Localising English language teacher expertise: What, why and how?

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Part 1: Appropriate outcomes

- **Building an evidence base upon locally defined appropriate outcomes**

What?

Part 2: A reality check

- **Understanding who 'we' are as English teachers**

Why?

Part 3: Emerging solutions

- **Building local, sustainable bases of English language teaching expertise**

How?

Part 1: Appropriate outcomes

What I mean by 'localising ELT expertise'

- Developing an evidence base of locally appropriate good practice in language teaching

- Based on research on what meets locally identified appropriate **outcomes** most effectively, rather than exogenous[1] assumptions about what we should value in our language use practices

- These **outcomes** may be defined on a national level (e.g., curricular; e.g., Wang & Luo, 2019) or a local level (e.g., district, community, institution)

- Research practices are integrated into the professional development activities of the teachers and wider educational community

1. exogenous – from outside our community.
Wang, Q., & Luo, S. (2019). Shifting from teaching the subject to developing core competencies through the subject: The revised senior middle school English curriculum standards (2017 edition) in China. In X. Gao (Ed.), Second handbook of English language teaching (pp. 109–134). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58542-0_6-1

Part 2: The reality check

Reality check: How have things changed?

- Communicative language teaching (CLT) emerged in 1970s in the context of tertiary and adult education in 'target language' countries with 'native-speaker' teachers (Howatt, 1988).

- It became the dominant 'paradigm' for language teaching in 1980s.

- Since then, English has steadily increased in importance globally, first in tertiary and adult education, then in secondary education, then primary and pre-primary.

- Increasing numbers of teachers of other subjects are being expected to teach these through English (e.g., EMI, CLIL, etc.)

- Increasing numbers of teachers in 'English speaking' countries teach a majority of EAL (English as an additional language) learners.

- Thus, today of >30 million teachers* who teach English as part of their job, a minority work in adult education; a minority work in 'target language' countries, and only a small minority of us would self-identify as L1 speakers of English. And a large number of us don't just teach English.
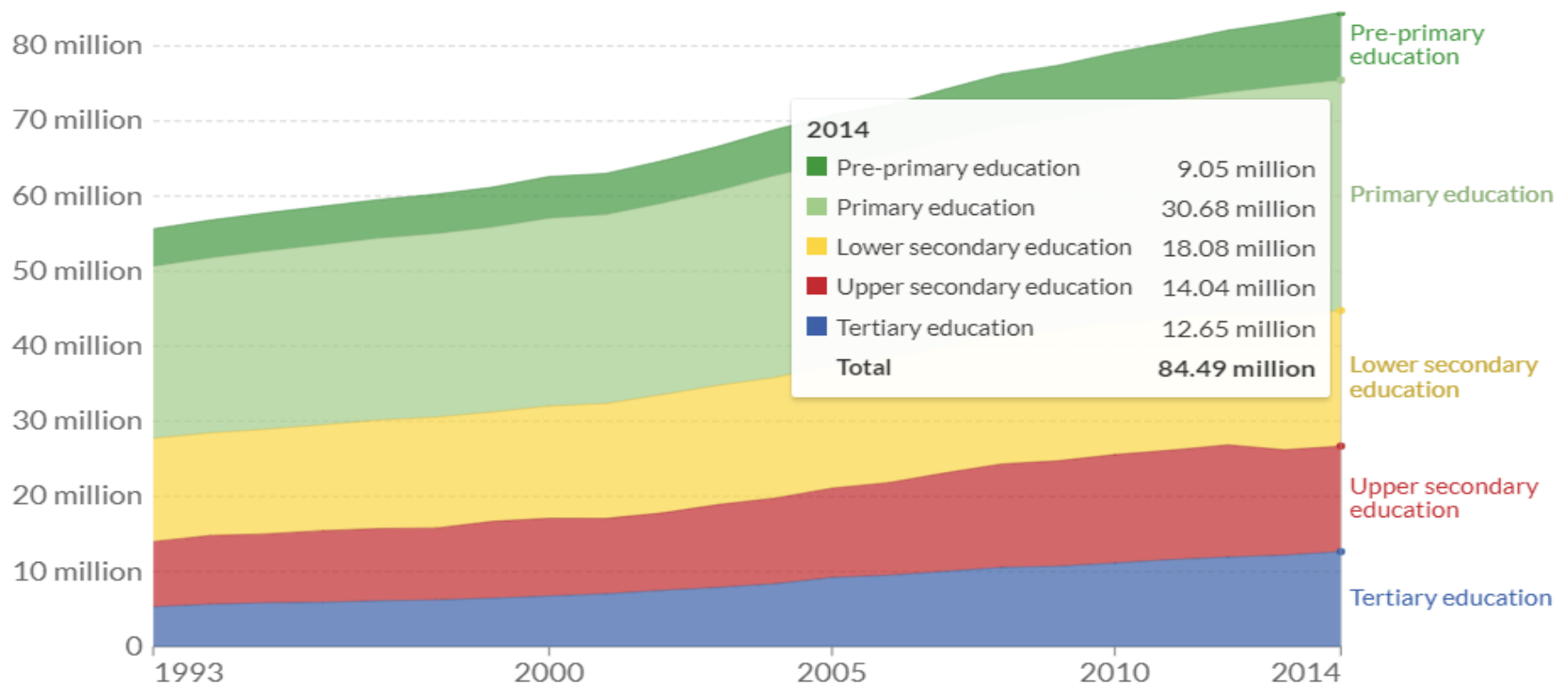
*My estimate.

