How Design Reviews work in Architecture and Fine Art: a comparative study

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Abstract

This paper compares student design reviews in fine art and architecture degrees. We use participant observation and draw on discussions with staff and students to describe the ways that reviews run in each subject, identify salient points of difference, and make suggestions for further developing design reviews. We found that 'crit' sessions in both fields are characterised by a tension between their dual functions of judgment and teaching. We think that this is better resolved in fine art because the hierarchy of expertise is less evident, and that teachers in architecture could consider separating the two functions in architecture. We observed high quality feedback on the content of design projects and we suggest ways in which the learning outcomes of listening, presenting, ability to participate in the disciplinary dialogue and ability to justify work created intuitively could be further supported. We also discuss the range of language used to denote design reviews and how these emphasize different aspects of the review's purposes to students and their reviewers.

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1 Introduction

In this paper, we consider the public review of student work as an event in the curricula of architecture and fine art degrees. We discuss what makes it function well and why students experience reviews differently in these subjects. The broader context of our interest is peer review in other disciplines.

We are taking architecture and fine art as exemplary instances of subjects where the opportunity for peer learning is deeply embedded in the disciplinary culture. The paper draws on conversations we have had with staff and students in various disciplines and participant observations we have done of student reviews in an internationally renowned school of fine art and two internationally renowned schools of architecture.

Two sets of factors led us to take an interest in the 'crit'. The first pair of factors were resilience and resonance. The 'crit' is a mode of learning that has characterized learning and teaching in architecture and fine art for a long time. This resilience interested us since it resonated with current moves in other subjects to develop more effective modes of peer learning. It seemed to us that architecture might offer other disciplines some insight into how students learn from one another in formal taught settings. However, working in a large multi-faculty university, we were also aware that 'crits' generated more stress among students than almost any other mode of teaching and assessment. Resistance and resentment were therefore the second pair of factors that drove us to take an interest in this area. Did students experience this process the same way in fine art and architecture, and was there anything that either subject could learn from the other about how to make 'crits' less stressful?

What we found was that the differences in how 'crits' run in fine art and architecture are different in subtle but important ways, and that there was a lot that they could offer each other, as well as other disciplines. But first we start with the observations.

2 Observations
2.1 Architectural design reviews
2.1.1 School A – First year crits
The reviews of student work at School A are termed 'crits' by the staff and students. The crits we observed began at 10am and went on until 7pm, with an hour for lunch, thus totalling 8 hours, which was divided into two sessions of four hours each. The work of 97 students (the whole of the first year) was considered by four parallel panels, with each student having 15 minutes to present their work and receive feedback. Each session was populated by approximately 12-15 students. The panels were formed of one or two tutors who were permanent members of staff and one or two guests, who dipped in and out and could be higher year students or people from another institution. The panel formed a fairly tight circle around the individual, their drawings and models (done at scale 1:200) and they alone commented on the work. The other students appeared to pay little attention to the conversation, instead sitting around or mounting or taking down their project work. The rooms were small, it was difficult to sit or move without knocking into student work, and there was a lot of coming and going. We were invited to sit on some of the panels and found ourselves unaware of what the other students were doing at these times, but also aware that they could not see the drawings or models under review, so even if desired it would be difficult for staff to involve the other students in the conversation.

The design reviews are only done as formative assessment – their sole purpose is to further develop the students' work and abilities via feedback and the activities the students undertake during the review. They play no part in establishing students' final mark for the module.

2.1.2 School A – MArch crits
We observed reviews for 2 different programmes at MArch level at School A. The reviews for programme UD took place over 3 days of seven and a half hours, with students giving individual presentations of approximately 15 minutes followed by 30 minutes of feedback from a jury of 9-10 people. The reviews for the GAD programme took place over 2 days of seven and a half hours. Here

students presented joint projects in pairs, where each individual had been given a theme and the pair had to combine the two in their project. The student presentations here lasted 15-20 minutes and were followed by approximately 15 minutes of feedback from a jury of 9-10 people. It was notable that this panel was formed almost entirely of men.

For both programmes, the presentations were oral but supported by presentation software, models and in some cases drawings. In the UD reviews the room was also being utilized by other students continuing their design work, while a number sat behind the panel. The latter sometimes seemed to be paying attention and at other times were looking at, what were presumably, the notes for their own upcoming presentations. The GAD reviews had their own room and there were far more students present, sitting behind the jury, again paying intermittent attention to the proceedings, and occasionally contributing to the discussion that followed the presentation.

