Power, tokenism or non participation with PAL - the choice is yours!

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Introduction

Is partnership important? Why?

"Engaging students and staff as partners...one of the most important issues facing higher education" (Healey et al. 2014, p.1)

What is *Partnership*?

"Equal relationship between two or more bodies working towards a common purpose" (p.14)

"Listening to students does not in and of itself constitute partnership" (p. 15)

"Looking for partnership where all are actively engaged and stand to gain from working with each other" (p.12)

Difference between "listening to the student voice" (which has connotation of "the customer is always right" there may be a power shift in this relationship but it is still a power dynamic) and "students as change agents" which is a more significant shift.

There is something interesting about working with students as employees!

"Given that partnership is both a working and learning relationship, these new communities should acknowledge the dual role of staff and students as both scholars and colleagues engaged in a process of learning and inquiry" (Healey et al. 2014, p.1)

Tensions?

"differentials in power, reward and recognition of participation, identity, and responsibility for partnership work" (Healey et al. 2014, p.9)

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Models of partnership and participation

Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education – an overview model (Healey et al. 2014, p.25)

'LADDER' OF PARTICIPATION

Type of participation	Type of involvement	Level of engagement
Manipulation	Learners are directed by staff and tend not to be informed of the issues. Learners may be asked to 'rubberstamp' decisions already taken by staff	Non participation
Decoration	Learners may be indirectly involved in decisions or 'campaigns' but they are not fully aware of their rights, their possible involvement or how decisions might affect them	Non participation
Informing	Learners are merely informed of action and changes but their views are not actively sought	Non participation
Consultation	Learners are kept fully informed and encouraged to express their opinions but have little or no impact on outcomes	Tokenism
Placation	Learners are consulted and informed. Learners views are listened to in order to inform the decision making process but this does not guarantee any changes learners may have wanted	Tokenism
Partnership	Learners are consulted and informed in decision making processes. Outcomes are the result of negotiations between staff and learners	Tokenism
Delegated Power	Staff still inform agenda for action but learners are given responsibility for managing aspects or all of any initiatives or programmes that result. Decisions are shared with staff	Learner empowerment
Learner Control	Learners initiate agendas and are given responsibility and power for management of issues and to bring about change. Power is delegated to learners and they are active in designing their education	Learner empowerment

Levels of learner participation (Rudd et al. 2006)

What level of participation do we achieve with Peer Assisted Learning?

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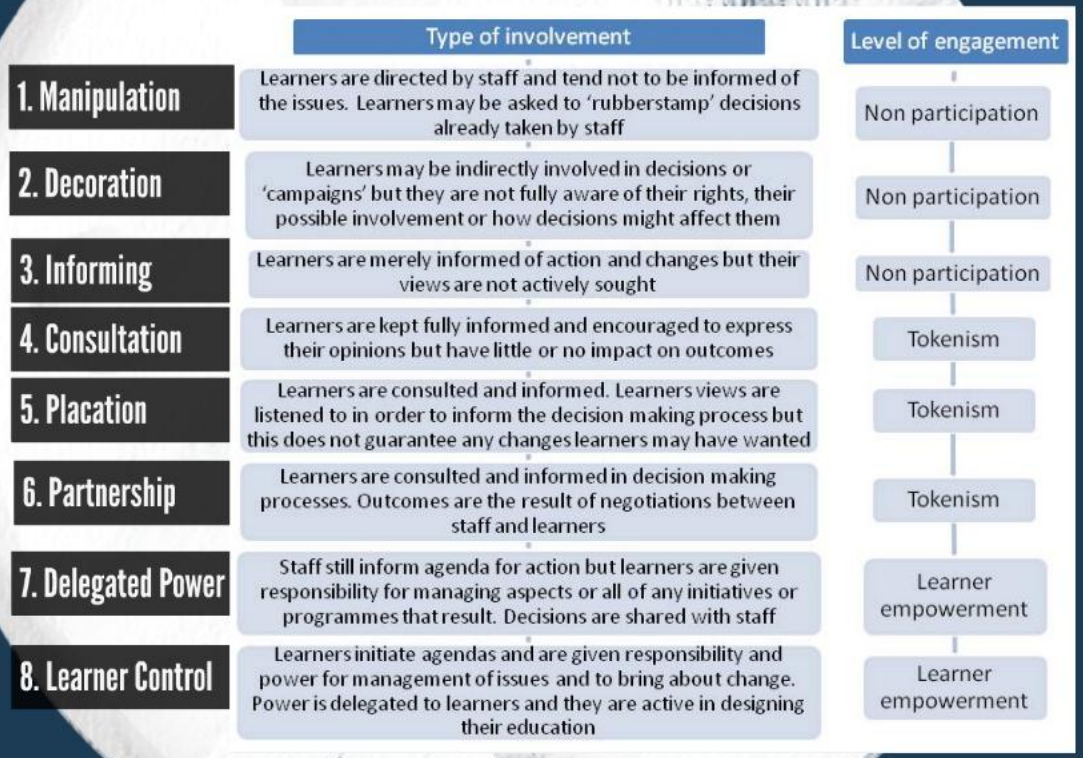
PAL

