How Pinteresting!
The Emergence of a New Curricular Resource

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Amid the recent vocal debates and discussions over curriculum design, Common Core State Standards (CCSS), standardized test preparation, and literacy frameworks (Alismail & McGuire, 2015; Gabriel, 2018; Johnston, 2019; Wallender, 2014), a curricular wellspring has swept up a generation of teachers with little fanfare. The use of social media in school and educational contexts has surged, and digital platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become bountiful sources of curriculum despite little regulation from school governing authorities. While the body of academic research concerning social media's impact is significant, the majority of this scholarship has attended to Facebook (e.g., Chugh & Ruhi, 2018; Hew, 2011; Irwin et al., 2012; Manca & Ranieri, 2013) and Twitter (e.g., Gao et al., 2012; Tang & Hew, 2017; Veletsianos, 2012). Investigation into teachers' use of Pinterest has emerged in the last 5 years, though much about the phenomenon remains unknown. In this literature review, I explore the growing trend of teachers using Pinterest as a curricular resource and survey the implications for curriculum. I also provide suggestions for teachers' use of this digital platform and highlight critical areas for future research.

Pinterest and Teachers

Pinterest, a visual bookmarking platform, was founded in 2010. Within 3 years, Pinterest displayed the fastest growth of any social network at the time, even surpassing the growth of Facebook and Twitter (Semiocast, 2013). A decade later, Pinterest is one of the world's most-used platforms, boasting over 459 million monthly active users (Sehl, 2021). Compared to the popularity of relatively newer applications, such as Snapchat and TikTok, the growth of Pinterest remains impressive—in 2020 alone, the site gained over 100 million active users (Geyser, 2021; Sehl, 2021). These staggering statistics demonstrate the popular use of this online tool by a variety of users. The website allows users to save or bookmark images by virtually "pinning" them to personal inspiration boards. These images, called "pins," often link back to the website where they were originally posted so that users, or "pinners," may locate sources and more information. The site also provides easy access to others' pins, encouraging the sharing of ideas and social networking. Users may interact with one another through liking, commenting, direct messaging, and "repinning" content.

Among educators, Pinterest has become an invaluable resource (Cummings, 2015). In 2018, 73% of educators were estimated to be active Pinterest users; it is likely this number is significantly higher today (McCloud, 2019). According to the company, more than 1.3 million education-related ideas are pinned daily, and teacher influencers on the site often boast hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of followers.

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Teachers use the site to gather ideas about thematic units and lessons, share pictures of model classrooms or activities, and save images of anchor charts, bulletin boards, and crafts. They can connect with a vast network of educators around the globe, comment on one another's pins, follow the boards of respected teachers and coaches, and integrate virtual planning with concrete classroom activities. At the same time, the use of Pinterest as a content-specific visual search engine for curriculum has become ubiquitous.

As one teacher influencer stated, "As a teacher, I use Pinterest like it's Google. Rather than typing into Google, teachers turn to Pinterest. It's their search engine and where they find what they need" (Joelle, 2019, para. 9). Importantly, "what teachers need" appears to be less about inspiration and more to do with actual content for use in the classroom. A RAND Corporation survey (Opfer et al., 2016) found that teachers, elementary and secondary, overwhelmingly consulted online resources such as Google, Pinterest, and Teachers Pay Teachers (TpT) for ELA and math instructional materials and ideas. Among the elementary teachers surveyed, 86% reported using Pinterest to select or self-develop curriculum, including individual lessons and/or activities, problems, writing prompts, assessments, texts for whole-class and individual use, and adaptations for students with special needs. Similar findings were established in other studies (Carpenter et al., 2018; Schroeder et al., 2019), in which teachers reported using Pinterest to gather curricular content and find tools and strategies for instruction. This utilization of social media, while not surprising, is critically important to acknowledge and explore further, as such ad hoc curricular content may reside outside the context of current research and established best practices.

