Students` Perceptions of Using Google Plus as a Learning Management System

Olga PILLI *
Oytun **SÖZÜDOĞRU****

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Learning Management System as a tool to organize, manage, deliver and evaluate the teaching and learning activities are expanding significantly at the on-campus and off-campus education. Apart from the plenty of benefits of LMSs, there are some restrictions of using LMSs for instructional purposes. At the same time, the expanding of social networking site is also climbing in the field of education. Therefore, this paper discusses the impact of the using Web 2.0 social media tools **through Google Plus as a learning management system for the "History of Science" course at the undergraduate level in computer and instructional** technology education

Purpose of Study: The main purpose of this study was to explore the students` perceptions of using Google Plus to organize the course. The Google Plus circle was used for putting up announcements, distributing resources, and leading online discussions.

Methods: A total of 28 students taking a **"History of Science" course at** Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus were participated in this study. An interview session was conducted with the students in order to collect data for this study

Findings and Results: Results indicated that students were mainly pleased with the affordances of Google Plus as the essential utilities of an LMS could be easily implemented in the Google Plus circle. However, using the Google Plus circle as an LMS has certain limitations. Students stated that Google Plus did not support to upload files directly, and also they indicated that most of the posts were not reading regularly

Conclusion and Recommendations: For the purposes of **"History of Science"** course, the user friendly interface of *Google+* with various features and the

*Dr. Girne American University, Faculty of Education, olgapilli@gmail.com
**PhD. University of York, oytunsozudogru @gmail.com

visual oriented content nature of "History of Science" course gave free-dom and creativity to students in communication, understanding and in-teraction. Constraints of using the Google Plus circle as an LMS, implica-tions for practice and limitations of this study are discussed.

Keywords: Google Plus, learning management systems, social network sites, North Cyprus.

Introduction

Nowadays, social network sites (SNSs) like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube are in-evitable become a real fact of life. Social network sites are web-based services that al-low users to build a public or semi-public within a system; articulate a user list whit shared relationships; and observe the list of relationships of those persons with other people with the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). SNSs have been considered different fields; marketing, communication, interpersonal relationships, and education. There are number of issues of social network sites related to education. Integration of SNSs into educational settings is not a new argument anymore, but the main debate is to introduce social network sites into educational setting in an effective and creative ways. Because using SNSs as a traditional tool like handouts or blackboard, out-comes would not be different than as it before. The main idea is to use the features that unique to social network sites in order to get the real benefits of them. What are the basic features of SNSs that enable students to understand or learn better?

One possible way of using SNSs for teaching and learning is to use its group as a Learning Management System. Learning Management System (LMS) is a broad term used to describe software tools designed to manage user learning interventions and provide access to online learning services for students, teacher, and administrator (Christensen, Horn & Johnson, 2008). Research studies show that using LMS pro-vides lots of benefits both for teachers and students. Basically, it helps to make a shift from passive to active learning with using not product-based but the process based learning opportunities (Herse & Lee, 2005). Beside this, with the integration of LMS into instruction, students' participation and interaction would be increased positively and consequently it enables students to understand and comprehend the topic defi-nitely (Moore, 2002).

Apart from the plenty of benefits of LMSs, there are some limitations of using commercial LMSs (Blackboard, Moodle, or WordPress) for instructional purposes (Sanchez-Franco, 2010). For instance, the cost of the most of the LMSs is not cheap to purchase by most of the educational institutions so that they tend to be expensive to create. Besides, it requires a considerable much time to install necessary hardware, software, course and database. Also, most of the LMSs are fairly complex and often contain a lot of features that teachers would probably never use, so that especially novice teachers ask for help from the LMS Administrator (Black, Beck, Dawson, Jinks & DiPietro, 2007).

Due to the above-mentioned limitations, using the LMS does not go beyond the traditional learning environment which is used only uploading lecture notes, data

presentation slides, notes and grades. Thus, students rarely log in to LMSs just to upload lecture notes or learn the exam results. In contrast, students naturally and voluntary spend their time on SNSs like Google Plus, Twitter and Facebook (Selwyn, 2011). If the Google Plus (*Google+*) circle can be used as an alternative LMS, it would be overcome some of the limitations of LMSs. In this way, teachers can organize and control the course content and also students can reach and be a part of the learning environment with little effort. In this study, we examined students' opinions on usage of *Google+* as a LMS to organize the content and activities of the "History of Science" course.

