



Fostering Mobility for Interior Designers: Exploring Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Between the Philippines and Indonesia

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Abstract

Aim: This research explored the potential of mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia as a means of fostering mobility for interior designers. By examining the existing practices, regulatory frameworks, and challenges associated with professional recognition, this study sought to identify opportunities for enhancing collaboration and establishing a more streamlined process for interior designers to practice across borders.

Methodology: This qualitative research utilized a case study approach to examine the discussions and outcomes of a conference that aimed to foster the recognition of professional qualifications among interior designers from the Philippines and Indonesia

Results: The interior design professional practices in the Philippines and Indonesia exhibit similarities in areas such as the definition of interior design, work phases, building typologies, client contracts, and required skills. However, notable distinctions exist between the two countries. In Indonesia, the definition of an interior designer is based on competence, whereas in the Philippines, it is defined by legal criteria. Additionally, the scope of work in Indonesia encompasses a broader range, including complementary tasks, whereas, in the Philippines, certain specified tasks are typically delegated to staff members with the interior designer's approval. Despite these variations, both countries emphasize the involvement of interior designers in project management.

Conclusion: The exploration of mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia in the interior design industry highlights the complexity and significance of this issue. By establishing mutual recognition agreements, there is a tremendous opportunity to enhance mobility for interior designers, enabling them to work across borders and contribute to a more globally connected industry. It is imperative that both countries recognize the potential benefits and actively engage in discussions and collaborations to develop frameworks that facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications.

Keywords: Mobility, Interior designers, Mutual recognition, Philippines, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, the demand for highly skilled professionals is rapidly increasing, with various industries experiencing significant growth and expansion. The interior design profession is no exception, as it plays a vital role in shaping and transforming built environments to meet the evolving needs and preferences of individuals and communities. As interior designers strive to excel in their field, they encounter opportunities for professional growth and career advancement beyond their home country.

The Philippines and Indonesia are two Southeast Asian countries known for their vibrant interior design industries. Both nations boast a rich cultural heritage, diverse architectural landscapes, and a growing demand for innovative and sustainable design solutions. However, despite the shared interests and similarities in their respective interior design practices, the mobility of interior designers between the Philippines and Indonesia remains a complex and challenging process.



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Mutual recognition of professional qualifications has emerged as a potential solution to expedite the mobility of interior designers between countries. This arrangement allows professionals who meet predetermined standards in their home country to have their qualifications recognized in a foreign jurisdiction without undergoing extensive additional training or assessment. By facilitating the recognition of qualifications, interior designers can enhance their professional mobility, broaden their career opportunities, and contribute to the exchange of knowledge and best practices between countries.

On the other hand, the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has created a single market and production base, enabling ASEAN Member States (AMS) to benefit from the unrestricted flow of goods, services, funds, and labor (Rivera, Cudia, & Tullao, 2019). One key aspect of labor mobility, particularly for skilled professionals, is facilitated through mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) (Rivera, Cudia, & Tullao, 2019). These MRAs involve AMS agreeing on recognition mechanisms, such as equivalent registration, licensing requirements, and reciprocity, to facilitate the mobility of skilled professionals within the region (Rivera, Cudia, & Tullao, 2019). This not only promotes trade in services but also enhances the integration of the AEC by enabling skilled individuals to capitalize on lucrative opportunities and maximize the returns on their investment in human capital (Rivera, Cudia, & Tullao, 2019).

In a similar vein, there is a Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMA) guidance intended to assist countries involved in labor migration in drafting, negotiating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating BLMAs that prioritize human rights and gender equality. The recommendations advocate for a collaborative and inclusive approach involving multiple stakeholders. It was created by the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on BLMAs within the UN Network, under the leadership of both the ILO and IOM. The TWG is comprised of representatives from UN agencies, employer and labor organizations, academic institutions, and civil society organizations.

The BLMA guidance establishes a set of evaluation criteria that governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and other interested parties can use to evaluate current practices. It draws from international human rights law, international labor law, and international labor standards, as well as pertinent UN and ILO instruments and promising practices. Therefore, it can serve as a technical resource for the development of policies and the creation of regulatory frameworks pertaining to BLMAs.

