it has been acknowledged by the participants.

Data analysis procedures

The data analysis process is designed and divided into two sections: 1) initial data analysis will be carried out by using the language of the gathered data – Simplified Chinese. 2) Once the raw data are categorised, they will be translated into English for further analysis. In the second part of the analysis process, in order to minimise any data being lost-in-translation towards the whole analysis process, on-going cross referencing between categorised data in both languages will then be carried out. An overview of this inductive coding process is shown in Table 1. Detailed procedures are described as follows.

1. *Preparation of raw data files*: Interviews will be digitally sound recorded and transcribed into their interview language by two groups of transcribers. Before these raw data are sent to the relevant participants for accuracy check, all transcripts will be first collected, proof-read and formatted in a common format by the proof-reader from the transcribing team then checked by the researcher. The proof-read transcripts will then be sent to each relevant participant along with the original sound recordings.

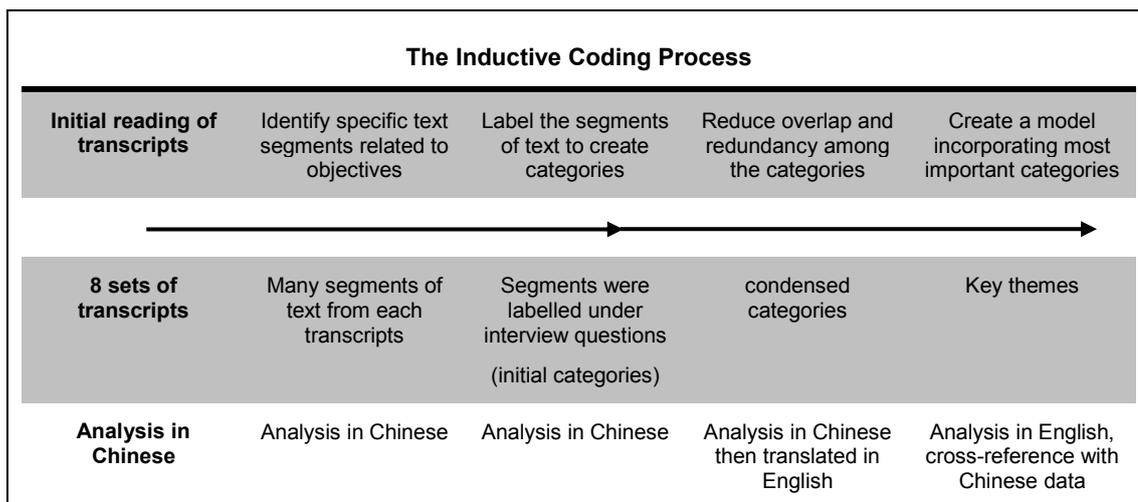


Table 3: The inductive coding process – adapted from : Thomas (2006, p242, table 2)

2. *Creation of categories:* After receiving confirmation of accuracy from the participants, the analysis will be commenced with a close reading of the text, which will be carried out by the researcher. Initial categories will then be created from actual phrases or meanings in specific text segments under the interview questions. The categorised data will be sent to the relevant participants for comments and confirmation. These categories, then, will be condensed by reducing overlaps and redundant material among them.
3. *Emergence of main themes:* These confirmed data will then be combined and formed into condensed categories under continuing revision and refinement until key themes emerged. The importance of the analysis will remain in Simplified Chinese at this stage maintaining the consistency towards the overall essence of the gathered information. Once the key themes emerge and are put into table form, they will be translated into English.

References

Thomas D. R. (2006) A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data, *American Journal of Evaluation*, **27**, 2, 237-246

| |
|--|
| <p>Who/what will be the research subjects in the research?</p> <p>a. Staff/Students of Edinburgh Napier (please give details)</p> <p>None</p> <p>continue from section 2</p> <p>b. Vulnerable individuals (please give details e.g. school children, elderly, disabled etc.)</p> <p>None</p> <p>continue from section 2</p> <p>c. All other research subjects (please give details)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four clients of the researcher's interior design firm 2. Four interior designers from other interior design firms <p>continue from section 3</p> |
| <p>Section 2 – research subject details</p> |
| <p>Will participants be free NOT to take part if they choose?</p> <p>Yes</p> |
| <p>Explain how informed consent will be achieved.</p> <p>Details of the research will be explained by the researcher and an information sheet will be given to each participant. Once they have agreed that they understand what will happen they will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing to their participation.</p> |
| <p>Will any individual be identifiable in the findings?</p> <p>No</p> |
| <p>How will the findings be disseminated?</p> <p>The findings will be written up in a thesis of the DBA.</p> |
| <p>Is there any possibility of any harm (social, psychological, professional, economic etc) to participants who take part or do not take part? Give details.</p> <p>No</p> |

How / where will data be stored? Who will have access to it? Will it be secure? How long will the data be kept? What will be done with the data at the end of the project?

The data will be stored in a secure locked safe in the researcher's office. Transcribers will have access to the data during transcription only. They will have no further access after transcription. From then on only the researcher and his supervisors will have access to the data.
The data will be kept for the duration of the research project.
At the end of the project ALL data collected will be destroyed.

Any other information in support of your application

Continue to section 3

Section 3 – RI (Research Integrity) Advisor's Approval

Delete as appropriate:

I approve this research / I refer this research to the FRIC (give reason for referral)

Name of RI Advisor

Signature of RI Advisor

Date

Signature of researcher/s to confirm understanding and acceptance of RI Advisor's decision

Date

Section 4 – FRIC (Faculty Research Integrity Committee) Approval

FRIC decision

Does this issue need to be referred to the URIC (University Research Integrity Committee)?

If YES Secretary to forward to URIC Secretary for referral with any appropriate paperwork

Date actioned

| |
|---|
| Reason for referral |
| Signature of Convener of FRIC |
| Date |
| Date researcher/s informed of FRIC decision – include copy of email to researcher/s |

Appendix 2: Information sheet for potential participants

Information Sheet for Potential Participants

Interactive dynamics between client and designer in interior design practice in China: *Understanding key characteristics in the partnership process*

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study which I am undertaking within the Doctor of Business Administration programme at Edinburgh Napier University.

The purpose of this research study is to seek understanding of the client/designer dialogue process to enhance the practice and education of the interaction between the client and the designer. The objectives are:

- To explore the influences that may be brought up in client/designer interaction and how this may affect the design process.
- To identify key characteristics of the client/designer dialogue from both the client's and the designer's perspective at an initial set-up, maintenance of the relationship and delivery of project stages.
- To enhance understanding of dialogue through identification of the key characteristics from the clients/designers' perceptions of the design process, their roles and relationship.
- Outcome: Key characteristics can be developed as a set of business initiatives for interior design practitioners, which can be further developed and applied in interior design firms and education.

You are invited to participate in the study because you may be able to provide helpful insights from your role as 1) a practice designer in the commercial interior design area, 2) sales and marketing managers/design manager of a property developer.

Please note you may not benefit directly from participation in this research study.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in a qualitative interview lasting approximately 1 hour. Interviews will be digitally recorded and data transcribed to hard copy.

Participants will receive a copy of the transcript of their interview and will be able to provide written comments on this. The data will be analysed by the researcher alone. You will receive a summary of the key themes of the research, upon request.

You have the option to decline to take part and are free to withdraw from the study at any stage. If you decide to withdraw you will not have to give any reason. All data will be anonymised as far as possible, your name and institution will be replaced with a participant cipher and it will not be possible for you to be identified in any reporting of the data gathered. Specific roles will not be identified, though it is likely that broad categories such as “manager” will be used. All data collected will be kept in a secure place (stored on an encrypted remote storage device) to which only the nominated researcher and his supervisors will have access.

The results may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

If you would like to contact an independent person, who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact Dr. Janice McMillan, Senior Lecturer, School of Management.

If you have read and understood this Information Sheet and you would like to be a participant in the study, please complete the Consent Form attached.

Appendix 3: Consent form

Consent Form

Interactive dynamics between client and designer in interior design practice in China: *Understanding key characteristics in the partnership process*

I have read and understood the Information Sheet and this Consent Form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Researcher Contact Details

Name of Researcher:

Timothy Y. M. CHAN

Address:

The Business School,
Edinburgh Napier University
Craiglockhart Campus
Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone:

40072393@live.napier.ac.uk
timothy.chan@mail.com

Independent Person Contact Details

Name of Independent Person:

Dr. Janice McMillan

Address:

The Business School,
Edinburgh Napier University
Room 2/38, Craiglockhart Campus
Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone:

or j.mcmillan@napier.ac.uk
+44 (0) 131 455 4340

Interview Schedule – Interior Design Clients and Interior Designers

First I would like to thank you for turning up for this interview to participate in a research study I am undertaking within the Doctor of Business Administration programme at Edinburgh Napier University. I would like to emphasize this is not a question-and-answer discussion and there are no right or wrong answers. During the session we will explore a number of areas that are related to your thoughts on the relationship between the client/designer during an interior design project.

1. Can you explain to me your understanding of the relationship between the client/designer during an interior design project might be?

2. **(For designer)** I am interested in hearing a little about your experience in the design industry can we start with you telling me how many years' experience have you had in interior design services? How well did the training/education that you completed prepare you for this challenge? *(Follow-up: what activities were most common for you during that period? How has this changed for you over time?) (Possible probe - if not through training/education, how did they learn, was it on the job or watching others?)*

3. **(For client)** I am interested in exploring your experience of interior design projects. How many years' experience have you had which has involved interior design projects? How has this changed for you over the years?

4. **(For designer)**
 - 4a. With regards to your experience in handling interior design projects, how would you describe your role as a designer? *(Follow-up: What were your main responsibilities as the designer?)*

 - 4b. What were the main topics for discussion and exchange of information and views in your relationship with the client during the design process?

- (For client)**
 - 4a. How would you describe your involvement with the process as client? *(Follow-up: What were your main contributions to the process as the client?)*

 - 4b. What were the main topics for discussion and exchange of information and views in your relationship with the designer during the process?

- * *(Remarks: A card with one or two specific definitions will be available for the participant to read and to comment on what it says – then these questions will be asked.)*

5. **(For both)** What do you think makes an ideal designer/client relationship in terms of working together on a design project? *
6. **(For both)** What do you think that makes a workable designer/client relationship in practice?*

Open questions:

7. **(For both)** Do you think there are differences between the designer's and client's perceptions of how a good interior design project should run from its inception to its completion? If yes what do you think they are?
8. **(For both)** Can you suggest an example which may be considered as a success in an overall interior design project? (*Follow-up: What were its most noteworthy features?*)
9. **(For both)** Can you tell me what interactive dynamics means to you?
10. **(For both)**

7a. Do you think the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer may affect the design process?

7b. Can you give an example of a positive effect of interactive dynamics? (*Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?*)

7c. Can you give an example of a negative effect of interactive dynamics? (*Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?*)

Open Questions

11. **(For both)** Do you think a power deviation exists in client/designer relationship and what would that be?
12. **(For both)** In your experience, do you think the necessity of providing continuous professional development training for graduate designers? And what would it be?
13. **(For both)** Is there anything else you'd like to tell me which these questions have not covered, or where you think I may have picked you up wrongly? If so, please tell me now.
14. **End of interview**

Appendix 4: Information sheet – Chinese version

潜在的参与者信息表

探讨中国室内设计在实践中客户和服务提供商之间的互动性

我想邀请您参加我在爱丁堡龙比亚大学 - 商业管理研究院从事的一项研究工作。

本研究的目的是探讨在中国室内设计在实践中，客户和服务提供商之间的一种互动概念。本研究可能有助于透析在一个室内设计过程中，客户的期望和设计师提供的服务所存在的差异，也可能有助于确定实现中国室内设计实践可持续发展的经营战略所要采取的方向。

作为 1) 在商业室内设计领域的实践设计，2) 一个房地产开发商的营销经理或设计管理人员，或许您无法从参与本研究中获得直接受益，但是您的参与却能为此研究提供有益的见解。

如果您同意参与本研究，您将被邀请参加一个持续大约 1 小时的访谈。访谈内容将以数码记录，并将转录为文档。

此外，参与者将收到一份访谈内容记录，如有需要您可以对提供内容记录给予书面意见。访谈内容中的数据将只供本研究项目的研究员分析。若您提出要求，您将收到本研究中关键主题的总结。

您有权选择拒绝参与，或在本研究中任何阶段自由退出。如果您决定退出，您并不需要给予任何理由。此外，为了确保对参与者的隐私保护，所有数据将匿名处理。您的姓名和机构等将以参与者和代码代替，以确保在任何报告的数据中无法识别您的身份。对于特定的角色，将可能以“经理”或“设计师”等泛义词代替。所有收集的数据将被保存在一个安全的地方（存储在一个加密的远程存储设备），只有指定的研究员和他的上司能够提取。

本研究结果将有可能在杂志或研讨会上发表。

如果您想与一位知道本研究项目，但不参与本研究的独立人员联系，欢迎您联系 爱丁堡龙比亚大学 商学院 - 人力资源管理系 教授：珍妮丝.麦克米伦博士。

如果您已经阅读并理解此信息表，并同意参与本研究，请填写附件的同意书。

Appendix 5: Consent form – Chinese version

同意书

探讨中国室内设计在实践中客户和服务提供商之间的互动性

I have read and understood the Information Sheet and this Consent Form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

我已阅读并理解信息表和本同意书。并我已了解我所将参与的问题。

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.

