

**A GUIDE**

**TO THE USE OF THE SRD METHODOLOGY**

**IN THE EXTENDED SEMINAR**

**IMPLEMENTATION MODE**

Version: March 2022  
WITH Community

## INTRODUCTION TO SRD

### **Learning needs to be Relevant**

In traditional theological education we normally think of a program of study that will provide knowledge for a broad range of situations. We first give knowledge packaged in a general way (principles) so that the learner will be able to store it in his brain until he comes across a situation where the knowledge has some relevance. This approach has major problems.

1. Experience tells us that, except for formal education, we do not learn in this way as we go through life. Instead we learn what we need to solve specific life problems, when we need it.
2. Brain research shows us that knowledge tied to an experience provides much better retention of knowledge so that it can be accessed in useful ways in future situations.
3. Jesus trained his disciples as they went along the way using situations that emerged daily. He did not implement a formal training curriculum.

Learning is relevant if it addresses real needs and brings about a change for the better.

### **Learning needs to transform people and situations**

It is true that teachers want to see their teaching produce personal transformation and community change. However, they hope that this will happen after the teaching or training event. If knowledge is not used immediately it will mostly be lost. Only those with an excellent memory will have any possibility to recall it when needed.

SRD aims to make the desired transformation more intentionally part of the learning process. SRD learning is successful if there is evidence of transformation during the learning process. It will continue beyond the learning but must be visible during the learning process.

### **Transformative learning starts with the situation.**

Before learning can be developed we need to have an adequate understanding of the situation that needs to be changed.

Our tendency as teachers and trainers is to make our starting point for learning a body of knowledge. SRD begins with the situation needing change.

### **Competent people change situations**

If we are trying to transform situations so that the situation does not remain the same, then what we need to build into learning is tasks that build competence. Competence is the proven ability to apply knowledge in real situations.

**Learning that brings change can only be done in community**

God did not expect us to be transformed into the likeness of Christ independently of others. He expected it to be done in community. The implication is that it takes a community to transform a life, a church, and a society.

**Learning engages with context and content in an integrated way**

This is done through what MMD calls ARA--- action, reflection, more action, more reflection, more action, and so on. ARA is the rhythm that runs through the learning process.

**SRD is action learning**

Action learning is vital in SRD. Part of the image of God in mankind is that we were created to be active co-creators; knowledge is best learned in the context of an experience. The human brain is designed to retain knowledge best when it is combined with an experience. SRD/ARA learning is designed to place heavy emphasis on activity and reflection. Biblical and other inputs are introduced to support the insight or skill being developed. In learning development we seek to bring a balance between action, reflection, input, insight development, and more action so that visible and measurable change occurs as the module proceeds.

## THE EXTENDED SEMINAR MODE

The extended seminar mode of learning is one of the strategies that can incorporate the SRD methodology. There are many ways to incorporate SRD into learning. The extended seminar mode is designed for those who have been training through the means of short seminars that last 1-5 days.

The basic structure of the extended seminar mode of learning is that a module consists of a seminar that normally lasts 2-3 days. This is followed by a period, usually 3 months, in which the learner is completing learning activities in his local community. The two parts of the module, seminar and post-seminar are both necessary for the module objectives to be achieved.

The seminar part of the module is used to achieve a number of learning goals:

1. To provide the learner with an initial connection to the situation needing change.
2. To create a disturbance in thinking and feeling so that the learner becomes more open to new ideas.
3. Learning about the experience of other learners that brings affirmation and insight.

## THE MAIN TASKS IN RESPONDING TO SITUATIONS

There are four major tasks to be completed when we want to respond to a situation in a community.

1. **Analyse** the Situation
2. **Develop** a Learning Response
3. **Implement** the Learning Response
4. **Evaluate** and Refine

These four tasks make up a process that we call the Agile Response System. It recognizes that bringing change to situations requires a cycle of analysis, development and implementation that is not completed in a single cycle. It will require several cycles of the four tasks before a response is optimally effective. Deeper understanding of the situation grows as responses are developed and implemented. Through evaluation we modify the response in order to be more effective in its next implementation. In this way the cycle continues until we have an effective response.

## TASK 1: ANALYZE THE SITUATION

### General Ideas

- Connect with people in situation (community)
  - Connect with the right people
- Go below the surface of what can be seen
- Ask probing questions
- Engage a whole person perspective
- Create stories that embody the situation
- Test current assumptions

There are four areas to be analyzed.

<b>Situation Now</b>	<b>Situation After Intervention</b>
<b>Learner Now</b>	<b>Learner Transformed</b>

There are five steps in analyzing the situation.

### Step 1: Analyze the situation now

- What do you know (or think you know) about the situation?
- Who do you need to connect with in your community?
- What are the questions you want answered?
- What stories do you already have that illustrate the situation?

### **Step 2: Describe the situation after intervention**

This is a vision of a future that is different from what we see now. It describes what is possible as a result of a learning and change process. We ask ourselves, “what does a transformed situation look like in individuals, families, church, and the wider community.”

