

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology provides a philosophical foundation for the rearticulation of situated learning theory

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article Article history: Received 26 August 2025 Received in revised form 28 September 2025 Accepted 22 February 2026 Published online 25 October 2026 Keywords: Situating Learning, Social Body, Merleau-Ponty, Perception.	The central idea of the present essay is to emphasize that situated learning theory is, at its core, a philosophical theory formulated on the basis of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodied perception. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body constitutes the pivotal locus of the human relation to the world and the primary medium through which lived experiences and everyday interactions are apprehended. Beyond its biological structure, the body is a field of possibilities and capacities that continuously reconstitutes itself in the face of experience. In his account, learning is not confined to the subject's mastery over nature; rather, it is the embodied perception of the world. Propositions, from Merleau-Ponty's perspective, bear an embodied dimension that is rearticulated in relation to the situation or context in which the individual's experience unfolds. Thus, body and world, in their reciprocal interaction, shape the overall structure of cognition, which is the key concern in situated learning theory. Situated learning is therefore a socio-corporeal theory whose fundamental orientation lies in examining the profound interrelation between mind and practice—an effort to transcend the dualism of subject and object. Learning is not a merely mental, individual, or socially disembedded activity; rather, it is inherently a social process constituted within the reciprocal encounter between mind and world. Accordingly, in the framework of situated learning—interwoven with Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception—education is inseparable from the embodied existence of the subject, the concrete situation, and the social context. Knowledge is thus grounded in the certainty of the lived body's encounter with the situation in which learning takes place.

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Intruduction

The enhancement of education today is regarded as one of the fundamental priorities of any society. A developed society actively advances the adoption of innovative educational methods across various levels and promotes the flourishing of cultural and social institutions. Situated Learning Theory (SLT), as one of the most recent educational theories of the contemporary era, represents a significant step forward by offering a critical response to Traditional Cognitive Theory (TCT) and by re-establishing educational concepts on new grounds. SLT, with its emphasis on the socialization of learning, displaces education from the confined, formal, and rigid spaces of traditional instruction and reorients it toward lived reality and social events.

Within this framework, learning is inextricably tied to the cultural and social context of the learner. It is not an isolated, individual enterprise, but rather a process that unfolds within society and through social interaction. This perspective departs from conventional models of education: the context or situation in which an individual undergoes intellectual maturation plays a decisive role in consolidating learning. According to SLT, the human being is fundamentally a social creature, and learning cannot be adequately conceived as a closed, purely mental activity restricted to schools and universities. In contrast to Traditional Cognitive Theory, which confines learning to the academic space and treats knowledge as an input passively delivered to the learner, SLT situates education in everyday practices, social interactions, and pragmatic activities, wherein knowledge emerges as an output of embodied engagement with the world. In this sense, no clear boundary exists between the internal and the external dimensions of learning (Fox, 1997, 73). What deserves particular attention, in the author's view, is the philosophical groundwork of situated learning. It is the contention of this study that the foundations of SLT are shaped through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and his conception of the embodied subject.

Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenological Perspective on the Body

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective on the body, embodiment, and the relation of the body to space and place has entered the field of education in a profound way, offering a renewed conception of situated learning. In this mode of learning, all knowledge is intrinsically bound to the context and situation in which the individual is situated. From Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological standpoint, education cannot occur apart from the embodiment of the body within the world. Situated—or context-based—learning takes place through the direct engagement of the embodied subject with the world. What enhances the philosophical significance of Situated Learning Theory (SLT) is precisely the embodied interaction of the individual with the *lifeworld* and with their lived experiences. Situated learning is thus an embodied relation: a mode of interaction wherein the body is inseparably tied to place and to the *Lebenswelt*—a body that, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, must be understood as a social body. The

central claim advanced in the present article is that it is the social dimension of the body that makes the realization of situated learning possible in the first place. Learning does not rest upon the primacy of a detached subject; it is, rather, fundamentally embodied. The body encompasses both subject and object—it is simultaneously subject and object. This dual capacity allows the body to stand in direct relation with the world, resulting in a deeper connection with reality and the consolidation of knowledge acquired. Before turning to the theory of situated learning and its philosophical foundations, it is therefore necessary to return to Merleau-Ponty and to examine his phenomenological analysis of the body in general, and of the social body in particular, as well as his account of perception, embodiment, and the relation of the body to the lifeworld (space and place). Only in this way can it be clarified how situated learning theory is, at its root, a philosophical theory articulated in direct engagement with Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the body and the meaning of embodiment.