Methodological and Theoretical Orientations

This review examines current literature that has centered the use of social media by teachers and other educators and particularly focused on Pinterest as a digital platform. Considering its wide use in educational spaces, scholarship in this area has been surprisingly limited. Popular media reporting on current trends have produced myriad blogs, thought pieces, and news articles regarding teachers' engagement with Pinterest; however, it is only in the last few years that significant investigations of Pinterest in education have emerged in academic scholarship (e.g., Carpenter et al., 2016; Gallagher et al., 2019; Pittard, 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Schroeder et al., 2019). A sample of these works, selected for their relevance and notable impact factor as identified through citations and peer-reviewed journals, is explored in this review.

Drawing on sociocultural frameworks that consider realities to be constructed through a host of social, cultural, political, and economic factors (Gee, 2010), this review engages a critical literacies lens that centers the interrogation of power, ideology, and race within phenomena (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Luke, 2012). Accordingly, in this review I consider who uses Pinterest, who benefits, and to what end. Simultaneously, the invisible and marginalized voices are recognized and amplified.

Critical Issues and Potential Pitfalls

Though the term "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) has been used almost exclusively in reference to children, the first generations of digital technology users have now reached an age at which they have entered the workforce (Lei, 2009). A great number of preservice and novice teachers who are familiar with various technologies are entering classrooms, eager to integrate them into their professional lives. However, as with many other Internet resources for which authorship, accuracy, and efficacy are not readily verifiable, caution should be taken when procuring materials online. Considering the widespread utilization of Pinterest and other social media sites as sources of curricular material, I highlight critical issues raised in recent scholarship and their implications for practice.

"Pinterest Curriculum"

At its core, Pinterest indexes images, thus prioritizing visual content. Under the education category on the Pinterest homepage, it is easy to see how this impacts what is shared and circulated among teachers, as users click on the images they find interesting and save them by repinning them onto their personal boards. In her exploration of the site from a

teacher's perspective, Pittard (2016) found three general pin categories: classroom décor, curricular materials, and inspirational or humorous quotes about teaching. The abundance of pins appealing to décor included content such as thematic bulletin boards, organizational ideas, crafts, and displays. This dependence on maintaining the visual aesthetic of classrooms has been criticized by some scholars as "shallow" (Hertel & Wessman-Enzinger, 2017) and devoid of academic value (Huber & Bates, 2016), and teachers, intentionally or unintentionally, may prioritize "cuteness" over other factors (Schroeder et al., 2019).

Curricular materials have proliferated as well and include lesson plans, writing prompts, anchor charts, and more. Pittard (2016) described a relatively recent profusion of materials that fill a gap for teachers who are expected to teach CCSS curriculum but are not provided instructional materials. Consequently, trending curricular pins include instructional materials such as standard-specific task cards, skill-based worksheets, and word problems. While this type of content is undeniably useful and desperately needed by overwhelmed teachers, some scholars have warned that a "Pinterest curriculum" may suffer from a lack of coherence and continuity (Greene, 2016; Schroeder et al., 2019). After all, it is more difficult and time-consuming to sift through content that cannot be captured within a single image or video, for example, instructional models or year-long plans. Consequently, key curricular content is lost or deprioritized when a holistic approach or curriculum is replaced with discrete activities and lessons.

Along with the increased potential for ideas, lessons, and projects to be taken out of their original

for bad ideas disguised as 'cute' lesson plans" (p. 217). Educators sharing these concerns have begun to circulate the hashtag #PinterestIsNotPedagogy to bring attention to the need for more critical literacy when using the platform.

Demographic Implications

While the educational content that permeates Pinterest has been a key point of study in the literature, the question of *who* creates and uses Pinterest has been less explored. The demographics paint a picture of the average user that differs significantly from the makeup of many cities and schools (Rainie et al., 2012; Geyser, 2021). It is a female-dominated site; as recently as January 2021, 77.1% of users were women (Geyser, 2021), with the majority between the ages of 18 and 49, affluent, and White; the site also attracts women with a higher education (Geyser, 2021). That Pinterest attracts this subgroup is not problematic in itself, but it becomes a concern when placed in the context of the site's tremendous popularity in educational domains.