Reality check: Who are 'we' as English teachers?

Number of teachers across education levels

Total number of teachers in public and private education institutions. Teachers are persons employed full time or part time in an official capacity to guide and direct the learning experience of pupils and students, irrespective of their qualifications or the delivery mechanism, i.e. face-to-face and/or at a distance.

☐ Relative

2014	
■ Pre-primary education	9.05 million
■ Primary education	30.68 million
■ Lower secondary education	18.08 million
■ Upper secondary education	14.04 million
■ Tertiary education	12.65 million
Total	**84.49 million**

Source: Max Roser (2017) - "Teachers and Professors". Published online at OurWorldInData.org. [CC BY Licence]
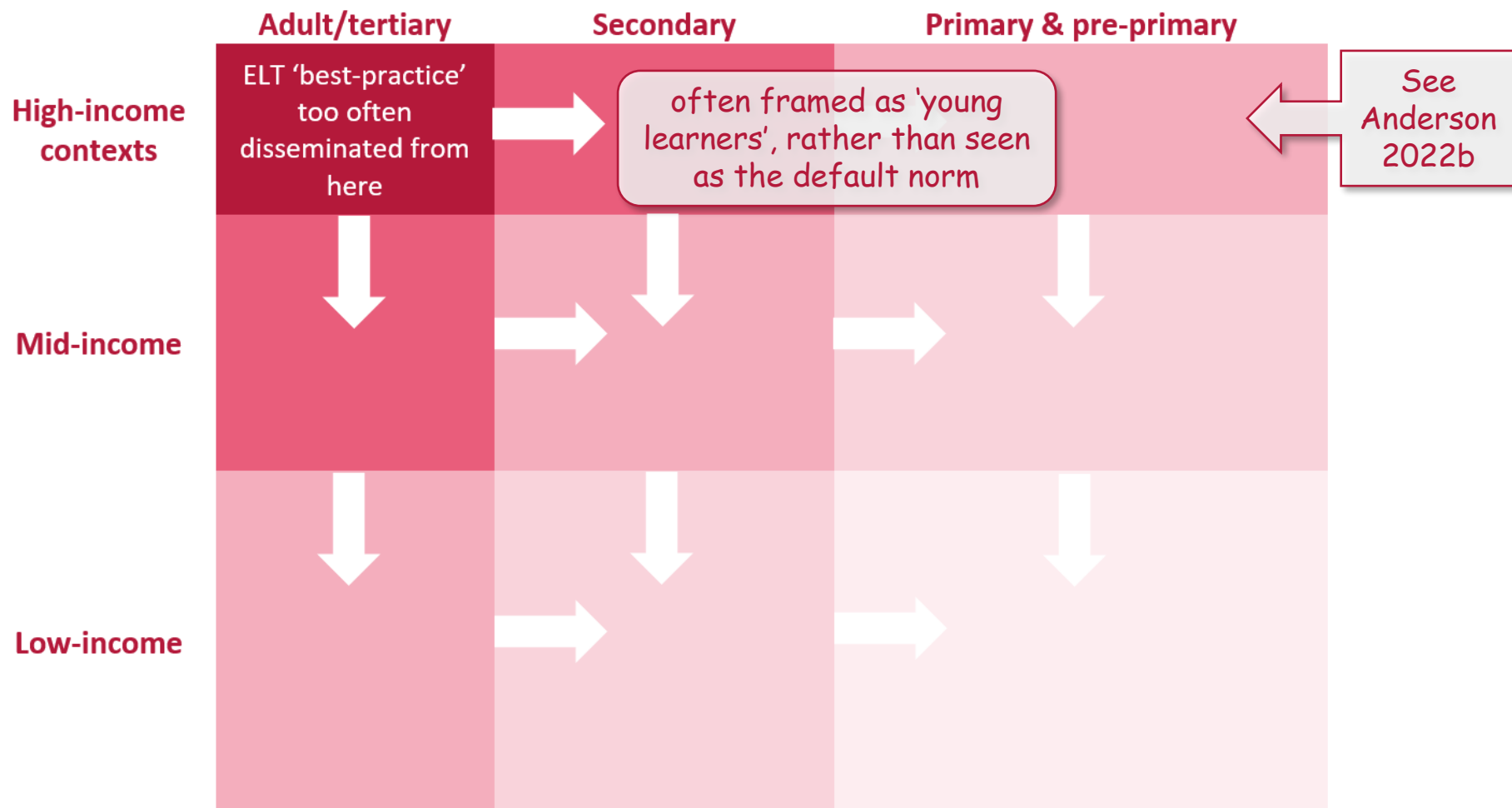https://ourworldindata.org/teachers-and-professors