The mutual recognition of professional qualifications for interior designers is an essential aspect that needs to be taken seriously in both the Philippines and Indonesia. According to Lacson (2004), this recognition helps in enhancing the quality of work delivered by these professionals. In many cases, people tend to hire interior designers without considering their qualifications, which can lead to substandard designs that do not meet the required standards. It is crucial for both countries' governments to establish a framework that recognizes accredited institutions in each country, ensuring that only qualified individuals are allowed to practice as licensed interior designers. Furthermore, through mutual recognition agreements between the two countries, it would be easier for interior designers from either country seeking employment opportunities across borders without having to go through extensive requalification exams or training sessions (Lacson, 2004).

This research explored the potential of mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia as a means of fostering mobility for interior designers. By examining the existing practices, regulatory frameworks, and challenges associated with professional recognition, this study sought to identify opportunities for enhancing collaboration and establishing a more streamlined process for interior designers to practice across borders.

Through a comparative analysis of the interior design industries in the Philippines and Indonesia, this research shed light on the similarities and differences in the qualifications, licensing requirements, and professional standards. It also examined case studies of existing mutual recognition arrangements between countries in similar professions to draw insights and lessons that can be applied to the interior design context.

Ultimately, this study provided valuable insights and recommendations to relevant stakeholders, including government bodies, professional associations, and interior design practitioners, on how to facilitate and promote mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia. By fostering greater mobility



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for interior designers, we can create a more interconnected and collaborative design community that transcends national boundaries and contributes to the growth and development of both countries' interior design industries.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the current state of the interior design profession in the Philippines and Indonesia, including an analysis of the qualifications, licensing requirements, and professional standards in each country.
2. To examine the existing practices and challenges associated with the mobility of interior designers between the Philippines and Indonesia.
3. To explore the concept and benefits of mutual recognition of professional qualifications as a means of fostering mobility for interior designers.
4. To identify potential areas of collaboration and alignment between the interior design industries of the Philippines and Indonesia.

HYPOTHESES

1. There are significant similarities and differences in the qualifications, licensing requirements, and professional standards for interior designers between the Philippines and Indonesia.
2. The implementation of a mutual recognition arrangement for professional qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia would facilitate the mobility of interior designers and provide benefits to both countries.
3. There are potential areas of collaboration and alignment between the interior design industries of the Philippines and Indonesia that can be explored to enhance professional mobility and industry development.

METHOD

In this qualitative research, a case study approach was employed to investigate the process and outcomes of the "1st Conference with Indonesia for the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ)" hosted by the Professional Regulation Commission of the Philippines. The study focused on exploring the discussions and outcomes of the conference, which aimed to facilitate the recognition of professional qualifications between Filipino and Indonesian interior designers.

The research involved the collection and analysis of qualitative data from various sources, including conference proceedings, committee meetings, and online break-out discussion sessions. The data were gathered through document analysis, observations, and interviews with key stakeholders involved in the conference, such as representatives from the Professional Regulatory Board of Interior Design (PRBoID), committee members, and participants.

The research employed thematic analysis to identify and analyze key themes, perspectives, and findings related to the alignment of professional qualifications in interior design between the Philippines and Indonesia. The identified themes were categorized according to the five committees: Education, Accreditation and Licensure, Professional Practice, Professional Development, and Professional Ethics. Through an in-depth analysis, the research assessed the alignment between the interior design profession in both countries and evaluate the potential for mutual recognition of professional interior design qualifications.

The findings of this research will provide valuable insights into the discussions, challenges, and potential opportunities related to the mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia in the field of interior design. The study will contribute to the understanding of the current state of the interior design profession in both countries and inform future policy development and decision-making processes regarding professional mobility and recognition.



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Ethical Considerations

1. Informed consent: Prior to conducting the research, the researchers obtained informed consent from the participants, which meant that the participants were fully aware of the purpose of the research, the data that would be collected, and how it would be used. The participants were also informed of their rights to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time.
2. Confidentiality: The researchers ensured that the information collected from the participants was kept confidential and that the identity of the participants was protected. The participants were not identified by their names, and the data was only accessible to the researchers involved in the study.
3. Risk assessment: The researchers conducted a thorough risk assessment to identify any potential physical, psychological, or emotional harm that may have resulted from participation in the study. Appropriate measures were taken to minimize or eliminate these risks.
4. Fair treatment: The participants were treated fairly and with respect throughout the research process. No participant was discriminated against based on their age, gender, race, religion, or any other factor.
5. Beneficence: The research aimed to benefit the participants and society as a whole. The results of the research were disseminated to the public in a way that was understandable and useful.
6. Data protection: The researchers ensured that the data collected was stored securely and was only accessible to authorized personnel. Data protection regulations were followed, and any potential risks or breaches were identified and addressed promptly.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Analysis and Recommendations of the Five (5) Committees