In terms of feedback, the UD review we observed was quite balanced, with panel members agreeing that this was a good, convincing project. A number of criticisms were nevertheless made which the student could use to further his work. The GAD review we observed provided very direct feedback on the perceived low quality of the work and reasons were provided for this but at quite a general level, so that it was not immediately clear what steps the students could take in order to improve the work.

2.1.3 School B – First year reviews
At school B, the reviews of student work are called 'design reviews'. The ones we observed ran over two days, which began at 9.30am and finished at 5.30pm with an hour for lunch and a break during each session. Over the two days, the work of 90 students was considered by 4 parallel sessions. Students were expected to attend for the morning or afternoon session they were presenting in and encouraged to attend others, though we saw little sign of the latter. The sessions were overseen by a staff group of 2-3. Staff and students gathered around the work of the presenting student, who presented for 10 minutes without interruption, except for time warnings. Three students presented in a row then the presenting students left the room for 15 minutes while the staff and students formed two separate groups to take a closer look at the work and plan the feedback they would offer. The student review group was expected to offer feedback first but often required the staff to prompt them with comments and questions. The staff then offered their own opinion and advice on improving the work for submission and on how to approach their next design project. The models and drawings were done to a larger scale than at school A, which helped to make them visible to the reviewers.

The final design reviews that we observed were worth 15% of the project mark, based on the effectiveness of the presentation rather than the quality of the work. Students then had a further week - 10 days to modify their work prior to the final submission of their portfolio. Thus the reviews had a dual assessment function – both formative in terms of the quality of the students' design work and summative in terms of their ability to present it in a face-to-face setting.

2.2 Fine Art seminars
Seminars in fine art typically involve a cohort of 15 to 20 students, 2 to 4 tutors, and maybe visitors, who are usually other tutors or visiting artists. The session will look at the work of 4 or 5 students, and last between two to three hours long. This is the case for theory reviews as well as for practice-based sessions and sessions are held focusing on different student work every fortnight, so that each student can expect to have their work as the focus of a seminar at least once a term. The session is typically informal, with the only real structure being the move from looking at one student's work to another, which is sometimes marked by the move from one location to another. Tutors usually give the student the choice as to whether they want to speak first, to introduce the piece, or listen to what the others in the group want to say. One tutor described it in the following terms: 'It's a bit like a Quaker meeting. There's quiet until somebody feels they have something to say'. The tone of the discussion is conversational, and students and tutors all participate, with the tutors acting as facilitators. As with Architectural design reviews at School A, the assessment is purely formative. Comments given by

both tutors and students will tend to gravitate towards feedback to the artist about where they might focus their subsequent efforts.

3 Comparison
3.1 Similarities
In comparing reviews in architecture with seminars in fine art we note that both modes of review share many points of form. Students and staff gather in a room and a students' work is discussed. This is like the student presentations which feature in many other subjects, with a few differences. In architecture and fine art they have a much more prominent role in the curriculum and the culture of the discipline; and the review focuses on the student's work represented foremost by a visual medium and secondarily through anything the student presents orally. In fine art the visual representation of ideas is the artwork itself, while in architecture the drawings and models are both the work itself and a representation of the work. In both subjects we observed that staff were keen for students to use the occasion to explain their work to an audience and also to themselves. It seems clear to us that reviews in architecture and seminars in fine art are not a presentation of finished work. In both subjects the presentation format is used to help the students review and interrogate their own work and working processes, with a view to producing better work in future.

The way that architecture and fine art use presentations to help students reflect on their work, is especially significant at a time when modularisation and pedagogical pressures mean that most other subjects are cutting back on the amount of formative assessment that students experience. It's worth noting that the architectural schools' decision to modularise their curricula has been resisted by the School of Fine Art, as they want to assess the work holistically, with the end of final year show being seen as an accurate indicator of the standard of the students' work.

