A GUIDE TO THE USE OF THE SRD METHODOLOGY

IMPLEMENTATION MODE: LOCAL GROUP

CONTEXT: AFS ETHIOPIA

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 LOCAL GROUP MODE

The local group mode of learning involves a facilitator who is guiding a group up to 12 people through a course aimed at responding to a situation in the community. That consists, typically, of three units and nine lessons. Each lesson contains a series of activities that typically include: orientation, reflection, response, and group reflection. These activities are described later in this document.

The Local Group learning mode is one of many strategies that can incorporate the SRD methodology. However they use the same four development tasks.

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 in order to build a profile that will guide the kind of learning response to be developed. When complete the profile be in the following format:

Situation Now	Situation After Intervention
Learner Now	Learner Transformed

There are five steps that lead to the creation of the profile. As these steps are explored they will be illustrated by a situation that was identified by the Africa Services Kenya training team. The situation was discovered in 2015 in the Kenyan church in how they relate to new believers coming out of a Muslim background (MBBs).

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?

For example, churches in Kenya R generally fearful of in BBs when they arrived at a church service--are they spies for Al Shabab? Are they here to kill us? As a result of this fear they are generally hostile two in BBs and do not make them feel welcome in the church. And BBs, having left their religion and culture your rejected and often become angry at their treatment by the church. Many fall away from Christianity and return to the relative safety of their old life. Those MBB's who stay do not receive the help they need to grow strong in their faith.

Story illustrating this problem is that in 2015 to young MDB them visited a kindling church a church member called the police saying that there might be

terrorists building. Police arrived and arrested beans they remained in jail several days being interrogated all the police became convinced they were not terrorists and they were released.

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."

In our example the ideal situation was seen as one in which MVPs have been welcomed without suspicion by church and have been joyfully integrated into church life. And B&Bs are being discipled and successfully making the adjustments needed to embrace the culture of Jesus' kingdom.

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.

In our example of the situation of him BBs two kinds of learners were identified:
1. Church members willing to be trained as friends and caregivers four MVPs, and
2. In BPs needing to be welcomed and discipled

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)
- Is there more than one kind of learner?
- 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?

In our example, even though there were some who were willing to be trained as caregivers, it was clear that they were also fearful of MBBs. The world of the Muslim is so foreign to church members that they could not easily relate to the issues that new believers from Islam faced.

A critical area that needs to be explored about the learners is the extent to which they can read and write. This will affect the educational level of the course.

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?

In our example, a transformed learner is now someone who can empathize with in BPs and the struggles of their journey in Christian growth because they now had strong relationships with MBB's. They are also active and discipling MBB's.

In our example of the MBB situation the completed situation profile looked, in summary, as follows:

Situation Now	*Ideal Situation*
Church and community hostile to MBBs **Church is fearful of MBB converts** **MBBs not integrated into life and ministry of church**	**MBBs are joyfully integrated into the church** **MBBs are holistically discipled**
Learner Now	*Learner Transformed*
Fearful of MBBs **Cannot relate to MMB culture and issues**	**Actively Discipling MBBs** **Can empathise with MBB families**

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 seven basic steps in the process of creating a learning response.
1. Determine what the learner needs for change
2. Identify courses to be developed
3. Write general outcomes for each course
4. Select a course to be developed
5. Write achievement-based objectives for the course
6. Identify unit and unit objectives
7. Design lessons

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 experiences does the learner need to have with those affected by the situation that needs to change?
- 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 courses to be developed
The local groups model is designed to be implemented in a church or community context by a local facilitator. Of course is made up of lessons grouped into units. It is recommended that a course would consist of three units each with three lessons making a total of nine lessons for the course. This means that the shortest duration of a course would be nine weeks, although of course with significant engagements in the local community is likely to take two weeks to complete a lesson. This would give sufficient time for the learners to complete community and self-study activities prior to a group reflection meeting with the facilitator.

It is essential to take these practical factors into account when determining the length and number of courses. A common mistake is to attempt to achieve too much in a short amount of time. This results in learners not having enough

time to do the practical activities that are essential to the achievement of course outcomes.