The outcome of the discussion meetings and breakout sessions held on 21 September, 14 and 21 October, 9 and 29 November resulted in the analysis and recommendations for the five committees: Education, Accreditation and Licensure, Professional Practice, Professional Development, and Professional Ethics. These committees were established with the objective of identifying the areas of alignment and assessing the items related to the mutual recognition of professional interior design qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia. The findings, derived from the committee deliberations, were subsequently presented at the in-person conference titled "1st Conference with Indonesia for the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ)," which took place from 1-4 December 2022 at Hotel Okura, Metro Manila, Philippines.

a. Education

In general, there are significant similarities between interior design education in the Philippines and Indonesia, with any differences being minor and not detracting from the overall essence of the field.

Both countries utilize the term "interior design" to denote the profession, and as a result, higher education institutions in both nations offer programs in "interior design." However, there is a slight disparity in the educational requirements. In the Philippines, Republic Act 10350 (Interior Design Act of 2012) mandates that interior design must be pursued as a bachelor of science degree. On the other hand, in Indonesia, it is a bachelor of design degree with interior design as a major. The duration of both degrees typically spans four (4) years.

The interior design programs in both countries share a similar focus, emphasizing the significance of interior spaces, particularly with regard to health and safety considerations. While the Philippines has a law governing the practice of interior design, which consequently affects its education, Indonesia explicitly includes sustainability and culture in its curriculum.



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To ensure the quality of interior design education in both the Philippines and Indonesia, each country has established specific government agencies responsible for regulation. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is tasked with overseeing education matters. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, it is the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education that assumes this role.

While the Board of Interior Design under the Professional Regulation Commission in the Philippines is not directly involved in higher education, it carries out monitoring activities on higher educational institutions (HEIs) that offer interior design programs. These activities focus on evaluating the professional qualifications and adherence to continuing professional development guidelines of the faculty in these HEIs. In a similar vein, the Himpunan Desainer Interior Indonesia (HDII) performs a comparable function in Indonesia.

Additionally, both countries encourage interior design programs to seek third-party accreditation and recognition. In the Philippines, this typically involves pursuing accreditation from organizations such as the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU) and the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). Indonesian HEIs offering interior design are required to obtain accreditation from international organizations like the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and/or the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

The interior design curricula of higher educational institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines and Indonesia exhibit a significant degree of similarity. A substantial portion of the curricula in both countries is dedicated to interior design professional subjects, constituting approximately 60% in the Philippines and around 50% in Indonesia. These subjects encompass various areas such as design presentation courses, interior design problem-solving, history, theory, construction, materials, and professional practice. Additionally, both countries incorporate practical on-the-job training requirements into their curricula.

Regarding elective courses, Indonesia offers a slightly greater degree of flexibility, allocating approximately 30% of the curriculum to electives. In contrast, the Philippine interior design curricula typically include only around 10% elective courses.

To ensure the effective delivery of the interior design curricula, both countries have established requirements for interior design professionals who engage in teaching. Apart from holding an interior design degree and possessing practical experience, interior design teachers in both countries are required to have completed a master's degree to continue teaching at the tertiary level. In Indonesia, interior design teachers are additionally expected to undergo training in teaching at the tertiary education level.

b. Continuing Professional Development

To support the continuous professional development of interior designers in the Philippines and Indonesia, both countries have implemented policies and programs. In the Philippines, this initiative is known as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and is overseen by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), a governmental organization. In Indonesia, a similar program called Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan (PKB) is regulated by the LPJK, which operates under the Ministry of Public Works and Housing. In Indonesia, recognized professional organizations may also be involved in the evaluation and monitoring of PKB activities. Both countries have established laws and regulations to provide legal authority to their respective continuing professional development programs.

In the Philippines, the accumulation of CPD points is tied to the renewal of professional licenses. Over time, the required number of points has been gradually reduced. Currently, professionals are only required to accumulate 15 CPD points within a three-year cycle to renew their licenses. However, there are exceptions for senior citizens, who are 65 years old and above, as they only need to accumulate 5 CPD points per cycle.

In Indonesia, the required PKB points differ based on the level of professional practice in interior design. At the junior level, 100 PKB points are required, while the middle level necessitates 150 PKB points. For interior designers at the highest level, 200 points are needed to fulfill the PKB requirements.