### **Step 3: Identify the people who can bring about transformation in the situation?**

Change only comes through people. So who are people who will bring change? These are the ones we want to train.

There may be one kind of learner for a particular situation, for example, a pastor. In other situations there may be multiple kinds of learners we want to train. For example, pastors, church leaders, youth workers, etc.

### **Step 4: Analyze the learner(s) now**

The people we will train to change the situation are not empty vessels that need to be filled up with knowledge. They already have knowledge and attitudes and values. They already have a worldview that guides their actions. Does it need to be corrected, or reinforced? And, how does it need to be corrected? This is the task of training. Therefore, in order to bring the necessary change, we need to understand what the learner already knows, feels, and how this manifests itself in the learner’s behavior. We need to analyse the learner.

- What do you know (or think you know) about the learner? (Whole person)
- Who do you need to connect with in your community?
- What are the questions you want answered? (Whole person)
- What stories do you already have that describe the learner?

### **Step 5: Describe a transformed learner**

We now look at what the learner will look like once the learning process has transformed him. What competencies does he now possess?

## TASK 2: DEVELOP A LEARNING RESPONSE

We have a picture of the situation as it is now and what a transformed situation looks like. We know who our agents of transformation are, their current situation, and what they will be like after transformation. Now we can begin to develop a learning response. A learning response is aimed at producing change in the learner and, through him, producing change in the situation.

There are five basic steps in the process of creating a learning response.

1. Determine what the learner needs for change
2. Identify learning modules
3. Write achievement based learning objectives for a module
4. Write seminar and post-seminar objectives
5. Design Learning tasks

### **Step 1: Determine what the learner needs for change**

What do we need to give the learner so that he will build the competence necessary to implement change to the situation?

- What knowledge does the learner need?
  - What biblical knowledge?
  - What knowledge of the situation?
  - What other knowledge is needed?
- What attitudes do we need to encourage?
- What skills need to be built?

### **Step 2: Identify learning modules**

Remember that the extended seminar model calls for a 2-3 day seminar followed by a post-seminar period back in the learner's home community of up to 3 months. The size of each module is determined by these limitations. The seminar is made up of a series of learning activities that cause the learner to engage deeply with the issues. Therefore, we cover far fewer topics than in other forms of training. This is intentional so that we can be sure to connect content with the learner's context and situation leading to a change in perspective and new commitments. Learning activities that include discovery Bible study and sharing in groups also slow down the learning process so that there is time for the learner to engage more deeply.

Often, the subjects for each module present themselves easily and naturally. Another way to determine how many modules are needed is to develop a series of broad objectives that will move the learner forward in the change process. These can help to identify the modules.



### **Step 3: Write achievement based learning objectives for each module**

Because new skills and capacities are essential outcomes in SRD the module has objectives at every level—module, seminar, post-seminar. Each session in the seminar also has learning objectives. We call these objectives achievement-based objectives. They are stated as outcomes that indicate what the learner has done as a result of the module, seminar, or session.

### **Step 4: Write seminar and post-seminar objectives**

Using the module objectives as a guide we can now determine what we want to achieve in each of the two parts of the module, the seminar and the post-seminar.

Seminar objectives relate to what we want to achieve in the 2-3 day seminar. The seminar is where the focus is on the learner and his situation. The seminar helps the learner to discover his situation with clarity. The learner's personal situation is often unclear to him. He may be aware that there is a problem but he often does not fully understand its nature or how much it is out of alignment with God's plan.

The seminar enables a group discovery of the real situation through a series of learning tasks. The seminar takes the learner, then, into a journey of self-discovery, perhaps for the first time, and provides a pathway for change. The seminar ends with the learner making a set of commitments to continue the journey of learning and change. The learner also creates a support group to help provide ongoing encouragement and accountability. It is expected that the support group will come from other seminar participants who live in the area.

The post-seminar part of the module builds on the seminar and provides a series of learning tasks to continue learner self-discovery and begin new actions in his context that will begin to change his situation. The post-seminar period of three months is an opportunity for the learner to deepen his understanding and further his change in perception. The learner also connects with others in his context, maybe family or church members to deepen his understanding of the situation. The post-seminar is also where the learner can practice new behaviours with others in the community. Completion of the post-seminar objectives brings the learner to the point where he has achieved the objectives for the module.

### **Step 5: Design Learning tasks**

There are four basic kinds of learning task. They are tasks that:

- Engage the learner with the situation in the community
- Engage the learner with his own situation
- Discover what the Bible has to say
- Build new skills

### TASK 3: IMPLEMENT THE LEARNING RESPONSE

Now you have a first version of your module and you are ready to test it with a group of learners. Expect that the first implementation will have some challenges, but you will learn from them and improve the module for the next implementation.

#### **Implementing the Seminar**

For the learner, this is very different to what he has experienced before. Most of the time learners come to listen and take notes. They rarely discuss or share from their own experience. You will find that most people find the interactive approach refreshing and powerful in bringing new insights from what is being discussed. There may be a few who find it challenging to share and discuss, and maybe even a few who come expecting to get new information only. They find the discussion too personal. Most of this reserved group will eventually become interested in the sessions and will find the courage to share, but it will take time. Be patient.

