

# **The Impact of Virtual Learning on Academic Identity status and Community of Practice: A sense of Heutagogy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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In August 2021, marked a new semester for all universities in Brunei. Unfortunately, a couple of weeks into the semester, Brunei academic institution was forced to resort to full on-line learning due to the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic. This prompted a study on thirty- four first year students' who just started to call themselves undergraduates. The objective was to uncover the participants' learning and academic preparedness of facing university-level of online learning for the first time as higher education students that constitutes their idea on their academic identity status and awareness of their community of practice (COP). All these could signify heutagogical elements in their learning in tertiary education. Due to the pandemic constraints, this mixed-method study utilized online questionnaire and virtual interviews for data collection. Qualitative analysis with the use of NVivo was used to gather common themes and build research findings using Academic Identity Status Measure (AIM) (Was and Isaacson, 2008; Ireri, Wawire, Mugambi and Mwangi, 2015; Kroger, Martinusen & Marcia, 2009), Lave & Wenger (1991) for COP and following Blaschke, 2012 ; Blaschke & Hase, 2021, for heutagogical element analysis. The participants were expected to cope well as they barely have other worldly commitments such as work and children, and this was their second experience with online learning. However, the data showed majority of the participants reported feelings of demotivation and a sense of detachment of academic identity hence failing to feel the sense of belonging in their Community of Practice (COP). Evidence showed that majority of the participants seemed to still be dependent on their teachers (andragogy), showed little to no evidence of moving towards independent learning and seemingly reluctant to change their learning behaviour regardless their newly acquired status as undergraduates. Participants who prosper academically during the pandemic however, showed evidence of a sense of resilience and acceptance to change, following the new academic norm. Regardless, the findings, it was apparent that heutagogical evidence in learning was nowhere to be found.

**Keywords:** Academic Identity, Heutagogy, Community of Practice, COP, Virtual Learning