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c. Professional Ethics

The interior design profession in the Philippines and Indonesia is governed by a set of ethical guidelines known as the Code of Ethics. These codes aim to foster professional conduct among registered interior designers, building trust and confidence within the general public. At their core, both Codes of Ethics prioritize the values of respect and integrity in the practice of interior design.

Delving into the specifics, the Codes of Ethics in both countries emphasize the responsibility of interior designers towards their fellow individuals, their respective countries, and their own sense of higher principles. Notably, the Code of Ethics in the Philippines explicitly highlights that success should be achieved not through advertising, but by upholding the highest standards of professionalism and competence on a global scale.

In all professional dealings, both codes require interior designers to prioritize their clients' interests above their own. Conflicts of interest are strictly prohibited in any interior design project, and decisions should be made with impartiality and objectivity. Regarding financial matters, the codes emphasize that interior designers should only seek payment for services actually rendered, refraining from accepting commissions that could compromise their clients' best interests. It is also emphasized that interior designers should avoid taking on projects outside their area of expertise. Furthermore, the codes discourage unfair competition through predatory pricing practices. When it comes to employees, interior designers are obligated to provide fair remuneration in compliance with labor laws.

By adhering to these Codes of Ethics, interior designers in the Philippines and Indonesia can uphold professional behavior and contribute to a reputable and trustworthy interior design industry. The codes serve as essential guidelines for maintaining ethical conduct, ensuring client satisfaction, and promoting a high standard of professionalism throughout the interior design profession.

Regarding continuing professional education, both Codes of Ethics encourage interior design professionals to engage in self-improvement activities, aligning with their respective countries' programs for continuing professional education.

While both Codes of Ethics share a commitment to the greater good, the Indonesian Code explicitly recognizes the significance of environmental health and the role of sustainability in the practice of interior design. Regrettably, similar provisions are currently absent in the Philippine Interior Design Code of Ethics.

d. Accreditation and Licensure

Indonesia and the Philippines share similarities in terms of government agencies involved in regulating and certifying the practice of interior design. However, there are distinct differences in their licensure processes. The Philippines conducts pencil-and-paper examinations, whereas Indonesia employs a portfolio-based competency licensure system through oral interviews. In Indonesia, interior designers can apply for work competency licenses in different categories, such as SKK Muda (3 years of experience), SKK Madya (6 years of experience), and SKK Utama (10 years of experience). Both countries have accrediting bodies that accredit examiners. The duration of the interior design course is four years in both countries. The accreditation validity period is five years in Indonesia and three years in the Philippines.

In both Indonesia and the Philippines, interior designers have the freedom to practice various types of interior design projects. However, membership in interior design organizations differs between the two countries. In the Philippines, passing the licensure exams automatically grants membership in the organization, while in Indonesia, membership is not mandatory even with the SKK levels. In the Philippines, possessing an interior design license is a requirement for teaching at the college level. Additionally, interior designers in the Philippines have a professional seal for stamping on interior design plans. Both countries use prefixes and suffixes before and after the names of interior designers. Both countries have a one-year civil liability period, and the scope of work is stipulated in the contract. The Philippines has an interior design law, while Indonesia is protected by the construction law. The Philippines also provides special temporary permits for foreign professionals.



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E. Professional Practice

The interior design professional practices in the Philippines and Indonesia exhibit similarities in several aspects, such as the definition of interior design terms, work phases, building typologies, client contract agreements, and required professional skills and competencies.

However, there are notable differences between the two countries. In Indonesia, the definition of an interior designer is competence-based, while in the Philippines, it is a legal definition. Indonesia provides an expanded and detailed list of interior design work, including complementary tasks. In contrast, in the Philippines, certain specified tasks, like presentation and animation, are typically delegated to the interior designer's staff, with the interior designer's approval. Nonetheless, the interior designer oversees project management in both countries.

In the Philippines, project types encompass a wide range, such as residential, corporate, institutional, and hospitality projects. In Indonesia, as the certification is portfolio-based, projects are categorized as private or state projects versus social or public projects. In the Philippines, project classification is based on project size in relation to computed fees.

Regarding professional fees, Indonesia has prescribed fees based on factors like the designer's rate, specialization, project type, or size. The previously mentioned specified tasks, such as presentation, BIM, and project coordination, may incur separate fees and remuneration in Indonesia. In the Philippines, fees are prescribed for each project, either based on a rate per room, a percentage per square meter, or a lump sum. Neither country has a fixed rate for repetitive work.

