

Personal epistemologies & student engagement in Active Blended Learning [ABL]

Elizabeth Palmer

University of Northampton

elizabeth.palmer@northampton.ac.uk

@ejpalmer1986

Sylvie Lomer

University of Manchester

sylvie.lomer@manchester.ac.uk

@SE_Lomer

Ivelina Bashliyska

University of Northampton

Assistant Researcher

With thanks to:

David Cousens

Nadine Shambrook

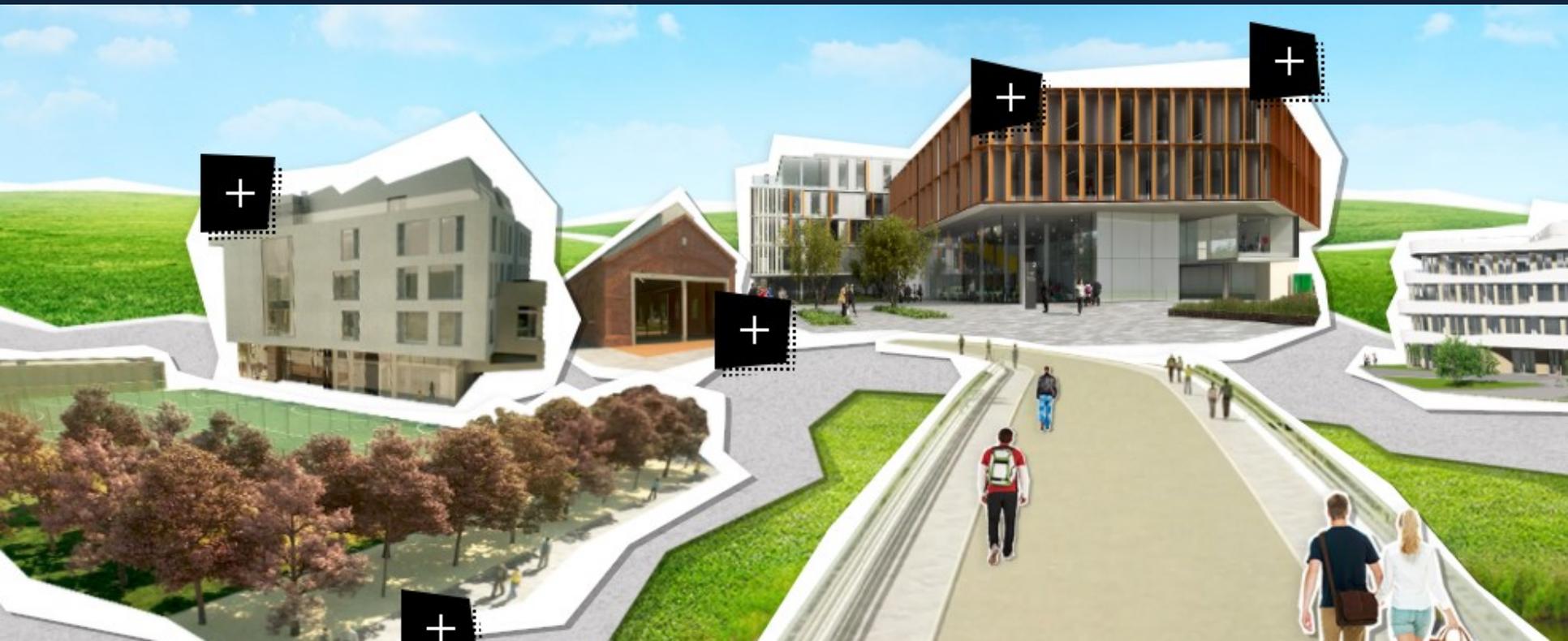
Active Blended Learning [ABL]

Active learning:

- Experiential
- Practical/ hands-on,
- 'Real world' orientated
- Collaborative
- Reflexive

Blended learning:

- Technology-enhanced
- Face-to-face [F2F] & online combined
- Digital literacy



Data Collection

Student engagement with ABL

Pilot (yr.15/16)

Main study (yr.16/17)

