



Academy of Medical Educators

ScEI CLUB THEORY CORNER

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Situated Learning Theory

BACKGROUND

Situated Learning Theory (SLT), developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (2001), posits that learning occurs most effectively when it is embedded within authentic contexts and social interactions – particularly through participation in communities of practice.

Rather than viewing knowledge as something transferred from teacher to student, SLT emphasizes learning as a process of becoming, where novices gradually move from peripheral to full participation in meaningful activities.

In medical education, this theory is highly relevant to clinical training, where students learn through real-world engagement with patients, peers, and mentors in healthcare settings.

FURTHER READING

Cho H, Jeong H, Yu J, Lee J, Jung HJ. Becoming a doctor: Using social constructivism and situated learning to understand the clinical clerkship experiences of undergraduate medical students. *BMC Med Educ* 2024; 24.

Lave J, Wenger E. Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice. *Supp Life Learn* 2001; 1: 111-127.

O'Brien BC, Battista A. Situated learning theory in health professions education research: A scoping review. *Adv Health Sci Educ* 2019; 25: 483-509.