An overview of Google+

Google + is a Google's social network which has the options to share, hide, protect and discover photos, friends, videos, posts that common features that make up today's online social network sites. The comScore.com reported 20 million users just after 21 days of introducing Google Plus (Anderson and Still, 2011). Unlike the Facebook, *Google+* allows users to organize "friends" into various groups by including them into user-created circles, which allows for more privacy when posting. For instance, users may create any number of circles: colleagues, high school friends, business associates, college peers, etc., and it might be assigned "friends" to be in one or more of each of the circles. Users may choose to share the post with a particular user-created circle ("friends" "family", multiple circles, or the "public" circle (everyone). Another elegant feature of *Google+* is Hangout, which provides user to do video chat sessions that are easily initiated by a user and joined by people in their circles. There are also some features of *Google+* that can be used by universities. For example, if you have an active Google for your institution, your content can be shared with only the institution's accounts. With the help of "circles" it is easy to create environments that can make announcements. Hangouts for several hours with a video conference could be held interviews with the students it can be done with Google Docs support. In addition to this, students can share their thoughts with a project group, friends, or family circle; have a Hangout with up to nine classmates; keep up with their connections from their mobile device. Faculty can host virtual office hours in Hangouts; share information with their class circles; share published articles with those that might be interested. Staff can use Hangouts to meet with a distributed team; share information with a project circle; keep in touch with colleagues, students, and faculty. Hangout is useful for all different educational settings (Brooks, 2011).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to find out the undergraduate students' perceptions on the integrating of *Google+* in their coursework. This study also aims to bring into light the possible integration of the *Google+* as an LMA into undergraduate course. Additionally, the researchers explored influences of *Google+* on the organization of course content and materials, whether *Google+* has potential to enhance learning and understanding.

Thus, this study focused on the following basic question and the related sub-questions:

- What are the students' perceptions of the integration of *Google+* in their learning activities?
- What are the students' views on the benefits of using *Google+* as an LMS?
- What are the students' general experiences of using *Google+* in the "History of Science" course?
- What are the students' views on the positive and negative aspects of using *Google+* as an LMS?

Methods

Research Design

In this study qualitative research method is used to find out the students' perceptions on the usage of Google Plus as a learning management tool. This study was conducted with the undergraduate course entitled "History of Science" in the fall semester of 2011-2012 academic year.

Sample

There were 28 students who were taken the "History of Science" course. Students were 3rd Grade in the department of Computer and Instructional Technology Education, Faculty of Education, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. Students are getting together once a week in a classroom environment and they are supposed to do presentation on the topics selected from the course content, such as "Birth of Science", "Science in Islamic Period" or "Science in Middle –Ages".

Research Instruments

For this study, an interview schedule designed by the researcher and the artifacts from students' posts on "BSCI303" circle were used as data collection methods to collect data. The face-to-face interview sessions were conducted with 12 students in different time periods. It consisted of questions on perceptions of usage *Google+* in "History of Science", experiences, benefits and effects on their understanding, and advanatges and disadvantages of using *Google+*. The interview process was carried out to gain deeper understanding of a focus group's perceptions with the set of questions.

The Course: "History of Science"

The "History of Science" is an undergraduate level course required for teacher education students. Higher Education Council required History of Science course for all the departments in the Faculty of Education. The "History of Science" is a compulsory course in their curriculum. "History of Science" is 2 credits one semester course which covers the evolution of science since the beginning of Near east civilizations, science during the periods of Ionia-Helen, Islam-Turk (Arab, Horason, Seljuk, Endulus, and Ottoman periods) the development of science branches in Astronomy, Mathematics, Physics, Medicine, Biology in "the West" since Renaissance and within present time, the reform movements in technology and science in the 21th Century. Basically this course aims to give the student a basic understanding of the history of science. At the end of the course students would be able to examine the connections between science and the humanities and come to appreciate that science is not done in a vacuum, but has consequences for wider society.