Perception is embodiment itself

In his seminal work *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty turns our attention to the concrete, embodied nature of our experience in relation to the world. His account of embodied intentionality and the corporeality of the subject develop in continuity with, yet also in critique of, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Heidegger's ontological phenomenology. At the very outset of the book, Merleau-Ponty asserts that phenomenology has remained incomplete (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, vii). In this regard, he critiques the insufficiency of Husserl's views, particularly the notions of intentionality and transcendental consciousness, and rejects the subject-object dualism pervasive in the Western philosophical tradition—most notably in Descartes' cogito.

His aim is to articulate an understanding of the concrete structure of experience, that is, the embodied subject situated within the world—an idea that resonates with Heidegger's account of *being-in-the-world*. While Heidegger conceives *being-in-the-world* as the fundamental structure of Dasein and the cornerstone of his existential phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, while borrowing this notion, critiques Heidegger for his limited and fleeting attention to embodiment. From Merleau-Ponty's standpoint, phenomenology incorporates both Husserlian and Heideggerian insights. It is subjective in that perception and consciousness are always grounded in the self—objects are perceived as they appear to the perceiving subject. Yet it is at once objective, insofar as the subject exists in direct and intricate relation with the object: to be a subject is, essentially, to be *in-the-world*. A key similarity between Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty lies in their shared emphasis on worldliness, where knowledge arises from lived and embodied experience. For Merleau-Ponty, however, the body becomes the decisive pivot of our relation to the world and the intertwining of subject and object. The encounter of the body with the world renders the human being fundamentally embodied. The body is not merely an instrument for engaging with the world; it is the very condition of possibility for the world to

appear. The world itself has no other means of manifestation than through the body, such that the world originates in embodiment, and embodied experiences acquire their coherence only in confrontation with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 262). According to Merleau-Ponty, the world (the perceived) and the subject (the perceiver) are inextricably constitutive of one another. Yet, he maintains that our relation to the world occurs exclusively through perceptual experience. Why, then, is perception so central in Merleau-Ponty's thought? Perception, for him, is the concretization of objects in their fully sensible and objective presence. In other words, at the moment of our presence in the world, our relation to the objective is immediate and unmediated. Perception involves the functioning and activity of the whole body as an embodied structure, which constitutes the pivotal point of our connection with the world. While Husserl conceives the process of knowing objects as a function of transcendental consciousness—where objects appear as intended correlates of acts of consciousness—Merleau-Ponty reconceives this process in terms of intentionality that Husserl overlooked: bodily intentionality. Bodily intentionality refers to our embodied perception and understanding of a situation. Bodily consciousness is the sense through which we apprehend our surrounding environment and lived experience (Hill, 2023, 34). For Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is not "I think that," but rather "I can" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 139). There exists a direct and constitutive relationship between perceptual experience and our lived experience of the world. In this way, perception is always grounded in embodiment and our situated engagement with the world.

George Marshall, in his *Guide to Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception*, emphasizes that the major contribution of *Phenomenology of Perception* lies in its attempt to argue for the primacy of perception over analytical thought, and he describes this primacy of perception as follows:

By these words, the primacy of perception we mean that the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things truth, value are constituted for us. The perception is a nascent logos that is teaches us, outside all dogmatism, the true condition of objectivity itself, that is summons us to the tasks of knowledge and action (Marshall, 2008, 55.)

