

# Students' views of the architectural design review: The design crit in East Africa

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## Abstract

The design studio and the associated design review can be regarded as the *signature pedagogy* of architectural education, where students garner the essence of what it means to be an architect. Here, novices are transformed into architects through the acquisition of architectural cultural capital. This paper investigates the design review in East African schools of architecture from a student's perspective, garnered from focus group discussions carried out in five schools of architecture, and corroborated through observations. Findings indicate challenges in the design review, vis-à-vis the broader goals and objectives of architectural education. However, it did uncover attempts at change, via a 'back seat instructor approach', for example, breaking down the stereotype of the design review as a hostile environment for students. The paper concludes with a few recommendations to help recast this signature pedagogical approach as a truly discursive environment.

**Keywords** Architectural education, design crit, design review, East Africa, power relationships, signature pedagogy, teaching quality