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**Title**

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**Abstract**

In recent years, there have been numerous attempts to improve the quality of higher education in Africa, but there is limited knowledge about the impact of these initiatives on student learning. The results of a study published in 2015 offered some initial data in this regard by identifying a lack of improvement in the critical thinking ability of students enrolled at three of Rwanda's public universities, despite extensive pedagogical reforms across the sector. However, subsequent analysis of the study data suggests that this lack of improvement is not a general phenomenon, as students graduating from the KIST Faculty of Architecture and Environmental Design appear to exhibit deeper approaches to learning and stronger critical thinking skills than graduates with similar backgrounds from other Faculties involved in the study. This paper examines the factors that appear to have contributed to this outlying Faculty's success and argues that departmental culture has played a crucial role, by fostering the conditions necessary for pedagogical innovation. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Schendel, Rebecca, E-Mail: r.schendel@ucl.ac.uk