Learning teaching and assessment

This example gives an overview of how PAL supports learning at BU. Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is a scheme that fosters cross-year support between students on the same course. PAL encourages students to support each other and to learn collaboratively under the guidance of trained students, called PAL Leaders, from the year above.

- Timetabled weekly or fortnightly sessions during first year (and sometimes beyond!)
- PAL Leaders receive compulsory 2 day facilitation training
- Content is mix of student-led (i.e. what are you working on at the moment) and academically-led (meetings with academics and course materials)
- PAL Leaders are paid for their time preparing and delivering sessions
- Ideally, PAL Leaders provide general feedback to academics
- PAL is not credit bearing or assessed, but may be used towards BU's Student Development Award

What level of participation does this case study represent?



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Answer 2	0%	0
Answer 3	0%	0
Answer 4	0%	0
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Answer 6	30%	3
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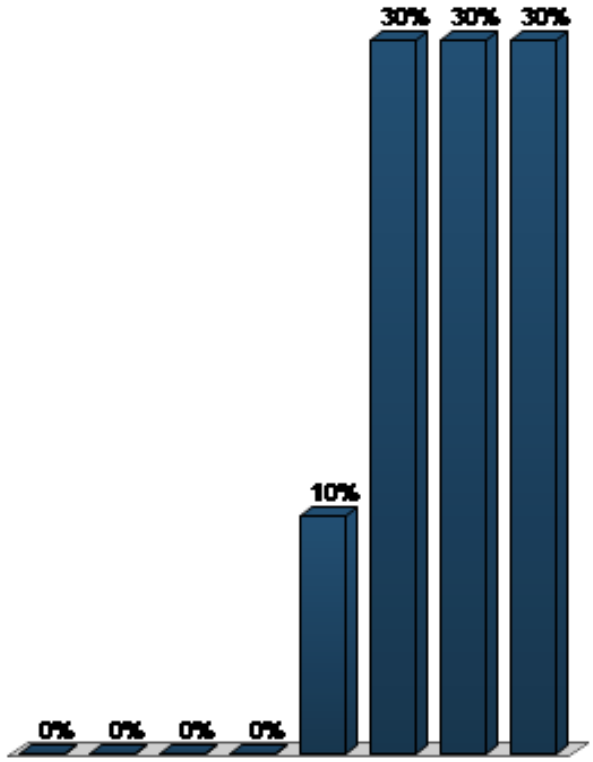
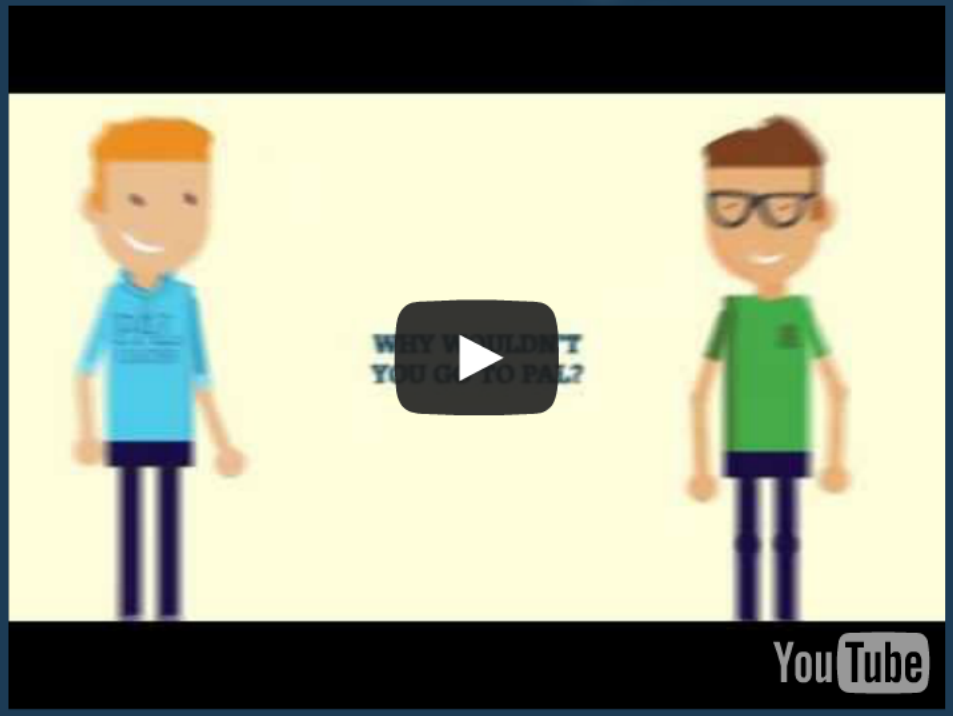