Our contexts for an inclusive 'future of ELT'

- We are mainly L2/LX users of English.[1]

- Most of us share our learners' languages, culture, 'schemata'.

- Most of us work in top-down (national) curricular contexts, teaching the same classes for a whole academic year.

- Most of us are (in part) assessed according to student exam achievement; exams that we cannot change.

- Most of us teach learners who never chose to study English.

- The majority of us work in the Global South.

- Many of us incorporate our Englishing into wider language repertoires.
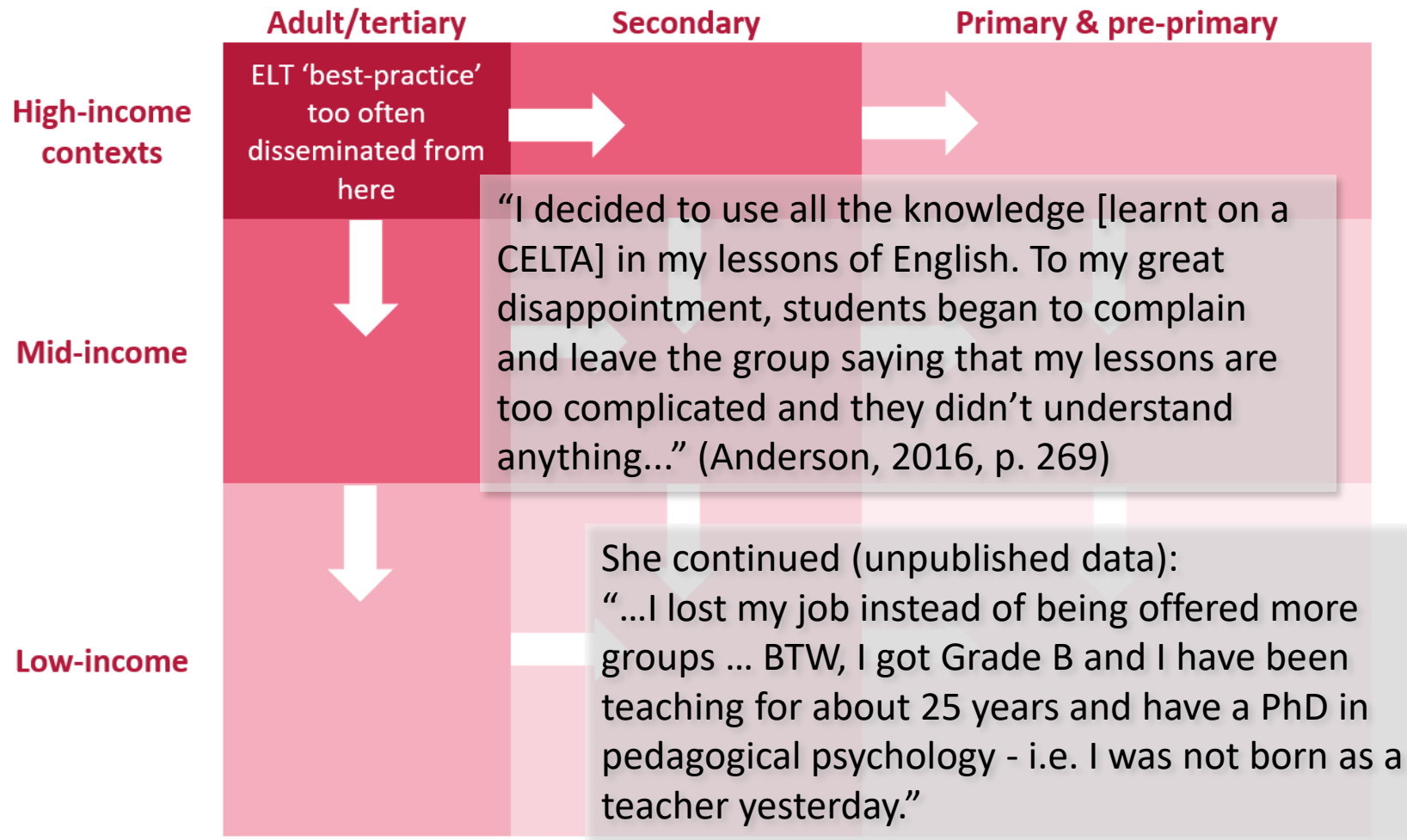
1. See Dewaele, J-M. (2018). Why the dichotomy 'L1 versus LX user' is better than 'native versus non-native speaker'. Applied Linguistics, 39(2), 236-240. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amw055

Historical dissemination of 'best practice' in ELT methodology

	Adult/tertiary	Secondary	Primary & pre-primary
High-income contexts	ELT 'best-practice' too often disseminated from here	often framed as 'young learners', rather than seen as the default norm	See Anderson 2022b
Mid-income			
Low-income			

See, e.g., Anderson et al., 2021; Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 1994, 2005; Phillipson 1992.

Historical dissemination of 'best practice' in ELT methodology

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Low-income			