我明白，我没有被迫参加本项研究。

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.

我知道我有在任何阶段退出本项研究的权利，并无需给予任何理由。

I agree to participate in this study.

我同意参与本项研究。

Name of Participant:
参与者姓名:

Signature of Participant:
参与者签名:

Date:
日期:

Researcher Contact Details

研究员联系资料

Name of Researcher:

研究员名称:

Timothy Y. M. CHAN

Address:

地址:

The Business School,
Edinburgh Napier University
Craiglockhart Campus
Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone:

电子邮件/ 电话:

40072393@live.napier.ac.uktimothy.chan@mail.com**Independent Person Contact Details**

独立人员联系资料

Name of Independent Person:

独立人员名称:

Dr. Janice McMillan

Address:

地址:

The Business School,
Edinburgh Napier University
Room 2/38, Craiglockhart Campus
Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone:

电子邮件/ 电话:

or j.mcmillan@napier.ac.uk

+44 (0) 131 455 4340

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule with Chinese translation

Interview Schedule – Interior Design Clients and Interior Designers

First I would like to thank you for turning up for this interview to participate in a research study I am undertaking within the Doctor of Business Administration programme at Edinburgh Napier University. I would like to emphasize this is not a question and answer discussion and there are no right or wrong answers. During the session we will explore a number of areas that are related to your thoughts on the relationship between the client/interior designer, during an interior design project.

首先我要谢谢你参加我在爱丁堡龙比亚大学--企业管理专业的博士研究项目的会谈。我想强调这不是一个问题与答案的讨论，而且没有划定正确或错误的答案。会谈期间，我们将探讨一些在一个室内设计项目中，你对于客户和设计师之间的关系的想法。

1. Can you explain to me what your understanding might be, of the relationship between the client and the designer during an interior design project?

你能陈述一下对于你的理解，在一个室内设计项目中，客户和设计师之间的关系是什么？

2. **(For designer)**

I am interested in hearing a little about your experience in the design industry can we start with you telling me how many years' experience have you had in interior design services? How well did the training/education that you completed prepare you for this challenge?

我有兴趣知道关于你在设计行业的经验，我们可以开始请你告诉我，你在室内设计服务（行业）有多少年的经验？在于准备你对这行业里的挑战，你觉得从你完成的培训/教育中，对你有多大帮助？

(Follow-up: what activities were most common for you during that period? How has this changed for you over time?) (Possible probe - if not through training/education, how did they learn, was it on the job or watching others?) (跟进：在（你的设计生涯）期间，什么是你通常的活动（普遍的工作内容）？在这段期间它（这普遍的工作内容）又出现什么变化呢？）（可能的探针-如果不通过培训和教育，它们（那些准备你面对行业里挑战的技能是如何学习的，它是在工作中学习或从观察他人中学习？）

3. **(For client)**

I am interested in exploring your experience of interior design projects. How many years' experience have you had which has involved interior design projects? How has this changed for you over the years?

我有兴趣知道关于你在室内设计项目的经验，我们可以开始请你告诉我，你在从事参与室内设计项目有多少年的经验？你在这些年这些项目有什么改变。

4. (For designer)

a) With regards to your experience in handling interior design projects, how would you describe your role as a designer?

关于你在处理室内设计项目的经验中，你会怎样描述你作为一个设计师？

(Follow-up: What were your main responsibilities as the designer?)

(跟进：您作为设计师的主要职责是什么？)

b) What were the main topics for discussion and exchange of information and views in your relationship with the client during the design process?

在设计过程中，你与客户的关系之间的信息和意见的交流里、讨论中的主要议题是什么？

(For client)

a) How would you describe your involvement with the process as client?

你对作为甲方在室内设计过程中的参与，你是如何形容呢？

(Follow-up: What were your main contributions to the process as the client?)

(跟进：您作为甲方，你在过程中的主要贡献是什么？)

b) What were the main topics for discussion and exchange of information and views in your relationship with the designer during the process?

在设计过程中，你与设计师的关系之间的信息和意见的交流里、讨论中的主要议题是什么？

5. (For both)

What do you think makes an ideal designer/client relationship in terms of working together on a design project? *

在共同进行一个设计项目工作中，你认为什么是理想的设计师/客户关系？

6. (For both)

What do you think that makes a workable designer/client relationship in practice?*

你认为什么使得在实践中可行的设计师/客户关系？

** (Remarks: A card with one or two specific definitions will be available for the participant to read and to comment on what it says – then these questions will be asked.)*

Open questions:

7. (For both)

What difficulties/differences do you think there might be between the designer's and client's perceptions of how a good interior design project should run from its inception to its completion?

设计师和客户对于一个好的室内设计项目应该怎么样从始到终的看法，你认为当中可能存在的困难/ 分别是什么？

8. (For both)

What examples could you give which may be considered as a success in an overall interior design project?

你可以举出什么可以给这可能被认为是一个整体成功的室内设计项目的例子？

(Follow up: What were its most noteworthy features?)

(跟进：其最显著的特征是什么？)

9. (For both)

Can you tell me, in respect of the client/designer relationship, what interactive dynamics means to you?

你能告诉我，在客户/设计师的关系方面，互动对你意味着什么？

10. (For both)

a) In what ways do you think the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer may affect the design process?

你认为在哪些方面客户和设计师之间的互动会影响设计过程？

b) Can you give an example of a positive effect of interactive dynamics?

你能举出一个互动的积极（正面）影响的例子？

(Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?)

(跟进：这动态是如何或怎样有可能发展、形成的？为什么？)

c) Can you give an example of a negative effect of interactive dynamics?

你能举出一个互动的负面影响的例子？

(Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?)

(跟进：这动态是如何或怎样有可能发展、形成的？为什么？)

Open Questions

11. (For both)

Do you think a power deviation exists in client/designer relationship and what would that be?

你认为在客户与设计师之间有权衡高低之分吗？那么你认为是什么？

12. (For both)

In your experience, do you think the necessity of providing continuous professional development training for graduate designers? And what would it be?

以你的经验你认为有必要为干毕业的设计师提供专业持续发展的培训吗？你认为应该会是什么样的呢？

13. (For both)

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me which these questions have not covered, or where you think I may have picked you up wrongly? If so, please tell me now.

还有什么你想告诉我而这些问题没有涉及到，或者在那里我误会你的意思？你可以现在提出。

End of interview

**Appendix 7: Initial categories table – Client group
(Chinese version)**

(Following pages)

**Appendix 8: Condensed categories table – Client group
(Chinese version)**

(Following pages)

| GENERAL CATEGORIES | CONDENSED CATEGORIES |
|---|--|
| 问题/受访者 | |
| Q: 在一个室内设计项目中, 客户和设计师之间的关系是什么? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 一个是需求, 一个是提供服务, 互相相辅相成的(C1,3,4,5,6) • 甲方是服务方, 乙方是被服务的(C2) • 互相合作的一个关系, 发展成朋友的一种关系(C5) |
| Q: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A |
| Q: 你看在这些年间, 这些项目有什么改变? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 潮流趋势, 不同的风格, 它也是一个发展(C3,4,6) • 人的思维在改变, 对设计理念的转变, 包括跟设计师合作的方式的转变(C4,5) • 项目定制化的过程, 由粗到细到精。(C1,6) • 设计师的水平提高了(C1,2) |
| Q: 描述作为甲方在室内设计过程中的参与? 你与设计师的关系之间的交流中的主要议题是什么? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 实际上我是不希望过早地去参与到, 因为我们是甲乙双方提供一个设计作品的, 我从个人观点来说, 我不希望过早地去参与到你的设计当中去(C3) • 首先我在这个岗位所从事的工作一个特定的条件, 首先我在这个岗位从事的工作一个特定的条件, 我背后的一些领导他们会对我有一个看法, 我会把他如何转到我希望走上正常道路的一个, 我可能会和你交流的过程中, 和设计师交流的过程中, 我要对他们观点扭转。(C3) • 因为设计师他也是有想法, 设计师他很有想法, 要不然他不会做这个项目的, 协调, 最后可能大部分百分之七八十还是靠甲方老板。(C4) • 一开始跟设计师的沟通, 到后期把设计师的理念得以执行, 跟设计师合作的话, 就是沟通非常重要。执行的时候, 能够跟甲方跟设计师之间的桥梁的作用, 是很重要的(C1,2,3,4,5,6) • 只要我觉得好, 我们都认为 OK 了(C6) • 甲方是一个协调者角色(C1,2,3,4,5,6) |
| Q: 在进行一个设计项目工作中, 什么是理想的设计师/客户关系? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 引导业主(C3) • 我更希望老板来改变(C4) • 理想的关系, 那就站在老板的角度上讲, 那肯定就是希望我们要求什么, 设计师给我们什么, 而且还要超出我们的预期, 肯定是这样, 还要节约成本, 又想马儿好, 又想马儿不吃草, 这个是所有老板的要求(C4) • 理想的设计师跟客户的关系就是信任感。(C2,5) • 理想状态, 我们希望公司给我们更大的权限, 轻表上, 成本预算上不要过于紧张, 我们可以和设计师有更多的沟通, 能够思想达到共识, 同样, 我们的理想状态, 可能更倾向于设计, 希望能够走出一条比较创新的路子(C6) |
| Q: 什么元素能使设计师/客户关系在实践中可行? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 我觉得只有改变, 妥协, 而且要灵活妥协(C3,4,5,6) • 可行的设计师跟客户之间的关系, 刚才说得确实还是比较理想化的, 我很信任你, 所以才是这样子。实际比较可行的话, 我认为在信任的过程中, 还需要加入一些相互妥协的这样一个东西, 但是主线, 原则不变。(C5) • 甲方必须指令明确(C1) • 灵活应变(C2,3,5,6) |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Q: 对于一个好的室内设计项目应该怎么样从始至终的看法，设计师和客户可能存在的困难/ 分别是什么？</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 我觉得首先一个最初的观点，大家应该是站在互相承认、相信的基础上才有一个开始，统一方向。(C3) 公司领导的决定。(C4,5) 客户跟设计师之间出这样一种在碰到问题的时候，如何去相互妥协的这样一个问题，也是刚才这样一个理念，就是原则性的东西，它包含了成本，包含了项目的主导精神，这个东西是不变的，其他东西可以【相互妥协】，相互去磨合。(C4,5,6) 这是甲方最关注的是把空间更好的展示出来，能够顺利引导消费者去消费，把房子卖掉(C1,2,4,6) |
| <p>Q: 请举出一些能使整体室内设计项目成功的元素吗？</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 我想设计师是用心去做一定会做好，他很认真、很用心，而且他不会不停地去思索，不停地在研究，我觉得我很佩服他。(C3) 完全尊重设计师的一个期望，完全尊重了她的意见，然后也保留了她这个设计师的风格。(C3,4) 所以就是两点，一个是【舍得】，另外一个【能够引导人们对这种类的追求方向】。(整体就是说信任，还有沟通。)(C5) 100%里面他们达到60%，这个就已经是成功了。量化来比的话，里面的因素，元素，或者特别突显出来的一个特征，有可能当中有刚好是碰到的一个客观的元素，所以就在某些程度上妥协，有太多的原因在里面，但是达到60%已经可以了，就算成功了。)(C6) 这设计是不是能让参观的客户冲动，马上把单子签下来，甲方就认为设计已经到位了，并不需要业内人士对设计的认同(C1,2) |
| <p>Q: 在客户/设计师的关系中，【互动】对你意味着什么？</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 很重要，就经常不断地沟通，不断地沟通。(C4,5,6) 设计师跟客户之间有互动，肯定是直接给项目加分的。(C4,5,6) 互动性密切的话那他出来的东西越接近甲方的要求。(C1,2,4) 因为互动意味着双方对这个项目会更深层次地了解。(C3,5) |
| <p>Q: 在哪些方面客户和设计师之间的互动会影响设计过程？请举出一个互动的积极影响的例子？请举出一个互动的负面影响的例子？</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 会影响，会往好的方向去影响，就是一个很正常的流程。(C1,2,3,4,5,6) (沟通得多，可能里面包含互动，然后形成因为次数多了，改动多了，而且是一个会把设计师的热情)(C4,5,6) 在这个过程中，甲方可透过互动把需求持续提供设计师，同时也可以透过互动去修正偏差想法，使最终结果更贴近甲方的要求。(C1,4) 不停互动可能会浪费时间。(C1) 互动中所产生的多个可行的想法，从而产生「选择」的问题。[选择]容易把原本清晰的想法变得模糊，最终导致没有想法。(C1,5) |
| <p>Q: 如果日后能供给给在设计师的一个在培训计划或课程，你觉得是在哪一方面？</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> |
| <p>Q: 在设计师和客户之间关系里，你觉得有没有一种权利之间高低之分？</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 绝对的平衡(C3,5) (那种平衡你觉得它会有变化吗？)会有，所谓的这个不能叫压制，而是大家观点的陈述，你对我的陈述，我对你的观点我有充分的理由，应该得到你的认可，那就应该尊重我的这个方法，这个就是技术层面的这种平衡，这种高高低低的这种(C3) 肯定是甲方高。那太直白，就是一个给钱，一个出力。(C4) (这种权利的关系会不会在设计项目的里面会不会有变化？)不会，因为还是有合同关系，肯定还是一个像服务和被服务的一个关系，可能设计师他也希望能得到这个项目。(C4) (那你怎么去平衡？)我首先还是必须要尊重我的工作，就是要妥协老板，然后再去妥协设计师。就是让设计师被妥协，尽量就是这样子(C4) 设计师跟客户之间的这个权力博弈，你觉得应该是，特别到现在，以前就是有高低，客户在上面，设计师在下面，这样的一个情况。现在已经转变成平等的，很多的时候，因为平等所以才有沟通，有沟通才能把事情做得更好。)(C5) |