Subject-based research and inquiry

Sharing PAL was a student co-creation project that employed media school students to create films researching different aspects of PAL. As well as promoting understanding of PAL, the students producing the films have used them to secure work placements.



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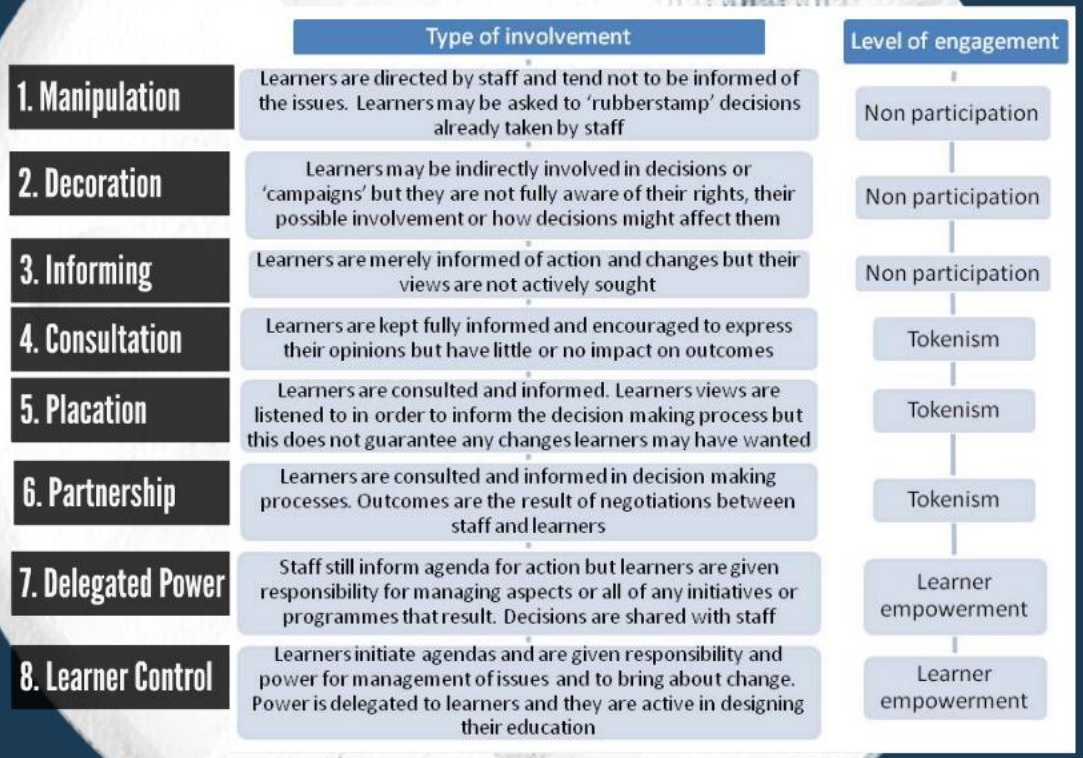