"I decided to use all the knowledge [learnt on a CELTA] in my lessons of English. To my great disappointment, students began to complain and leave the group saying that my lessons are too complicated and they didn't understand anything..." (Anderson, 2016, p. 269)

She continued (unpublished data):
"...I lost my job instead of being offered more groups ... BTW, I got Grade B and I have been teaching for about 25 years and have a PhD in pedagogical psychology - i.e. I was not born as a teacher yesterday."

See, e.g., Anderson et al., 2021; Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 1994, 2005; Phillipson 1992.

How can we develop more context-sensitive models of ~~best~~ *good* practice?

Research/Inquiry needs primarily…

1. to be localised

2. to be a collaborative, participatory endeavour

3. to be primarily practitioner-led

4. to identify and disseminate good practice currently happening

5. to build from more exploratory, qualitative, small-scale endeavours towards larger-scale studies (e.g., experimental, metasynthesis)

Part 3: Emerging solutions

Five elements

1. Collaboration
2. Exploration
3. Inquiry
4. Reflection
5. Expertise

Part 3: Emerging solutions

Teacher-led idea 1: Exploratory practice

- Involves teachers working with their learners collaboratively to understand situations and puzzles (Allwright, 2005)

- Starts with a 'why' question, rather than a 'how to' question. Try to avoid solving problems (Hanks, 2017).