The Context: "BSCI303" Circle

The instructor of the course was created a "BSCI303" circle (course code of "History of Science") on *Google+*, and asked students to set up an account on Google and joined into the *Google+* circle. During the beginning of the semester the instructor explained how *Google+* would be used in the course and what to expect. Students were supposed to build the content of the *Google+* circle by adding hyperlinks to videos, pictures and articles related with the topics of the course throughout 13 weeks. Topics of the each week are presented in the course outline; students are supposed to search and find the related online documents and materials to post and share with their friends on the *Google+* circle. Finally, they would be graded on their *Google+* based activities besides written project, presentations and final examination, at the end of the semester.

Results

The aim of this study is to find out the perceptions of students on the usage of Google Plus as a learning management system. Students beliefs on the usage on *Google+* in "History of Science" course are searched into 5 categories: benefits of *Google+*, general experiences with *Google+*, pedagogical profits of using *Google+*, communication on *Google+*, and pros and cons of *Google+*.

Benefits of Google+

In this study, the majority of students who interviewed responded that they all were favorable for using *Google+*. As shown in Table 1, according to the students` responses benefits of *Google+* is divided into 4 sub-categories: helpfulness, ease of use, usefulness and collaboration. A large majority of the students reported benefits of using *Google+* as helpfulness. The following example illustrates students` focus on helpfulness of *Google+*: "*Using Google+ in this course has been very useful for me. We reached videos easily, and also this course would not be enjoyable so much if there is only reading so it motivates us*".

The second sub-category is related with ease of use, which is defined by Davis (1989, p.12) as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance". Most of the students responded that using *Google+* as a learning management system is easy to use so that some features of *Google+* enable them to manage the course content easily without much effort. One student stated that: "*The Google+ was very helpful when handing in homework because I was just able to go and post in on the website instead of having to hand it in class, which also created less confusion. It was also very helpful because you gave us lots of resources to look at that would help us with anything we needed to look up*".

Table 1

Student Beliefs of the Benefits of Google +

Sub-categories	Themes
Helpfulness	Transferring theory into practice
	Internet using skills
	Motivation
	English language skills
Ease of use	Uploading pictures
	Downloading
	Sharing ideas
	Sharing source (videos, pictures, articles)
Usefulness	To understand the course content
	To reach the source (videos, pictures and articles)
Collaboration	Group work, projects, ideas

Another sub-category is usefulness which can be defined as "the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than its precursor" (Rogers, 2003). According to students` response *Google+* provides different opportunities such as the video chat feature namely the Hangout that they make students to understand the course content and to reach the sources directly. One of the students stated the following: "*Using group video chat with Hangout provides us an incredible experiences, especially discussion sessions for group projects was very beneficial for us*". Less than half of the students stated `collaboration` as the last benefits of using *Google+* as a learning management system. Using *Google+* provides different options to work together by sharing homework, projects, ideas and resources. One of the students stated the following: "*I liked the community feeling that Google+ provided. It was great to be able to read about my classmates, and be able to see when they were online for instant messaging. Also, we can work together virtually to complete the projects because it takes too much time to get together*".

General experiences with Google+

Second category corresponds to "general experiences". As most of the interviewed students stated that using *Google+* as an LMS was the first experience for them. None of the students ever used any social network site as an instructional tool, although they were using other social network sites to communicate about social events and daily issues with each other. One of the students stated as: "*We never used SNSs as an LMS before in fact when I first heard that we are going to use Google+ in this course, I never believed the possibility. Later, when we have started to participate and share then it became more convincing and useful and visual resources increased the interest*".

Students` "general experiences" are subcategorized into: sharing, following, posting, watching and leading. As shown in Table 2, the popular sub-category was "sharing" for example one of the students stated this: "*I was sharing videos preferable, I have found related videos to the history of science course, and first I do search from YouTube and later share on Google+ circle. It was beneficial both for me and my friends*". Secondly the "following" is another major preferred activity. Most of the students stated that, they mostly like to follow the *Google+* post related with course-based materials, links or videos that were posted by their friends and instructor. Apart from "following", most of the students preferred "posting" on the circle of "BSCI 303". They mostly posted ideas, quotations, questions and rarely comments about the videos. One of the students stated that "*I like most to comment on shared videos and links, as well as I do comments and I ask questions about the posts that were shared by the instructor, thus it helps me to prepare to the exam*"

Table 2
Students' General Experiences with Google +

Sub-categories	Themes	
Sharing	Videos, pictures, articles	
Following	Friends' posts, discussions, instructor's posts,	course related pages
Posting	Ideas, quotations , questions, comments, links	
Watching	Videos	
Leading	Discussion	

"Watching" videos also highly preferred activity for the students. However, limited number of the students indicated that they preferred to be the part of discussion. However leading discussion by using "Hangout" function had been found to be meaningful to their learning. Apart from these, all students agreed that they preferred to add comments on the instructor- based posts.

