INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses issues concerning the suitability of particular media as mass communication tools in an UK higher education setting. It looks firstly at the use of e-mail as a communication method whilst managing two large modules. The paper then goes on to examine the use of a Web site to provide a mass communication method more suited to the needs of both the staff and the students.

A variety of issues are examined:
• the applicability of e-mail as a communication medium,
• the applicability of Web pages as a communication medium,
• the types of information which are normally communicated,
• the certainty with which staff can utilize the technology to update students on recent developments,
• the ease of accessibility of the communication medium, and
• the student’s responses to the communication experience.

An in-depth case study will look at how two large modules are managed through the use of Web Sites on the Internet, discussing the reasons why such a tactic was embarked upon, the pros and cons of using such technology and tips for others wishing to adopt a similar approach. For the purposes of this paper,
distance learning will not be considered as the university in question has no plans to follow or adopt such an approach for these modules.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The University of Westminster is a large modern university operating on four sites across the centre of London and West London. It was Britain’s first polytechnic, established in 1838 in Regent Street, and it still uses these original buildings for lectures and seminars. It became a university in 1992 and is now recognized in the *Financial Times* annual survey as the top English “new” university.

The university has a population of both full-time and part-time students drawn from the local surrounding areas but also has a large population of international students. Many of these students (over 33%) are studying post-graduate or post-experience/professional updating courses.

The Westminster Business School operates out of the Marylebone campus, which is situated close to Regents Park and is thus a very popular location for students to attend courses, as not only is it in the centre of London but is also easily accessible by public transport.

COMMUNICATION MEDIA

This section discusses the theoretical background to communication studies looking at “fitness for purpose” for each of the media.

To begin with, a brief overview of the communication process and its constituents would be useful. A basic theoretical model of the communication process states that messages are “sent” and “received,” confirmation of receipt and interpretation of the message indicates that it is a two-way communication process (Warner, 1996). The efficiency of this process is subject to a variety of issues such as:

- Effectiveness—How do we measure this when using e-mail or a Web site?
- Simultaneous reception of information by recipients—The information is available simultaneously, but how do we measure if students have accessed it?
- Acknowledgement of receipt—With e-mail a receipt can be provided, but how is this addressed using a Web site?
- Speed—How quickly does the information reach the recipients?
Analogical Thinking Based Instruction Method in IT Professional Education
www.igi-global.com/article/analogical-thinking-based-instruction-method/46079?camid=4v1a