One critical issue is what Pittard (2016) described as the neoliberal gendering of education, in which an overwhelmingly White, female workforce operates to (re)produce discourses of "good" and "bad" teaching. This gendered imbalance is exacerbated by the system set up through Pinterest, in which search results link to items for purchase and women teachers engage in a cycle of buying and selling in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Importantly, Pittard pointed out that while the discourses of empowerment and choice are associated with the production and sale of curricular materials on sites such as Pinterest, often in day-to-day life, such discourses may narrow

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context, scholars have also found that curricular content found on Pinterest may be inaccurate or problematic (Gallagher et al., 2019; Hertel & Wessman-Enzinger, 2017). Gallagher et al. (2019) contended that "with no editorial board, vetting process, or quality control, [sites such as Pinterest] can act as turbocharged conduits

the choices available to women as they perpetuate the making and remaking of what counts as good teaching. Simultaneously, those teachers who do not fit this mold (or cannot afford to purchase it) may be marginalized.

The racial subjectivities implicit in such teaching and schooling narratives cannot be ignored.

As Gustafson (2019) noted, curriculum is not just about what is taught but also "who chooses what knowledge is taught" (para. 4). Considering the American teaching force is overwhelmingly White and female, a racial divide exists inside and outside of Pinterest (Shelton & Archambault, 2019). Thus, interrogating the role of race and racism in this digital platform is worthwhile. If what is assumed as "good teaching," or the average pinner, does not reflect the racial or cultural diversity in schools, it is inevitable that a host of voices and experiences is made invisible in the curriculum enacted within classroom walls. This point is emphasized by Rodriguez et al. (2020), who analyzed preservice teachers' reflections on curricular content on Pinterest and found that "both Pinterest and Teachers Pay Teachers direct users to resources that reproduce the color-evasive ideologies of racial capitalism" (p. 516). Consequently, the racialization of Pinterest must be understood as not merely a lack of voices but a mechanism for (re) producing dominant ideologies that actively harm non-White individuals and communities.

The Business of Teaching

Another issue that clouds the rise of Pinterest in the education realm lies in its social-communication origins. Pinterest is a networking and marketing tool. Individuals can connect to an immense system of global users through the sharing of information, and they are able to pursue personal motives in a professional domain. However, that these users include a vast and growing number of education-related businesses and organizations that promote their own content must be acknowledged. As Rodriguez et al. (2020) noted, "[TpT and Pinterest] exist not to foster curricular conversation, but to commercialize it" (p. 502). These groups, which range from publishing corporations to state education departments to small, independent LLCs, have their own agendas in promoting educational content that may or may not reflect the mission statements, goals, or needs of individual schools and districts. Moreover, a growing number of privatized groups, controlled by major corporations and media giants and driven by economic capital, have appeared disguised as educational and child development experts (Hade & Edmondson, 2003).

In tandem with the propagation of Pinterest in schools is the phenomenon of pinners promoting and selling their own content, often through online marketplaces such as TpT, and using Pinterest to boost traffic to their personal sites. These "teacherpreneurs" (Joelle, 2019) have been publicized as so profitable that many leave the classroom altogether to pursue their Pinterest and TpT work full-time (Joelle, 2019). While their success is enviable, the increasingly blurry line between teachers and businesses is worrisome, as these teacher influencers increasingly accept sponsorships and paid advertisements, often without clearly disclosing such partnerships (Davis & Yi, in press; Reinstein, 2018). These factors create a troubling combination in the purview of current curriculum and professional development.