According to Merleau-Ponty's account of perception, one can argue that perceptual experience is not merely a function of the mind or a mechanical process of the brain. Rather, perception is the very starting point of our bond with the world. It is active rather than passive, corporeal rather than purely mental, and is intrinsically bound to our *being-in-the-world*. Through perception, we engage with the world, and this engagement—active and participatory in nature—not only establishes our direct relation to reality but also dissolves the dualism of subject and object. Perception objectifies our lived, concrete experience of the world and renders it real, and it is precisely this everyday experience that constitutes the primordial embodied encounter between the human being and the world. The body, moreover, is dependent upon the other for its

intelligibility—not only biologically, but also cognitively and ontologically. Conversely, the other, with all its determinations, is dependent upon and inseparable from the embodied subject. As Merleau-Ponty himself remarks:

The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject who is nothing but a project of the world; and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world that it itself projects. The subject is being in-the-world and the world remains “subjective,” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 454).

As Matthews points out, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology describes our pre-reflective involvement with the world. To articulate this pre-reflective relation, Merleau-Ponty employs the concept of perception (Matthews, 2009, 41).

Perception, in this sense, is embodiment itself. Everything I apprehend from my being-in-the-world—what I see, hear, or judge—is an active engagement with the world. Whatever I recognize in myself as cognitive, experiential, aesthetic, or cultural interest underscores the unavoidable relationality of my perception of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is neither the passive reception of sense-data, as empiricism would have it, nor the mere unfolding of ideas immanent to the mind, as rationalism suggests. The subject is in the world and an agent within it, just as the perceived object reciprocally acts upon the subject. We are thus embodied subjects—corporeal beings—who occupy space and establish a bridge of relation between ourselves and the world (Matthews, 2009, 63). David Morris describes this perspective as the intersection of body and world and argues that our engagement with any object is, in fact, a bodily-mediated connection between the object and our body (Morris, 2004, f4). It is through our body that we perceive the world and relate to objects.

Embodied Subject, Sensory Perception, and Corporality

Merleau-Ponty can be regarded as a philosopher of the body (Hass, 2008, 75) due to his emphasis on the body as a concrete, embodied entity in the process of sensory perception. The body is a concept central to Merleau-Ponty's thought. While scholars have offered multiple interpretations of the concept of the body, Merleau-Ponty's account is innovative, revealing the conceptual complexity of what the body signifies. For Merleau-Ponty, the subject is an embodied subject, and he considers embodiment a real aspect of existence, reducing the analysis of human reality to the body. The subject is not merely a thinking entity; it possesses a body. My body constitutes the manner of my being-in-the-world—a direct, immediate reality through which the world manifests itself to me. It is through the body that objects achieve their objectivity. Through my body, I observe the world before me. With my body, I seek out objects and discern the relationships among phenomena. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty describes the body as follows:

In the first place it was stated that my body is distinguishable from the table or the lamp in that I can turn away from the latter whereas my body is constantly perceived. It is therefore an object which does not leave me. To say that it is always near me, always there for me, is to say that it is never really in front of me, that I cannot array it before my eyes, that it remains marginal to all my perceptions, that it is with me. In other words, I observe external objects with my body, I handle them, examine them, walk round them, but my body itself is a thing which I do not observe: in order to be able to do so, I should need the use of a second body which itself would be unobservable (Merleau-ponty,2012, 103-104).

Thus, perception is not something separate from the world in which we live. Perception is embodied. Merleau-Ponty states:

If it is true that I become aware of my body through the world, and if my body is an unperceived limit at the center of the world toward which all objects are directed, then, by the same reasoning, it is also true that my body constitutes the core of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 14).

My body responds to the solicitations of the world and adapts itself to the possibilities it offers, and my bodily structure—which emphasizes the body’s attunement to situations—is cultivated. The body adapts to its environment and learns how to establish balanced relations with the circumstances embedded within it. The relations between the body and the environment are fully reciprocal and mutually accommodating, each playing a crucial role in maintaining the balance of the other.

