Since the introduction of Web 2.0, the potential to network, share content and communicate with others has improved greatly. In the education industry prior to social media, the potential to network and communicate with others was far less. Teachers and students have used social media as a third-place to share content and communicate with one another. Being able to network globally with anyone almost instantly is something that is truly remarkable. To demonstrate how social media has improved education, I will discuss the improvements to communication between students and teachers and improved tools to broadcast news and content.

Social media has allowed for almost instant, worldwide contact to be possible within everyday life, drastically improving the way we communicate with one another. The updates in social media technology have improved greatly over the past 10 years, with abilities to send messages, video chat and voice memos, people are able to instantly communicate with others worldwide. Basic catchups, as well as organising events and meetups have never been easier thanks to social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram. Facebook has many features that help users keep in contact with work colleagues, loved ones and acquaintances. It also allows users to create a personal space, where they can gather friends and family within their own personal network (Ractham & Firpo, 2011). Facebook has especially succeeded in providing a useful resource for students who need to communicate frequently about school or university. A study by the National School Boards Association (of America) in 2007, demonstrated that there was positive correlation between the use of Facebook and students' performance (Grunwald, 2007). The study also showed that students using social networks had impressive skills in communication, creativity, collaboration and leadership. These social networking sites allowed for students to acquire and practice skills that are relevant in this digital era. Through using Facebook, the role of teachers transformed from helping students learn in a physical space, to becoming a mentor and information provider. They helped students plan advanced learning, careers and provided extra educational resources (Pollara & Zhu, 2011). These findings demonstrate that the use of social networking sites can be optimized to enhance the learning experience. Allowing for students to send messages to classmates and teachers instantly about questions or comments related to what they were learning in class.

It's undeniable that social media can be used to enhance people's ability to communicate and foster social connections with one another (Ractham & Firpo, 2011). When COVID-19 hit in 2020 and almost all physical workplaces were shutdown indefinitely, people had to figure out another way to keep in contact with their colleagues. This is when instant messaging and video chat in a work sense became very popular. Social media site zoom, which was once used as a tool for hosting remote business meetings, was suddenly utilised by millions to connect those who retained their jobs during the pandemic (Bellan, 2020). Eventually schools and universities adopted Zoom and switched to online lectures and classrooms. Zoom allowed for an authentic classroom experience with a weekly schedule and resources to review academic materials whilst still staying safe and isolated (Mohammed et al., 2020). Despite its success in providing a platform for those who were made to work at home, online learning via Zoom during the pandemic received backlash and was not preferred by some in different situations. In a study surveying 3275 Chinese parent's beliefs and attitudes around young children's online learning during the lockdown, 84.6% found their children spent less than half an hour of focused work each day. The parents preferred traditional learning in early childhood settings and resisted online learning due to young children's inadequate self-regulation and their lack of time and professional knowledge in supporting their child's online learning (Dong et al., 2020). This demonstrated that online learning is perhaps not the most efficient education tool for young children. However, teenagers, young adults and teachers who had to use online learning tools such as Zoom often found that the freedom and flexibility of work and study hours allowed for more time to be spent doing legitimate work (Purwanto et al., 2020). Now that some time has passed since the first initial lockdown in 2020, students and parents of young children have had time to figure out how to work well and what their weaknesses are when it comes to online learning. Even though there is debate about if online learning educates students at the same level as physical, the introduction of social media learning tools such as Zoom have allowed for a very impressive substitute of physical learning, during a time in which it was prohibited. Without the capabilities of social media to connect users instantly, there's no way any efficient work would've been possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sharing news and content has always been an important aspect of social media. The ability to access news updates and share with colleagues is something that improves

connectiveness and communication. A Pew Research Centre survey conducted between August and September in 2020 found that 53% of U.S adults get news from social media often (Shearer & Mitchell, 2021). The access of having news articles littered in a user's news feed makes it very easy to pick up important headlines and share with friends. There often is debate about the authenticity of news articles on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The scare of finding misinformation on social media is often what drives users away from getting their news off these sources. This spread of fake news on social media is a large issue facing society, however these sites have implemented checks to ensure that a user is receiving authentic material (Kim et al., 2019). Fact checking applications such as Truthy and Hoaxy provide searches on fact-checking sites to verify news articles and sites that have a history of publishing fake news articles. If an article is deemed fake these applications will flag the posts and alert Facebook to take the post down (Kim et al., 2019). Credible news pages will also have a "blue tick" next to their name if they are verified by Facebook. However, on sites such as Facebook, authentic news far outweighs the fake. In 2016, researcher Andrew Guess of Princeton University found that 85% of posts on Facebook about the U.S. election were deemed trustworthy (Travers, 2020). Despite the small chance that an article is fake news, the capability to share articles and news with other users is truly remarkable and improves our ability to communicate with one another.