24 Students

201 Students

5 Focus groups

47 Focus groups

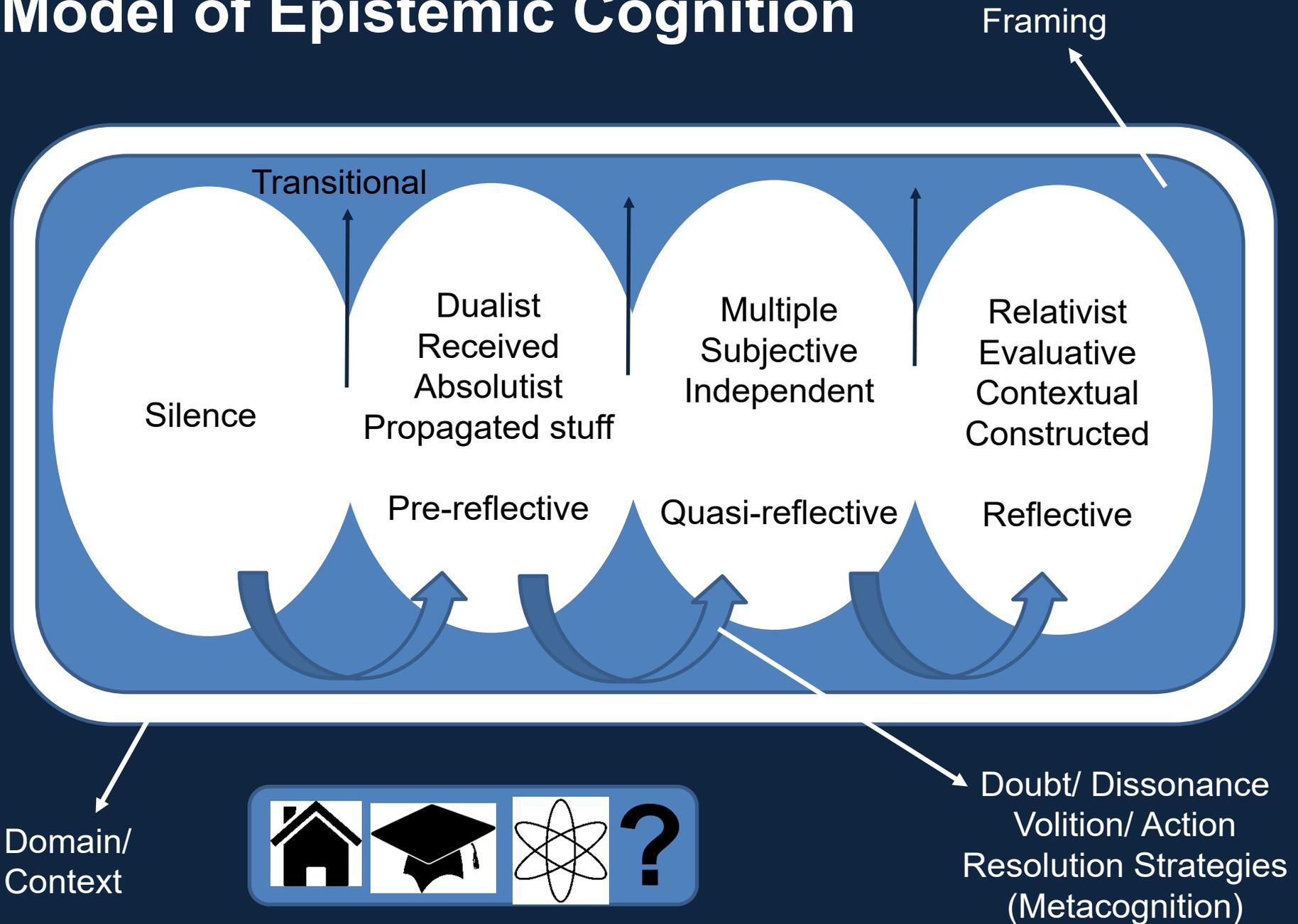
5 Schools

4 Faculties

Education and Humanities	13.93%
Health and Society	58.20%
Art, Science and Technology	18.9%
Business and Law	8.95%

Foundation	2.48%
Level 4	39.8%
Level 5	45.27%
Level 6	9.45%
Level 7	2.98%

Model of Epistemic Cognition



Dualist epistemology

“it gives you more knowledge”
“you get more knowledge”
“Gaining knowledge” (Various)

“What if you do it completely wrong? You’ve taken it completely the wrong way.” - Education

“How learning works? Well, I read it, I accept it, I learn it. I don’t get it (the question).” - Health

“It’s kind of like advanced preparation which is it’s like broaden our knowledge we know exactly what we need to do and what we need, like, what we are talking about” - Law

“So there is a clear cut model of what is effective and what people walk away with no questions. At the end of a lecture if you don’t have anyone ask a question, then you’ve done your job.” - Arts

“[Learning is] for me, that’s understanding new information” - Health

Dualist epistemology

"[lectures are more informative} because in class, obviously, people want to discuss and ask questions" -Arts

"No, we're not doing it....because it is online and not, like, a lecturer telling us to our face 'You have to do this'" - Arts

"His lecture slides are always packed with information" - Business

"if we don't understand something, we shouldn't be told just to give it a go" - Arts