Pedagogical profits of Google Plus
Table 3 shows the students' beliefs on the pedagogical profits of using *Google+* as a LMS. The majority of students who participated in this study reported that using *Google+* was beneficial for them to learn the "History of Science" course content. The first sub category is "learning" which contains following themes: effective learning, meaningful learning, language learning, retentive, easy, meaningful and joyful. As seen from the Table 3 the popular response is "effective learning" and "meaningful learning".

Table 3
Students' Beliefs on the Pedagogical Profits of G+

Sub-categories	Themes
Learning	Better / effective
	Meaningful
	Retentive
	Easy
	Language
	Joyful
Achievement	Course content
	Internet-based skills
	Social-networking skills
Motivation	Preparation to the course

One of the students stated that: "*When we learn visually, I think we understand better, especially with the help of the posted links, also I do post links before the class, it was kind of preparation to course*". Besides this, based on the responses of interviewed students, using *Google+* helped them to achieve the most of the learning outcomes of the "History of Science" course. In addition, they stated that they also gained skills on the internet and social networking. One of them affirmed thus: "*…my English was also improved while trying to understand the shared videos because most of the videos related to the "History of Science" course are in English*". Last sub-category is related "motivation". Based on the students responses, it is found that using *Google+* is also motivates them toward the course positively. For this issue, one student stated that: "*What I liked most about Google+ is that you can reach the content of the course immediately, you do not need to wait too much, posted videos and pictures motive me and I feel to watch them immediately when I get the notifications*"

Communication on Google+ Circles

On the interviewed data, content analysis revealed that the perceptions of students is also categorized under the category of communication, consequently they believed that *Google+* is useful for them to communicate by posting messages on *Google+* circle. Since the *Google+* circle enables them to do public communication, it is much easier for them to communicate each other rather than sending private messages to each other. Table 4 shows that "student-student" and "student-teacher" communication were the two main sub-categories, they were no communication in circle with strangers. Student-student communication is categorized under five themes, knowing about my classmates, easy to communication, discussion and sharing.

Table 4
Students' Opinions on the Communication on Google+

Sub-categories	Themes
Student – Student	Get to know my classmates
	Easy to communicate with my classmate
	Discussions
	Sharing
Student – Teacher	Effective
	Video chat with hangout
	Easy access to the instructor
	Better organization of the course content

One student indicated that: "*I had the chance to know my friends. I made discussion with one of my friends whose even I did not recognize his name. I also had the opportunity to view my classmates' thoughts and ideas, Google+ provided a comfortable place for us to share our opinions freely*". On the other side, *Google+* circle was useful to communicate with the instructor and ask guiding at any time. Most of the students stated that video chat with the "hangout" is unique and effective application that enables them to ask question and to get information about the daily schedule and course content of the course. One student commented: "*It was nice to be able to see when my instructor is on-line; I think with the help of Google+ I felt that my instructor was more accessible, she answered my questions immediately*". Besides, one student indicated that *Google+* organizes of the course content effectively.

Pros and Cons of using Google+

An open-ended question asked students what were the positive and negative aspect about using *Google+* in this course. There was a great deal of variability in responses to this question. As seen in Table 5, the popular topic for the positive aspects included, watching videos, sharing videos, easy to follow, instructor's announcements, easy to access course related materials and easy to participate. According to one student: "*It was nice to have all the resources in one place, because I already use Google+ as a SNS to communicate my friends and in this everything is combined in one place, when I log in to Google+, I can reach the course' circle automatically*". They mostly liked sharing videos related with course content and they stated that sharing video was really easy, one of student stated that "*it is time saving all I have to do just link the video from YouTube to the course circle on Google+*". They all specified that when they were watching the videos they can easily understand the content, and that way it is more enjoyable.

