Working definition of action research

If yours is a situation in which

- People reflect and improve (or develop) their own work and their own situations
- by tightly interlinking their reflection and action
- and also making their experience public not only to other participants but also to other persons interested in and concerned about the work and the situation, i.e. their (public) theories and practices of the work at the situation

and if yours is a situation in which there is increasingly

- Data-gathering by participants themselves (or with the help of others) in relation to their own question.
- Participation (in problem-posing and in answering questions) in decision making
- Power-sharing and the relative suspension of hierarchical ways of working towards industrial democracy
- Collaboration among members of the group as a "critical community"
- Self-reflection, self-evaluation and self-management by autonomous and responsible persons and groups
- Learning progressively (and publicly) by doing and by making mistakes in a "self-reflective spiral" of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, replanning, etc.
- Reflection which supports the idea of the "(self-) reflective practitioner"
- *open* enough so that further elaboration and development seemed possible
- *allowing for an ex post facto in*corporation of projects into the discussion (which had not been initiative and conducted on the basis of some elaborate understanding of action research)
- *and, above all, shared with respect to the process of its formulation for a specific context*

then   Yours is a situation in which ACTION RESEARCH is occurring.
(Herbert Altrichter et al. 1990, pp. 19-20)

Altrichter, H., Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R. & Zuber-Skerritt, O. (1990) Defining, Confining or Refining Action Research?, in Zuber-Skerritt, O. (Ed) (1990) Action Research For Change and Development. Griffith University, Australia; Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching.

In 1989, whilst President of the British Educational Research Association, I published the following ideas on Living Educational Theory.
Whitehead, J. (1989) Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?' Published in the Cambridge Journal of Education, 19(1); 41-52. Retrieved 22nd July 2016 from
http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html