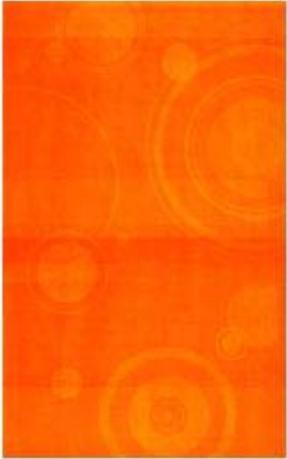# Action Research
## in Adult Education

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*10/27/2011*

**Reference:** McMillan, J. (2008). Educational Research: Fundamentals for the Consumer. Pearson Education: Boston, MA.

# Becoming an agent for change

"The call to action is to ensure that institutional researchers see statistical analysis as only one step in their role of decision support. Initiation, building support for, implementing, and institutionalizing change are all natural extensions of the work already assigned to the institutional research office" (Swing, 2009, p. 14-15)
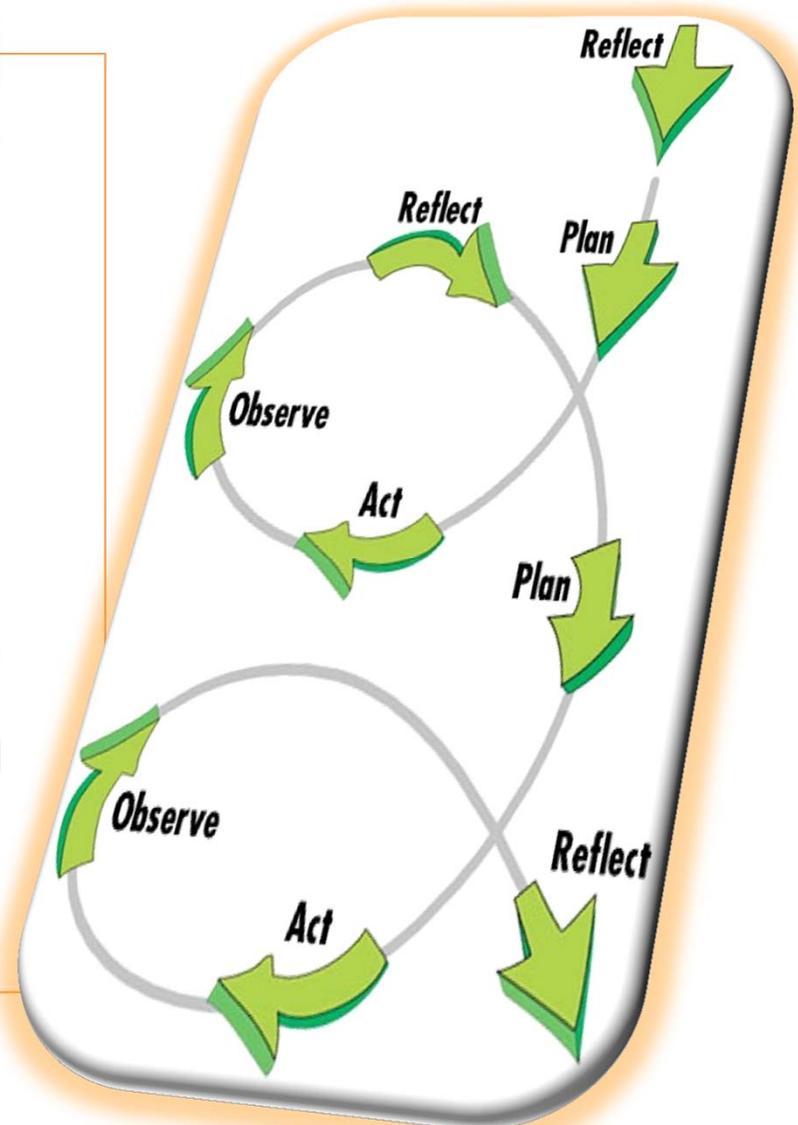
## Introduction

- **Definition:** Systemic **investigation** conducted by a **practitioners** to provide information **to immediately improve** teaching & learning.

