Creating a new space to empower voice for students and staff who are usually not heard
Intentions and aims

- Inspired by the Teaching & Learning Academy at Western Washington University (Werder & Otis, 2010)
- A cross-disciplinary, pan-university forum in which staff and students participate inclusively to tackle L&T ‘problems’
- Set their own agenda
- Facilitate dialogue and discourse – ‘parlour talk’
- Form teams who undertake projects using participatory action research
The Learning and Teaching Forum

- Got some funding
- Bit of a late start
- Major comms issue reaching the students and staff
- Such a struggle to get beyond dialogue into action
- Decided to create student internships – 6 projects (change agents mode – Dunne and Zandstra, 2011)
- First year review with REACT team
The Students and Staff Partnership Forum

- Joint organising committee
- More structured approach - schedule; induction meetings
- Lots of student interest...
- So started with a bang...
- Three foci emerged – student wellbeing, international students; and assessment
- But focussing failed – dwindled away
- One great success
PICNIC – Short-term Student Exchange
Fanni Albert

- Partnership
- Innovation
- Collaboration
- Networking
- Improvement
- Creation

Creating opportunities and support for student exchange visits (1-7 days) between UK universities
Network already includes Newcastle, Exeter, Durham, Open, Swansea and Westminster
More partners welcome!

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Reflections- student convenor

- We reached a broad range of students, including those who may have no have been involved in anything before
- ‘rebranding’ worked well and initial communication about the forum led to a large number of students attending
- Too much discussion and not solutions
  - Do we need to have a tighter structure while the scheme establishes itself?
- Lack of understanding about what the forum was about
  - Course specific suggestions instead of university wide suggestions
- Staff commitment and sabbatical officer commitment wasn’t sustained throughout the year, which may have influenced student commitment
Reflections – a staff participant

- Initial motivation – sharing good practice
  - Networking & building awareness (potential to break out of ‘separate school culture’)
  - Interesting cross-section of university society

- Lack of consistency in members
  - Resistance to ideas in different disciplines
  - Same conversations, little action – facilitation issues?

- Busy lives and competing priorities
  - Reluctance to take responsibility
Reflections- staff convenor

- 108 came (44 students) came but only 23 (6 students) 3 or more times
- Poor university communication infrastructure
- The cultural capital of SOTL

- Progress towards a universal model of partnership
- Gave voice to the voiceless and in a safe space
- Making discussion of L&T legitimate
Where next?

- Keep persevering
- Progress inch by inch
- We can change culture but need resilience, determination and patience