

World Conference on Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Evaluating Students' Need in Using Computer Aided Software in Landscape Design Course

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Abstract

Landscape design is one of a course offered in Landscape Programme in higher level education institutions in Malaysia. The objective of this paper is to study and to evaluate students' need in using computer aided software in landscape design course in Community College in Malaysia. As a well-known fact, landscape design is a course about drawings and most of the teaching techniques involve hand drawing. Hand drawing class seems to be a problem when it comes to the advanced use of technologies nowadays. The emergence of computer aided software in landscape design course appears to provide convenience to students in this course. Furthermore, there are long-term impacts regarding the literacy of using the software after the students finished their college. The survey involves interviews and questionnaires. Questions for interviews were closed questions whereas a set of questionnaire was distributed to 50 respondents involving three (3) Community College in Malaysia which offered Landscape Programme. Findings of the study showed that most of the students think that using computer aided software is convenience and they are significantly need to use the software in landscape design course.

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Peer-review under responsibility of Istanbul Univeristy.

Keywords: Computer Aided Software; Landscape Design Course; The Need of Computer; Malaysia Community College

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1. Introduction

Landscape design is a course that offered by higher education institutions in Malaysia. The level varies from certificate up to master's degree. Soft skill in drawing is essential in order to achieve good result in this course. However new pattern has emerged towards the new era where everything is computerized. Thus, soft skill in using computer aided software has becoming as essential as soft skill in hand drawing, particularly for this course.

According to Monk (1996) in his research, all students should explore and utilize computing as it is used by professionals within their respective field of study, and upper level courses with significant computing content should be available in each major. Therefore the use of computer aided software is becoming the most important necessity in landscape design nowadays, which provides lesser time, lesser cost, able to speed up proposal or presentation drawings, and paper-less, even the presentation can be presented anytime and anywhere.

Today's children are the first generation of the "digital age." They are raised in a society that is changing rapidly as a result of the influx of new computer-based technologies that provide more pervasive and faster worldwide links to commerce, communication, and culture. Students of Community College across Malaysia especially in landscape programme, cannot benefit fully from a traditional classroom anymore because they have a weak hand drawing skill that impairs their ability to participate faster in presenting ideas.

In a typical classroom, students are given assignments needed to be completed in a given time, yet they waste time for not understanding, and they even struggling to understand the drawing. Consequently, most of the time that is supposed to be used to finish the assignment has become a tutorial on simply how to draw. Besides having problems in finishing their assignments because of the time constraint, students also face difficulties to submit their manual drawings as the drawings are prone to be damaged. Also, not to forget the limitations of available drawing tools. In certain cases, lecturers or instructors need to prepare the students with all the drawing tools which they have to carry all the way to classroom.

Furthermore, the industry would want a graduate who can use technology in some ways that will allow them to compete in the increasingly high-technology workplace. Most of the companies, authorities or even contractors seek to hire computer software literate. This paper is about evaluating students' need in using computer aided software in landscape design course, in order to solve problems in landscape design faster and easier, with the drawings that can be presented well anywhere and anytime, and also to be more marketable after college.

2. Related Works

Hutchison (2011) in his book stated that in design disciplines, drawing by hand has largely become a lost art. With digital tools at their disposal, the majority of designers create spaces while sitting at their computer screens. Certainly, teaching and learning will be easier, faster, accurate and interesting, nonetheless attitudes are changing, however: spurred by creative boredom and by a sense of being disconnected from their briefs, today's designers seek a greater and more immediate connection with their projects. Thus, it shows that the skill of using computer aided software is extremely in high demand, but not to forget, drawing by hand is still a sought after skill too. In Malaysia, particularly in community college, a study conducted by Yaakub. A (2011) concludes that 100% of the respondents agreed that the software is very helpful for them in finishing up their design projects in appropriate time constraint. Therefore the use of computer aided software for the most part of landscape design is needed even in the lower level of higher education institutional provider.

Previous study, Jared (2007) suggested that students need to have direct instruction to efficiently use computer technology applications such as authoring and sophisticated hypermedia. These programs provide computer skills in advanced computer technology applications that will enable faculty members to expect more discipline specific computer-based projects. There are many issues related to the successful use of technology in the classroom concerning platforms, hardware, software, and so forth. While these are perhaps the most obvious considerations, an often-overlooked but crucial determinant of whether technology succeeds or fails in the classroom is a less than

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