**Appendix 9: Condensed categories table – Client group
(Translated version)**

(Following pages)

| GENERAL CATEGORIES | |
|---|---|
| INTERVIEW SCHEDULE | |
| CONDENSED CATEGORIES | |
| Q: Can you explain to me your understanding of the relationship between the client/designer during an interior design project might be? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One who has needs and the other provides that needs. Complementary to each other. (C1,3,4,5,6) Client provides service and designer is being served. (C2) A relationship of mutual cooperation, to develop into a relationship of friends. (C5) |
| Q: | N/A |
| Q: I am interested in exploring your experience of interior design projects. How many years' experience have you had which has involved interior design projects? How has this changed for you over the years? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> trends, different styles, it is also a development (C3,4,6) People thinking change, changes of design concepts, including changes in the way of cooperation with the designer. (C4,5) The progress of projects emerged from coarse to fine. (C1,6) Designer's ability has elevated(C1,2) |
| Q: 4a. How would you describe your involvement with the process as client? (Follow-up: What were your main contributions to the process as the client?) Q: 4b. What were the main topics for discussion and exchange of information and views in your relationship with the designer during the process? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not want to be over-participated in the process because both parties (client and designer) contribute to a design work. From my personal point of view, I do not want to be over-participating in the designer's work. (C3) First, there is a specific condition in my position at work. My directors could have particular point of views that I need to transform their opinions into a normal way; their point of views might be required to be turned around when communicating to the designers during the process. (C3) Designers have their own thoughts and good ideas otherwise they could not manage to the level of coordination works. However, around 70 to 80% of the original work remain to be compromised in favour to the big boss.(C4) Designer's concept can be implemented due to the commencement of communication. Communication is very important when working with designers. My post is like a bridge that can link both company and designers together, which is very important.(C1,2,3,4,5,6) When the sale is good that we recon everything is fine. (C6) The client's role is a coordinator. (C1,2,3,4,5,6) |
| Q: What do you think makes an ideal designer/client relationship in terms of working together on a design project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designer should guide the client where to go. (C3) I rather hope big boss to change. (C4) For an ideal relationship, I must say that designers give us what we asked for when I stand in my boss's point of view. And also should exceed our expectation and save cost. As the Chinese old saying, 'hoping a horse that is good and also does not need to eat grass.' Which is all bosses requests.(C4) Ideal client-designer's relationship is trust. (C2,5) In an ideal situation, I hope my company can authorise more power in budget that budget should be less tight. Therefore, we can have more communication with designers to achieve a common understanding. At the same time, our ideal situation could lean forward to design itself. In hope to achieve an innovative way. (C6) |
| Q: What do you think that makes a workable designer/client relationship in practice? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I believe the only way is to change and compromise, flexibility in compromise. (C3,4,5,6) A workable client-designer relationship I believe a form of compromise would be needed under the process of trust, where the main direction and principle remain the same. (C5) Client must give clear instruction(C1) Flexibility (C2,3,5,6) |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Q: Do you think there are differences between the designer's and client's perceptions of how a good interior design project should run from its inception to its completion? If yes what do you think they are?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I believe the initial point is that a unified direction will only arise when both parties are positioning themselves on a foundation of mutual understanding and trust (C3) The decisions of the company directors (C4.5) As long as the main principle unchanged, which includes the budget and project direction, everything else can be negotiated and compromised. (C4.5,6) Client concern especially is to have a better display that can direct consumers to buy effectively, until all the estates have been sold out. (C1,2,4,6) |
| <p>Q: Can you suggest an example which may be considered as a success in an overall interior design project? (Follow-up: What were its most noteworthy features?)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If designer intended to do a good job and he will do it well, the characters of seriousness, non-stop in analyses and research.(C3) A total respect to designer. (C3,4) There are two points: 1) (She De) 'She' means give up, 'De' means gain, which means: be willing to part with, not begrudge. The other point is the ability to lead people to pursuit beauty. Overall this means to trust and communicate. (C5) There are many elements could lead to different level of compromise, therefore by maintaining 60% of the original design could be considered a success. (C6) Whether or not the design could influence potential buyers' desires to place the order. If do so, clients will consider the design is sufficient (good) enough without the need to seek recognition from industrial expert. (C1,2) |
| <p>Q: Can you tell me what interactive dynamics means to you?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very important, the necessity of continuous communication. (C4,5,6) It is definitely a bonus to a project with the client-designer interaction.(C4,5,6) The final design product can be as near as what the client's requests by having a close interaction in a project. (C1,2,4) Interaction means both parties will have a deeper understanding in the project. (C3,5) |
| <p>Q: 7a. Do you think the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer may affect the design process? Q: 7b. Can you give an example of a positive effect of interactive dynamics? (Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?) Q: 7c. Can you give an example of a negative effect of interactive dynamics? (Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction between client and design can influence the design process towards a positive direction, which is a very normal procedure.(C1,2,3,4,5,6) Increasing in communication could lead to numerous changes; as a result this could eliminate designer's enthusiasm. (C4,5,6) Clients can provide their thoughts to designers sustainably through interaction during the design process. At the same time, any off track ideas can be revised through interaction to enable the final result as close as to the client's requirements.(C1,4) Non-stop interaction could waste time. (C1) Varies ideas can be generated though interaction which lead to a matter of 'choices'. 'Choices' can easily distort the original thoughts that eventually lead to no idea. (C1,5) |
| <p>Q: In your experience, do you think the necessity of providing continuous professional development training for graduate designers? And what would it be?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> |
| <p>Q: Do you think a power deviation exists in client/designer relationship and what would that be?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolute balance.(C3,5) Changes to this balance can happen, based on mutual respect on expressions from each point of view. This is considered as the balance in the technical side, reasonable point of views should be respected and recognised. (C3) Client is on the higher side that is definite; with one side who pay and the other labour.(C4) This power relationship will not change due to the binding relationship in the contract. Therefore, there will be service and being serviced relationship. Besides, designer also hopes to get the project.(C4) How to balance it? First of all, I still need to respect my own role that I have to compromise to my boss. Then I will have to compromise to designers, which means to make sure designers are compromised.(C4) This power relationship changed from the hierarchy position where client is holding power over designer in the past, and now changed into a balanced power position. It is because when they are equal then they can communicate, when there is communication then work can be done better. (C5) |

Appendix 10: Initial themes identification tables – Client group

(Following pages)

| THEMES | CONDENSED CATEGORIES | | | | PERCEPTION of RELATIONSHIP |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | CLIENTS | PERCEPTION of ROLES | PERCEPTION of PROCESS | PERCEPTION of RELATIONSHIP | |
| Progression in design perception | (C3,4,6) | ● | ● | ○ | |
| | (C4,5) | ● | ● | ○ | |
| | (C1,6) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| | (C1,2) | ● | ● | ○ | |
| CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | | | | | |
| | (C1) | ● | ○ | ● | |
| | (C1,3,4,5,6) | ● | ○ | ● | |
| | (C2) | ● | ○ | ● | |
| ROLES OF DESIGNER AND CLIENT | | | | | |
| | (C1,2,3,4,5,6) | ● | ● | ○ | |
| | (C1,2) | ● | ● | ○ | |
| | (C1,2,3,4,5,6) | ● | ● | ○ | |
| POWER DISTRIBUTION | | | | | |
| | (C3,5) | ● | ● | ○ | |
| | ↕C3 | ● | ○ | ● | |
| | (C4) | ● | ○ | ○ | |
| | (C4) | ○ | ● | ● | |
| | (C4) | ● | ○ | ● | |
| | (C5) | ○ | ● | ● | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | communicate; when there is communication then work can be done better. | | | | |
| Result and compromise | ● I believe the only way is to change and compromise, flexibility in compromise. | (C3,4,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | ● A workable client-designer relationship I believe a form of compromise would be needed under the process of trust, where the main direction and principle remain the same. | (C3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | ● As long as the main principle unchanged, which includes the budget and project direction, everything else can be negotiated and compromised. | (C4,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | ● Client concern especially is to have a better display that can direct consumers to buy effectively, until all the estates have been sold out. | (C1,2,4,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | ● (shé dé) 'shé' means give up, 'dé' means gain, which means: be willing to part with, not begrudge. | (C5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | ● In a project, there are many elements could lead to different level of compromise, therefore be able to maintain 60% of the original design could be considered a success. | (C6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | ● Whether or not the design could influence potential buyers' desires to place the order. If do so, clients will consider the design is sufficient (good) enough without the need to seek recognition from industrial expert. | (C1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | ● In the client's perception of a successful interior design project, the end result is the most important (the success of a project would be that buyers made their purchase during their visit) | (C1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | ● To fulfil the client's ultimate goal is fundamental to an overall success in an interior design project. The final design result is considerably less important. | (C1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | IDEAL CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | | | | |
| Progressive Relationship | ● Designer should guide the client where to go. | (C3) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | ● I rather hope big boss to change. | (C4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | ● For an ideal relationship, I must say that designers give us what we asked for when I stand in my boss's point of view. And also should exceed our expectation and save cost. As the Chinese old saying, 'hoping a horse that is good and also does not need to eat grass.' Which is all bosses requests. | (C4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | ● Ideal client-designer's relationship is trust. | (C2,5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | ● In an ideal situation, I hope my company can authorise more power in budget that budget should be less tight. Therefore, we can have more communication with designers to achieve a common understanding. At the same time, our ideal situation could lean forward to design itself, in hope to achieve an innovative way. | (C6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | WORKABLE CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | | | | |
| Progressive Relationship | ● I believe the only way is to change and compromise, flexibility in compromise. | (C3,4,5,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | ● A workable client-designer relationship I believe a form of compromise would be needed under the process of trust, where the main direction and principle remain the same. | (C3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relationship of mutual cooperation, to develop into a relationship of friends. | (C5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility | (C2,3,5,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If designer intended to do a good job and he will do it well, the characters of seriousness, non-stop in analyses and research. | (C3) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total respect to designer. | (C3,4) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to lead people to pursuit beauty. Overall this means to trust and communicate. | (C5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe the initial point is that a unified direction will only arise when both parties are positioning themselves on a foundation of mutual understanding and trust | (C3) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal client-designer relationship – respect and comprehend each other (trust). | (C1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of a practical client-designer's relationship – clear instruction from client, the ability to differentiate varies designers' ability. | (C1,2) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | MEANS TO INDIVIDUAL | | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important, the necessity of continuous communication. | (C4,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is definitely a bonus to a project with the client-designer interaction. | (C4,5,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final design product can be as near as what the client's requests by having a close interaction in a project. | (C1,2,4) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction means both parties will have a deeper understanding in the project. | (C3,5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | HOW IT MAY AFFECT THE DESIGN PROCESS | | | | |
| Interactive dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between client and design can influence the design process towards a positive direction, which is a very normal procedure. | (C1,2,3,4,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing in communication could lead to numerous changes; as a result this could eliminate designer's enthusiasm. | (C4,5,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients can provide their thoughts to designers sustainably through interaction during the design process. At the same time, any off track ideas can be revised through interaction to enable the final result as close as to the client's requirements. | (C1,4) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-stop interaction could waste time. | (C1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies ideas can be generated through interaction which lead to a matter of 'choices'. 'Choices' can easily distort the original thoughts that eventually lead to no idea. | (C1,5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could assist in crafting a right direction towards the client's ultimate goal. | (C1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead to time wasting – causing lost in direction and disagreement easily. | (C1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |