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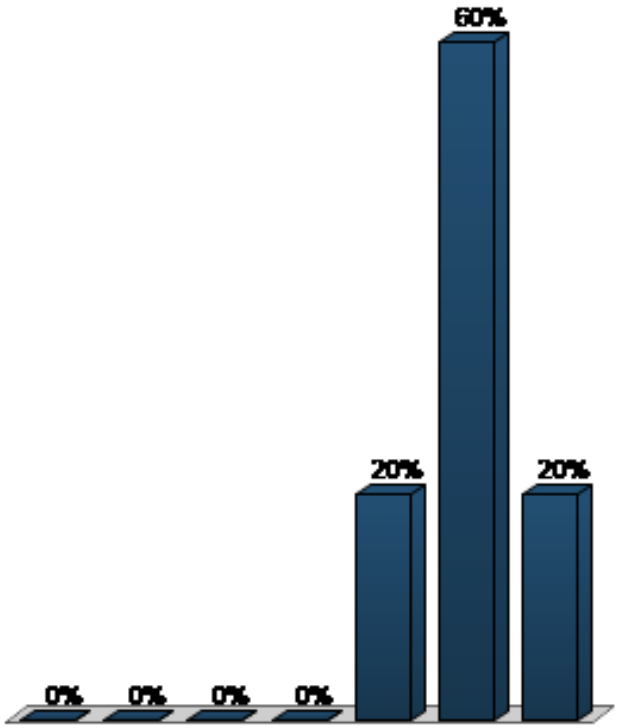

Scholarship of teaching and learning

During 2014/5 two of our PAL Leaders attended the National Leader conference. Prior to the conference they created a poster and later reflected on their experience in a portfolio.

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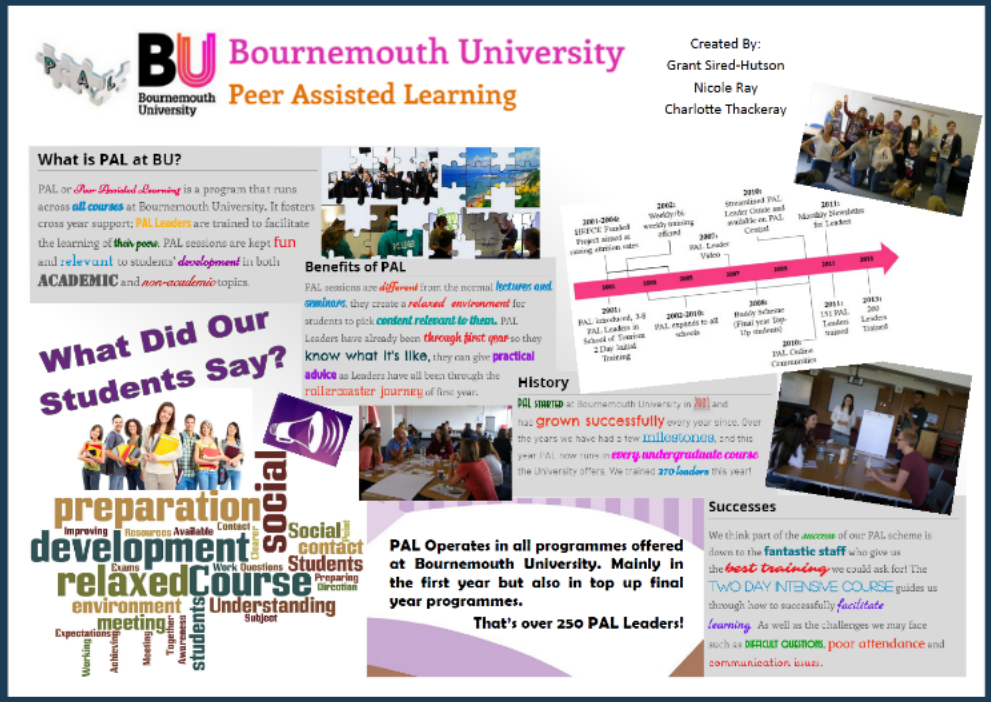
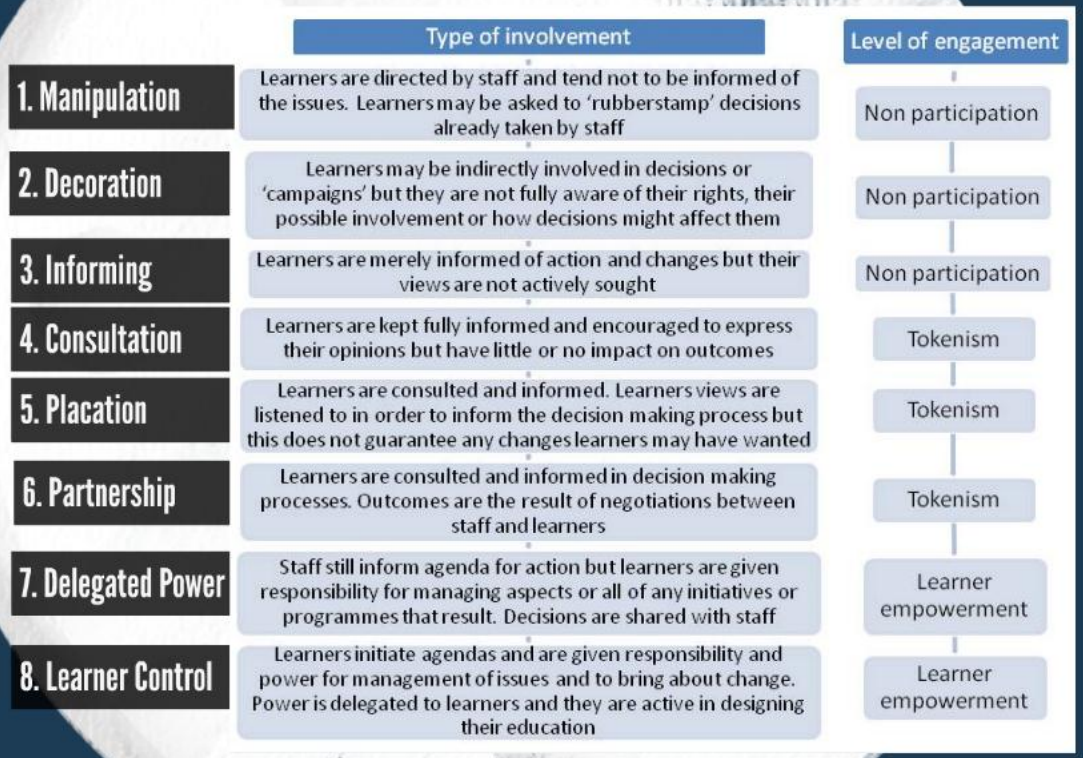


