Teaching midwifery students
A model for transferring epistemology to midwifery practice

INTRODUCTION
For new midwifery students in Denmark it can be difficult to understand the meaning of epistemology and how to use it in midwifery. By using a new method in teaching epistemology it has been possible for us to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and to reduce the gap between theory and practice. In this poster we present a new model for teaching epistemology and pedagogical as well as didactic considerations.

NATURAL SCIENCES
Focusing on e.g. clinical observations of mother and child throughout childbirth

HUMANITIES
Focusing on e.g. experiences, women-centred care and/or bonding

SOCIAL SCIENCES
Focusing on e.g. the influence of society; place of birth or family formation

MODEL FOR THE WORKSHOP
The students form 9 groups

Group 1-3 watch the video from a perspective of natural sciences
Group 4-6 watch the video from a perspective of humanities
Group 7-9 watch the video from a perspective of social sciences

Group 1-3 answer epistemological questions from the perspective of Natural Sciences together with the teacher in Natural Science
Group 4-6 answer epistemological questions from the perspective of Humanities together with the teacher in Humanities
Group 7-9 answer epistemological questions from the perspective of Social Sciences together with the teacher in Social Science

The students are placed in three new groups where each “science” present their answers to the two other “science”

The students evaluate this workshop as very useful in understanding the basic differences between Natural Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences and how these Sciences can be helpful to broaden their perspective on practice.

CONCLUSIONS

PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS
The students are introduced to the philosophical background for natural, humanistic and social scientific approaches through six lectures during their first semester. Most of the students find epistemology highly abstract and irrelevant for their education towards becoming a midwife.

To promote appreciation and understanding of epistemology the students work with a case from their future practice – represented by a video. Guided by their teachers, the students are encouraged to adapt, apply and appreciate different scientific viewpoints and generate different perspectives on the case – All perspectives are meaningful for midwifery practice. Through the activity in the workshop the students gain a basic knowledge of epistemological and methodological approaches and begin to understand their significance for midwifery and for themselves as future midwives.

DIDACTIC CONSIDERATIONS

- The competence to transfer science into midwifery practice are developed in three subgroups (who each watch the video from their assigned scientific approach).
- Involving the teachers in science in the group work facilitates the connection between the content in the lessons and the answering of the epistemological questions.
- Presenting the assigned science to other students in smaller groups facilitates the student skills of explaining how each scientific approach is visualised in the video.
- The didactics promote the students’ comprehension of the significance of epistemological approaches to midwifery practice.