There are some students who have some concerns about using *Google+*. One was that *Google+* appeared to be a good tool to reach the visual materials and course related links but it is not possible to follow all posts, links and videos. One of the stu-

dents indicated that: "*It takes time to sit down and watch all the posted videos and view the pictures or resources, I don't think that most of my friends are watched and read all the posted videos and resources*".

Table 5
Students' Beliefs on the Pros and Cons of Google+

Sub-categories	Themes
Pros	Watching videos
	Sharing videos
	Easy to follow instructor's post/links
	Easy to access resources/course- related materials
	Easy to participate on discussion
Cons	Slow internet connection
	Content of videos (difficult)
	Not possible to follow all posts, links, videos
	Not easy to control directions of discussion

Other students expressed that they were uncomfortable with using *Google+* as an LMS. Common reasons included "complex content of videos", "not easy to control the directions of discussions" and "slow internet connections". One student pointed out: "*I think discussion sessions are little bit problematic because you cannot control the directions of discussions, and it can be resulted in different and undesired conclusions*".

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study examined student' perceptions on the usage of *Google+* circle as an LMS. More precisely, the main purpose of this study was to explore students' views based on their experiences related with *Google+*. The findings of this study confirm that *Google+* circle has the potential to be used as an LMS. It allows making announcements, sharing resources, taking part in online discussions and participation. Also, using the *Google+* circle as an LMS helps instructor to control the course efficiently. However, using commercial LMSs has some limitations that prevent instructor to organize the course freely.

All of the students stated that they haven't used the Google Plus before in any of course. At first they were surprised about the integration of *Google+* in their "History of Science" course, moreover at the beginning, they did not believe this application, however later when they began to share course related videos, links and research on the "History of Science" circle they convinced the applicably of *Google+* in teaching process. Our first question focused on the benefits of using *Google+* as an LMS. All

the students believed that *Google+* was beneficial for them with respect to follow the course content. Social media as a tool to use course management system, the positive results are parallel with other studies in this area (Karabulut, Braer, Lindstrom, Niederhauser, 2009; LaRue, 2012; Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang and Liu, 2011).

As a result of this study, students preferred to share resources related with the course by using *Google+* circle. Especially related to the content of the course, students share a lot of video and audio material which they considered as an easy and fun activity for them. But of course it is not possible to be certainly sure if all shared video and material have been read or unread by students. In fact, the vast majority of students stated that they do like the "following" activity as a maximum level, although it is very difficult and time consuming to follow the shared material. This finding is quite similar with the study which was conducted by Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009). Initiate discussion and to support the existing controversy has been the least preferred activity. The reason for this can be the organizing the course content does not require much discussion. However, comparing to the traditional classroom environment students were much more participated and interacted thru *Google+* circle. Chen and Chen (2012) in their study have found similar results with this study.

Our findings also suggest that the using *Google+* circle is useful to achieve the learning objectives of the lesson. Based on the students' responses it can be concluded that students who used *Google+* actively have a better understanding of the course thus they had learned the content of the "History of Science" course. This finding is consistent with the result of Brady, Holcomb, and Smith (2010) who found that the students did prefer to use the SNS because of it has a plenty of educational benefits both for teachers and instructors. Besides, as Gagne (1977) proposed in his Nine Events of Instructions visual material such as graphs, videos, case studies, which assist the learner in retaining and encoding the information into their long-term memory, in this study using videos was assist students to retaining the content of the "History of Science" course. Another conclusion of this study emerged that the biggest advantage of using *Google+* is the easy access to resources and also dealing with the course-related issues is much easier. Similar results using the social networking site as a course management system is also seen in other studies (Selwyn, 2009; Ozkan and McKenzie, 2008; Baran & Cağıltay, 2010).

In addition, the students reported that reaching many materials via *Google+* is an advantage for them, but they only prefer to follow some of the posts. More specifically, mostly they read and follow the links that had been posted by the instructor. Unlimited posting of the links (video, articles and pictures) is the most important problem arising in this study. In order to prevent this, either the instructor should control the links that posted by students or it should be certain standards for the shared materials. Apart from this disadvantage, discussion sessions are also problematic in the platform of the *Google +* circle.