| Progression in design perception | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| C ₁ | The overall interior design industry has progressed; the requirement in control complexity has increased. For those designs that requires an integrated management have strengthen. The designers' abilities elevated constantly. |
| C ₂ | In general, designer's ability has elevated |
| C ₃ | I think there must be a certain trend like fashion; this year's trend for ladies fashion could be long skirt and checks pattern and it will change to another style next year. As for decoration style, it was simplicity, then it combined with New Chinese style, New Asian as well as Minimalist. Now it even has a style call "Zen", it came from Japan and it is very abstract... Different styles are considered as a development. |
| C ₄ | The change of overall environment shifts the design trend towards multi-directions as it was considerably only one direction in the past. In fact, people's thinking is changing. I think it came from a foreign influence, such as the western culture, which could bring a significant impact on us. |
| C ₅ | Changes of design concepts, including changes in the way of cooperation with the designer. |
| C ₆ | The progress of projects emerged from coarse to fine. |

| Roles and power | |
|------------------------------|---|
| CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | |
| C ₁ | Client has an idea and designer helps to achieve it. Client passes the requirements to the designer and designer will fill up the contents that base on these ideas. |
| C ₂ | Client provides service and designer is being served. Client needs to have the initial work prepared then designer can concentrate in the design work without being distracted by additional matters. |
| C ₃ | I believe one who has needs and the other provides that needs. As a property developer, we need to analysis what our specific customers' habits and their needs. Then we will base on this analysis to layout the requirement for designer to complete the design work. And which should be able to satisfy our customers. This is a simple relationship. |
| C ₄ | I believe the client-designer relationship should be a relationship of mutual cooperation. In fact, I think first we need to respect designer, then followed by maximize the benefits. It should be like this. |
| C ₅ | With regards to the area of interior design, I reckon the most important part is that there is communication between the client and designer. Communication is very important and gets to know what the client wants. Both sides should have what they need... I believe someone who can be communicated with is relied on "understanding", like a partner. It may also evolve into friendship. |
| C ₆ | I believe this client-designer relationship should be complementary to each other. As a property developer, we hope to display the best part and value of our property, which does not necessary mean to for reality living environment. We need the designer to round this up for us; creating bigger space in a fantasy point of view to impress our customers. |

| Roles and power | |
|-----------------|--|
| | ROLES OF DESIGNER AND CLIENT (Coordinator) |
| C ₁ | Client acts as a coordinator role, to gather and coordinate relevant requirement and pass to the designer for implementation. Hence, to assist and coordinate works with other parties (civil engineers or architects etc.) during the process. Besides, we need to ensure time, budget and profit to be under controlled. |
| C ₂ | Client acts as a coordinator/middle man role; preparation of documents such as business contracts, project requirement (design style, budget and time schedule). In different stages during the process, we have to ensure everything on the right track through communicating and holding coordination meetings with different department and parties, to ensure clear answers (instructions) were given to the designer. |
| C ₃ | First, there is a specific condition in my position at work. My directors could have particular point of views that I need to transform their opinions into a normal way; their point of views might be required to be turned around when communicating to the designers during the process. |
| C ₄ | First, I need to know what my boss' favourites and transfer these favourites in relation to design ideas. Then I need to combine these ideas along with my boss' requirement and pass to designer. I probably act as a link in between, a coordinator, which requires a constant coordination work with different parties. |
| C ₅ | Designer's concept can be implemented due to the commencement of communication. Communication is very important when working with designers. My role is like a bridge that can link both company and designers together, which is very important. |
| C ₆ | We bear a collection of responsibilities from different parties when communicate with designer. When things go right then everything can run smooth. If divided point of views occurs, we need to make sure designer to meet our goal. This is our point of view. |
| Respondents | |

| Roles and power | |
|-----------------|--|
| | POWER DISTRIBUTION |
| C ₁ | During the design process, client can provide designer with a constant flow of ideas. If designer goes down a wrong path where can be corrected immediately. Therefore the final result could lead to what we want and expected easily. Besides, designer can guide us through as well. He/she could have ideas that might change the initial direction that we did not realize in the first place, we then end up going down to a better direction. |
| C ₂ | When encountering with excellent designers, clients would usually accept what they presented and would strive for what they requested from the company accordingly, in respond and respect of their design ability. However, some designers are 'smuggled goods' with poor design level and completely inexperienced, a compulsory full controlled would be needed. |
| C ₃ | Absolute balance. Changes to this balance can happen, based on mutual respect on expressions from each point of view. This is considered as the balance in the technical side; reasonable point of views should be respected and recognised. |
| C ₄ | Client is on the higher side that is definite; with one side who pay and the other labour. This power relationship will not change due to the binding relationship in the contract. Therefore, there will be serve and being served relationship. Besides, designer also hopes to get the project. How to balance it? First of all, I still need to respect my own role that I have to compromise to my boss. Then I will have to compromise to designers, which means to make sure designers are compromised. |
| C ₅ | This power relationship changed from the hierarchy position where client is holding power over designer in the past, and now changed into a balanced power position. It is because when they are equal then they can communicate; when there is communication then work can be done better. |
| C ₆ | During 90s and 00s, clients usually were in a very strong power position and forced designers to accept this fact that it was wrong. We are now hoping to have a more orderly development that let professionals to do the professional work. |
| Respondents | |

| Results and compromise | |
|------------------------|--|
| C ₁ | In the client's perception of a successful interior design project, the end result is the most important (the success of a project would be that buyers made their purchase during their visit). Whether or not the design could influence potential buyers' desires to place the order. If do so, clients will consider the design is sufficient (good) enough without the need to seek recognition from industrial expert. |
| C ₂ | Client concern especially is to have a better display that can direct consumers to buy effectively, until all the estates have been sold out. |
| C ₃ | I believe the only way is to change and compromise, flexibility in compromise. |
| C ₄ | My boss hopes to pay the lowest and get the best. The reality is you get what you paid for. Under the circumstances only can accept and to persuade the boss to accept it, a form of compromise could be. |
| C ₅ | (shé dé) 'shé' means give up, 'dé' means gain, which means: be willing to part with, not begrudge. A workable client-designer relationship I believe a form of compromise would be needed under the process of trust, where the main direction and principle remain the same. As long as the main principle unchanged, which includes the budget and project direction, everything else can be negotiated and compromised. |
| C ₆ | In a project, there are many elements could lead to different level of compromise, therefore be able to maintain 60% of the original design could be considered a success. |

| Progressive Relationship | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| IDEAL CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | |
| C ₁ | Ideal client-designer relationship – respect and comprehend each other (trust). ...mutual respect means client should pay respect to the designer, whether it is towards his design ideas or his design perception. Conversely, designer should understand there were different restrains towards the project... on the whole, there are differences on the idea towards an ultimate goal, and attentions are paid differently. For client, they are in pursuit of time, cost and profit, while to designer, which are in pursuit of design effect and an overall design concept. These differences actually have intersection and dispersion. I do think the best is to interconnect these differences and relationship together. |
| C ₂ | Ideal client-designer's relationship is trust... client does not need to imitate designers as if they were prisoners. Designer would then be more understanding and ensure a project to be completed beautifully and on time, both in quality and quantity. |
| C ₃ | Because the areas that the designers have exposed to that are so different to the clients... designers focus on the perfection of the artistic area, the control in art of living facilities, these are the experience we clients cannot compared. Therefore, designer should guide and direct the client where to go. |
| C ₄ | I rather hope big boss to change. For an ideal relationship, I must say that designers give us what we asked for when I stand in my boss's point of view. And also should exceed our expectation and save cost. As an old saying, 'have one's cake and eat it, too.' Which all bosses request. |
| C ₅ | I believe the ideal client-designer relationship is based on trust. When I hand over the space to the designer it was a blank sheet... we need to put in lots of money for a project to complete, therefore "trust" is vital. |
| C ₆ | In an ideal situation, I hope my company can authorise more power in budget that budget should be less tight. Therefore, we can have more communication with designers to achieve a common understanding. At the same time, our ideal situation could lean towards design itself, in hope to achieve an innovative way. |

| Progressive Relationship | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| WORKABLE CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | |
| C ₁ | Client should provide clear instruction in the first place; the worst scenario is letting the designer to guess what you are thinking. |
| C ₂ | (The ability to differentiate varies designers' ability.) When encountering with excellent designers, clients would usually accept what they presented and would strive for what they requested from the company accordingly, in respond and respect of their design ability. However, some designers are 'smuggled goods' with poor design level and completely inexperienced, a compulsory full controlled would be needed. |
| C ₃ | I believe the only way is to change and compromise flexibility in compromise. There are a lot of things can change in design. For example, putting the picture of the painting of Mona Lisa in Photoshop, the twitch of her original smile is 3 degree. You might think that is not good enough to your own taste, so you change the twitch of her smile to 5 degree. However it is still Mona Lisa's smile. |
| C ₄ | The ideal of 'have one's cake and eat it, too' is impossible without compromise. The reality is you get what you pay for. The budget is set and we can only look for designer company under this budget. I also know you get what you pay for, we can't expect more from what we can get from the design company, and don't even attempt they can produce something that exceed what can be expected. |
| C ₅ | A workable client-designer relationship I believe a form of compromise would be needed under the process of trust, where the main direction and principle remain unchanged. A relationship of mutual cooperation, to develop into a relationship of friends. |
| C ₆ | Be honest, in a project, if 60% of the work can be completed as planned I will be very happy. There are so many elements could discount what have planned, such as time schedule and budget. If the designer has to take everything on board we can only get 40% of what can be achieved. Therefore, the 20% of the differences is what we, as a client and designer, have to work together to persuade the company and different parties, in order to gain this 20% at the end. |

| Progressive Relationship | |
|---|---|
| MOST NOTEWORTHY FEATURES AS A SUCCESS IN AN OVERALL INTERIOR DESIGN PROJECT | |
| C ₁ | Whether or not the design could influence potential buyers' desires to place the order. If do so, clients will consider the design is sufficient (good) enough without the need to seek recognition from industrial expert. |
| C ₂ | A design with a poor reviewed from the market could win design award. Professional could be favour an award winning design, but the public may disagree and consider the design is unacceptable. A good design should combine and integrate with public aesthetic and consumers' point of view. If the local public do not accept the design, then it is not good news to the client. Therefore, if the design cannot fulfil and cater for the consumers' needs then the design is a failure. |
| C ₃ | When designer works hard, s/he will do well. So the characteristics of hard working, seriousness, continuous research and analyses. |
| C ₄ | A total respect to designer and his/her expectation and opinions. |
| C ₅ | The first point is (shé dé) 'shé' means give up; 'dé' means gain, which means: be willing to part with, not begrudge. And the other is the ability to lead people to pursuit beauty. Overall this means to trust and communicate. |
| C ₆ | In a project, there are many elements could lead to different level of compromise, therefore be able to maintain 60% of the original design could be considered a success. |

| Progressive Relationship | |
|--------------------------|---|
| | DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DESIGN AND CLIENT PERCEPTION OF GOOD DESIGN PROJECT |
| C ₁ | Whether or not the design could influence potential buyers' desires to place the order. If do so, clients will consider the design is sufficient (good) enough without the need to seek recognition from industrial expert. In considering to the conflicts between client's elements (ideas) and reasonable requirements, designer will give up some reasonable design elements to satisfy the end result. |
| C ₂ | Clients concern especially is to have a better display that can direct consumers to buy effectively, until all the estates have been sold out. Designers concerns whether or not the design result is good and fulfil their expectation. |
| C ₃ | The foundation of the client-designer cooperation based on communication where a direction could be set and work can be carried on. Without this foundation there will be no future, there will be no sharp contradiction in the future. |
| C ₄ | Of course there are differences. It is certain that there will be discounted to the designer expectation in the final effect (result), company must have budget control. I think the real-estate market is still there. As long as there isn't any major error or contradiction towards beauty, as long as the properties are sold, (the final design effect) there is no difference to us. |
| C ₅ | During the design process, designer main responsibility is to deal with the client representative directly, one to one. On the other hand, I do have my bosses above me and also have different departments to deal with. I don't make any final decision as I only serve as a bridge; to distribute the work that collected from the designer to the others. As for how to compromise to each other when dealing problem in between the client and designer, I stick to the concept that I have mentioned: as long as the main principle unchanged, which includes the budget and project direction, everything else can be negotiated and compromised. |
| C ₆ | Design stage was smooth then the development and construction documentation stage will become smoother. We asked designer to submit materials sample board in order to have all these things safe guard. Once being confirmed then will be carried out in the site. If not, we will communicate with the designer and have those materials replaced. Sometimes, the contractor might find those materials won't work, then we also request the designer to replace them. However, it is a matter of time control, but mostly would be cost control. It is rather difficult to ask the contractor to demolish the work after they built. Therefore there are more often to compromise in this stage. Under the fundamental condition are being satisfied, we will normally be compromised. As I mentioned to you before, to be able to reach the satisfactory of 60% out of 100% in a project we are already very happy. |

