Pinning, Sharing, Learning:
The Use of Pinterest for First Year Architecture Students

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
This paper discusses the use of Pinterest as a medium for learning among first year architecture students. Pinterest is a form of social media that focuses on the sharing of visual materials. From an educational point of view, Pinterest is an example of Web 2.0 tools in which the users could participate as the creators of content rather than merely being passive consumers of content. The new paradigm of connectivism suggest that “Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources” (Siemens, 2012). The presence of Web 2.0 has redefined the concept of learning, in terms of collaboration (increased participation), publication (opportunity to publish learning outcomes), literacy (new forms of expression, representation and creativity) and inquiry (new ways of conducting personal research) (Crook, 2007). Pinterest has been used in education in various ways, including for sharing teaching materials, encouraging student participation, and showing students’ works (Marino, 2012). Since Pinterest is primarily associated with visual content, it becomes highly relevant for the learning in visual-based disciplines such as arts, design and architecture.

Objectives and Methods
This paper focuses on examining the process of introducing and using Pinterest as a part of learning activities for first year architecture students at Universitas Indonesia. In particular, this study is aimed at understanding, from the students’ perspective, their experience of using Pinterest as a learning media, and whether its use also encourages them to pursue further actions on their learning. The study also looked into various aspects that the tutors could assess from the students’ Pinterest activities.

The study was conducted based on the analysis of students’ activities in using Pinterest in an architectural communication class. This course is compulsory for all first year architecture students. A total of 97 students participated in the course at the time of the study, with six tutors facilitating the learning process. As a part of their learning in this course, the students were required to participate by pinning visual materials on several Pinterest boards set for this purpose. The monitoring of students’ activities in the Pinterest resulted in the records on the variety of visual images pinned by the students, and various types of student activities: pinning, adding texts, liking and commenting on other students’ pins. In addition, interviews with a small group of students were conducted to obtain the students’ perspectives on their learning activities with Pinterest.

Main Findings
The followings are some findings from this study, which suggest some opportunities as well as challenges in the use of Pinterest for students’ learning.

Introducing Students to Pinterest as a Learning Tool
Although the majority of students had been active users of the internet, including some social media, Pinterest was relatively new for them. Nevertheless, their technology literacy allowed them to participate in this media immediately and easily. Managing the use of Pinterest is relatively easy;
however, the use for a large number of students might involve some issues in making sure that everyone has been invited to participate in all the boards. Some students pinned images in the wrong board, which could cause difficulties in monitoring their participation.

**Learning Activities with Pinterest**

The students’ main activity in Pinterest was pinning a variety of visual materials to four Pinterest boards. On the first board they were allowed to pin any images that they found interesting. Since re-pinning is not allowed, this activity encourages them to find any online resources that they could explore to find interesting things, thus widening their knowledge on the various resources available. Three other boards were used as media to showcase their works, both individual and group works. This activity required the students to be able to ‘curate’ their own works, selecting which one was appropriate to display, deciding the best point of view to capture the works, and creating texts to describe the images. In addition to individual pinning, the students could also ‘like’ or give comments to other students’ pins.

**Opportunity for Assessment**

The visual materials pinned by the students had made it possible for the tutors to get some ideas on the students’ abilities in various aspects. These included the quality of visual materials chosen by the students, the wide range of online resources found by the students, the student’s ability to select their own works and present them, the levels of students’ aesthetic abilities, as well as their interest on various aspects that might be of benefit to further architecture studies.

**Trigger for further learning**

The students were also encouraged to not just pin their own images, but to also look at the variety of materials pinned by other students. In this way, materials, resources and knowledge were shared naturally among the students. They could see other alternatives in exploring visual materials, and they were exposed to a wide range of online resources that they did not know before. They could also see the quality of other students’ work and get inspired to achieve better quality for themselves. Although we only monitored the students’ participation in the four boards, the students might also use Pinterest for other purposes, thus the use of Pinterest in this course might trigger further uses of Pinterest to support their learning in other courses as well.

**Conclusion**

The use of Pinterest as a learning tool allows the students to share materials, resources and interest with one another. Various skills could be exercised through the use of Pinterest, such as the skills of curating and selecting materials, locating and using a various resources, and presenting works with good quality. The use of Pinterest might also encourage students to use it for other purposes that could support their learning beyond those required by the course.

**References**