Student's Perception towards the Use of Social Networking as an E Learning Platform in Technical Tertiary Education in Sri Lanka

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The education system is changing from traditional learning to modern with self-knowledge production via modern technological aids. An important place is taken by E- Learning, among which Learning Management System (LMS) and Social Networks dominate. Therefore, this research examines either LMS or social networks are the most suitable for the students in technical universities in Sri Lanka in the context of E learning environment. The objectives of this study are; to investigate students' perception on the current E-Learning system, to discover students' perception towards adopting social network as an E-Learning platform, to identify required skills for effective use of social networking tools among students, to identify the differences on students' perception of current E-Learning system; their perception towards adopting social networking tools as an E- Learning platform and their skills to use social networking tools based on their gender and type of the programme of study. The study population is the undergraduates of University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, sample consisted 100 E-Learning participants. Questionnaire, which is relevant to the usage of LMS and social networks used as a primary data collection method. The findings of this study indicated that students' satisfaction of current E-Learning system was in a moderately positive level. Students agreed on adopting social networking as an E-Learning platform and agreed with all the required skills for the effective use of social networking tools. Type of students' study programme has no effect on students' perception neither towards current E-Learning system nor in the required skills of using social networking effectively. However, there was a significant difference between male and female students in the required skills of using social networking tools at α= 0.05. Female students appeared to be more skilful and ready for using social networking tools than male students. Further, it could be concluded that students preferred social networking as an E-Learning platform, where it can provide them more interactive features than the current E-Learning system. In addition, it is important for universities and lecturers to be aware of students' needs to guide and advise them with relate to their learning environment.

Key words: *E learning, Learning management system, Social networks, Technical universities*