| Interactive dynamics | |
|----------------------|--|
| | NEGATIVE EFFECTS |
| C ₁ | Non-stop interaction could waste time. Varies ideas can be generated though interaction which lead to a matter of 'choices'. 'Choices' can easily distort the original thoughts that eventually lead to no idea. |
| C ₂ | During the process of interaction, there are a lot of designer's ideas could be wasted due to the client's budget concerns. It can't be considered as a negative effect though, but it is inevitable. |
| C ₃ | (no input) |
| C ₄ | Increasing in communication could lead to numerous changes; as a result this could eliminate designer's enthusiasm. |
| C ₅ | Sometimes developer forces to designer to work under an emotional hijack manner, "if your design cannot express in the design direction that I gave you, I will terminate the contract". Developers sometimes can be simple but crude. And therefore these manners affect designer's emotion. Because both parties should be in an equal status in this cooperation relationship with one whom pay and the other offer the labour. This developer's strong position can destroy designer's enthusiasm in the design task. Then the designer will give up his will and follow everything the developer asked for. At that time, the design product will end up losing its spirit and become a design without any connotation. |
| C ₆ | (no input) |

| Interactive dynamics | |
|----------------------|---|
| | MEANS TO INDIVIDUAL |
| C ₁ | The final design product can be as near as what the client's requests by having a close interaction in a project. |
| C ₂ | To ensure completing the interior design that is based on client's intension, which rely on the interaction between the client and designer. Then it could satisfy the client's need. |
| C ₃ | Because of interaction our hearts can be linked together. For example, when we shake hands our hearts already pull closer. It is like relationship between a man and a woman, heart to heart kind of a process. This is the positive result of interaction, a very good method. |
| C ₄ | Interaction is very important; the necessity of continuous communication. That is why I think the relationship with designer is to respect designer's design ideas, and which should align with the needs of the company's normal interest. Finally it is communication, continuously communicate. |
| C ₅ | It is definitely a bonus to a project with the client-designer interaction. Interaction means both parties will have a deeper understanding in the project. To both parties, what I can see is a bare shell property. When I received the design drawings, as a client, I still only see a set of drawings. However, more elements could be found after communicating to each other; it will definite benefit to the project. |
| C ₆ | I believe interaction can influence the design process towards a positive direction. It is because when there is interaction, there are different understandings on one thing. You can only push this matter forward by communication while under these different understandings. Therefore there will be breakthrough. You might have an idea A initially and he is thinking about idea B, and the result might developed into idea C which is different to both initial ideas A and B. However, this idea C could be something that a lot closer to reality, and can achieve a better future development. |
| Respondents | |

| Interactive dynamics | |
|----------------------|---|
| | POSITIVE EFFECTS |
| C ₁ | I believe there are two areas where interaction will affect the design process. First, clients can provide their thoughts to designers sustainably through interaction during the design process. At the same time, any off track ideas can be revised through interaction to enable the final result as close as to the client's requirements. Secondly, designer can take the leading role, as a guide to the client. |
| C ₂ | I believe the majority is on the positive side in interaction. The biggest positive result of interaction is a good design that both parties are satisfy. |
| C ₃ | Of course interaction will affect the design process; it will lead to a positive direction. I believe there should be no negative effect as interaction will only lead to a better development but not towards the opposite direction. |
| C ₄ | In my point of view, interaction between client and design can influence the design process. Lots of communications, such as there are many problems could come across in the construction site, I took the pictures and send to the designer and explained the specific problem. Then the designer assigned his colleague to sort this out by issuing new drawings. Then I can pass it to the contractor immediately to have the problem solved. This is a good thing, cooperation is very crucial. This is a very normal procedure. |
| C ₅ | In design, there are things like ideas or directions, they are abstract things. It is very difficult to be understood unless you communicate. |
| C ₆ | During design process, having interaction is a good thing, most of the time. It is positive! Sometimes problems came from the differences between peoples' cultural backgrounds or personalities that could be in a fixation situation. And gap can be created sometimes due to the client is in a strong position and forced a design direction that the designer who does not approve. As long as pushing work forward I still believe things can be developed in a positive direction. |
| Respondents | |

**Appendix 11: Initial categories table – Designer group
(Chinese version)**

(Following pages)

**Appendix 12: Condensed categories table – Designer group
(Chinese version)**

(Following pages)

| GENERAL CATEGORIES | CONDENSED CATEGORIES |
|--|--|
| 问题/受访者 | |
| Q: 在一个室内设计项目中, 客户和设计师之间的关系是什么? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 相互【信任】, 彼此欣赏【尊重】 (D3) ● 要有一定沟通, 而且这些沟通要通过不停交流。(D3) ● 互相帮助的关系(D4) ● 设计师(和客户的关系)就是服务和被服务的, 设计师要满足客户的需求。(D1,2,3,5,6) ● 共同目标。(D1) ● 朋友的关系(D6) |
| Q: 从你所完成的培训/教育中, 在筹备你去面对这个行业里的挑战上, 对你有帮助多大帮助? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 基础, 只是很入门。在学校里(所教育)的东西只是一些片面的东西, 比方说一些软件、功法的一种方法。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) ● 教育让你选择了这一行, 然后其余的要通过后期的不断积累完善才能够提高。(D1,4,5) ● 累积到经验。其实真正在项目的時候, 所需要的是需要靠平时在项目上吸取出来的经验、更多的发挥出来。还有就是沟通能力, 需要去跟业主沟通。其实我觉得这方面的能力是占到了 70-80%。(D1,2,4,5,6) ● (教育的帮助)第一是在生活上 -- 经济, 因为收入上还是蛮好的, 可以养家活口的。(D4) ● (教育对工作上的帮助)只有 10% (D5,6) |
| Q: 在这些年间, 你的工作内容有什么改变? 面对行业中挑战的技能是如何学习得来的? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 现在甲方更开放一些了, 不像过去那么闭塞了, 现在客户也见多识广了(D2,3) ● (这种设计工作安排上的做法你是从哪学来的? 比如培训)这是实践中来的, 这个没有人教。(D1,3,4) ● 这方面现在在通过近几年国内的设计师进步是蛮大的, 从汇报文件, 想法理念和国外设计师的差距已经缩的很小了 (D2,4) |
| Q: 在室内设计项目中你如何描述作为一个设计师角色和职责? 你与客户的关系之间的交流中的主要议题是什么? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 要有一定沟通, 而且这些沟通要通过不停交流、善于观察、引导、整合、分析, 把业主的想法完善到我的方案里。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) ● 引导客户。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) ● 设计师的主要职责就是把美呈现给每个需要的人。(D3) ● 了解各方面的需求, 搭一个桥梁。(D4,6) ● 大面来说是去创造自己的作品, 是要更贴近客户的想法, 其实更贴近客户的想法, 想法是连起来, 互相连接的。从细节上, 既要满足我的作品, 又要满足业主的要求, 这个是关键。(D1,2,3,4,6) ● 最终目标把项目完成。(D1,2) |
| Q: 在进行一个设计项目工作中, 什么是理想的设计师/客户关系? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 朋友, 信任, 彼此尊重, 认可。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) ● 多沟通。(D4) |
| Q: 什么元素能使设计师/客户关系在实践中可行? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 站在客户的角度捕捉到他所需要的东西。(D3,4,5) ● 多沟通。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) ● 我们的理想是跟一个人去做倒作为朋友、相处融洽, 去把项目做好。(D5,6) ● 设计师需要有智慧。(D1) ● 让客户信服。(D2) |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Q: 对于一个好的室内设计项目应该怎么样从始至终的看法,设计师和客户可能存在的困难/分别是什么?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 立场不同,审美也不一样。(D1,2,3,5,6) • 客户对设计项目的看法,结果最重要(包括过程中的节点)(D1,2,3,6) • 设计师对设计项目的看法—作品的最终效果,但基于甲方的要求需要对最终效果做出妥协。(D2,3,4,5,6) |
| <p>Q: 请举出一些能使整体室内设计项目成功的元素吗?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 尽心去完成项目(心态),替客户着想,站在客户的角度上去走就可以了。(D1,2,3,4) • (一个项目的成果)一定要融入当地文化。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) • 互补——你提出你的专业,他提出他的想法。(D4,6) |
| <p>Q: 在客户/设计师的关系中,【互动】对你意味着什么?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 一个表达的一种方式,你跟他在某些地方有分歧的话,通过你的言语表达,通过你的沟通方式,就是通过沟通方式,把你的实力、经验去显示出来的一种方式。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) • 互动一个是多沟通,你要知道他的想法呀,不交流怎么知道呢。(D2,3,6) |
| <p>Q: 在哪些方面客户和设计师之间的互动会影响设计过程?请举出一个互动的积极影响的例子?请举出一个互动的负面影响的例子?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 朝好的方面发展,大家互动一个可以增加互相信任感,了解度,互相理解,对项目有所促进。(D1,4) • 每一步也许都是一个转折点,每一次会议交流之后都是一个你的设计不断改进,不断靠近他,最终到达效果的一个更进一步的交流吧。(D3,5,6) • 家装沟通上是比较主观,在工装上,相对比较客观。(D2,5) • 会触设计师的灵感。(D2,5) • 外行的(业主),提的建议可能会推翻你整个设计,整个设计要改动了,影响设计进度。(D2,5) • 这种沟通我觉得没有多少负面影响,有些时候不是一个人在场,就是有很多人参与在这个项目当中,我希望把每个人都带到我的想法里去,让他们走入我的思路,这样他们在同一条线上才不会产生分歧。(D6) • 不巧的方式,过多交流容易产生误会。(D1,2) • 私心。(D4,6) • 第三方因素:老板的意见,外行意见,风水。(D3,5) |
| <p>Q: 如果日后提供给你在职设计师的一个在培训计划或课程,你觉得是在哪一方面?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 中国现在已经有很多这种机构了,他只教你软件,就是一些作图的技巧。(D2,3,4,5,6) • 口才很重要,一个设计师的表达,沟通非常重要。(D1,2,3,4,5,6) • 特别在学校期间多走向社会,让他们单位里面多接触一下,多看,多实习。(D1,3,4,5,6) • 对材料方面要有所了解,还有一个就是对规范、功能方面有一个最基本的了解。(D4) |
| <p>Q: 在设计师和客户之间的关系里,你觉得有没有一种权利之间高低之分?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 客户高,设计师低(D2,3,4,5) • 平等(D1,5,6) • 倾斜变化(D2,5) |