The Theory of Sensory Perception: A Philosophical Grounding for the Analysis of Situated Learning Theory

It appears that situated learning theory is fundamentally based on a phenomenological and philosophical perspective, and without understanding the deep philosophical layers embedded within the theory, a comprehensive analysis cannot be easily offered. One of the key approaches that underpins the theoretical foundation of situated learning is its deep attention to the body and the inescapable dependence between the body and the environment (or situation), which itself serves as a critique of the traditional and historical divide between subject and object. From Merleau-Ponty’s perspective, the body is the starting point of knowledge. Knowledge does not begin with a focus on the subject; rather, the body embodies the entirety of the individual and their being-in-the-world. The body grants its identity and allows the world, with all its possibilities, to be presented to the individual. What the body perceives goes beyond the subject—it is an acquired skill or a particular mode of being that responds to the possibilities the world offers (Hill, 2023,49). Situated learning theory is based on the assumption that learning is a context-

dependent or situated process, closely linked to the individual's interactions, sociality, and engagement with tradition and history. Knowledge and learning appear to be socially oriented and embodied, seeing cognition as independent of traditional instructional content or academic contexts.

Unlike other cognitive educational theories that limit learning to academic environments and view it as context-independent, situated learning emphasizes lived experience and everyday interactions, where the individual engages directly with the world. In this type of learning, the focal point of education is not the Kantian or Cartesian thinking subject who masters reality; rather, social and cultural contexts in general, and the individual as an embodied subject within society, play a decisive role in shaping and enhancing knowledge. Situated learning seeks to explain the role of social and bodily engagement in learning, whereas traditional learning theories focus primarily on individual knowledge acquisition and personal development (Korthagen, 2010, 99).

The context in which knowledge is formed has a significant impact on the ability to retain and recall learned information. In situated learning theory (SLT), the focus of research and learning shifts from formal and educational spaces to the broader environment. In other words, education moves beyond the theoretical and traditional confines of academic spaces and is directed toward practical and functional activities. Situated learning occurs through direct engagement and full participation in the social contexts where learning takes place. Lave and Wenger describe this type of learning as a form of reciprocal social participation. Rather than asking which cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved in learning, they ask: what kind of social engagement can provide a suitable context for learning? (Lave, 1991, 14). This engagement is an embodied one, in which the individual perceives the situation and understands knowledge in relation to the context in which they are situated. From Merleau-Ponty's perspective, situations produce meaning. The context allows the individual to establish a reciprocal relationship with it, leading to an embodied and intimate experience with objects. Education in general, and meaning in particular, is a deep and complex experience that manifests itself through the body.

Merleau-Ponty's conception of situation arises from a kind of motor or bodily knowledge, which he describes as: *"through a pre-reflective bodily apprehension, we perceive the world as a set of structured fields for action"* (Hill, 2023, 38). These elements potentially reveal new possibilities in their encounter with my body. In turn, my body, when faced with the situation, seeks to take control of space, allowing bodily and social awareness to coordinate with experience, process it, and present it as concepts within the mental structure. In fact, the beginning of knowledge manifests as a form of bodily awareness and intentionality, which develops through situated learning. An example of bodily and social awareness can be observed in a chess player. Initially, the player must master the rules of the game. At the stage of social awareness, they recognize which moves will allow them to defeat the opponent. The combination

of these two dimensions—motor knowledge—emphasizes that the environment enables the realization of the individual's potential for action. In situated learning, space and context provide such abundant potential for teaching and learning that this is rarely achievable in rigid academic environments. It is through the body that we facilitate the expansion and development of situated knowledge. Therefore, social participation or engagement precedes conceptual and cognitive structures in effective learning. Learning is not merely an individual activity or the acquisition of a set of abstract knowledge transferable to others. Rather, it is participation in practical activities and collaborative work within the learning process, which occurs outside traditional or academic spaces (Lave, 1991, 14). Learning is fundamentally an inseparable and intrinsic aspect of social action (Lave, 1991, 31).

