

Introduction

To maintain job relevance and support future career transitions in a world with artificial intelligence, individuals will require highly developed self-regulated learning skills.

– Markauskaite et al. (2022, p. 3)

Our current job landscape is changing rapidly with enhanced technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and a proliferation of information due to globalisation. Jobs that require routine tasks are being replaced, compelling the current workforce to engage in an ongoing process of upskilling, or risk unemployment. Upskilling requires high-level learning skills that enable one to adapt and innovate in response to new demands and changing circumstances, a skill set known as self-regulated learning (SRL).

SRL is the capability to understand your own thinking, motivations, emotions and behaviours in the context of learning, and to monitor and change these in response to a problem or towards a desired goal.

Being able to self-regulate as a learner has risen to the top of the 'skills in demand' list. For example, the World Economic Forum (2021, p. 14) listed 'active learning and learning strategies' as number two in its 'Global Top 5 Skills of 2025' (analytical thinking and innovation came in at number one). In the World Economic Forum's 2023 *Future of Jobs Report*, SRL is covered within the top ten skills on the rise ('curiosity and lifelong learning' is listed as number four, while 'motivation and self-awareness' is number ten). In a collaborative study, a group of leading authors in the field of AI were asked the question: 'What kind of capabilities do people need in a world with AI?'. Dragan Gasevic (Professor of Learning Analytics, Monash University) indicated SRL as the number 1 capability due to:

(i) the need to adapt (re- or up-skill) frequently due to speed of job and life changes; and (ii) the need to maintain agency in decision making while working AI systems. (Markauskaite et al., 2022, p. 3.)

SRL is a skill set that empowers students to engage in learning more actively. For learners, this means being keenly aware of how they think and what they feel about the material they're learning. It's about recognising when they're motivated or when their attention starts to wane. Students who are adept at SRL can notice when they're struggling with a concept and then use strategies to overcome these challenges. They might adjust their approach, try new study techniques or seek help when needed. SRL also involves setting clear goals and tracking progress towards them, allowing students to steer their learning in a direction that aligns with their aspirations and academic requirements. In essence, SRL equips students with a mental toolkit to not just cope with educational challenges but to excel through them by self-managing their thoughts, feelings and actions in a way that fosters effective learning.

To help you further understand the concept of SRL, I ask you to imagine that there is a living room in your mind:

In this living room, the TV is mostly on. It's showing your thinking – your thoughts. At times, you may feel so immersed in the TV that you feel like you're one with the television. You are your thoughts. Other times, you're able to separate yourself from the TV – watching your thoughts, the 'TV show', as if sitting on a metaphorical couch. In this instance, you might say that you're the observer – you're noticing your thoughts. Now imagine you've just discovered the remote and can change the channel. You're self-regulating your thinking, changing its course – in this case, for learning. Each button on the remote represents a different tool, a different learning strategy (Barr, 2022a).

I introduced the 'living room of the mind' metaphor in my TEDx Talk about the importance of teaching SRL. Watch my TEDx Talk: shyambarr.com.au/book



In the living room of the mind metaphor, the different levels of SRL are as depicted in Figure 1.

The role of education, with teachers at the helm, is to support and nurture the development of an SRL skill set in students, that primes them for success beyond the classroom walls. As demonstrated in Figure 1, this includes developing an awareness of ourselves as learners (observing the TV) and having access to a repertoire of strategies and the knowledge to apply these strategies in different learning contexts (the remote). By integrating SRL into