**Appendix 13: Condensed categories table – Designer group
(Translated version)**

(Following pages)

| GENERAL CATEGORIES | CONDENSED CATEGORIES |
|--|---|
| INTERVIEW SCHEDULE | |
| Q: Can you explain to me your understanding of the relationship between the client/designer during an interior design project might be? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mutual respect and trust (D3) ● The necessity of communication that requires continual conversations/exchange. (D3) ● A relationship of mutual help. (D4) ● The client-designer relationship: the relationship of a serviced subject and its service provider; designer have to satisfy the client needs (D1.2,3,5,6) ● Common goal (D1) ● Friendship (D6) |
| Q: How many years' experience have you had in interior design services? How well did the training/education that you completed prepare you for this challenge? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basis, beginner. Things in school (teaching/training) are just some one-sided thing, such as some software and techniques. (D1.2,3,4,5,6) ● Education leads you to choose this industry. To improve the abilities you need to accumulate and perfect your skills through experience (D1.4,5) ● 70-80% of project knowledge were gained and accumulated through the experience in real projects; communication skill can only be gained through communicating with the client. (D1.2,4,5,6) ● The initial benefit from education/training relies on living – economy, as the salary (as a designer) is pretty good, can feed the family.(D4) ● Education contributes 10% of assistance to work. (D5,6) |
| Q: (Follow-up: what activities were most common for you during that period? How has this changed for you over time?) (Possible probe – if not through training/education, how did they learn, was it on the job or watching others?) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Client is more open-minded now, unlike being closed-minded in the past; clients are knowledgeable nowadays(D2,3) ● Design management was learnt through practice and not by teaching (D1,3,4) ● In recent years, domestic designers progress significantly. In the sense of ideas and concepts, the gap between foreign and domestic designers have reduced (D2,4) |
| Q: 4a. With regards to your experience in handling interior design projects, how would you describe your role as a designer? (Follow-up: What were your main responsibilities as the designer?) 4b. What were the main topics for discussion and exchange of information and views in your relationship with the client during the design process? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In order to comply the client's idea into the design proposal thoroughly, it is necessary to have a certain communication; these communications should go through constant communication, good observation, guidance, integration and analysis. (D1.2,3,4,5,6) ● As a guide to client. (D1.2,3,4,5,6) ● Portraying beauty to everyone in need is the designer's main responsibility. (D3) ● To understanding the needs of each party, as if building a bridge(D4,6) ● In a broader sense, designers create their own works that needs to be close to clients' ideas. In fact, ideas were linked and interconnected from clients and designers when communication took place. In detailed, not only it should satisfy to be my work, but also satisfy client's requirements, and this is crucial. (D1,2,3,4,6) ● The ultimate goal is to complete the project(D1,2) |
| Q: What do you think makes an ideal designer/client relationship in terms of working together on a design project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Friendship, trust, mutual respect and recognition.(D1.2,3,4,5,6) ● Immerse communication (D4) |
| Q: What do you think that makes a workable designer/client relationship in practice? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To capture what the client's need in his/her perspective(D3,4,5) ● Immerse communication (D1.2,3,4,5,6) ● The ideal is to be able to become friends and get along well, and to accomplish well in a project. (D5,6) ● Designer should have wisdom(D1) ● The ability to convince client (D2) |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Q: Do you think there are differences between the designer's and client's perceptions of how a good interior design project should run from its inception to its completion? If yes what do you think they are?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different positions have different aesthetics (D1.2,3,5,6) • In client's perspective, the result is most important (which includes those in different stages) (D1.2,3,6) • In designer's perspective, the overall effect in the completed project, however, compromise(s) to be made towards the final effect to meet the client's requirements. (D2,3,4,5,6) |
| <p>Q: Can you suggest an example which may be considered as a success in an overall interior design project? (Follow-up: What were its most noteworthy features?)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedication in completing the project and taking the client's point of view as consideration(D1,2,3,4) • The success of a project must be able to integrate with the local culture. (D1,2,3,4,5,6) • Complementary to each other – designers offer their professionalism, and clients provide with their ideas and comments (D4,6) |
| <p>Q: Can you tell me what interactive dynamics means to you?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A method of expression that evolved from one's verbal expression and experience; it came from the expression of one's ability and experience via communication. (D1,2,3,4,5,6) • Interaction means communicate. If you do not communicate you will not what the other thinks. (D2,3,6) |
| <p>Q: 7a. Do you think the interactive dynamics between the client and the designer may affect the design process? O: 7b. Can you give an example of a positive effect of interactive dynamics? (Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?) C: 7c. Can you give an example of a negative effect of interactive dynamics? (Follow-up: How did or might the dynamics develop? Why?)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction can help design process towards a positive development, interaction can increase mutual trust and the degree of understanding; mutual understanding help the progression of a project. (D1,4) • Each step in interaction could be a turning point; after communicating in each meeting it brought forward the continuous refinement of the design, and this bring closer to the ultimate desirable effect. (D3,5,6) • Communicating in private residential design is considered to be more subjective, in contrast, it is rather objective in commercial design (D2,5) • Interaction can activate designer's inspiration(D2,5) • Non-professional client's suggestions could over-turn the whole design. When there are changes towards the whole design, these could affect the whole design progress. (D2,5) • Interaction should have no negative impact towards design process. Due to there are many parties involve in a project, I would like to take all of them into my design idea. Let them be sucked into my thought. There will be no disagreement if they all stood on the same line. (D6) • Negative impact could be an inappropriate method during interaction, such as over communicating could lead to misunderstanding easily. (D1,2) • Selfish thoughts (D4,6) • Third-parties elements; Big boss' comments, non-professional advise/comment, Fengshui(D3,5) |
| <p>Q: In your experience, do you think the necessity of providing continuous professional development training for graduate designers? And what would it be?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are lots of organisations holding these kinds of training. You will be taught how to use software only, the kind of drawings technique. (D2,3,4,5,6) • Expressiveness is important; that is how a designer to present himself (expression). Communication is very important. (D1,2,3,4,5,6) • Students should get involved to the society, particularly during school (training) time. Students should get in touch with (design) companies to observe and practice. (D1,3,4,5,6) • Students should have knowledge on materials and also have basic understanding towards regulations and the aspects of functionality. (D4) |
| <p>Q: Do you think a power deviation exists in client/designer relationship and what would that be?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client on the high side and design on the low side.(D2,3,4,5) • Equal(D1,5,6) • Shifts and tilts(D2) |

Appendix 14: Initial themes identification tables – Designer group

(Following pages)

| THEMES | CONDENSED CATEGORIES | DESIGNERS | PERCEPTION of ROLES | PERCEPTION of PROCESS | PERCEPTION of RELATIONSHIP | |
|--|---|---|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Progression in design perception | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client is more open-minded now, unlike being closed-minded in the past; clients are knowledgeable nowadays | (D2,3) | ● | ◐ | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In recent years, domestic designers progress significantly. In the sense of ideas and concepts, the gap between foreign and domestic designers have reduced | (D2,4) | ◐ | ● | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basis, beginner. Things in school (teaching/training) are just some one-sided thing, such as some software and techniques. | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education leads you to choose this industry. To improve the abilities you need to accumulate and perfect your skills through experience | (D1,4,5) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70-80% of project knowledge were gained and accumulated through the experience in real projects; communication skill can only be gained through communicating with the client. | (D1,2,4,5,6) | ○ | ● | ◐ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The initial benefit from education/training relies on living – economy, as the salary (as a designer) is pretty good, can feed the family. | (D4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education contributes 10% of assistance to work | (D5,6) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design management was learnt through practice and not by teaching | (D1,3,4) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can only gain professional knowledge that helps when you practice at work. | (D1) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional knowledge was summed up and gained from practice. | (D2) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| | CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL TRAINING | | | | | |
| | Roles and power | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are lots of organisations holding these kinds of training. You will be taught how to use software only, the kind of drawings technique. | (D2,3,4,5,6) | ○ | ● | ○ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressiveness is important; that is how a designer to present himself (expression). Communication is very important. | | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | ◐ | ○ | ◐ | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should get involved to the society, particularly during school (training) time. Students should get in touch with (design) companies to observe and practice. | | (D1,3,4,5,6) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should have knowledge on materials and also have basic understanding towards regulations and the aspects of functionality. | | (D4) | ○ | ● | ○ | |
| CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | | | | | | |
| Roles and power | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The client-designer relationship: the relationship of a serviced subject and its service provider; designer have to satisfy the client needs | (D1,2,3,5,6) | ● | ○ | ○ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to comply the client's idea into the design proposal thoroughly, it is necessary to have a certain communication, these communications should go through constant communication, good observation, guidance, integration and analysis. | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | ○ | ● | ◐ | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual respect and trust | (D3) | ○ | ○ | ● | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------|---|---|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The necessity of communication that requires continual conversations/exchange. A relationship of mutual help. Common goal | (D3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | | (D4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | | (D1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |
| ROLES OF DESIGNER AND CLIENT | | | | | | |
| | To understanding the needs of each party, as if building a bridge | (D4,6) | ● | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | Portraying beauty to everyone in need is the designer's main responsibility. | (D3) | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | Designer – all-round worker, project coordinator, a guide to client, to complete the project under client's instruction (within time-frame and budget) no matter whether the end results are good or bad. | (C1,2,D1,2) | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | As a guide to client. | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | Different positions have different aesthetics | (D1,2,3,5,6) | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | In a broader sense, designers create their own works that needs to be close to clients' ideas. In fact, ideas were linked and interconnected from clients and designers when communication took place. In detailed, not only it should satisfy to be my work, but also satisfy client's requirements, and this is crucial. | (D1,2,3,4,6) | ● | ○ | ○ | ● |
| POWER DISTRIBUTION | | | | | | |
| | Client on the high side and design on the low side. | (D2,3,4,5) | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | Equal | (D1,5,6) | ● | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | Shifts and tilts | (D2) | ● | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | The ultimate goal is to complete the project | (D1,2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | In client's perspective, the result is most important (which includes those in different stages) | (D1,2,3,6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | In designer's perspective, the overall effect in the completed project, however, compromise(s) to be made towards the final effect to meet the client's requirements. | (D2,3,4,5,6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | In the client's perception of a successful interior design project, the end result is the most important (the success of a project would be that buyers made their purchase during their visit) | (C1,2,D1,2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | In the designer's perception of a successful interior design project, is whether or not the finished design is good and this would be their main concern. However, there would be compromise during the design process to find ways to reach the client's requirements and needs. | (C1,D1,2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | To fulfil the client's ultimate goal is fundamental to an overall success in an interior design project. The final design result is considerably less important. | (C1,2,D1,2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |
| | IDEAL CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | | | | | |
| Result and compromise | | | | | | |
| Progressive Relationship | | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendship, trust, mutual respect and recognition. | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immense communication | (D4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedication in completing the project and taking the client's point of view as consideration | (D1,2,3,4) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The success of a project must be able to integrate with the local culture. | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complementary to each other – designers offer their professionalism, and clients provide with their ideas and comments | (D4,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideal client-designer relationship – respect and comprehend each other (trust). | (C1,2,D1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| WORKABLE CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | | | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To capture what the client's need in his/her perspective | (D3,4,5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immense communication | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ideal is to be able to become friends and get along well, and to accomplish well in a project. | (D5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designer should have wisdom | (D1) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to convince client | (D2) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designer should possess wisdom and communication technique, both social and professional knowledge. | (D1,2) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| MEANS TO INDIVIDUAL | | | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A method of expression that evolved from one's verbal expression and experience; it came from the expression of one's ability and experience via communication. | (D1,2,3,4,5,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction means communicate. If you do not communicate you will not what the other thinks. | (D2,3,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| HOW IT MAY AFFECT THE DESIGN PROCESS | | | | | |
| Interactive dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction can help design process towards a positive development; interaction can increase mutual trust and the degree of understanding; mutual understanding help the progression of a project. | (D1,4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each step in interaction could be a turning point; after communicating in each meeting it brought forward the continuous refinement of the design and this bring closer to the ultimate desirable effect. | (D3,5,6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating in private residential design is considered to be more subjective; in contrast, it is rather objective in commercial design | (D2,5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction can activate designer's inspiration | (D2,5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-professional client's suggestions could over-turn the whole design. When there are changes towards the | (D2,5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | <p>whole design, these could affect the whole design progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction should have no negative impact towards design process. Due to there are many parties involve in a project, I would like to take all of them into my design idea. Let them be sucked into my thought. There will be no disagreement if they all stood on the same line. Negative impact could be an inappropriate method during interaction, such as over communicating could lead to misunderstanding easily. Selfish thoughts Third-parties elements; Big boss' comments, non-professional advise/comment, Fengshui Assist towards the ideal client-designer relationship – to respect and comprehend each other (trust). Enhance and elevate both design awareness and knowledge towards each other. Lead to time wasting – causing lost in direction and disagreement easily. | | | | |
| | (D6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | (D1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | (D4,6) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | (D3,5) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | (D1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | (D1,2) | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| | (C1,D1,2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |

| Progression in design perception | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| D ₁ | (no input) |
| D ₂ | Over the decade, I think the change is that the quality of people has improved. Nowadays, many clients are still undergoing the changing of perception process. An overall transformation (in perception) allows them to be able to accept the so-call professionals' suggestions. . . Many clients do not limit themselves to be in the country but travel abroad to gain and bring back knowledge and experience and to share with designers. Therefore, not only those clients have elevated their design awareness, but also encourage the designers, as you know not all designers can travel abroad. In fact, many of them cannot travel abroad. |
| D ₃ | I would say clients are more open nowadays. Clients have stronger mind and having distinct personality. Unlike in the past, they stayed silence when approaching something that they don't know; may be say a little then let the designer to carry on; they basically just agreed to what the designer suggested as they would not comment to something that they do not understand. Nowadays, most of the clients having unique characters that designers need to cater and work for according to their ideas. Nowadays clients are more knowledgeable. They will prepare and research via the internet to get relative information in advance, to provide convenience in our communication. They will provide a stack of information of what they want and discuss with the designers in order to speed up the design process. |
| D ₄ | In recent years, domestic designers progress significantly. In the sense of ideas and concepts, the gap between foreign and domestic designers has reduced; nowadays domestic designers take over many areas used to be designed by foreign designers. |
| D ₅ | It could be the accumulation of experience, in particular in the design development area; there were many techniques and workmanship that was unable to achieve in the past have become achievable. |
| D ₆ | (no input) |
| Respondents | |