A feature mainly utilised on the sites Facebook and Instagram called 'tagging', is a process where a user can publicly share a post or article to their friend or acquaintance. Users usually 'tag' others in posts that have mutual significance to one another. The simplicity of writing a person's name under a post can provide new light to previous conversations or humour about previous jokes. The capabilities in a physical sense can also strengthen communication by having easy access to a post that a user may have seen earlier. This could present new ideas and opinions about a topic that may have been forgotten about otherwise. The freedom to share opinions and engage in an active, public conversation with others is another thing that improves communication. They can also share their opinions with a far wider audience and share news and current events not dominated by mainstream media. Without this ability, people would have to wait for a physical occasion to discuss topics.

Another valuable aspect that social media has is the ability to update friends and family about your status instantly. In 2017 Facebook added 'Safety Check', a feature for letting others know that you're safe during an emergency (Kastrenakes, 2017). In events such as terrorist attacks and extreme weather events, if a user has their location services on and they're in the radius of an emergency, Facebook will provide an option for the user to mark themselves safe, alerting their friends list. This is particularly useful if someone is in a different city or country away from their friends and are unfortunate enough to be in the same area as the event. This communication aspect is simple and is far more efficient than calling or messaging individual friends and family to let them know you're safe.

The potential to influence societal change has improved greatly due to social media providing a platform for activism. In recent times, society has seen many campaigns pleading for change about social issues such as police brutality against African Americans, brutal oppression in war-torn countries, domestic abuse and child labour laws. These extremely important issues are slowly being solved thanks to the impact of social media. Social media has provided a platform to build awareness for these issues and help fix the problem. The Black Lives Matter campaign began after police officer George Zimmerman was acquitted of the murder of an unarmed African American teenager named Trayvon Martin. After the trial the words "Black Lives Matter" appeared on Facebook and quickly gained popularity after multiple more instances of police brutality. These words eventually rose to become a ubiquitous presence in American culture (Ince et al., 2017). Thanks to the ability of hashtags to group words together, people used "#BlackLivesMatter" to broadcast their solidarity and approval of the movement. In 2020, Pew Research Centre found that from May 26 to June 7 the hashtag was used 47.8 million times on Twitter (Anderson et al., 2020). This incredible number demonstrates social medias importance in allowing users to share their thoughts and opinions on societal issues. Another campaign utilising has/htags is the domestic abuse awareness movement "#MeToo". This campaign highlighted the scale and pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the workplace, displaying physical and verbal experiences endured by women. In 2016, a UK survey for the Trades Union Commission found that 80% of women did not report sexual harassment incidents to their employer (Gilmore, 2018). This social media movement has allowed millions of people to have a voice

in a world where they wouldn't necessarily have the courage to take that step (Rackham, 2018).

Hashtags aren't the only way to influence societal change on social media. The ability of people to share posts and issues important to them and their friends list can influence drastic social change. The website GoFundMe allows for users to create fundraisers for causes that they care about. This crowdfunding platform enables fundraisers to get financial support for an issue at a low cost and risk when compared with traditional forms of funding (Alazazi et al., 2020). Whether it's small crowdfunding to get a head start on a business idea, or to help pay hospital costs for a loved one after an accident, a GoFundMe link can be easily shared across social media. Social media can also influence societal change through its ability to foster collaborative conversations about different movements (Rackham, 2018). The website "Change.org" allows for users to sign petitions about societal issues. Like GoFundMe, users are able to share the link of issues they find important to their friends on social media. This helping people engage in an active discussion about social issues and how they can work together to fix them.

Social media has been an extremely useful tool to practice communication and broadcast awareness for societal issues. Through abilities enabled by social media, people have been able to stay in contact with one another from different sides of the world and through a pandemic. This paper has demonstrated how social media has improved the way people communicate through education, sharing of news and the substantial impact it has in broadcasting societal issues. Social media will continue to improve and provide more opportunities to communicate and engage in societal change.

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