**Let's compare Action Research to Traditional Research**

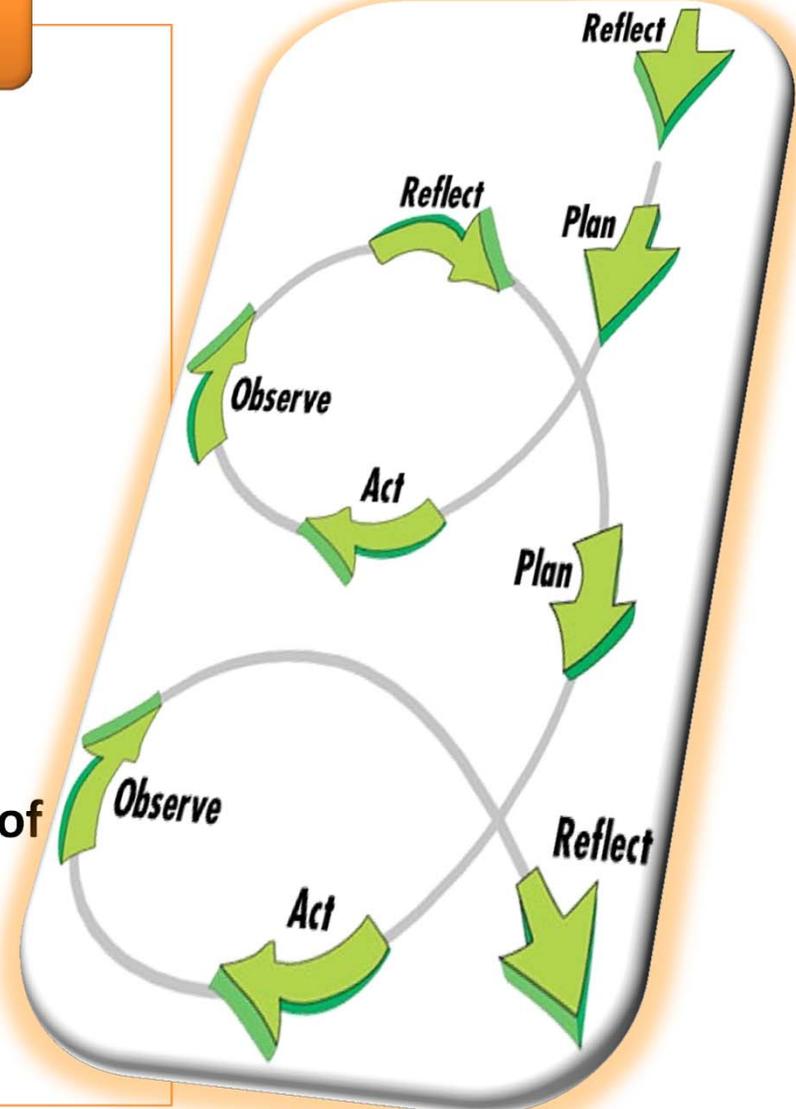*Do you think they're similar or different?*