However, it is an embodied action, which, according to Merleau-Ponty, is through embodied social activity that we respond appropriately to the solicitations of the world. At the same time, the world draws us toward itself and exerts its action upon us. As Bergson states,

The objects that surround my body always reflect the potential action of the body upon themselves (Bergson, 1988, 21).

Bergson's assertion makes it clear that the body and the world are two sides of the same coin, and nothing attains determination beyond the embodiment of the body in the world. In other words, the situation or context in which an individual is situated is filled with possibilities and affordances that are reproduced and constructed in relation to our bodily capacities. The American psychologist Gibson also emphasizes environmental affordances, suggesting that the environment provides opportunities for action, while the body, in turn, delivers significant feedback to the environment. In fact, environmental affordances are dependent on bodily capacities for their realization (Gibson, 1986, 127–143).

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body, as an independent cognitive mechanism, transforms information from experience through sensory perception into understanding, presenting it to the mind as concepts. Likewise, the situation or context in which an individual is present offers its possibilities to the individual in accordance with the capabilities of the body. This perspective is a key element in situated learning theory. In situated learning, education is a fully external process, as the environment, social interactions, and the learner's contextual background serve as the basis for learning even before any internal mental activity takes place. According to Lave, a scholar in the field of situated learning, Traditional learning and educational theories rely on the out-of-context (decontextualized) nature of certain types of knowledge and their modes of transmission. In contrast, in activity-based situated learning theory, 'out-of-context learning' is considered a contradictory and inconsistent concept (Lave, 1993, 6). Human beings, as social entities, are dependent on the world, and many of their actions emerge in relation to environmental behaviors. Place, when interacting with the body, seems to possess a kind of cognitive awareness that can be transmitted to the learner. There is an embodied and reciprocal

awareness between the individual and the situation. Just as Merleau-Ponty critiques the traditional Western notion of the subject's dominance over the object, situated learning represents an effort to overcome the mind-body dualism. In this theory, the relationship between the individual and the situation is unified, holistic, and reciprocal, with each considered complementary to the other. Apart from this, social learning can be examined from several perspectives. First, humans are inherently social beings, and it is within the social sphere and through social events that a significant portion of an individual's intellectual, cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development occurs. After passing through childhood, as an individual enters a larger society such as school or university, they begin to engage actively as an agent. Within the social context, the learner is confronted closely with diverse and practical issues, and through interaction with others, another dimension of the individual's social development unfolds. This perspective closely aligns with Actor-Network Theory, which asserts that "*society is not composed solely of humans, but is a network of heterogeneous elements, including humans, tools, spaces, and so on*" (Law, 1992,381). Learning occurs through active engagement and interaction with everyday events and objects, all of which can be encompassed within this broader conceptual framework. The second point refers to the social subject. The mind is a social phenomenon, and the subject becomes a social subject. In the Western philosophical tradition, the subject is typically associated with mental action and the relations between subject and object.

In Merleau-Ponty's conception, however, the subject becomes a social body. Merleau-Ponty does not merely speak of a purely biological body. The social body, in this sense, affirms the capacity to engage with the possibilities the world offers. According to him, it is the social nature of the body that allows an individual to connect with the environment or context in which knowledge is to be formed. Essentially, it is the social aspect of the body that provides the conditions for the realization of situated learning. From the perspective of situated learning researchers, the mind is a social phenomenon rather than merely an individual subject capable of mastering and subordinating objects. From the perspective of a subjectivist philosopher, although experience influences the process of cognition, the independent effect of the subject and the assumption that learning occurs as a purely internal, mental process are emphasized. However, from the perspective of a situated learning researcher, thinking and learning are structured within a social context and through interaction with the environment. Vygotsky's cognitive perspective on this matter is particularly noteworthy. According to him, educational concepts become personal concepts only when children are able to apply them in their everyday lives (Hedegaard, 1998, 114).