| Help from design training | |
|---------------------------|--|
| D ₁ | National basic education has nothing to do with (interior design) industry. You need to possess this knowledge first before you can go to university. Once in the university beginning to know the concept of interior design profession. However, what you learnt from the university is different to those in real job of this procession. On-job practice is the only way you will get help to your profession. Computer software, social relationship and diploma are those things you will find useful through university education in this profession. |
| D ₂ | Education is the basic thing to fill you with knowledge. If you really want to work in this profession, you will need to learn from the summary of your practice or what you have fumbled with. |
| D ₃ | The training or education that I completed that prepared me for the challenge in this profession were very basic, a beginner level. |
| D ₄ | Education leads you to choose this industry. To improve the abilities you need to accumulate and perfect your skills through experience. Most of the thing that I learned from the university do not benefit to the profession. But of course learning how to use some kind of software as well as the subtle influence from the teachers still play a significant role in the profession. |
| D ₅ | The initial benefit from education/training relies on living – economy, as the salary (as a designer) is pretty good, can feed the family. Education contributes 10% of assistance to work, maximum. The stuffs in the university were some shallow stuff. Besides, you can only gain some theoretical knowledge from the university, which is too wide. That's why I think education offered only 10% of what I need to face my challenge in my profession. |
| D ₆ | I have 10 years' experience in the profession. I feel that only 10% of my training/education in the university was helpful to my profession; these were some kind of methods in software and skills. 70-80% of project knowledge were gained and accumulated through the experience in real projects; communication skill can only be gained through communicating with the client. |
| Respondents | |

| Roles and power | |
|-----------------|---|
| | CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP |
| D ₁ | Opposition but unified relationship. They both have the same goal, to complete the project together. Based on the client's requirement and comments, designer would do their best into perfection. However, clients always expect more from designer whom may work based on their requirement or comments, clients will forever ask for more, better and more perfect. |
| D ₂ | Client leads and designer is service provider. When designer's idea and client's expectation become vary, as a service provider you can just find ways to force client to accept what you design due to you do not want to compromise. Designer should be client's opinion orientated. |
| D ₃ | Firstly, I think there should be mutual trust between client and designer, and should have mutual respect towards each other. Trying to be in the each other positions to gain understanding at things, such as budget control and what is the expected feeling to the project. These things need to be going through communicating, through non-stop exchange communication. |
| D ₄ | The relationship between client and designer is a mutual help relationship. |
| D ₅ | Designer and client relationship means the former is the service provider and the latter is being served, in fact, design industry is a service industry. Frankly speaking, designer needs to satisfy client's needs. |
| D ₆ | It is like the relationship of friends. In some areas, you take in account of things that the client might not be thought of. You can only be able to show your design ability, special and colour senses when you are in this position. |

Respondents

| Roles and power | |
|-----------------|--|
| | ROLES OF DESIGNER |
| D ₁ | Designer is like an all-round worker; ought to understand different stages of fabrication and techniques before he/she can start the interior design work efficiently. |
| D ₂ | Designer's role is in a leading position, a guide. There are many different kinds of tasks in interior designer's work, such as documentation, construction drawings, computer rendering and site coordination works. As a leader, externally, you need to face the client, attending meetings and responsible for site coordination work. Internally, you are responsible for design management, coordinating and guiding assistants to complete the work on time whatever it may be good or not in your management. |
| D ₃ | Designers need to put themselves onto the client's perspective to look at things, such as total cost and budget control, and what exactly the client wants to achieve overall. Designers should also communicate, in which these communication should be based on continuously exchange of comments. You also need to be a well observer. Designers should possess a sensitive observation ability; the ability that when you know your design direction might cause confusion to your client, you need to re-direct yourself to capture what the client want. You will give your client a rough direction, and lead them to the area that you want them to understand. If you keep following where the clients lead you to then you will be lost. They can only give you a rough idea and you need to integrate and analysis. Then you give them what you think they are looking for; the idea you think you have reached to the client's expectation. |
| D ₄ | As for me, first of all I need to know what the idea of overseas designer, what does he want to portray? Then I need to understand the national regulation, and put two together. To face the client, I need to know if it is what they want or they just want the designer's design. After getting the knowledge from these few sections, I will carry out the design development and preparing drawings. Finally, not all the stuffs the overseas designer designed can be built locally. Therefore, I will be acting like a bridge in between the contractor and overseas designer, and some of the elements might need to be replaced. In design area, you need to have an idea to a project, and then communicate with the client. First of all, the design should fulfil the client's facility requirement, and then will be environment and ergonomics. In addition, also need to consider all these facilities fulfil the national regulations, then to persuade the client. Sell your idea to client thru communication. |
| D ₅ | I believe there must be a subject first, so that you can lead the client to your set subject. My main responsibility is to control an overall effect, which includes as detailed as a light fixture, a small decoration object, as large as the overall colour scheme, space and atmosphere. |
| D ₆ | For the client, the first impression of designer should be confident, bright and can hold moderate conversation. Then the designer can slowly leading the client. Everything starts with leading (guiding). In a broader sense, designers create their own works that needs to be close to clients' ideas. In fact, ideas were linked and interconnected from clients and designers when communication took place. In detailed, not only it should satisfy to be my work, but also satisfy client's requirements, and this is crucial. |

Respondents

| Roles and power | |
|-----------------|---|
| | POWER DISTRIBUTION |
| D ₁ | <p>I think everybody is equal. The client chooses you, and you should take the responsibility.</p> <p>In the past two decades, both the qualities of designers and clients has changed, which causes the changes in the relationship of the clients and designers. There were also changes of these relationships among private and commercial clients within the client category.</p> <p>When I graduated, private clients looked for someone on the road side, those so-called design companies to do so-called design for their home. General public did have very strong subjective minds; they do not easily accept designers' suggestions. For those who may receive better education tends to pay more respect to designers. Almost 20 years passed, many clients have changed their perceptions, and everything has changed. They become more acceptances towards designers' suggestions.</p> <p>As for commercial project they are different again. Clients might look for something to invest and make money but they might not familiar to this area. When facing interior design issues, they are not that subjective in comparison; not like designing a mansion where they live in it every day, and then usually these clients will respect designer's suggestion as they recognize you are the one to design the project.</p> <p>Whether a country or an organization, I think there is always a developing progress. It's like in the past, design was considered less important than construction. Nowadays, design is becoming more important slowly and gently. The general public has realized there are reasons behind what the professional did.</p> |
| D ₂ | <p>I think there are power differences between the client and designer. The client believe he paid the money and the designer should listen to me, you are providing service to me, whatever I want you will give me to me, in particular residential, private clubhouse clients, these kinds of private clients will have a strong attitude towards it. In comparison, the commercial and public projects, such as opera house, corporate offices, these kinds of clients are better, they usually will respect designers.</p> <p>As for the power shifting, I would think it depends on the interaction chemistry. If both parties have mutual trust to each other, then the power level will shift slowly toward the designer. If they don't trust you or don't even like you, repelling you and not believe anything you said and not take any suggestion you gave. Then they will force you to take their ideas, you have to do whatever I told you to, and no question.</p> |
| D ₃ | <p>The majority of clients will still hold the 'right to speak' than the designers do. It is almost a definite due to the client hire the designer to design; in particular there are different approaches from the clients towards overseas designers and local designers. Clients usually behave stronger in position towards local designers, and the power of 'right to speak' is stronger. Designers will be required to listen to the clients and turn their ideas into reality; this kind of unbalanced weight in power is very obvious. However, there are clients could respect the designers more but there are not that many around. The majority of the clients that I came across who were in a stronger position throughout my previous experience.</p> <p>There still could be power shifting somehow. In the initial stage, client is still in a strong power position. However, by going through communication and interaction, the designer and client have reach a mutual understanding, then this power level will eventually shift towards designer slowly by understanding process. They may become friends at the end, this happened before. On the other hand, after a period of communication process, the client could realize that you are really concentrating to work for him in the project, then the power level will shift a bit.</p> |
| D ₄ | <p>From my experience, I think designers received more respect from clients in the southern region, particularly believe designers and respect them. In contrast, in the northern region this is totally opposite. In the northern region clients are everything, they would rather to have everything should be under my command as they paid the bill.</p> <p>As for designers, of course they want an equal power position as the clients do, balanced, equal and reciprocal. However, in a design firm, the business is very important to the boss. Everything firm still has to look upon the clients. For example, in a long term cooperation contract, the boss will require a 'yes man' policy towards providing services and attitudes. In contrast, for the non-long term contract, the boss will require a firm approach towards the clients. Not everything the client said they will take on board because you hire us to expect the effect we create. Therefore it is very hard to find the balance point.</p> <p>Personally, I believe client and designer are equal; I offer my service to you and you are not any higher than me. I am not lower than you and also not higher than you. We are equal under mutual communication, exchange comments and the goal is to complete the project, and achieve a satisfying effect as well as the designer's expectation. These are the things that the designer would like to have, that my design can satisfy the client. I think it is down to a profitable relationship which lies on work to work and person to person.</p> |
| D ₅ | <p>First of all, there should not have any hierarchy position, this is my job and I just want to do it well. As for the client you have your responsibilities. First, you need to pay. Secondly, if you want the project be done well, you will not have choice in everything; I will give you three choices A, B and C. Or I will do a bit further and offer you three choices in one item, so that you can choose.</p> |
| D ₆ | |
| Respondents | |

| Results and compromise | |
|------------------------|--|
| D ₁ | In the client's perception of a successful interior design project, the end result is the most important (the success of a project would be that buyers made their purchase during their visit). Whether or not the design could influence potential buyers' desires to place the order. If do so, clients will consider the design is sufficient (good) enough without the need to seek recognition from industrial expert. |
| D ₂ | Client concern especially is to have a better display that can direct consumers to buy effectively, until all the estates have been sold out. |
| D ₃ | I believe the only way is to change and compromise, flexibility in compromise. |
| D ₄ | My boss hopes to pay the lowest and get the best. The reality is you get what you paid for. Under the circumstances only can accept and to persuade the boss to accept it, a form of compromise could be. |
| D ₅ | (shě dé) 'shě' means give up, 'dé' means gain, which means: be willing to part with, not begrudge. A workable client-designer relationship I believe a form of compromise would be needed under the process of trust, where the main direction and principle remain the same. As long as the main principle unchanged, which includes the budget and project direction, everything else can be negotiated and compromised. |
| D ₆ | In a project, there are many elements could lead to different level of compromise, therefore be able to maintain 60% of the original design could be considered a success. |
| Respondents | |

| Progressive Relationship | |
|--------------------------|--|
| | IDEAL CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP |
| D ₁ | Under the circumstances, you found me that mean you trust me. I will certainly intend to do my best in my job. You trust me and I will give you in return. |
| D ₂ | Mutual respect - a collision between one's thoughts and idea to the other; because each people's idea is not the same, then how does designer respect the client and put oneself into the idea to let client to accept you at the same time? It is a matter of skill; how to handle this relationship. |
| D ₃ | Friendship, trust and mutual respect. It is not a deal, nor being forceful; I just want it this way and you just do what I said. If the relationship is like this, anybody can do the design; you don't need me to do it for you. It is because each designer is different and each one is an individual. There may be some ideas which only this individual can design it and make it work. This is what I think. |
| D ₄ | I think it is based on trust, understanding and communication. |
| D ₅ | I think client and designer relationship is built on trust. Client trusts designer, recognize his ability; not saying that everything the designer do are always right, but the client especially appreciate the designer. And I think this is the most idealistic. |
| D ₆ | The ideal client-designer relationship should be like friends. The designer is able to put client's thoughts into his design concept. In common language, you treat him as your friend. This time he gave you a project and he is satisfied, and he will give you another project; a simple theory. |
| Respondents | |

| Progressive Relationship | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| WORKABLE CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP | |
| D ₁ | Designer should have wisdom. Designer should lead the client to involve and express their opinions and applied to the design skillfully during the design process. Allowing the client to feel his presence as well as the superiority for direct involvement in the design. Designer could also make some obvious mistakes for the client to discover, in order to show his contributions and superiority in the project. |
| D ₂ | Designer should be convincing in front of the client. When designer possess a certain level of professional knowledge and personal quality that he/she can perform in a professional efficiently while communicating with the client; this can increase the client's acceptance and recognition towards the designer. Designer needs to guess what are the client's thoughts, digest then transform and express through his professional knowledge. |
| D ₃ | Workable client-designer relationship is like everybody happy about the final result. It is because you stand in the client's point of view, in fact, we designers take account of the client, help our clients to achieve what they want. At the end, every client became our friends. How can you manage to do your job if you stay in the opposition side? It is impossible. You need to capture what the clients' want, which means you need to think in their position. |
| D ₄ | When designer has an idea, client should listen. Designer should be responsible and complete the project under the client's thoughts and requirement; designer should give feedback to client regarding which of the client's idea can or can't be done. As I said before, it is a double aspect. Some clients who could be very busy or those the high and mighty general manager or chairman, simply gave an un-intentionally comment or idea. Then his/her staffs will guess what said and pass it to the other then to the designer. I would rather to have direct conversation and communication with THE clients, and the clients have to be patience and try to understand our thoughts, someone sell you an object and costs 10 RMB, that doesn't mean this object is good! |
| D ₅ | I believe it is a status, when both sides come together and be able to communicate and exchange views calmly. You will be able to present and explain your comments and design ideas to the client. And the client will be able to raise his comments. Until both parties integrated together. If the client's comment is un-reasonable I can argue and explain to him why this is un-reasonable in my debate. If reasonable I can accept and blend it into my design. It is a calm communication I would say. |
| D ₆ | There are so many parties involved in a project and everyone have their own thoughts and you can't please every single one of them. So, my ideal situation is to deal with one person only and hopefully becoming friends, get along well and to complete the project. |