Another similarity between the reviews is the apparent reflection of professional practice. In architecture, the studio is supposed to simulate the architect's office and the review is intended to echo the presentation of work to clients, although the extent to which it actually does so is hard to ascertain. In fine art the comments of peers and tutors in a seminar setting helps the students develop their critical faculties, which they may use with regard to their own work or the work of others, and it also helps them learn how to respond to critical opinion when their own work is under scrutiny. It is perhaps worth noting that the distinction between artist and critic is not at all like the distinction between architect and client. Even when an artist writes as a critic, as many do, they are still writing as an artist; and serious critics who are not artists have very close relationships with the artists about whom they write. Famous recent examples include Clement Greenberg and Kenneth Nolan, David Sylvester and Francis Bacon, and Benjamin Buchloh and Gerhard Richter. This perhaps explains why the Fine Art School were so happy to have us come and observe: an interest in the artist's working process is key to artistic practice and critical reputation. While there are obvious differences between the professional environments for critique and student reviews the assessment is nevertheless seen as authentic and justified in this way.

3.2 The Purpose of Reviews
In order to understand why the reviews are so important in architecture and fine art, it is important to identify what exactly is going on in the reviews. As Margaret Wilkin (2000) has pointed out, design reviews have a dual purpose, of delivering a public judgement about the merit of a student's work, but also of teaching the student. The judgement element is particularly noticeable. One of the architecture tutors at School A we spoke to told us that it was considered important to make it clear how good the work was in the feedback, so that the students were clear about where they needed to focus their development efforts and we observed students receiving feedback on both the outcome and process of their work. At Architectural School B, the students left with clear ideas about how to develop their work prior to submission and the presentation itself was subject to judgement, in terms of counting towards their final grade for the project.

While the feedback was less directive in the fine art reviews, the staff and students taking part in the seminar sought to come to some kind of consensus about the merit of the work under review, and want

to help each other understand it better. In one case we witnessed, a student's work was judged by the whole group to be below standard, in spite of his claims about its worth, and the student in question was told by his tutor to work harder. Judgement thus remains very much a public affair in both disciplines.

3.3 Learning Outcomes
In terms of learning from the experience of the review itself, the students should develop their presentation and listening skills, ability to take part in the discipline's dialogue and to justify work that should be created more intuitively. The teaching function was prominent in all of the reviews. However, while the reviews at Architectural School B carried marks for the presentation and the students were instructed to practice these, feedback was focused on the work rather than the presentation in all the reviews (architectural and fine art) that we observed. We were in fact struck by the low quality of oral presentation skills of the MArch students we observed in contrast to their drawing and visual presentation skills.

In terms of listening skills, an architect at a third school, where we did not conduct observations, spoke of the importance of waiting time where the students were expected to listen in on other students' tutorials. Though the context is slightly different, this suggests to us that this is an anticipated learning outcome for the reviews in all the architectural schools. Schools A and B both had waiting time where the students were expected to watch and learn from their fellow students. We observed that at School B this time was structured around a specific activity. The whole day was broken into four parts. Students came to just one part, meaning they were in groups of only six. This group was in turn split into two, with each person in one group presenting their work, and the listening group discussing the presenters' work and giving them feedback. The groups then exchanged roles. This was different to School A, where the students were asked to turn up at the beginning of the day, in the expectation that they would listen to a days' worth of presentations. We think that students at School B listened more successfully than at School A because only in School B was listening structured as a specific and well defined activity and because they did not face the same presentation fatigue that comes with an entire day of presentations. In their sessions, the best possible use was made of the waiting time, whereas the purpose of the waiting time appeared to have been lost on students at School A.

It is our opinion that while students were expected to present and listen, this is not sufficient to develop these skills and so it is unsurprising that we observed little evidence of these skills being well developed in the MArch students (who would originally have been trained at a wide range of architectural schools). At School B, presentation skills were summatively assessed and thus there was at least here a motivation for students to develop them. However, skills are developed via reflective practise (Kolb 1984), with the accepted learning cycle including elements of practise, reflection, theorization on how to improve and the testing of such theories through further practise. All the architectural schools we observed offered the opportunity to practise these skills but in school A there was little incentive to do so and neither school appeared to support the other elements in the cycle via feedback and facilitated self-reflection (which is increasingly being recognized as an important aspect of any feedback - see for example Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006).

Furthermore, students can only learn the disciplinary dialogue (another anticipated learning outcome of the reviews), if they really do listen (and preferably participate), at the very least in their own review. Some of the tutors in Architectural School A reported that students were anxious (see also Cuff 1992 and Webster 2005) and so failed to take in the feedback they received. In the first year reviews we observed a panel member taking notes for the students and other tutors have told us that they encourage students to ask a friend to take notes for them. The inability to think clearly due to the stress and last minute working will inhibit this learning about the discipline's mode of discussion. This problem did not appear to exist in the fine art reviews that we observed. Here, the students appeared to consider the feedback they received carefully and in some cases responded to it or asked for clarification, and there was more student participation in reviewing than in the architectural reviews we observed.