In practice, a connection must be established between educational concepts and their function in daily interactions and experiences to both emphasize the effectiveness of instruction and integrate the learner's experiences with everyday life. From Merleau-Ponty's perspective, place

and memory interact reciprocally in learning. The context in which learning occurs is directly related to the retention of acquired knowledge. For instance, in ancient Rome, individuals who wished to memorize long texts would first go to a specific location, remember the spatial environment, and then memorize the text. During public recitations, recalling the location and imagining themselves within it helped them reproduce the text (Yates, 1992, 17–20). Therefore, two elements are essential for learning any type of knowledge.

First, the situation or context in which the knowledge is formed, providing it with practical and functional relevance; second, the knowledge itself, which carries a specific psychological weight and acts like a bodily marker when confronted with a situation—for example, painful or traumatic experiences in life that are difficult to forget. Fundamentally, knowledge has an embodied aspect. Cognition does not simply mean the subject's mastery over reality or summoning it beyond themselves; rather, it entails understanding *where* and *when* concepts or propositions can be applied (Hill, 2023, 42–43). True knowledge emerges when the individual reaches a level of bodily and social awareness that allows them to apply fundamental propositions, abstract concepts, and theories in connection with cultural contexts in everyday life. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that bodily, embodied awareness—opposed to Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness—begins as a bodily intentionality. This enables the learner to establish reciprocal relationships between the environment and their body, allowing concepts to be learned to a certain degree. At the level of social awareness, the individual recognizes that the environment also provides potential for their growth and can practically apply concepts based on their personal abilities and environmental affordances. This Merleau-Pontian perspective is crucial in the development of situated learning theory because it underscores that learning must be aligned with lived experiences and the learner's world, shifting education beyond purely academic spaces to workplaces or the learner's everyday life-world.

From the perspective of educational researchers, all knowledge is situated. There is no type of activity in general, nor any engagement with educational processes in particular, that occurs independently of context. In Merleau-Ponty's thought, the notion of situation is not merely a transient physical location; rather, it can refer to the complex and intimate relationship between humans and the world. The individual is engaged with objects and, in complex interactions with tools and instruments, encounters new cognitive pathways for understanding both the world and their social mind. Situated learning involves *how agency is enacted within the world and through shared interactions with it* (Lave & Wenger, 1991, 31). Accordingly, learning is agentive: the actor is the source of activity, reconstruction, reproduction, and production of concepts in interaction with worldly matters. The world and the human are mutually organized as both agentive and responsive entities, establishing fully reciprocal relationships that shape and influence one another. Learning, in this sense, becomes active, agentive, durable, and effective.

Therefore, the claim that all knowledge is situated is not an exaggeration. Situated learning emphasizes that an individual's world begins with the perception of experience within the context of the world. This perspective aligns closely with realist or empiricist streams in the Western philosophical tradition, where experience is primary in cognition and the mind functions like a blank slate that begins to issue cognitive judgments upon encountering experience. This contrasts with rationalist and subjectivist approaches, in which the subject or mind is primary in cognition and issues judgments a priori. Modern education, however, is moving toward direct engagement with the external world and understanding concepts through experience. One of the primary goals of situated learning is to connect education with real-world contexts, which, from a philosophical standpoint, occurs through embodied engagement. Palincsar, in presenting three key principles for situated learning, also emphasizes the importance of the relationships between knowledge and the environment.

According to Palincsar, the first principle emphasizes that situated learning connects the individual to the world in a functional and practical manner. Learners are trained to think like experts and to respond adaptively to ambiguous problems and complex concepts. The second principal highlights that situated learning strengthens situational cognition. It allows the learner to construct a fresh and robust cognitive framework, rather than relying on predetermined question-and-answer formats. This perspective aligns with Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor cognition, which underscores the necessity of this type of understanding. As previously noted, Merleau-Ponty explains that we engage in action and interaction with the world when we both have mastery over it and know the appropriate timing for our actions. For instance, a rock climber must theoretically understand the knowledge of climbing while also recognizing which rocks fall within their physical abilities. An important point in describing motor cognition is that it encompasses both social and bodily awareness. In motor cognition, it is crucial to understand that the environment or situation also provides the necessary affordances for actualizing individual potential ([Hill, 2023, 47](#)).