Our findings also suggest that the communication on *Google+* is divided into two forms namely: student-student and instructor-student. Although the major communication flow occurred between students and students, students are benefited more from student-instructor communication. Students in the classroom cannot find

enough time to chit-chat each other but with the hangout video chat feature of *Google+*, they had an opportunity for face to face communication both with instructor and classmates in an effective and continuous way. This finding is consistent with the study of Aksal, Altinay, Rossi, and İşman (2012) that highlighted the ways in which online communication tools facilitate collaboration and participation. Even more important, accessing to the instructor with *Google+* is very convenient and easy way for the students. There are several limitations of this study. Firstly, the data collected mainly thru interview sessions and the posts of the students on the circle, second this study assess a specific group, primarily students attending a private university in North Cyprus and finally this study was descriptive rather than experimental.

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers proposed a social media classroom that freely invites students to participate virtually by sharing, discussing and following content of the "History of Science" course. The *Google+* has the potential to be used as an LMS. It has pedagogical, social and technological affordance which allows putting up announcements, sharing ideas and resources, and implementing online discussions.

Altough the *Google+* is considerable new social media tool in educational platforms, this study shows that *Google+* has plenty of useful features both for teachers and students. *Google+* allows instructors to post resources, to lead discussions, to conduct live video chat (the Hangout) and to inform students. On the other side, similar with other SNSs *Google+* has some constraints, grading, uploading different file formats on the circles, and online assessment. For an effective use of *Google+* in learning, it should give opportunity to support different file formats both for uploading and downloading or it can be integrated with Google doc directly. To put it another way, technical support and updates based on the students' and teachers' needs are crucial.

The unique features of *Google+* such as the "Circle" and the "Hangout" helped students to access both rich and different visual based course content and it also improved seamless and effective communication flow between students and teacher which was concluded with the increased student curiosity and motivation to learn more about the topic. For the purposes of "History of Science" course, the user friendly interface of *Google+* with various features and the visual oriented content nature of "History of Science" course gave freedom and creativity to students in communication, understanding and interaction. Further research needs to focus on benefits of these SNSs so that the educational institutions will be more likely to integrate them into the curriculum. As SNSs continue to grow day by day, it is becoming crucial to investigate the effective integration into teaching and learning activities to enrich student learning.

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Bir Öğrenme Yönetim Sistemi Olarak Kullanılan Google Plus Hakkındaki Öğrenci Algıları

Atıf:

(Özet)

Problem Durumu

Son zamanlarda öğrenme yönetim sistemleri (ÖYS) eğitim faaliyetlerini düzenlemek, yönetmek, sunmak ve değerlendirmek için kampüs ve kampüs dışında kullanımı önemli ölçüde genişleyerek artmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, sosyal ağ siteleri de eğitim faaliyetlerinde yaygınlaşarak kullanılmaya başlamıştır. Hiç kuşkusuz ÖYS'lerin eğitim ortamlarına sağladığı yararlar yadsınamayacak kadar fazladır, ancak öğretim amaçlı kullanılan bazı ÖYS'lerin az da olsa kullanıcılara getirdiği kısıtlamalar vardır. Oysa sosyal ağ sitelerinin rahat kullanma ve kolay ulaşılabilme gibi özellikleri, ÖYS'nin getirdiği dezavantajları ortadan kaldırmak için alternatif bir seçenek sunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada bir sosyal ağ sistesi olan *Google Plus* bilgisayar ve öğretim teknolojileri eğitimi bölümü 3. Sınıf lisans düzeyinde yer alan "Bilim Tarihi" dersi için bir öğrenme yönetim sistemi olarak kullanılmış ve bu konudaki öğrenci algıları araştırılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Amacı

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı Bilim Tarihi dersini düzenlemek ve yönetmek için *Google Plus* adlı sosyal ağ sitesini kullanmak ve bu konuda gelişen öğrenci algılarını incelemektir. *Google Plus* eşsiz uygulamaları olan çember ve video görüşme özellikleri kul-

lanılarak ders hakkındaki duyuru ve kaynakların dağıtımı sağlanmış ve çevrimiçi tartışmalar yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmada aşağıdaki temel soru ve alt sorular üzerinde duruldu:

Google + adlı sosyal ağ sitesinin öğretim faaliyetlerine entegrasyonu üzerine öğrencilerin algıları nelerdir?