Because there is no moderation of content, whether by experts in the field or guidelines created by professional organizations, what *looks* good is made and sold in droves. Whether it also does good is another question. Stein (as cited in Pondiscio, 2016) noted that within the domain of instructional design, the trajectory of curriculum is iterative, as instructional materials are developed, field tested, and modified before being used with students in classrooms. Bypassing such developmental processes for curriculum not only devalues those with the training and credentials to thoughtfully create materials but may also result in poor outcomes for students, who become unknowing test subjects in the field. As the purchase of curricular materials is contemplated, it is necessary to confront, in the words of Rodriguez et al. (2020), the elephant in the room: "What qualifies *you* to make this?" (p. 518). Within this digital domain, it is difficult to evaluate the motives and goals of online users, and it cannot be assumed that education-related pins are grounded in research or sound practice.

Suggestions for Teachers

Despite this literature review's focus on the potential pitfalls of curating curriculum on Pinterest and other social media platforms, I do not pronounce that Pinterest is a poor tool or that it offers little to the field. Its explosive growth and near ubiquity in schools demonstrate its usefulness and popularity

with novice and veteran teachers alike who have long felt alienated in the field or underprepared to address the shifting sand of educational standards and expectations. Indeed, the sheer number of educators who use Pinterest indicate the platform's potential as a teaching resource as well as a marketing, business, and communication tool. Rather, I echo the growing number of scholars who have called for the use of Pinterest for educational purposes to be tempered with reflexivity and criticality (Gallagher et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Schroeder et al., 2019; Shelton & Archambault, 2019).

In light of the concerns laid out in this review, I offer suggestions for teachers to consider as they engage with Pinterest and other social media platforms:

1. Several scholars have created tools to help teachers critically evaluate instructional materials on Pinterest and TpT. Archambault et al. (2021) have provided a "Responsible Teachers-Buyer's Guide," (available for free download at https://bit.ly/TeachersBuyersGuide) which provides guidance for vetting sellers and critiquing resources. Gallagher et al. (2019) have constructed a "Pinning with Pause" checklist to help teachers assess reliability, purpose, and perspective in instructional materials. This checklist has been further amended by Rodriguez et al. (2020) to encourage more user dialogue and conversation among teachers, the purpose of which is recentering the focus of curriculum from the digital platform back to the specific needs of the learning community in question. Such resources may be enormously helpful for teachers, particularly because they provide explicit guidance in navigating a vast amount of education-related content.

2. Teachers must be purposeful about diversifying the pinners and boards they follow to interrupt and combat the "non-neutrality" (Rodriguez et al., 2020), or racialized and gendered mechanisms, driving the site. Archambault et al. (2021) recommended teachers "proactively seek out materials that have been created by teachers of color who explicitly call attention to the perspectives they've featured" (para. 14). Not only would such efforts likely result in more culturally authentic materials but could also boost the visibility of BIPOC teachers and pinners on the platform.

3. Considering Pittard's (2016) warning about the association of "good teaching" with the perpetual labor and monetization of women's work, a prudent step would be for teachers to continually reflect on their own understandings of teaching excellence and "big picture" resolutions. Reflexive praxis holds the possibility of restoration and change, even in digital territories.

4. Finally, it is critical that teachers situate curricular content curated from Pinterest within the context of more cohesive curricula. Though much of the educational landscape has moved online, it is the case that excellent and expertly developed curricular material is available and appeal to a wide variety of student and classroom needs. To completely bypass such resources compromises the integrity of current research, but to supplement them with specific materials derived from sites such as Pinterest may be a boon.

Looking Ahead

Even among other forms of social media, Pinterest's evolution is remarkable. In just over a decade, it has engaged hundreds of millions worldwide and found niche purposes in a multitude of domains, and the substantial impact it is having in the field of education and on the landscape of curriculum must not be ignored. In particular, further research is needed to analyze content-specific curriculum on these sites, the continued intertwining of neoliberalism and teaching, and racial inequities in social media–derived curriculum. In addition, more empirical work with teachers and students who engage with these forms of curriculum is desperately needed. As fast-changing digital platforms come to be embraced by educators, collective attention must remain focused on curricular needs to bridge practice and theory.

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