- Prioritises Allwright's 6 principles (2005, p. 360):
  1. Put "quality of life" first.
  2. Work primarily to understand language classroom life.
  3. Involve everybody.
  4. Work to bring people together.
  5. Work also for mutual development.
  6. Make the work a continuous enterprise.

Free introduction by Judith Hanks: https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu063
Video introduction: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYcVXJmfBsw

Teacher-led idea 2: Teacher-friendly action research

- Exploratory action research (EAR; e.g., Smith & Rebolledo, 2018)

A. Plan to explore
B. Explore
C. Analyse and reflect

exploration

1. Plan (to change)
2. Act
3. Observe
4. Reflect
?

action

Often followed by a 'sharing' phase (Smith & Rebolledo, n.d.)
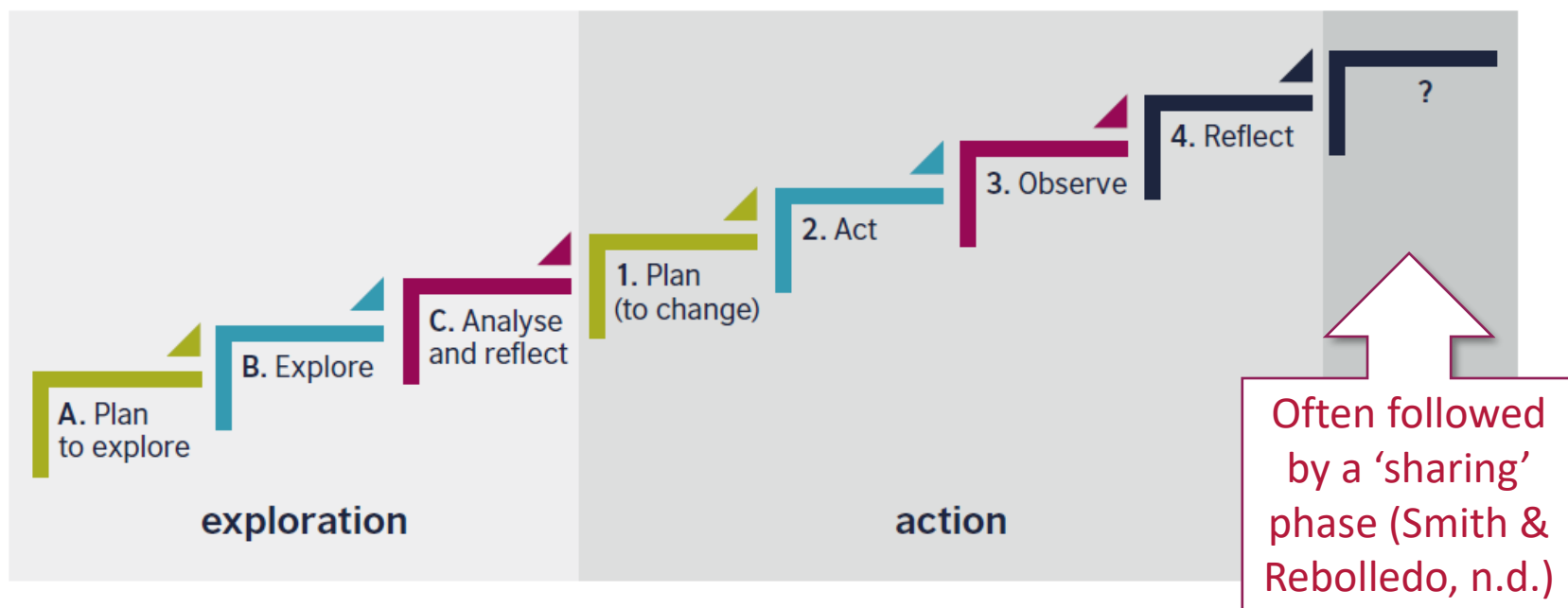
Download the handbook:
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_30510_BC%20Explore%20Actions%20Handbook%20ONLINE%20AW.pdf
Brief introductory video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsHGoG4BAx4

**Collaboration during the sharing of findings in EAR:
A 'mela' in which they share their findings through poster presentations and 'mingle' activities**

British Council India ARMS initiative
https://www.britishcouncil.in/programmes/english/research-publications/arms
Image credit: Nadeem Khan.