1) *Google+* bir ÖYS olarak kullanılmasının yararları üzerine öğrencilerin görüşleri nelerdir?
2) "Bilim Tarihi" dersinde *Google+* kullanan öğrencilerin genel deneyimler nelerdir?
3) Bir ÖYS olarak Google+ kullanmanın olumlu ve olumsuz yönleri hakkında öğrencilerin görüşleri nelerdir?

Araştırmanın Yöntemi

Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi bir öğrenme yönetim aracı olan *Google+* kullanılması ile ilgili öğrenci algılarını ortaya çıkarmak amaçlanmıştır. Bu çalışma, 2011-2012 akademik yılı güz döneminde "Bilim Tarihi" adlı lisans dersini alan 28 öğrenci üzerinde yürütülmüştür. Öğrenciler Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Bilgisayar ve Öğretim Teknolojileri Eğitimi Bölümü 3.sınıf düzeyindedirler. Bilim Tarihi dersi kapsamında derse kayıtlı her öğrenci sınıf ortamında haftada bir kez bir araya gelmekte ve dersi ders planında belirtilen konular kapsamında genellikle sunum yöntem ve teknikleri kullanarak takip etmektedirler. Öğrenciler dönemim başında gruplara ayrılmakta ve dönem içerisinde dersin içeriğine uygun konular seçilerek sunum yapılmaktadır. Sunum konularına örnek olarak "Bilimin Doğuşu", "İslami Dönem ve Bilim" veya "Orta Çağda Bilim" gösterilebilir.

Bu çalışma için gerekli verileri toplamak amacı ile araştırmacı tarafından tasarlanmış bir görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, öğrencilerin "BSCI303" çemberine göndermiş oldukları iletilerde incelenmiştir. Yüz-yüze görüşme seansları farklı zaman dilimleri içerisinde 12 öğrenci ile yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmada kullanılan görüşme formu, "Bilim Tarihi" dersinin *Google+* üzerinden yürütülmesi hakkında gelişen öğrenci algıları, yaşadıkları deneyimler, bu uygulamanın kendilerine sağladığı yararlar ve sınırlıklar, avantaj ve dezavantajları ve son olarak da bu uygulamanın sınıf içerisindeki iletişime olan katkısı üzerine etkileri hakkında sorular içermektedir. Görüşme süreçleri sonunda tüm sorular üzerinden tekrar geçilip elde edilen verilerin teyit edilmesi, öğrencilerin "BSCI303" çemberinde yaptıkları gönderimler de incelenerek daha derin anlayış kazanılması amaçlanmıştır.

Bağlam: "BSCI303" Çemberi

Bu dersin sorumlu öğretim görevlisi dönem başında Google+ adlı sosyal ağ sitesinde bir "BSCI303" çemberi ("Bilim Tarihi" ders kodu) oluşturmuş ve dersi takip eden öğrencilerden Google üzerinde bir hesap kurarak, *Google+* çember içine katılmaları için onlara gerekli yönlendirmelerde bulunmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, dönem başında bu dersin *Google+* üzerinden dersi desteklemek ve yönetmek için takip etmeleri gerektiğini ve gerekli katılım ve katkıları yapmaları gerektiğini bildirmiştir. *Google+* Bilim Tarihi dersi içinde nasıl kullanılacağını ve dönem süresince neler yapmaları gerektiği açıklanarak öğrenciler bilgilendirilmiştir. Öğrenciler 13 hafta boyunca dersin konuları ile ilgili video, resim ve makalelere köprüler ekleyerek *Google+* çemberinin içeriği inşa etmeleri sağlanmıştır. Her haftanın konusuna uygun içerik ders planında veril-

miştir. Ders planı, proje taslağı, kaynak ve sunum raporları ise Google Doc kullanarak öğrencilere paylaşılmıştır. Öğrenciler ise her haftanın belirtilen konusuna uygun kaynakları aramak, bulmak ve bunları dersin Google+ çemberinde belge ve malzemeler şeklinde göndermek gibi sorumlukları vardır. Böylece bu paylaşımlardan hem kendileri ve hem de arkadaşları haberdar olmalarına fırsat verilmiştir. Son olarak, öğrenciler dönem sonunda sunum ve sunum raporu, proje ve final sınavı haricinde, *Google+* temelli etkinliklerinin içeriği ve kapsamı alanlarında da değerlendirilmiştir.