"The fact that we pay a lot of money to then not actually have support from lecturers...and access to professionals" - Education

"Especially in the midwifery degree, like health care, anything like that that you actually have to put all of those things into practice and it is practically life or death, I do think that when you don't have somebody there to straight away facilitate what you've just learned [it's a problem]" - Health

Transitional

“I like to have someone discuss with me before I can consolidate my knowledge.” – Education

“Learning is trying to find the right mindset and then saving the information of getting that mindset later to access it at any point...it’s being able to have an understanding of it instead of just being told and hoping for the best” - Arts

“I think about the online section is more about the basic informational knowledge, you can learn from it and if you have a question you can ask the teacher in the seminar.” - Law

“I think a lot of people only think they are going to get things out of what they’re told, like what the lecturer tells them...They don’t really see the benefit of, not putting effort in, they don’t really, they kind of blame it on, you know, the lecturers aren’t very good.” - Business

Multiplist

“It is better when you are in a group. You’ve got more opinions to go into it.” - Education

“Just learn it in class with everyone else. That way you get different views and opinions. Like, you have to wait until you get into class and they say, ‘What did you think?’” - Education

“if it’s the group work like where you are sharing ideas, you get to see whether you are on the same page as everybody else and you get that feedback from other students...Rather than the lectures” - Health

“Yes and everyone’s got different ways of understanding things and different opinions and – so it’s good to discuss it with each other” - Law

“You are able to just discuss different ideas with other students’ as well.” - Law

“They might learn different things which they can bring. So they can learn something from me and I can learn something from them.” - Business

Relativist / evaluative / reflective

“[of an online discussion board] You are just putting your opinion and you leave. You don’t go back and reflect on what everyone else put” - Health

“someone else thinks of something that you haven’t thought of and then you are like, ‘Oh actually building on that, you could possibly or potentially do that”

Business

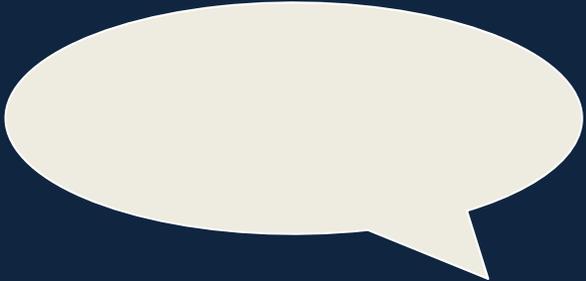
“If it was a virtual session we are all doing the same thing at the same time and we can consolidate between each other” -

Health

“Stuff delivered online...there’s no critical thinking. ...There has to be some sort of thing that’s going to make people think.” – Health

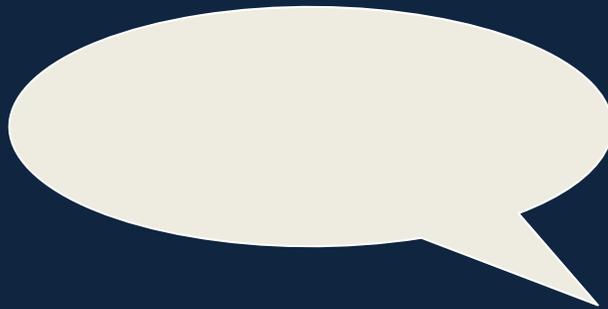
“With online, it does encourage you, it forces you almost to go and do the research for yourself and go and look in the books, in the articles.” – Health

Silence / alienation



“it 100% disengages me because I’m just like, what’s the point of me being here and learning from these lectures when I can’t even keep up” -Education

“Hardly anyone talks...we will be asked a question and then it’s just silent” - Education



“Powerpoints like that just make me feel devalued as a student” - Health

“It’s like ‘No’. Sat down to do it; couldn’t do it; not going to carry on.” - Education

Discussion

Observations:

- Non-productive 'stances' dominate.
- Little year variation/ discipline specificity

Problems with ABL:

- Inconsistent (Teacher Epistemology)
- Poor implementation
- Lack of transparency

Pedagogic implications

- Transparent pedagogy: explaining what we are doing and why
- Explicitly targeting and scaffolding epistemic change through learning design
 - E.g. Incorporate reflective tasks
 - Discuss epistemology and positions of authority explicitly with students
- Designing learning and teaching activities which are epistemologically coherent across all modes (online and face-to-face)



The University of Manchester



Thank You!

Palmer, E. Lomer, S. & Bashliyska, I. (2017) *Overcoming barriers to student engagement in Active Blended Learning*. University of Northampton. Available at: <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/ilt/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/05/Student-Engagement-with-ABL-Interim-Report-May-2017-v2.pdf>