Teacher-led idea 2: Teacher-friendly action research

- Collaborative action research (CAR; e.g., Riel, 2019)
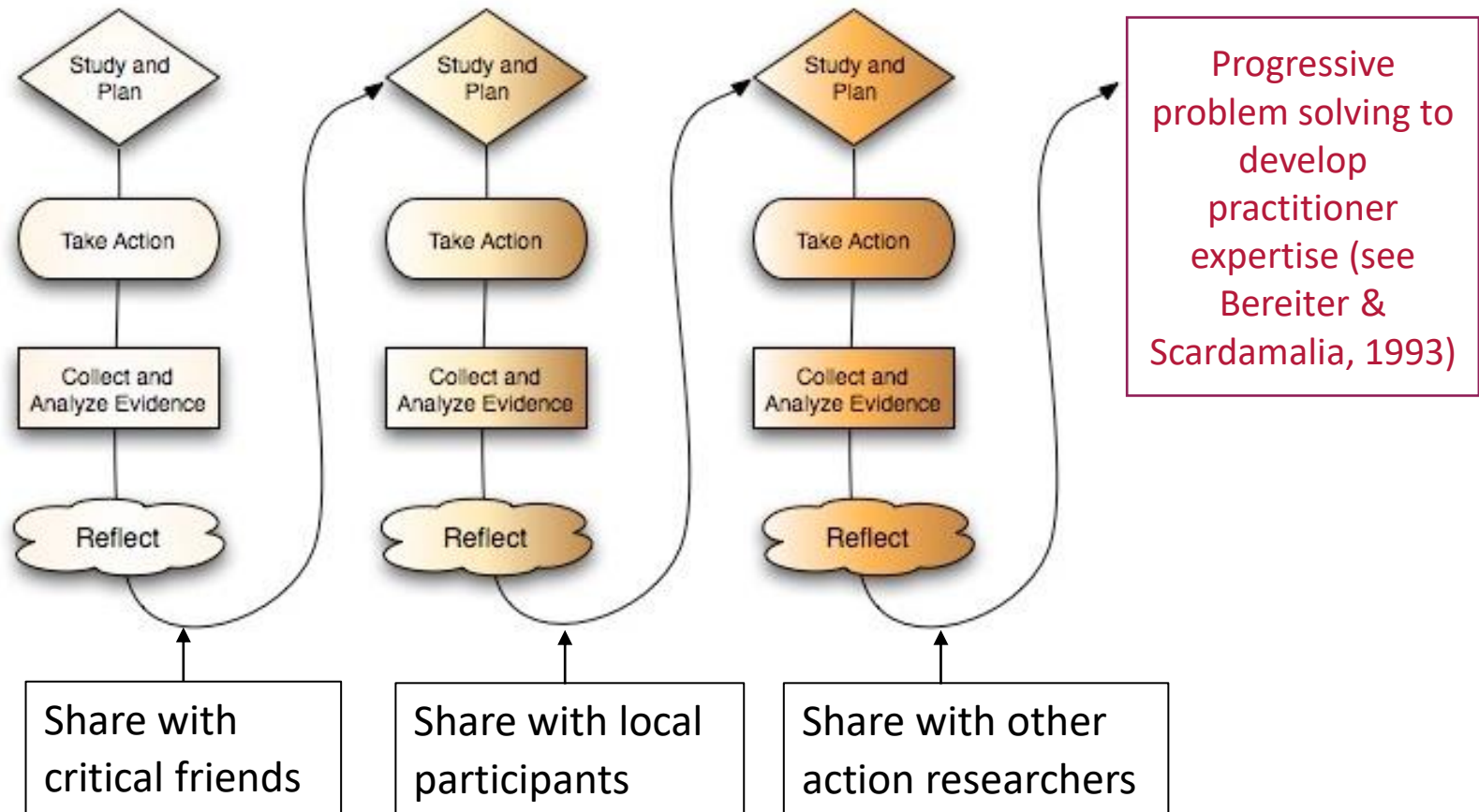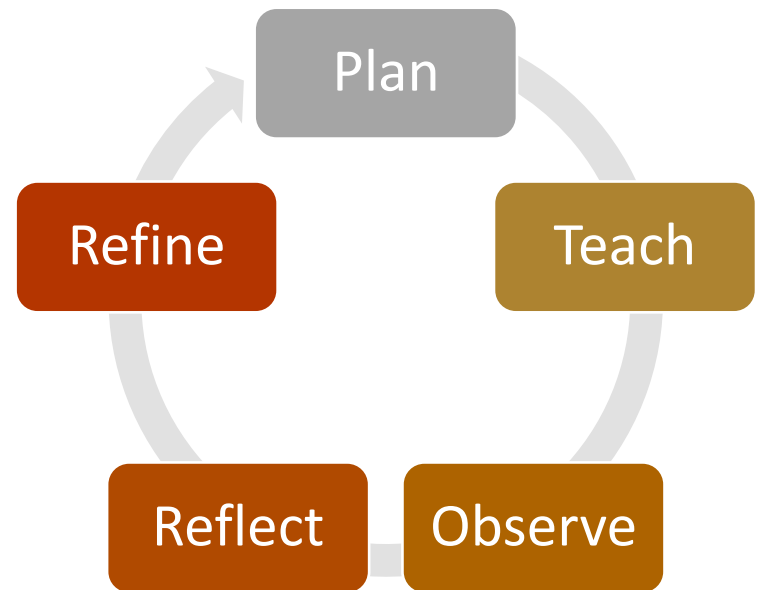

