Introduction

Social Networking is in fact a new term but not a new concept. Social networking exists since the old age through physical gatherings involving groups of persons with similar interests or commonalities. People used to exchange business cards and related details. Among the student population, social networking took the form of going out among friends, meeting for group work by students of different or same institutions and through the exchange of phone numbers. Taking things a step further, social networking existed through the concept of *'penfriends'*.

In the digital era, social networking became a technology-enabled commodity, accessible to the digital natives and a luxury for those who can afford the costs of living in cyberspace but also an inhibitor to the inferiority or superiority complex that some people would have when they physically network in a social setting.

Social networking existing in the web 1.0 era mainly through chat based systems like IRC and in the web 2.0 era through interactive sites like **facebook** and **blogs** where persistent traces of interactions are kept. Indeed with globalisation and the emergence of **www** and the growing accessibility of the information superhighway, Mauritian students are greatly influenced by this new fashionable fabric of the digital society.

Social networking in itself can be a good concept but can be as bad as the so-called *'peer pressure'* phenomenon that young adolescents face; a phenomenon that was once, and is still 'cauchemardesque' for many parents. Well, in that sense, nothing has really changed but indeed the accessibility to the so-called peer pressure phenomenon is much easier than ever.

Mauritian students especially young adults/adolescents are not aware of concepts of data protection yet, issues that can be to the detriment of their fundamentals rights to privacy, and other related issues that can have a negative social impact on their future life, and the pace that they adopt the social networking approach is frightening.

On the other hand, education can be and is still the key. Just as sex education in schools had been a taboo subject for long in our educational system and this has caused quite some turbulences in our society, a lack of education related to the living online can be a problem in the future.

Social networking can also be beneficial for the Mauritian student in the sense that sites like **Google**, **YouTube**, and **Twitter** amongst others can be of high educational added value when used in the form of a community of practice.

The important thing nowadays would be the appropriate weighing of the for and the against and the ability to reach a socially acceptable compromise for the social networking culture that has always existed in limited form but which has expanded in a borderless unlimited field of action