- Funding from Fusion bid (internal research funding)
- All PAL Leaders offered the opportunity to attend
- Applicants wrote short paragraph to illustrate why they should go
- Travel and accommodation from conference organizers
- Bookings by admin team
- Attendees expected to produce an output sharing their experience

What level of participation does this case study represent?



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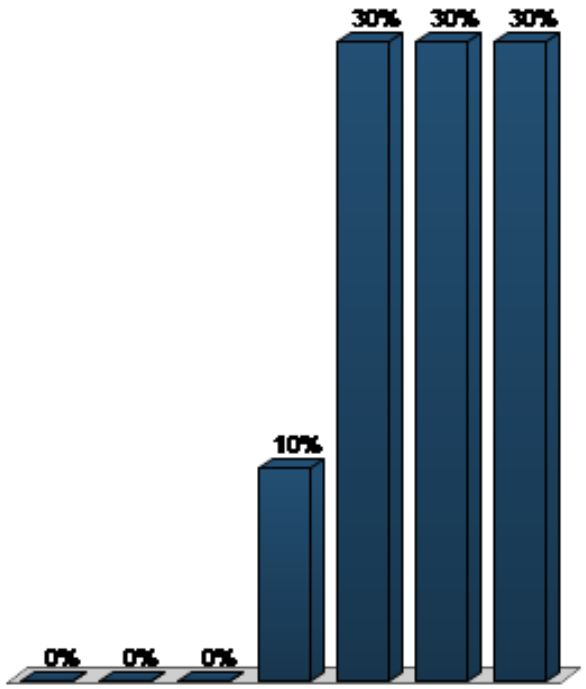

Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy

During 2013-14 student feedback affected the scheme's guidance and support for academics recruiting PAL Leaders to encourage creating an authentic recruitment process.