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Tutors in both architecture and fine art agreed that a purpose of the review was to help students understand their own work better. It seemed to us that this stated outcome fitted well with what we observed in fine art, but less well in architecture. One particularly intriguing comment came from a tutor in Architectural School A, who said: '[The review is a] space for students to consolidate their ideas [...] [We are] teaching students to operate intuitively - but then to justify their ideas'. Justification certainly loomed large in the review process. We observed one architecture student being told that they over-analysed everything, while another was denied his review because he refused to justify his work (which we were told happened to be very good). A fine art student was castigated by his peers and tutors because the justification he offered for his work seemed to them inadequate. We could sympathise with these students, because it is difficult to reconcile intuition and justification. The tutor's point raises a key question: is it contradictory to say that work must be intuitive but that it can also be subject to justification? Intuition is a personal unconscious process. Deep personal reflection is thus needed to move the process into the conscious and allow a person to publicly justify their work.

We saw that students in architecture found this distinction hard to stomach, and this is almost certainly because of the very public nature of the review. A distinguished Professor in architecture recognized that the public nature of the review represents a great opportunity for the students to learn from one another, but at the same time, the spectre of public judgement adds to the stress. On the other hand, students in fine art did not struggle with this distinction, largely because the emphasis was on explaining their intuition to the public, and reflecting on it in the light of what other people said, rather than having to justify it in such a way that their intuition transcended its subjectivity and became acceptable to the public's judgment.

3.4 The Public

Studio work is public inasmuch that it occurs in a space shared with other students and staff. At the Fine Art School the studio space was one of the most public places on campus – without the requirement of most other buildings for visitors to show an ID card. Work is thus available for viewing whether it is at a very early stage or ready for display in a gallery. The architectural studios were more private and professionalized spaces. Furthermore, the semi-private nature of architectural drawings (as opposed to finalised designs, or actual buildings) may explain why public design reviews in architecture can be an uncomfortable affair.

The two disciplines dealt with the problem of public judgement quite differently. To understand how they did so, we should stop a moment and clarify the two key terms here, 'judgement' and 'public'. Both terms can mean a wide range of things. The philosopher David Hume addressed these issues in a famous essay called 'On the Standard of Taste' (first published in 1757), where he argued that taste could be decided by appeal to a community of individuals whose judgement had been formed by exposure to the best examples of the subject in question. On one hand, matters of taste were not purely personal, but on the other hand, they could not be proved. They were public, and subject to the public's judgement.

Hume and other philosophers have recently been criticized for being too elitist in their notions of what is meant by 'public', but for both Hume and his critics, the important point is that judgment is a public phenomenon, and that to be a member of this public means to agree with one another in matters of judgment. Each term cannot exist without the other. Susan Orr (2010), amongst others, has picked this point up in her writing about design reviews, and has shown that it is important to pay attention to the ways in which a culture reifies its values and initiates newcomers through practices such as taking part in disciplinary dialogue.

In School A's design reviews it seemed that the only people who passed judgement were the staff, or visitors, who sat on the review panels/jury. This would seem to be a much more exclusive notion of what is meant by the 'public'. Design reviews are where students should learn which architectural values are normally considered as contestable and which are taken for granted. Yet by giving directive feedback, the staff seem to reinforce the perception that Helena Webster (2005) found amongst first

year students that there are absolute architectural values, and that until these values are mastered, students are disbarred from citizenship in this public.

Students may see the passport to citizenship as achieving good marks: James Benedict Brown (2013) refers to the student tendency to think that marks represent objective values. This also raises the question of what may stand as a 'public' in the context of judging live project work, since the architectural community forms one public and the client is another, and work that is highly valued by one may not be judged so highly by the other. A problem that reflects that existing in professional architectural practice.

While Architectural School B avoided the trap of reinforcing the notion of absolute architectural value and the public became architectural staff and students, the staff were clearly perceived as the experts and students as peripheral participants in the architectural community of practice. There was thus the possibility of the students seeing themselves as waiting for the correct advice and opinions of the staff at the end of the review (White, 2000).