Accordingly, the relationship between place and cognition appears to be embodied. Based on Palincsar's third principle, situational cognition is essential because it teaches learners that learning is not merely a sense of agency. Education is not limited to performing specific tasks or confined to academic settings; rather, it enables learners to develop the ability to manage and regulate the events in their own lives (Palincsar, 1989,6).

Conclusion

Thus, education is a reciprocal relation between the body and the world. The body is conceived as a constellation of potentialities for action and collective interaction with the world, while the world, in turn, necessarily recreates itself through its profound bond with the body in order to actualize its own possibilities. The complexity of the relation between body and world is a crucial issue—explicitly emphasized in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception—and it

provides the philosophical ground for the determination of new theories in the domain of learning. In this study, we addressed the significance of situated learning theory with particular emphasis on its philosophical foundation, namely the theory of perceptual experience in Merleau-Ponty's thought. Ultimately, we underscore that situated learning theory, while dismantling the traditional boundaries of education and emphasizing the connection between mind and world (theory and practice), seeks, first, to bring education closer to the realm of lived experience, situating thought and action alongside one another. Whereas most contemporary research in education remains concentrated on theoretical and traditional cognitive models, situated learning theory—by foregrounding context, situation, and embodied mind-in-practice—transcends conventional instruction and dissolves the distinction between abstract and concrete knowledge, transforming theory into a social practice, a process that emerges at the very point of its linkage with the social body. Second, the level of education is elevated insofar as the body attains a profound understanding of the world. One of the primary reasons for the significance of situated learning theory lies in its philosophical foundation, wherein the deeper layers of Merleau-Ponty's thought are rendered discernible.

In Merleau-Ponty's later thought, lived experience is significant insofar as it is an embodied event in encounter with the world. Education, from Merleau-Ponty's perspective, constitutes a form of embodied interaction with the world. Indeed, the incarnate body is itself the condition of possibility for cognition. On this basis, the linkage of theory and practice, emphasized in situated learning, rests upon a thoroughly philosophical foundation: Merleau-Ponty, by grounding cognition in the body's relation to the world, dislodges embodiment from the isolated subject and underscores its incarnational character. It is the embodied subject who acts in the issuance of theoretical judgments as well as in their enactment. From this standpoint, situated learning highlights the importance of learning within situation or context—that is, the locus where body and world are intertwined. It is precisely the possibilities of the social body that, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, render the assimilation of educational concepts within the social milieu and the context of one's growth more accessible.

In truth, there exists a profound synthesis between Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception and the theory of situated learning, which may be summarized in several key points:

1. **The ineluctable bond between body and world (place, situation, context).** The body is the very ground of our being-in-the-world, the medium of worldliness and of connection with lived experience—learning originates precisely here. The body is directed outward toward interactions, and situated learning underscores this very orientation. Learning is not merely the internalization of concepts but action and interaction with the world.
2. **The social nature of the body.** For Merleau-Ponty, the body is a social phenomenon that makes possible the realization of situated learning. In situated learning theory (SLT)

as well, the social body is central, since it is the body's sociality that displaces education from rigid, static, and exclusively academic settings, redirecting it toward life-world contexts, everyday interactions, and communities of practice.

3. **The surpassing of the subject and the dissolution of traditional dualisms.** The body's transcendence of the isolated subject and the overcoming of the mind-body or subject-object dichotomies of the Western philosophical tradition—one of the central grounds of Merleau-Ponty's critique of rigid Western systems and his turn toward the incarnate subject—finds its way into situated learning theory as well. Situated learning situates mind and world along the same axis, within a relation of interaction.
4. **The integration of motor cognition, bodily awareness, and social consciousness.** Merleau-Ponty's account of these dimensions is indirectly woven into situated learning theory. For the learner, cognition (which for Merleau-Ponty is not based on the priority of subject over object, but rather is the activity of the embodied subject in the world) entails mastery both of theory and of the discernment of how to translate theory into practice.

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