Araştırmanın Bulguları

Bu çalışma sonucunda elde edilen sonuçlar, *Google+* çemberinin "Bilim Tarihi" dersinin yürütülmesinde dersi yönetilmesi anlamında bir Öğrenme Yönetim Sistemi gibi kullanabileceğini göstermiştir. Bu uygulama sonunda Google+ tıbkı bir ÖYS olarak kullanabileceğini ve öğrencilere duyuru yapmak, kaynak paylaşmak, çevrimiçi tartışma ve katılım sağlamak amaçlı etkili bir şekilde kullanılabileceğini göstermiştir. Ayrıca, *Google+* çember özelliği ile dersi düzenli bir şekilde organize etmek amacına uygun olarak kullanılarak verimli bir ders yönetim sistemi gibi kullanılarak eğitmene de yardımcı olmuştur. Tüm öğrenciler Google+ kullanarak ders içeriklerini takip ettiklerini, paylaşımda bulunduklarını ve bu açısından kendilerine dersi anlama ve takip etme yönünden çok yararlı olduğuna inandıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bir sosyal medya aracı olan *Google+* ders yönetim sistemi olarak kullanılması ile elde edilen olumlu sonuçlar bu alandaki diğer çalışmalarla benzeşim göstermektedir. Buna ek olarak, öğrenciler birçok görsel kaynağa *Google+* kullanarak ulaşmanın onlar için bir avantaj olduğunu, ancak sadece bazı gönderileri gerçekten takip ettiklerini, diğerlerine sadece göz atmak için vakit bulabildiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Daha açıklayıcı ifade etmek gerekirse, çoğunlukla dersi yürüten öğretim üyesi tarafından paylaşılmış olan kaynaklar, videolar ve makaleler tercih edilmiş ve okunmuştur.

Araştırmanın Sonucu ve Öneriler

Google+ adlı sosyal paylaşım sitesi bir ders yönetim sistemi olarak kullanılabilecek bir potansiyele sahiptir. *Google+* dersle ilgili duyuruların yapılabileceği, dersle ilgili kaynakların, videoların ve görsellerin paylaşılabileceği, çevrim içi görüntülü tartışmaların yapılabileceği pedagojik, sosyal ve teknolojik kapasiteye sahiptir. *Google+* eğitim platformlarında diğer sosyal medya araçlarından farklı ve önemli özellikleri ile hem öğrencilere ve hem de öğreticilere bir çok kullanım kolaylığı sağlayan yeni bir sosyal medya aracıdır. Bu çalışmada da elde edilen bulgular *Google+*'ın öğretmenler ve öğrenciler için etkili ve verimli bir ders yönetebilmek için birçok özelliği olduğunu göstermiştir. Diğer bir taraftan ise, diğer sosyal paylaşım sitelerinde olduğu gibi, *Google+* kullanımında da bazı kısıtlamalar vardır. Örneğin farklı dosya formatlarının çember içerisine eklenmesi mümkün olmamakta ancak diğer sosyal paylaşım sitelerinden farklı olarak Google Doc ile kolayca ilişkilendirilerek, dosya paylaşımı sağlanabilmektedir. *Google+* daha etkin olarak kullanılması için kullanıcılara farklı dosya formatlarının yüklenilebilmesi ve indirilebilmesi gibi yöntemlere doğrudan Google Doc uygulaması ile entegre edilmesi gerekmektedir. Kısaca özetlemek gerekirse, öğrenciler ve öğretmenlerin ihtiyaçlarına göre teknik desteklerin sürekli güncellenmesi sosyal paylaşım sitelerinin eğitim amaçlı olarak kullanılması yolunda önemli bir yere sahiptir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Google Plus, öğrenme yönetim sistemleri, sosyal ağ siteleri, Kuzey Kıbrıs.