In the School of Fine Art, in contrast, expertise was not so clearly expressed. If students still exhibited many of the same behaviours as the students in the architecture reviews, such as speaking less than the tutors and letting them have the final word, the group was constituted differently and had a different dynamic. Staff and students commonly discussed a student's work for up to 30 minutes, and sought to come to some agreed judgment about its merits, before feeding their points back to the student in question. At least one fine art tutor has said they want to preserve the 'rich culture of people' that ideally characterizes art school education. In seminars we saw that students were willing to comment on each other's work, to exchange and respond to comments given by each other as well as by the tutors.

We might better render the tension between intuition and judgment in terms of the relationship between 'the work presented', in other words the outcome of the intuitive processes of the student, and 'the subject itself', taken here to mean the collective understanding of what constitutes the subject, as expressed in judgments delivered by the experts. What distinguishes fine art from architecture is a mode of teaching in which staff and students participate in discussion about a student's work. In other words they take the student's work as the subject matter of the teaching. While spoken or written presentations happen in most academic subjects in HE from the earliest stages of study, 'the work presented' usually has an auxiliary function of some sort in relation to what might be called 'the subject itself', which is usually comprised of a canonical body of knowledge about some specific subject matter. This is true of classroom activity such as an oral presentation, a piece of coursework, an examination paper, or a dissertation. The clarity of the distinction between 'the work presented' and 'the subject itself' is what distinguishes undergraduate from postgraduate study. Undergraduates usually perform tasks in relation to a previously identified body of knowledge, whereas a PhD dissertation (and, ideally, all subsequent work) is understood as a contribution to the field itself. In fine art, this distinction between 'the work presented' and 'the subject itself' is almost meaningless, since the work presented in reviews and seminars is taken as the very subject of learning itself. It's not a representation of the subject, and nor can the subject be conceived purely in terms of its representation (as it is in some subjects, e.g. history is nothing other than what historians write).

Architecture lies somewhere in-between. Unlike fine art, there is a gap between the 'work presented' and the 'subject itself'. A clear expression of this gap is the presence of a panel of authority figures in the 'crit'. Their domination of discussion and feedback suggests that the 'work presented' functions as a representation of the subject in question, where 'the subject' is defined less as a Platonic form, and more as a public set of knowledge, skills, and attributes. The aim of the presentation is to be judged to have achieved these public standards. What's interesting about architecture is that the 'crit' is a mode of learning that is sustained through undergraduate and postgraduate training and into professional life. This gives student learning a strong feeling of proximity to the 'subject itself', and is compounded by the willingness of tutors to use the 'crit' mode of teaching as a means of pointing out the gap between the 'work presented' and the 'subject itself'. Such willingness is what gives the 'crit' such a brutal

reputation, but we might also say that it is what enables students to feel that they are being brought into the community of practice. What's particularly noteworthy is that it is the design review itself, i.e. the mode of learning, that both highlights the gap between student work and professional practice, and makes visible the closing of that gap. In many other academic subjects the mode of learning's relationship to the outcomes of learning is veiled in mystery. Staff very rarely explain to students why their learning takes the mode it does. But in Architecture we have seen that they do.

3.5 Terminology

The differences within and between the disciplines of architecture and fine art are reflected and revealed by the terms given by each school to the review session. In Architectural School A the term 'crit' (or critique) is evocative of receiving criticism on one's work (with the intention of the student then improving it) and this is reinforced by calling the review panel the 'jury'. Notions of feedback are more sophisticated than just criticism these days, with a recognition that students require feedback on their strengths (in order to retain them) as well as development areas and though both were provided in School A, the foregrounding of criticism may begin to account for the stressfulness of the occasion for students and may also foreshadow this purpose in the minds of staff.

In Architectural School B, the term 'design review' is far more neutral. Interestingly it puts the emphasis of the review on the design work rather than the presentation (which was the assessed part of the day) and thus reflected quite well what actually happened but perhaps not all the intended learning outcomes. (Readers may note that we have opted to use the term 'design review' in our own writing).

In the School of Fine Art the term seminar obscures the reviewing function of the sessions, foregrounding the conversational and participatory nature of the session, and signifying that each attendee assumes some responsibility for the group's learning. The major intention of them thus appears to be one of learning through the work of a student rather than reviewing and offering feedback (though this was a significant outcome of the sessions we observed).