Image: Margaret Riel (2019), CC BY-SA 3.0.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8652138

See: https://www.actionresearchtutorials.org/

Collaborative exploratory action research

Teachers from Yunnan and Guizhou, China collaborating on an exploratory action research project.

See Anderson, J. (2019). Topsy-turvy training: An attempt to blend top-down and bottom-up approaches to in-service language teacher education in China. The Teacher Trainer, 33(3), 21-24.

Teacher-led idea 3: Lesson study

- Centralises the lesson as an object of focus
- Collaborative meetings between teachers to work on 1 learning outcome or lesson at a time within a curriculum
- One teacher teaches the 'research lesson', others observe
- Post-lesson group reflection to refine lesson

Useful Handbook (Dudley, 2014)
https://lessonstudy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/new-handbook-revisedMay14.pdf
Useful series of videos depicting one project:
https://lessonstudy.co.uk/2444-2/

Plan

Teach

Observe

Reflect

Refine

Network-led idea: Instructional rounds

- A 'network' of educators is formed (same institution, organisation or district)

- A 'problem of practice is defined'

- Smaller groups (3-4) each visit 4-5 classes within the institution or district for 15-30 mins each

- A debrief meeting follows (whole network)

- Focus is on **observer learning** and **collective improvement** prioritising the problem of practice

Introductory article (City, 2011):
https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib08/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/262/learning_from_instructional_rounds.pdf
Also see 'Learning walkthroughs' as a larger-scale version (e.g., DODEA, 2019):
https://www.dodea.edu/Pacific/CIL/upload/Learning_Walkthrough_Guide_2-0.pdf

Network-led idea: Instructional rounds

	Supervision and evaluation	Instructional rounds
Learning stance	Informative: We want somebody else to learn from us	Inquiry: We as observers want to learn something ourselves
Unit of improvement	The teacher being observed	The collective (school, district, etc.)
Accountability	Positional (top-down)	Lateral (peer-to-peer)
Output	Evaluative feedback, prescriptions for next steps	Next level of work, collective commitments
Primary focus in the classroom	The teacher	Students, their engagement and learning

(adapted from City, 2011, p. 39)

Researcher-led idea: Teacher expertise studies

Simple research design:

Find expert teachers

⬇

Study aspects of their cognition, teaching, development or professionalism

⬇

Share findings for teacher education (local or wider), curriculum and policy development and further research (e.g., experimental designs)

See Berliner's (2004) overview:
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0270467604265535
Examples in ELT include Anderson (2021, 2022a) Tsui (2003).
Can be made collaborative (see my IATEFL talk:
http://www.jasonanderson.org.uk/talks.htm)