Indonesia has prescribed fees for different categories, including non-SKK, SKK, and foreign interior designers. SKK refers to the work competence license granted to interior designers in Indonesia. Additionally, Indonesia has prescribed fees for limited assignments, multi-disciplinary collaborations, and consortiums. These prescribed fees apply to both interior designers with and without SKK. In contrast, the Philippines does not have any leveling or specialized practice for interior designers.

CONCLUSIONS

The interior design professional practices in the Philippines and Indonesia share commonalities in terms of the definition of interior design, work phases, building typologies, client contracts, and required skills. However, there are distinct differences between the two countries. Indonesia's definition of an interior designer is competence-based, while the Philippines has a legal definition. The scope of work in Indonesia is more extensive, including complementary tasks, whereas in the Philippines, some specified tasks are often delegated to staff with the interior designer's approval. Despite these differences, both countries maintain interior designer involvement in project management.

Project types vary in the Philippines, covering residential, corporate, institutional, and hospitality projects, while Indonesia distinguishes between private/state and social/public projects due to its portfolio-based certification. Project classification in the Philippines is based on size and fees, while Indonesia focuses on the competence level of interior designers.

Professional fee structures also differ. Indonesia has prescribed fees based on factors like designer rate, specialization, and project type, with additional charges for specific tasks. In the Philippines, fees are prescribed per project, considering factors such as room count, square meterage, or a lump sum. Indonesia has differentiated fee structures for different categories, including non-SKK, SKK, and foreign interior designers, as well as for limited assignments and collaborations. The Philippines does not have specific levels or specialized practices for interior designers.

These findings highlight the importance of understanding the regulatory frameworks, project classifications, and fee structures in each country when practicing interior design. Professionals in both countries should be aware of



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the specific requirements, code of ethics, and practices governing their respective jurisdictions to ensure compliance and successful project execution.

The exploration of mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Philippines and Indonesia in the interior design industry is a complex yet crucial issue that demands attention. The establishment of mutual recognition agreements has great potential to foster mobility for interior designers across borders and promote a more globally connected industry. However, this must be approached with caution as challenges such as differing educational standards and regulatory frameworks need to be addressed. The opportunities presented by mutual recognition agreements are immense; they can facilitate cross-border collaborations, encourage knowledge sharing, and increase employment prospects for interior designers. Moreover, it can lead to an overall improvement in the quality of services provided by professionals in both countries. However, these opportunities also come with their share of challenges. Establishing standardized education requirements poses difficulties due to differences in curriculum structure and course content between countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education

1. The Philippines shall include aspects of interior design relating to sustainability and culture in a future iteration of the law governing the practice of interior design in the Philippines.
2. The Philippines should also look into the feasibility of its HEIs to seek international accreditation and recognition.
3. The Philippines should consider including subject/s on international interior design to orient interior designers on the global aspects of the profession.
4. The Philippines and Indonesia should explore faculty and student exchanges to enhance cultural exchange and promote research. Alumni relations and their benefits to education should also be studied.

Continuing Professional Development

- 1: Should the Philippines institute professional levels in the future, they may want to think of a graduated point scheme in relation to the levels.
- 2: A comparison study can be done to see how aligned these matrixes are to each other, especially if international recognition of continuing education points is desired in the future.
- 3: The Philippines may want to evaluate if international engagements should also merit the awarding of more CPD points.

Professional Ethics

1. The Philippines may discuss and advocate for proper and just compensation in the interior design industry, particularly for junior interior designers.
- 2: The next revision of the Philippine Interior Design Code of Ethics must incorporate professional responsibilities concerning the environment and sustainability issues.

Accreditation and Licensure

1. The Philippines needs to benchmark the SKK of Indonesia to establish levels of professional competencies.
2. In the Philippines, it is recommended to have a master's degree and ID license to teach.

Professional Practice

1. The Philippines can benchmark Indonesia in terms of fees on the premise of Junior Interior Designer, Senior Interior Designer, and foreign interior designer.
2. The Philippines should look into institutionalizing guidelines on how to charge for additional documents (e.g. Building Information Modelling (BIM), animated walkthroughs) that are outside of the usual set of construction documents.
3. The Philippines should review the classification of project types by identifying private and state projects versus social or public projects.



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