# Action Research

Action Research vs. Traditional Research

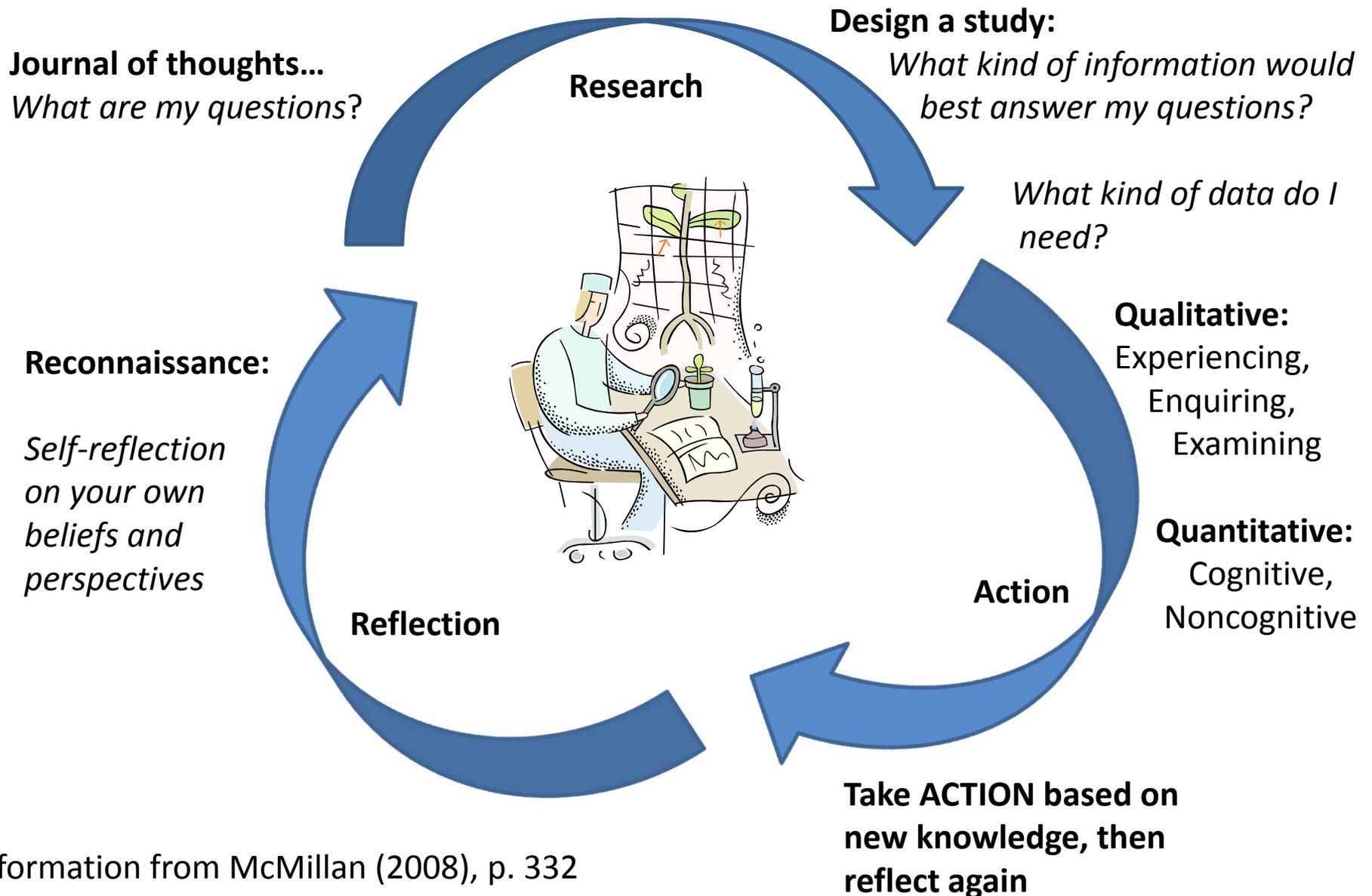| Characteristics | Action Research | Traditional Research |
|---|---|---|
| Goal | New knowledge relevancy | New knowledge contributions |
| Researcher, (?) | Practitioner, teachers, principles, counselors | Trained researcher, professors, scholars, & graduates |
| Setting | Educational settings | Controlled setting |
| Literature Review | Brief and secondary source focused | Extensive & primary source focused |
| Instrumentation | Locally developed, convenient, & easily administrable | Off the shelf, based on technical accuracy |
| Sampling | Convenience and purposeful sampling | Random or representative |
| Design | Non-experimental or Quasi-experimental | Whatever design is needed |
| Data Collection | Descriptive | Descriptive and inferential |
| Results | Limited to specific programs/schools | Valid with field & study scope |

# Action Research

## Benefits

- Creates system-wide set of school/program improvement.
- Enhances decision making
- Promotes reflection and self-assessment
- **Instills commitment to continuous improvement**
- Positive environment conducive to productive learning & teaching
- **Impacts directly on practice**
- **Empowers all involved participants of the system**
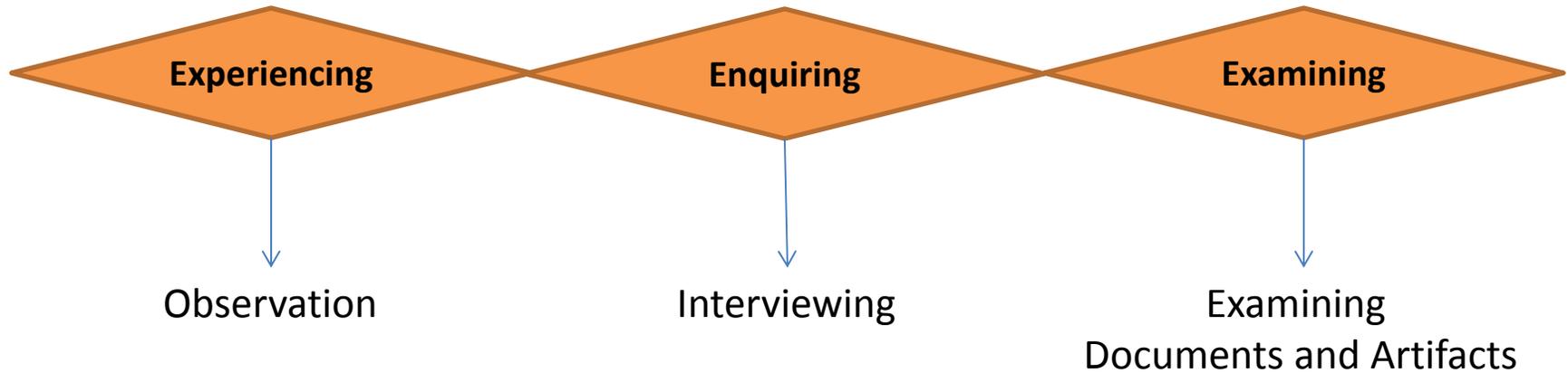- **Practical training for practitioners.**