Student raised issue of recruitment in SU education council

SU VP Education contacted PAL central team

Met with student and SU VP Education

Established recruitment meeting for academic contacts

Identified current best practice. Sent guidance sheet to all contacts

Examples of practice now include students on recruitment panels

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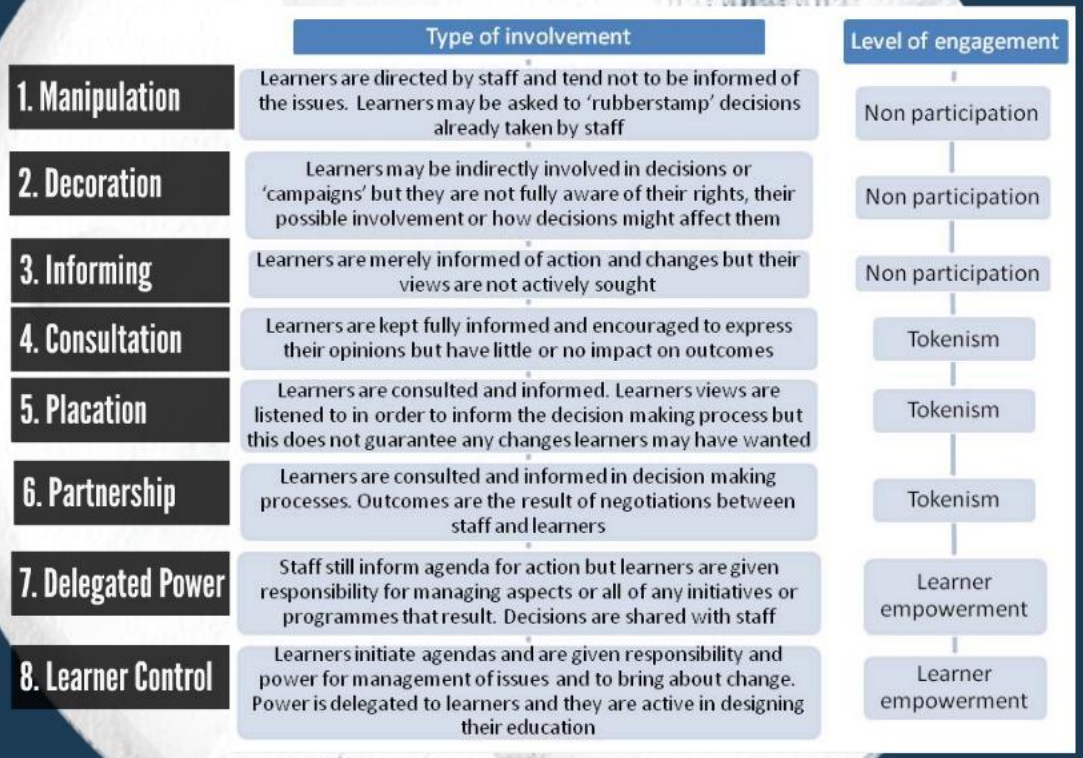

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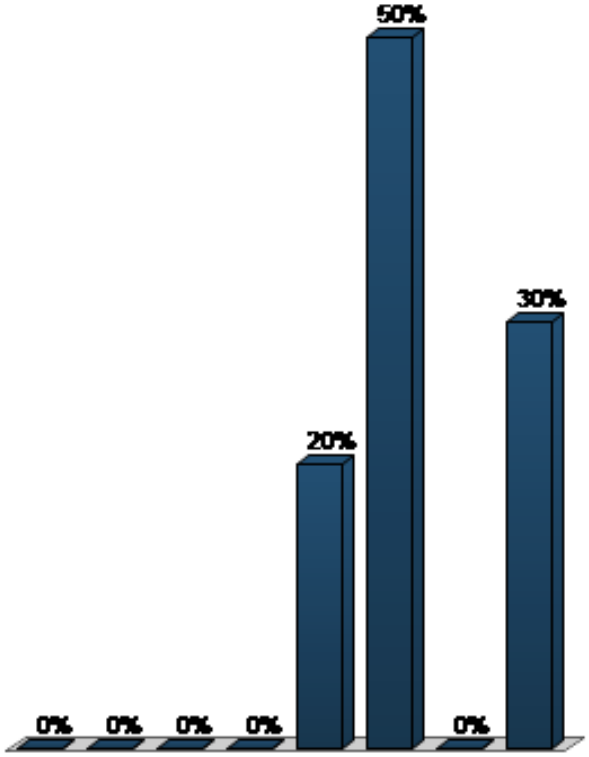

Discussion & Questions

Should we seek to increase student partnership and participation? Why?

Are there any aspects of Higher Education where student partnership and participation are not appropriate? What are they?

Do forms of peer learning have the potential to become partnership learning communities? How?

What examples of partnership learning communities exist in your organizations?

References

Healey, M., Flint, A. and Harrington, K., 2014. Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education. York: Higher Education Academy.

Rudd, T., Colligan, F. and Naik, R., 2006. Learner voice: a handbook from Futurelab [online]. Bristol: Futurelab.