# WORKING & LEARNING AT THE BOUNDARIES OF KNOWLEDGE

Increasingly, knowledge workers have to generate new and unknown knowledge as part of their daily work. For example, in the finance industry changes to regulations necessitate agile innovation, creating new knowledge. **To learn effectively, professionals must self-regulate their own learning through successive cycles of forethought, performance and self-reflection** (Zimmerman, 2000).
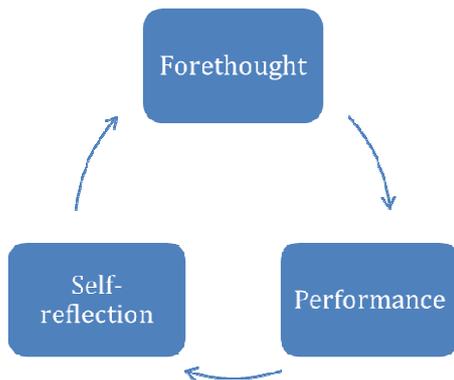
CONTEXT AND METHOD

We explored how finance professionals from 19 organisations (identified through the **Chartered Institute of Securities and Investments**, CISI) self-regulate their learning in the context of work, focusing on the behaviours (sub processes) that underpin self-regulation: for example motivation, planning, help-seeking and self-evaluation. We measured finance professionals' Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) profiles using an SRL questionnaire then examined how they self-regulate their learning through semi-structured interviews, classifying learners as High- or Low-SRL.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

What SRL sub-processes influence learning behaviours in the workplace? People who have high ability to self-regulate their learning are more able to take advantage of learning opportunities afforded by their job. We found evidence of their greater engagement in informal learning activities in their work. Three key factors were identified: *task interest/value* (a person's motivation to carry out a task), *elaboration* (ability to recognise how learning can impact other areas of work), and *self-evaluation* (reflection about learning).

How do professionals plan, implement, and reflect on their learning goals in the context of their work? There are internal and external triggers for learning. The professionals we interviewed said learning is prompted by something 'external', for example a change in their work, a different role, a new process/tool, or organisational change. High-SRL also described intrinsic motivations for learning, recognising how learning might benefit their career, or lead to improved performance. Almost everyone we interviewed said they plan their learning. High- SRL learners tend to carry out more detailed planning, articulating complex learning goals extending beyond the core task. Low-SRL also plan, but are more likely to depend upon external regulation from line managers. However, High- SRL favour gap analysis, relying on their own ability to judge what they need to learn.

How do professionals interact with others to self-regulate their learning? Everyone we interviewed relies on others in their professional network to support or facilitate their learning. High-SRL people tend to have a broader and more outward facing network than Low- SRL with significantly lower reliance on line managers. Both High & Low SRL use social networking sites (SNS), mainly Twitter and LinkedIn. SNS are used to source information and make connections with other people. High-SRL use more social tools than Low-SRL and are more likely to use LinkedIn.

How do professionals use technology to support their self-regulated learning? Technology is an integral part of work for everyone we interviewed. People seamlessly use technology to mediate their learning. However we found little evidence of specific use of tools for planning, implementing, and reflecting on learning goals. During 'performance', 'Google' is routinely used as a starting point to source information for their learning. While L-SRL associate formal documents (e.g. internal reports) with their learning, H-SRL are more likely to adopt a different approach, sharing notes, ideas, and resources with other team members and line managers.

IMPLICATIONS

This study evidences that a great deal of learning happens 'on the job', illustrating how finance professionals self regulate their learning. Employers and professional bodies like CISI can help professionals improve their ability to self-regulate their learning. For example, changes to development planning can encourage people to reflect on their learning, and view their continual informal learning in a broader context.

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