117 Exploring the Homeification of Post-Pandemic Learning: Pedagogic Relations, Student Experiences and Questions of Equity

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Abstract

Hybridity, flexibility, and digitisation remain features of the post-pandemic university. This decoupling of learning from physical campuses enables students to spend more time studying outside the university – with homes emerging an important pedagogic 'space'. Yet, 'home' is not static or neutral backdrop but shapes the possibilities of learning and learners. Drawing on research in progress, including qualitative interviews with 20 undergraduate students from a UK university and photos from a creative workshop involving university decision-makers, this paper interrogates what 'home' represents, produces, and excludes. It first explores how students engage with learning at home and the resources, relations, materials and pedagogies required. Secondly, it asks who thrives when learning is 'homeified' and how the complex constellation of students' identities and equity characteristics shape these possibilities. Finally, it considers the relations between learners and their 'homes' and imagines the current and future ways home/campus spaces might coexist and interact.

Full paper

Learning at home is not a new phenomenon for higher education, but home as a universal site of learning for all students (albeit in different intensities and durations) was unique to the global Covid-19 pandemic, during which home became a site for 'campus exiles to learn' (Schwartzman, 2020). In these moments, university learning became 'homeified' (Beausoleil, 2020) - decompartmentalising and 'queering' (Morley and Leyton, 2023) the relations between learners, teachers and the academy. Post-pandemic in the UK, the physical campus remains in crisis as digital provision, commuter students, and changing domestic and international markets fragment the reliance on 'hallowed' buildings. As institutions seek to capitalise on the threats and opportunities of a post-pandemic sector, there is a real urgency to understand the equity implications of the intensification of home. Temple's (2014) research foregrounds how the physical and material form of the university is not a blank space within which learning happens but the 'interplay between space and the people in it' shapes possibilities for learning. Moreover Clayton et al (2009) describe how the geographies of home and university are both material and physical places but also spatial resources that enable students to make sense of themselves and are critical to the ongoing re-constitution of student identities. Futurologists imagine that by 2030 students will be able to 'move fluidly across physical, digital and social experiences' (JISC, 2021) and envision a university without walls – accessible at home and freed from the confines of the physical campus. Consequently, this paper aims to explore the under-theorised and omnipresent role of 'home' in the campus student experience in order that such future 'boundaryless' provision is both accessible and inclusive for a diverse student population.

This paper draws on research in progress, including two data encounters: qualitative semi-structured interviews with 20 UK university students and a creative workshop involving students and key university staff decision-makers related to pedagogy, technology, and campus resourcing. The interviews delve into the possibilities and limitations that home presents for diverse learners, examining the material, psychological, and social resources necessary for successful home learning. The workshop utilises art and model-building to encourage participants to imagine and construct representations of home and campus learning, facilitating 'multi-model' visual and collaborative engagement with the topic (Gourlay, 2015). Both the interview transcripts, photos and workshop discussion will be analysed using feminist post-humanist theorisations (including Braidotti, 2009 and Barad, 2007) which seek to explore themes of connections, flow, materialities and affect.

The paper will focus on the following emergent findings. Firstly, it will explore the activities students engage in outside of formal teaching and what home looks like as an extension of the university. It will examine the compatibility of home spaces with new pedagogic approaches and challenge normative assumptions about homes and the digital

and material resources required for effective learning in these diverse settings. For example, interview participants reflected on the assumption from lecturers that home equated to 'quiet' and the challenges in finding spaces to absorb asynchronous materials for 'flipped learning' on busy campuses. Secondly it will consider who thrives when learning is homeified and how do the complex constellation of students' identities and equity characteristics shape this possibility? Higher education's policy demands, and pedagogical practices often take as their 'desirable' subject an unspecified body, failing to interrogate who the student is (and is not) in relation to differentiated access to power, privilege, and opportunity structures (Danvers, 2018). This research seeks to ask similar questions about the imagined or idealised home learner particularly given how the pandemic exposed inequalities, tensions, and instabilities among student populations. Finally, the paper will consider the relations between home and campus spaces and how these are experienced and valued as students are increasingly 'in motion' across a range of material, digital and imagined spaces (Holton and Finn, 2020). Attendance and engagement on campus is declining (Times Higher Education, 2022), and the number of commuter students rising (Maguire and Morris, 2018), with expensive private rents in the UK and an ongoing cost-of living crisis set to exasperate these flexible, hybrid or spatially distant engagements. Participants in the research spoke of everyday decisions shaping mobility such as the intellectual and financial trade-off between bus fare to campus or watching the lecture recording at home. Through these data, this research will seek to understand the renewed place of home as a space of the university and argue the need for new imaginaries of higher education that consider what 'home' represents, produces, and excludes learners and learning.

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