

### Distinctive nature of PLAR

- + Status change for practitioners: both subjects and objects of research. NB Importance of controlling for assumptions.
- + The aim is not merely to explain and understand educational practice but to change and improve it. The role of the practitioner in research democratises knowledge production.
- + Traditional research does not have a theory of change built into it; researchers merely hope to influence policy and practice. PLAR includes the change agent – the practitioner – in the research process.

### PROFESSIONALISM AND PLAR

- Informed bodies of knowledge of practice, which result in principles, systematic and ethically justified interventions that are aimed at improving the lives of people who are beneficiaries of the profession.
- 1) Practitioners put theory into practice
  - 2) Practitioners put their practice into the language of theory
  - 3) Practitioners put themselves into practice
  - 4) Practitioners engage in 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (Schon 1983)

*Research questions are the vital first steps in any research. They guide you towards the kinds of information you need and the ways you should collect that information. (Lewis and Munn 2004 p5)*

### NAMING THE PROBLEM

- Starting point of research
- + The problem frame
    - identify the boundaries
    - what aspects of the problem are outside the way the study is framed?
  - + PLAR is most effective when it can generate action.
  - + What assumptions are made about the problem being investigated? Can you brainstorm possible causes and solutions to the problem? What value judgments are being made? What is the evidence for these judgments? What do colleagues think? Does the literature support the assumptions?

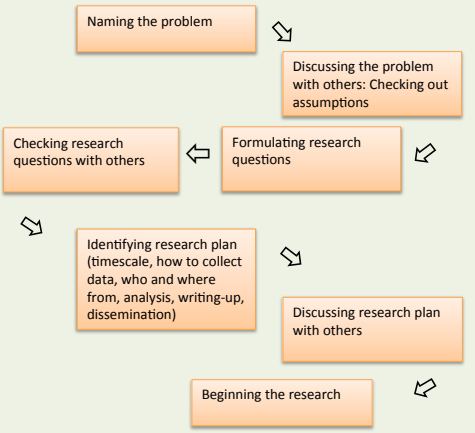
# PLAR

PLAR is a form of research whereby practitioners examine aspects of their practice in order to improve it. For Carr and Kemmis (1986 p165) there are 'two essential aims...to improve and involve. Action research aims at improvement in three areas: first the improvement of practice, second the improvement of the understanding of the practice by practitioners; and third, the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place'

### WHERE DO RESEARCH QUESTIONS COME FROM?

- 1) The problem you are studying and the purpose of the research
- 2) Discussion with other people and professionals
- 3) From your own position in an organization
- 4) From reading literature

The history of PLAR in the UK illustrates the attempt to engage the capacity of educators to shape, influence and improve their practice at an individual level, amongst colleagues and institutions. In schooling the heyday of action research (sometimes involving practitioners as researchers, sometimes collaborating with specialist researchers) dates back to the 1970s. This history influences how we think about PLAR today in that it is concerned with small-scale research which focuses on practical problems educators face and name. In the context of community action, however, research is often undertaken with communities as participants in a process of action research which draws on a Freirean tradition of participatory action research (PAR). This tradition focuses on social change instigated through community-level social action



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