# Conducting Action Research



**Journal of thoughts…**
*What are my questions*?

**Research**

**Design a study:**
*What kind of information would best answer my questions?*

*What kind of data do I need?*

**Qualitative:**
Experiencing,
Enquiring,
Examining

**Reconnaissance:**

*Self-reflection on your own beliefs and perspectives*

**Quantitative:**
Cognitive,
Noncognitive

**Action**

**Reflection**

**Take ACTION based on new knowledge, then reflect again**

Information from McMillan (2008), p. 332

# Qualitative Action Research

## Qualitative

## Quantitative



| Cognitive | Noncognitive |
|---|---|
| Tests of knowledge and understanding | Attitudes, ratings and beliefs |
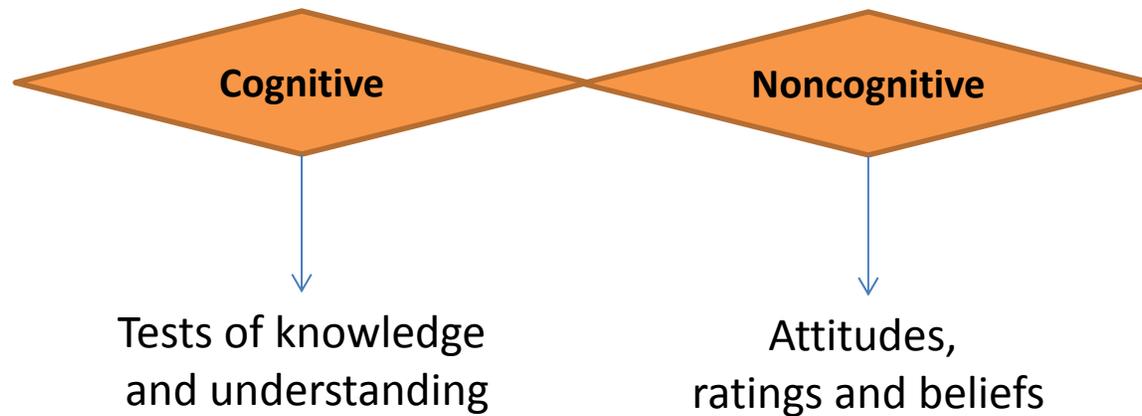
# Criteria for Evaluating *Good* Action Research

1. Determine motivation and involvement of researcher.

2. Decide if research question matches the chosen research methodology.

3. Look for whether or not multiple methods for data collection have been utilized (triangulation).

4. Look for "emergent" research process that includes reflection, research and action.

5. Is there any external monitoring or feedback?

**Dress for Success Twin Cities- CASE STUDY**

- Dress for Success is an international non-profit organization started in 1997

- 110 cities- Dress for Success programs can be found in the United States, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, the United Kingdom and the West Indies.

- A non-profit Dress for Success Twin Cities affiliate opened in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area in January 2010.

- Participants referred to Dress for Success by local agencies including: Como Community, Merrick Community Services, the American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center, Hennepin County Employment Program, HIRED, the Jeremiah Program, Minneapolis Community & Technical College, People Serving People and Twin Cities RISE!

**University of Minnesota Extension Programs- Vignette**

       Current Practice= 1) Evidence-based Research + 2) Program Creation + 3) Program Evaluation (Effectiveness)

What if we turn this on its head...

Action Research Practice might look like this...

1) See a problem in the real world
2) Create an action research team of interested parties (Researchers, Practitioners, Teachers, Parents, Evaluators, Program audience)
3) Create a solution and try it out in the real world as a solution
4) Continuously meet, ask did it work? Did it solve the problem? What needs to happen to solve them problem?
5) Keep going until you feel that you have learned and created a solution
6) KEY: Get knowledge into the hands of other researchers, practitioners etc... to build the scholarship.