The term 'seminar' used in fine art suggests a process closer to the tutorials in architecture, which are also known as 'desk crits'. The distinction perhaps being that a single tutorial focuses on one student's work and they receive feedback and guidance on how to go forward with it (and other students are perhaps expected to listen in and learn through the conversation) whereas the seminars in fine art are structured to allow learning through a range of different students work.

The timing of the reviews also suggests this distinction between the major purpose being formative feedback in architecture and a mode of learning in fine art. The latter occurred on a regular basis throughout the term, whereas the architectural reviews occurred at set points in a module, with all students being reviewed at the same time in the module's timespan. This distinction probably also relates to the modular basis of architecture, where projects have discrete time-spans and for fairness students need to receive comparable experiences (i.e. feedback at comparable stages of the project) - an issue that does not apply in the same way in fine art's non-modular programme.

3.6 Participation

The level of student participation varied between the schools, with none apart from the presenting student(s) in Architectural School A, through to high levels of participation in the School of Fine Art. Participation is a learned process: as one fine art tutor noted, 'these are not by nature very co-operative people', and nor are they inclined to comment on each other's work. In our observations we noted that third-year students were more likely to contribute to discussion than second-year students; and graduate students in turn seemed still more at ease when contributing to discussion.

The process of learning to participate begins for fine art students during their foundation course. Students are carefully selected during the recruitment process and the School of Fine Art's students are encouraged to attend and take part in all seminars in the first term of their degree, not just the seminars in the field in which they might specialise (i.e. painting, sculpture, or fine art media). All seminars were also held in mixed-year groups. In contrast, at the architectural schools higher year

students were invited to be part of the reviewing staff teams but lower year students did not seem to be invited to higher year reviews.

Staff at the School of Fine Art simply expected the students to participate and the presenting student had full control of all their allotted time. A chemistry staff member who reviewed the Fine Art School emphasized to us the importance of student ownership for making the reviews work as true peer learning. The students own the space, the time and the way that their review runs. Though the actions of the staff at Architectural School B were not so different (they prompted and cajoled the students into commenting), the students did not own the space, time or the reviews in the same way. There was a prescribed format to the session and once the feedback section had begun the students were fairly passive recipients of it.

The major difference appeared to be in terms of who are the teachers and who are the learners. In the School of Fine Art everyone was both to a fairly equal extent, though the staff could perhaps have their own work reviewed if they wished to push this even further. In both architectural schools the staff were clearly the teachers and the students the learners and it is not clear to what extent this could be changed in a degree that leads to professional accreditation, where one must be accredited to practise – this notion lays down notions of expert and novice before one has even begun.

The 'rich culture of people' ethos in the fine art seminars point to the fact that this is a much more open kind of citizenship than prevails in architecture. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger have called this kind of open citizenship a 'community of practice' (1991) and have suggested that in this kind of public, 'opportunities for learning are, more often than not, given structure by work practices instead of by strongly asymmetrical master-apprentice relations' (93). Their comments allow us to contrast fine art seminars with architecture design reviews, which place more emphasis on the formality of relationships, as mediated through the contributions of 'experts' and the provision of feedback. For example, students and tutors exchange views in what is ideally a constructive dialogue in the fine art seminars, and students very rarely wrote down anything that was said. Architecture students, on the other hand, are encouraged to record the comments delivered by the tutor, or at least have a friend act as their scribe.

3.7 Peer review in other disciplines

Peer learning is being increasingly used in other disciplines, where the review format has not been traditionally used, and this is one of the reasons we wanted to look at peer review in architecture and fine art.

Talking to staff and students in a range of disciplines, we found that staff thought that peer review is more suitable for disciplines where quality is contested than for subjects where there is perceived to be a right and a wrong answer. (Students tended to think it was best suited for whatever type of discipline they were not participating in.) If we accept that it is more suitable for contested disciplines, this would fit with our belief that judgment is a public matter, if we take 'public' to refer to a community of practitioners, rather than something that can be proven logically or empirically. We think there is less recognition of the contested nature of values in architecture than in fine art, and this may explain why there seems to be less in the way of 'peer review' in architecture design reviews than in fine art seminars, but this simply means that the notion of public judgment is constituted differently in each subject.