As you implement the seminar take notes of your experience in facilitating the sessions. At the end of each day, reflect on the sessions and make notes of topics to consider after the seminar.

Implementing an SRD seminar is very different to traditional forms of learning delivery. As the seminar leader your primary role is facilitator. Your role is not primarily to be the communicator of biblical concepts. The sessions are designed for discovery learning and your role is to ensure that the learners understand what is expected of them in a learning activity and you guide them toward their own discovery.

Expect that the learners will struggle at first with the SRD format, as they are not used to sharing and discussion. They will easily misunderstand instructions for a learning activity so they need to be made very clear.

When learners struggle you will be tempted to provide the answers yourself through an explanation. Do not do this. Struggle in learning is often a good way for new ideas to emerge, particularly ideas that seem to contradict prior learning. When learners struggle ask them questions that will lead them toward understanding.

As the facilitator you will need to be competent in several skills:

1. Listening
2. Asking effective questions
3. Attending
4. Adapting
5. Managing conflict
6. Handling distractions

We have a separate facilitator-training programme but here are a few comments on each skill.

### 1. Listening

As a facilitator you are always learning more about your learners that will help you make the learning effective for them and bring the desired transformation. Listening that is focused on the learner when he speaks increases your ability to be effective. It requires looking at someone in a focused way when they speak. It can be useful to repeat back to the person what you think they said so as to confirm your understanding and their understanding that you heard them. This is a powerful way of building trust and allowing learners to interact at a deeper level.

### 2. Asking effective questions

Effective questions use such words as why, how, what, when, who. Questions that lead to yes or no answers are not useful and do not move the discussion forward. Good questions enable the deeper issues to surface.

### 3. Attending

Being attentive is noticing and naming what is happening in both the group process and in individuals. This is important because it communicates that you care about the person. It enables you to see where God is at work in the group and helps you to be aware of how people are doing in the group.

### 4. Adapting

The learning tasks you have developed in the module are designed for a purpose. If you see that the activity is not producing the result it is important that you find another way to achieve the session objective. You need to learn to be adaptive and not to slavishly follow the session guide.

Being adaptive requires that you have a very clear idea of the session objective before you begin. This will enable you to make changes as needed without getting off track.

### 5. Managing conflict

You will often be implementing a module with a mixed group from different denominations. This can be a challenge because in many cases these groups do not naturally relate well together. However, this is also an opportunity for God to bring new relationships in being and build unity among groups. However, this needs to be managed with care and sensitivity.

## 6. Handling distractions

There are many potential distractions in training that have to do with the venue. You should attempt to minimize them as far as is possible. Other distractions are introduced through the presence of cell phones and other devices. You need to make a policy to limit their impact on focused attention by the learners. Another potential distraction is the person who dominates the large or small group conversation. This person must be gently limited early on in the sessions. There are ways to achieve this without alienating the person. Sometimes the group becomes distracted by a topic that is not relevant to the session. This must be redirected as soon as possible back to the focus of the session.

### **Implementing the Second or Subsequent Modules**

When you implement the first module the group of learners will come together for the first time around a particular situation. However, in module two and subsequent modules you will always spend a few hours having the group reflect on their experience with the post seminar tasks from the previous module. This is a very important activity.

1. It provides you, the facilitator with feedback on whether the module objectives were really achieved and to what extent they were achieved. This is excellent input for your evaluation and module refinement.
2. It gives the learners an opportunity to express what God has accomplished in their lives and this leads to thankfulness and praise.
3. It deepens learning as learners gain insights from other's experience.

### **Implementing the Post-seminar**

The post seminar learning tasks are equally as important as those in the seminar. Those who are experienced in running seminars will be tempted to put most of their effort into the seminar. Yes, the seminar is important to begin the learning and change process but it is only the beginning. The post seminar period of three months is where the learner will engage more deeply with the situation with the continued work of the Holy Spirit and with the help of others. Time is also a friend to the process of change. This is where new skills will develop and practiced.

Therefore, it is essential that learners leave the seminar with a clear plan for what they will do back in their local context and a support system to help them reach their objectives. Your task is to make sure that they leave with a good plan.

However, your involvement as a facilitator does not end there. You must look for ways to maintain connection with groups to gain a sense of progress and provide encouragement where necessary.

## STEP 4: EVALUATE AND REFINE

Evaluation is the critical task of reflection on what we have done and what the learners have done as they have learned. Without reflection we are destined to repeat the same mistakes the next time. We reflect after each seminar, as we receive news of progress during the post seminar period, and after the group reflection at the start of the next seminar.

Evaluation is best done as a team activity so that different perspectives can be represented.

Evaluation leads to refinement. It is easy to omit evaluation and refinement in the busyness of ministry and the next seminar to be run or task to be performed. However, we will only be effective in bringing change to challenging situations faced by the church if we purposefully complete this task.