Respondents

| Progressive Relationship | |
|---|--|
| MOST NOTEWORTHY FEATURES AS A SUCCESS IN AN OVERALL INTERIOR DESIGN PROJECT | |
| D ₁ | A very good way should be having the attitude of working together to complete the design towards a project. Design should take the leading role in the initial stage and collaborate different matters that were raised from different professions. To consolidate a final result after discussing together, in order to avoid any problem that may cost unnecessary waste of time and money. However, I believe there will be a lot of difficulty to achieve in this method. |
| D ₂ | The fact is how to work together to complete a project. Basically there isn't a positive ratio between the final result and the design effect due to the existence of client's elements which lie within. You show your dedication to your job the client that is most important. In client's perspective if the designer worked hard and will gain recognition or even understanding from the client. Client will be unsatisfied in anything anyway as everyone is different. Some clients are happy and satisfied by the recognition of designers' dedication. They aware there were objective reasons that caused some areas to be unsatisfied. |
| D ₃ | Taking account of what the client's thoughts and working from the client's perspective are the keys. You will success when you gave him what he wanted, but not to against his will. As long as you can withstand your principle should be fair enough. You can't always against your client, need to learn when to stop. On the other hand, you can't just stand firm with what you think and try to dictate the client, the client won't be happy. I did that once when client said it is not nice. I said I will pay the bill if it ended up not nice. Then the client wrote it down as evidence that if it turned out not nice I have to pay the bill. |
| D ₄ | Each project is different where you meet different people. Different things evolve in different projects. Therefore I found there are difficulties in every project. Working hard and communicating with others I can overcome these problems. I believe every project is relatively reasonable. Client's management ability – for example, if there is a standardised procedure process in the client side, it will enhance the design process and will have a rather smooth dealing cooperation. Contractor's ability - A good and experience contractor could convert designer's idea from drawing into reality efficiently and effectively. So it is very important to the construction stage. Designer – each designer has different ability and it is not possible to categorised who is good or bad. It's all down to one's attitude towards one's responsibility, to work a good job. There will be good and bad comments on the final design, the important thing is the designer was being responsible and controlled all the necessary facilities well. All the design elements are reasonable. Whether the design is beautiful or not, this is really down to each designer's ability and quality, it is hard to be judged. |
| D ₅ | A good design project should combine with local culture, which means the designer must have a deep understanding of cultural background of the project. |
| D ₆ | There is a project that I think it was my most successful project. It was an office design project and the owner was very picky. The gross area of this office is around 3000 Sq. meters. The owner behaved like a parvenu but no grace. Everything must be followed under his wishes. After a period of time working together, I learnt that he has a straightforward personality. After the completion of this project we became friends. Due to his vast life experience he would point out the area that I haven't considered in my design. In the design area we complimentary each other weaknesses; you provide your professionalism and he raises his idea. At the end we became friends. |

Respondents

| Progressive Relationship | |
|--------------------------|---|
| | DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DESIGNER AND CLIENT PERCEPTION OF GOOD DESIGN PROJECT |
| D ₁ | Clients only concern each deadline and milestone in each stage of the projects. In each stage, they don't concern whether the time spent on discussions and changes had exceeded within the planned schedule, they still expect designer to provide each stage result on time. The only thing designers can do is to try their best to complete each task within the non-changeable time schedule. |
| D ₂ | When designer's idea is closest to client's idea then he will be able to produce a good design. When the designer hands in the design is what the client wants, and then there is no different in their perception towards a project. This is only a process and this process is very hard to achieve. Subjectively speaking, I am a designer and the final design result is important to me. However, practically speaking, the project is important, and that is why compromise is important. No matter what kind of design, the first priority is to cater the demand. Designer could provide his/her service when there is a demand. At the end, the client would not be bothered to consider what do you meant to achieve. As for the client, the most important thing is the final result. |
| D ₃ | Of course there are differences between designer and client perception of a good design project. They are in different positions and their aesthetics are not quite the same; if the designer thinks it is suitable but it is not what the client needs. Quite often designer will add some accents to the design, but some clients will think it is not practical. In fact, it is true that accent points are design to please the visual effect, but it has no real practical purposes. It can only please our senses, visual enjoyment only. Some clients prefer to be in a practical side, in such case the design will usually end up very plain. That's why we always suggest and guide our clients to consider adding accents to the designs. |
| D ₄ | There is contract binding between the client and designer, there are many restrictions. Designing a so called perfect design still has to be regulated. No matter if it is conceptual presentation or email correspondents, everything should be based on regulations, must be clear. Apart from formal documentation there is the necessity of communicating. What is your idea you need to tell me; I have difficulty in this area I will have to inform you. We have to have cooperation in work. |
| D ₅ | I think the most difficult part is that client who is very subjective; I want this and I want that. Therefore designer need to integrate at least 60 to 70% of the client's requirement, along with continuous distributing and designing to reach designer's satisfactory result. However, it is very difficult for designer. |
| D ₆ | I don't really think there are differences at all; as long as the designer has a proper attitude that client hires you to help him to create profits. Some designers are considered to be quite stubborn. For instant, I want to do a good design. It is my design and I can ignore the client's thoughts; I only want to do my own design, etc. I believe we should be close to the reality. When differences arise I believe it is down to self-consciousness. Everything can be sorted via discussion and communication. |

Respondents

| Interactive dynamics | |
|----------------------|--|
| | MEANS TO INDIVIDUAL |
| D ₁ | "interaction" means I can fight for my rights. I can let the client to accept my design during interaction. I can also fight for extra time. Each interaction could generate additional values; it's like what I said I can get the stuffs that I want and clients can also get more what they want. This kind of interaction plays a very important role during the design process. |
| D ₂ | Client likes a piece of ice cube. If you want to merge with it then you need to touch it first. The touching process is "contact". You can "contact" the client through language and visual media, to guide and merge with the client. |
| D ₃ | Interaction is very important. You will need to know what the client's thought is, you will never find out if you don't communicate. Every meeting, presentation or communication, these are the most basic but effective path to know what clients want. |
| D ₄ | Interaction is like different kind of communications, it could be email or documents; just a different forms of communication. Sometimes going out for a pint or two can be a kind of private communication, no business involves, and this is not bad at all. |
| D ₅ | I think there will be a lot of interaction if it is a private client; at the end of the day the private client who lives there. On contrary, for clients like real estate developers or hotels then it will be different. For hotels, designer needs to communicate with hotel management company, owners and investors. For real estate developers designer needs to communicate with the developers directly. For projects with private clients, there are lots of frequent communications. As for developers, once the concepts approved and that's it, there will be no further communication on this matter, just follow the confirmed direction and carry on the design process and there will be very little changes. However, there will be lots of changes for the design while dealing with private client, you may find there could be a completely different concept to work on compared to where you started initially. |
| D ₆ | I think it is a way of expression. If there are differences between you and the client, you can express yourself through your conversation and your experience; by going through communication to show where your strength lies. |

| Interactive dynamics | |
|----------------------|---|
| | NEGATIVE EFFECTS |
| D ₁ | Due to the Chinese language is very rich, client might think that you did wrong that caused by a slightly change of tone. Sometimes misunderstanding could be caused by "Polyphone". Besides, designer might try to flatter the client by taking about his hobby. But the client couldn't care less which turns flatter into antipathy. |
| D ₂ | Client and designer could have disagreement easily during the design and construction process. This can be caused by the way how the designer express himself or uphold his principles. During the design and construction process, if designer cannot detach himself, being impatient or over with-held his personal opinions, it will cause misunderstanding easily, without allowing the client know your design purposes or reasons clearly and effectively, client will be misled and misunderstand that you did this for your own benefits. |
| D ₃ | There are lots of negative effects due to each director's preferences are different. Sometimes they insisted to put something to display which is totally out of place and made us headache. In addition, many clients believe "Fengshui". Lots of restrictions and contradictions within the interior space, cost a fortune to build but not appealing. We can only respect this as individual believe. |
| D ₄ | If there is a negative side of interaction I would say it could be selfishness. |
| D ₅ | Some non-professionals (clients) will raise some weird comments that might over-turn the overall design concept, the whole design needs to re-do. In particular after confirmation of the layout plan and design development work, they came up with new idea that over-turns the original layout. Once the layout was forced to change, everything we've done is ruined and caused delay in the overall schedule seriously. |
| D ₆ | (no input) |

| Interactive dynamics | |
|----------------------|---|
| | <p>POSITIVE EFFECTS</p> <p>Interaction is very helpful. I can understand what kind of person that the client is and what does he like by interaction. These are very valuable to designers. You can add these elements to your design to achieve an unexpected effect.</p> <p>I usually use different types of conversation to find out what the client would be interested during interaction, then I will guide and extend these topics so that the client could feel more comfortable and at ease. Then he will tell me more about his thoughts and more truth will come out.</p> <p>The design contract is the foundation that I get to know the client; the contract brought me this person and I will treasure him, and let him to accept me as a person and slowly becoming friends through interaction. It is of course I hope through this friendship he might offer me more contracts in the future. Basically, I will make friends with the clients through each project.</p> <p>I don't think interaction will affect the design process.</p> <p>Sometimes when designer's knowledge is insufficient in comparison to the client, designer's knowledge will be improved via interaction with the client.</p> <p>Nowadays many clients can travel abroad, gained knowledge and brought back. Client's design awareness is improved that also influences designer, as not all designers can travel abroad; in fact, most of them cannot afford to travel abroad.</p> <p>I think interaction could affect the design process; each step could be a turning point. After communication in each meeting that brought improvement towards the ultimate design effect. There were changes from each meeting and this also happened during the construction period.</p> <p>The positive side is when I spent a lot of time in communication and persuasion in hope that the client can accept my design proposal, which has been designed based on maximizing the client's acceptance. At the end the client liked it and accepted our proposal.</p> <p>I think the majority of the development from interaction turns out to be positive as interaction could improve our trust and understanding. Different ideas can be share and made understood via interaction. As long as there isn't any corruption element involved, I don't think increase in communication could bring negative effect, it should be a positive to a project.</p> <p>For the residential (private) clients, they are usually being subjective, as they are the end user and they look at things that include the overall effect in a very subjective point of view. In commercial projects, basically clients will not use the space like the residential clients do, therefore they usually are more objective; looking at how to achieve a good result in the project and ensure everyone is happy and satisfied. In conclusion, one is being subjective and the other is objective.</p> <p>For the positive effect of interaction, for example, when designer design the project they might not fully understand the local customs or characteristics, therefore client can contribute in these matters in order to inspire the designer so that a good design project can be achieved.</p> <p>I think communication should not cause any negative effect towards the design process. If you express your point of view clear on the matter of the project, which should be in the positive side.</p> <p>When there are many parties whom involve in the exchanging comments on the proposal, I hope I can lead them into my thoughts. Once they are all on the same path then it will diminish any disagreement.</p> |
| D ₁ | |
| D ₂ | |
| D ₃ | |
| D ₄ | |
| D ₅ | |
| D ₆ | |
| Respondents | |