Another factor that determines the number of courses necessary to achieve larger change desire has to do with how many categories of learner have been identified. In the example of the MBB situation it was determined that there were two categories of learner—the MBB caregiver is one and the other is the MBB needing to be discipled. This could have resulted in two courses, each addressing one of the learner categories. However, it was decided that the best way to train MBB caregivers was to have them gate during their training with actual MBBs and for them to be discipled as the caregivers were building skills.

Step 3: Write general outcomes for each course
Before work begins developing the first course it is helpful to write general outcomes for each of the courses that have been identified. These outcomes may change as course development proceeds but they help to show how each course together to contribute to the final outcomes being aimed for.

Step 4: Select a course to develop

Step 5: Write achievement-based objectives for the course

Step 6: Identify units and unit objectives

Step 7: Design lessons
Each lesson has five basic kinds of learning task. They are tasks that enable the learner to:
- Engage with the current situation in the community
- Engage with his own situation
- Discover what the Bible has to say
- Build new skills
- Engage with the experience of learners

A lesson format that has been used effectively is as follows:
1. Orientation Task
    - This begins the lesson and enables the learners to connect with their own experience or with the experience of others in the community
    - It creates context for the lesson
    - It can also, when needed, begin the process of challenging a learner's previous assumptions
2. Discovery

- Enables an extended reflection on what the learner discovered during the orientation task
- Connects learner experience to biblical stories and concepts
- Facilitates the development of new insights

3. Post-lesson Activity
- Provides an opportunity for the learner to do something with the new or changed perspective gained so far
- Builds new skills as the learner takes these insights into the community

4. Group Reflection
- Brings learners together under the direction of the facilitator to share learning experiences and gain further insights from others

TASK 3: IMPLEMENT THE LEARNING RESPONSE

Now you have a first version of your course or a unit 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 course for the next implementation.

Before implementing the course on a large scale it is important implemented with a test. This is best done by the course development team. Sense the course will be likely implemented by facilitators operating far from where the course developers live it is important to ensure that the facilitators clearly understand the course objectives. The previous experience of the facilitator is likely to be that of a teacher meeting with learners to pass on information. An SRD course is vastly different because most of the learning will take place as the learner engages with the context and learning materials. The critical role of an SRD facilitator is to guide the learners as they follow the learning process set out in the course materials.

Key Issues for the Facilitator in Implementing the Course
For the learner, this is very different to what he has experienced before. They will not be used to doing the kind of learning activities found in an SRD course. They are used to coming to a meeting to listen and take notes. They are rarely expected to discuss or share from there own experience. You will find that most people will eventually find the SRD approach refreshing and powerful in bringing change and new capabilities.

Let's look at the issues that can arise within each element of a course.
1. Orientation Task

    Very few learners will have experienced an orientation task that has taken them out into the community. There will tend to be a lot of fear and

hesitation and because of this it will not be easy for them to understand what is expected of them for the first time that they do an orientation task. The facilitator must make sure that they understand what is expected of them and to provide encouragement and ideas as they take on the task.

2. Discovery (self-study)

Reflecting on what happened when they did the orientation task is also something that the learner will not have done before. So this needs to be carefully explained to the learners.

The course will have been written with a particular educational level in mind. However, there will always be people who have a lower educational background making it difficult for them to understand written instructions and explanations. The facilitator will need to find ways of overcoming these difficulties.

3. Post-lesson Activity

Some learners will struggle to understand what is required of them and will need help in working out how they can complete the activity.

4. Group Reflection

Many will come to the group meeting expecting not to have to talk. For a successful group meeting the facilitator will need to ensure that everybody is actively involved.

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.

Core Facilitation Skills
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 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 mover 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.

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 evaluation we are destined to repeat the same mistakes the next time. We evaluate after each lesson and more formally when the course is complete.

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 with the next course to be implemented. However, we will only be effective in bringing change to challenging situations faced by the church if we purposefully complete this task.