

Chapter 7

Situated Learning Online: Profiling Learners by Theorized and Practical Learning- Context-Defined Role(s)

ABSTRACT

In online situated learning, enabled through enhanced information and communications technology (ICT), learning management systems (LMSes), learning content repositories, immersive virtual worlds, simulations, games, augmented reality enablements using mobile technologies, web meeting tools, digital libraries, and other software and hardware, target learners may be profiled based on the practical learning-context-defined roles: the functional roles, the defined target learning skills, the requisite interactions between learners, the interactions between learners and digital and analog artifacts and online environment, and others. This work explores defined idealized learning profiles in situated learning online.

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Table 1. Situated learning as a bridge between traditional learning and transfer to workplaces, real world, applied practices, and problem solving

Traditional “Ideal” (Idea-Based) Classroom	Situated Learning (as a bridge)	Workplaces / Real World / Applied Practices / Problem Solving

INTRODUCTION

A long-term challenge of teaching and learning has been the issue of transferability of the learning, to enable learners to apply what they learn to new contexts in effective ways. (Another term for this is “generalizability,” to move from a specific application to a range of possible somewhat-similar but variant applications.) One potential solution has been enabling learners to acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities (and attitudes) [or “KSAs”] in various apprenticeships, practicums, work places, and other contexts of social “situatedness.” The situations are supposed to emulate the real world while providing learners the mentorship and support and safety of traditional classrooms. This bridging function is depicted in Table 1. Generally, beyond a place-based surrounding, situatedness refers to a situation as a “set of circumstances”; in a situated learning context, the various elements of situatedness then relate to a learning context that represents something of the real world and imbues the learning work with some authenticity.

Online, situated learning is enacted in a variety of different ways, with varying learning objectives, target learners, learning outcomes, and tactical uses of technologies. How the target learners are conceptualized has deep impacts on the design of the learning, particularly in terms of the efficacy of the bridging role of situated learning in enabling learners to apply the learning to work places and other contexts. In online learning, “situated learning” (in its various incarnations) is thought to enable learning benefits:

- The creative use of the surrounding virtual and / or real spaces for learning,
- Experiential learning practice using simulations and / or games,
- More applied authenticity in the learning,
- Enhanced levels of learning transfer to various contexts,
- Increased social and other soft skills in the human-to-human and human-to-‘bot collaborations,

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