Recommendations based on findings are Feasible, Appropriate and Sustainable (FAS)

Bringing diverse elements together

5 requirements for research/inquiry:

1. localised

2. collaborative, participatory endeavour

3. primarily practitioner-led

4. identifies and disseminate good practice currently happening

5. moves from exploratory qualitative to larger-scale studies
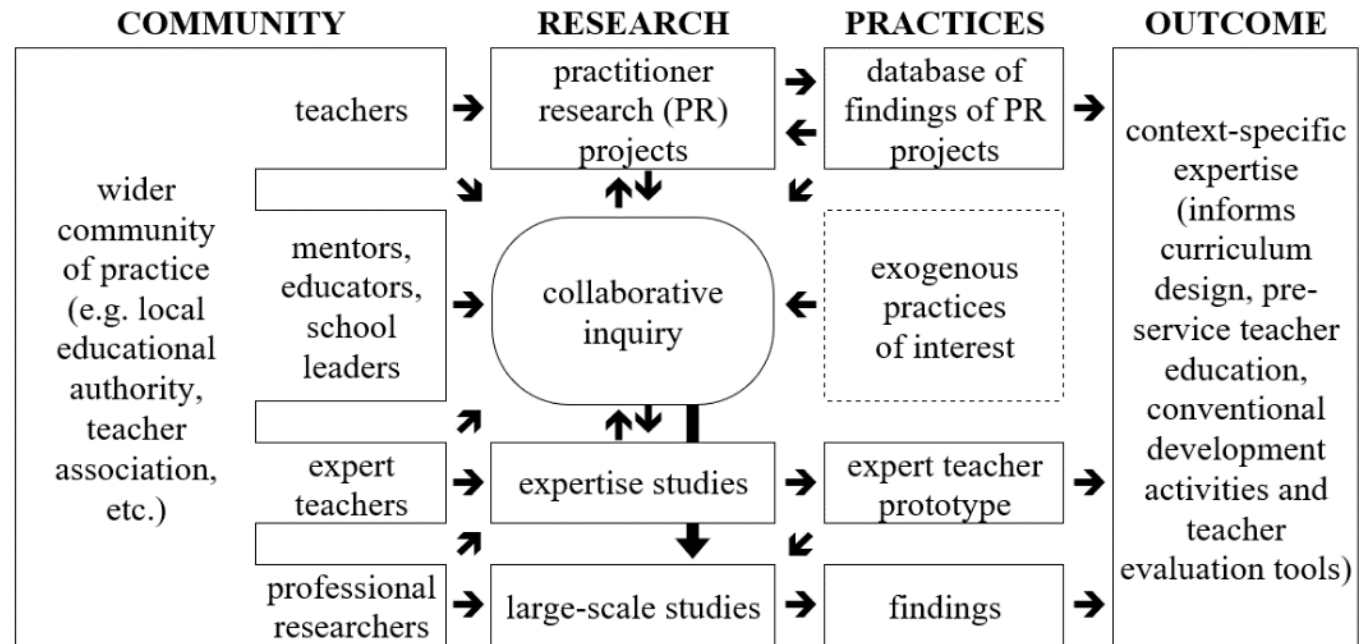
(from Anderson, forthcoming)

Also see Education Scotland. (2015). Collaborative action research (CAR). https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/sacfi12b-car-overview.pdf

Summary

Part 1: Appropriate outcomes

- Locally identified appropriate outcomes are prioritised over exogenous beliefs about what language learning and teaching should be

Part 2: A reality check

- Current dominant methodologies originate in contexts that do not represent the majority of teachers today
- These methodologies neither recognise our classroom and curricular realities nor draw upon our many strengths as multilingual L2/LX teachers of English
- 5 requirements for context-sensitive research into good practice

Part 3: Emerging solutions

- **Teacher-led ideas:** Teacher-friendly action research, exploratory practice and lesson study
- **Network-led idea:** Instructional rounds
- **Researcher-led idea:** Expertise studies
- Framework for building teacher expertise (not just in ELT!)

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