This leads us to consider that a distinguishing feature of both subjects is that they may be said to be subjects where judgment operates, in a way at it does not in other subjects. Values are contestable, but there are still standards that are agreed on by the community. In other subjects, especially the STEM subjects, the degree to which this is made apparent by the curriculum may be far less evident to undergraduate students. As one deputy head of economics told us, students in turn may not be sufficiently well placed to offer good-quality feedback on each other's work, not only because they

don't understand the subject properly, but also because they aren't sufficiently well acculturated to the practice.

4 Conclusion

The architecture reviews we observed were less participatory and more hierarchical than the fine art seminars we saw. We began our investigation with the premise that it would be better if architecture reviews became more like fine art seminars. Our investigations confounded this assumption, for two reasons.

Firstly, we quickly came to see that the differences in how 'crits' ran in fine art and architecture were accounted for by the tighter structure of architecture as a profession. Like doctors and lawyers, architects need to train for about seven years before being licensed by a public authority. There is thus a strong sense of expertise in architecture that is both public, and exclusive. Students aspire to membership of this public and understandably they are willing to receive feedback and guidance on their work from the expert. The notion of expertise is also at work in fine art, but within the confines of the art school, it is more loosely defined. Participation in this public is recognized by the value of the contributions an individual makes to a discussion, rather than their formal qualifications. This distinction accounts for much of the difference in the extent to which students felt competent to take part in the discussions in fine art and architectural reviews and the extent to which they primarily wanted staff feedback.

The second reason for why our expectations were confounded was that we came to see how architecture used the environment of the 'crit' to both make visible the distance between the work that students produced, and the standards deemed acceptable by experts. This is the function of judgment, and champions of the traditional mode of 'crits' will argue that it is what makes the experience of the 'crit' both authentic and frightening.

If the 'crit' draws attention to the gap between the work presented, and the standards required, it is less easy to see how it helps diminish that distance. We argued above that simply making it visible can be a great help to students. In many academic subjects the standards required at 'expert' level are completely hidden from students, which may explain why undergraduate teaching often has a diminished status in many areas of university life: it is too commonly regarded as being separate from other aspects of professional practice (often generalised as 'research'). This is not the case in architecture, where the candid exposure of first year students to professional standards accounts for both the brutal reputation of 'crits' but also the presence of highly regarded practitioners on the teaching staff of leading institutions. Again, a comparison with the status of teaching in medicine and law may be appropriate.

The fact remains that our observations revealed a tension between judgement and teaching function of the reviews. Feedback on work is desired from the experts but much of the learning from the reviews should come from student participation in the provision of feedback. The most effective way of tackling this problem would be to separate the two, such that there are teaching sessions, where the students review architectural work in order to learn how to participate in the dialogue, and reviews of student work, where the main aim is to provide feedback to students. The latter could be given in private and perhaps by fewer members of staff to reduce the student stress and staff workload. There is a danger here of reinforcing the notion of absolute Architectural values, held by the experts, but we would expect that this could be tackled in the teaching review sessions.

If schools do not wish to separate the two functions, there is still much that can be done to improve the situation. It was clear to us that Architectural School B had taken proactive steps to encourage the students to participate and this should improve the students' learning outcomes in terms of their ability to listen and take part in the disciplinary dialogue. While the time that students spend waiting in 'crits' in School A may be seen as an opportunity for the students to develop their listening skills, this opportunity was not maximized due to the difficulties of seeing the work and the students took little

advantage of it in the reviews that we observed. We would therefore recommend that architectural schools seriously consider what motivation they are providing to students to encourage them to listen and learn from conversations about other students work. These opportunities do not necessarily need to be as structured as those at School B, but there needs to be an expectation for students to attend and participate in other students' reviews as there was at both School B and the School of Fine Art. In this way students will gradually develop from novices into expert practitioners. Notice should also be taken of Brindley et al's (2000) warning that changes need to be implemented from the first year cohort and visitors need to be well briefed, as it is easy to slip back into the traditional mode of running reviews.

For both disciplines more consideration needs to be made of how the development of presentation skills are encouraged. The award of marks for the presentation offers motivation to develop. However, students may be unclear about how they can do so without feedback on the quality of the presentation. Students could be encouraged to consider how they can further develop by requiring them to write a short piece reflecting on their presentation or by asking them to set an objective for their next presentation, which in turn could function as a marker for on-going development.

The development of reflective practice is also vital for the students to be able to justify work created intuitively. Though students' ability to do this was clearly judged at the reviews we observed it was unclear to us to what extent students were supported to develop this ability, perhaps via direction to materials on reflective writing (Watton 2001).

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