

POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING IN
HIGHER EDUCATION: THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS

Action Research

Module 2: Evaluation and Enhancement

Cordelia

2012

TESS DIGNAN MA

Action Research Project

Tess Dignan

Plagiarism Declaration

I hereby declare that this work contains no plagiarised materials as defined in the college academic regulations.

I confirm that I have properly acknowledged all references and quotations from both primary and secondary sources in this submission.

Signed

T. Dignan

5th Oct 2012

CONTENTS

Page Number

| | |
|--|------------|
| <u>Aims</u> | <u>4</u> |
| <u>Literature Review</u> | <u>8</u> |
| <u>Methodology</u> | <u>9</u> |
| <u>Account of the Conduct of the Investigation</u> | <u>1 1</u> |
| <u>Findings</u> | <u>14</u> |
| <u>Evaluation</u> | <u>15</u> |
| <u>References</u> | <u>20</u> |
| <u>Appendices</u> | <u>21</u> |

AIMS

I am a Senior Lecturer on the BA (Hons) Acting and BA (Hons) in Actor Musicianship courses in a Higher Educational College and am the Voice Module Coordinator. I am also this year a student on the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching at Higher Education in Theatre and Performing Arts.

In *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, John Biggs Psychologist, Academic, and Educationalist writes

“Wise and effective teaching is not, however, simply a matter of applying general principals of teaching according to a rule; those principals need adapting to your own personal strengths and to your teaching context. A characteristic of award-winning university teachers is their willingness to collect student feedback on their teaching in order to see where their teaching might be improved (Dunkin and Percians 1992). Expert teachers continually reflect on how they might teach even better.”(as cited in Bigg, 203)¹

I value Teaching and Learning, and the above quote inspired me to examine the tacit qualities of my practice, with a view to improving my weaknesses, and understanding my strengths, in relationship

¹ John Biggs, (2003, Second Edition) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press, p.6.

to academic models and frameworks I have been introduced to on this course of training, that I might learn best practice and share best practice with the Learning and Teaching community at large, by using transparent tangible frameworks of learning that enable others to replicate my results, and together work towards life validating and life affirming teaching practices. Becoming a student at the establishment where I am also a teacher, created a duality which has very much changed my perspective of teaching, by finding myself in the position of my students with regards embracing the Colleges Virtual Learning Centre (VLC) being given tasks to prepare and perform and written work to hand in, where I found myself scrutinising the course documentation and wrestling with the insecurities and discomfort of letting go of the accepted norms and entering into a new epistemological relationship with the topics of Teaching and Learning.

A principle of the training of the PGCLTHE has been the introduction of reflective practice to my teaching.

“I begin with the assumption that competent practitioners know more than they can say. They exhibit a kind of knowing in practice, most of which is tacit...indeed practitioners themselves often reveal a capacity for reflection on their intuitive knowing in the midst of action and sometimes use this capacity to cope with the unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice.”²

To use another quote from the educationalist and writer, D.A Schon:

“Reflection in action occurs when we are in the midst of an action and in doing and being reflective-in-action we are, for example saying:

- Something is happening that surprises me...
- Is what I am doing appropriate at this moment?
- Do I need to alter, amend, change what I am doing and being in order to adjust to changing circumstances, to get back into balance,...
- I must check with myself that I am on the right track

² Schon, Donald A. (1982) *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books. pp 8-9

- If I am not on the right track, is there a better way?”³ (Schon, 1987:28)

I have designed an Action Research Project using the McNiff and Whitehead (2010) Action-Reflection Cycle (See Appendix 1.) to explore an aspect of my teaching which I feel would benefit from some active reflection. Using the Jayne Stevens, ReP: The Performance Reflective Practice Project De Montfort University,(See Appendix 2) (which is based on Gibbs (1988) cycle of reflection,) and enables the Learner to ascertain the level of reflection through to a cycle of increasing competences.

I have looked into the Warm-Up procedure for the Voice in Actor Training.

The Research I designed was to deliver a series of extra curriculum teaching sessions to three Acting and Actor Musician Rehearsal Companies to test out the benefits of having a set of prescribed Warm-Up exercises in a Sequence of incremental steps for the actors to use as a Vocal

Warm-Up Routine, called “The Bullet” (a title I gave to the Model to engage the students imagination with ideas of; speed, exactness, and an idea of this being a targeted endeavour).

I then engaged in a dialogue with them about the vocal warm-up in terms of its function, design and goals. Then over a series of weeks, we as a collective study group engaged in a complicit Teaching and Learning Activity (TLA) (See Appendix 4. Fig 4.1:Desired and Actual Level of Engagement: approaches to learning and enhancing teaching.).I proposed to start with learning, repetition and memorising and then move towards hypothesizing, problem solving and reflective solving designed to promote deep rather than surface learning, taking the student from memorising to application, and reflections on application, leading to modifications through changing and adapting the Vocal Warm-Up, from Blooms SOLO Taxonomy framework, (See Appendix 3). Looking at the transitional process of surface to deep learning, and how to identify students’ levels of engagement.

This process of experience and reflection, action, reaction, and re-evaluation to facilitate a shared understanding of the twenty minute vocal warm-up’s usefulness, effectiveness, ability to target all

³ Schon, 1987:28 (as cited in Brockbank, A. (2007, Second Edition), *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*. Berkshire: Open University Press. p.89)

areas of the voice, and enabling a noticeable transformation of the voice from an ordinary usage potential to a high level usage potential. The process to involve forty one students, (myself included) generating through one shared procedure, increased levels of understanding, discerning and analysing causes, and ultimately hypothesizing and theorising a process that exists as a direct result, at a deeper level of formulation, action and usage. This using the theoretical framework of Blooms SOLO Taxonomy,(cited in Biggs and Collis,1982 p.124) which defines and classifies levels of competences, and the appropriate outcomes for each level of learning aptitude from quantitative to qualitative, from process to theory underpinning process. (See Appendix 4). Figure 5.1 A Hierarchy of verbs that may be used to form intended learning outcomes).

The voice is a simple and complex musical instrument, in my experience capable of basic sounds without preparation and layered harmonics, diverse resonances, and placements, providing the instrument with both power and subtlety, revealing the unique internal architecture, thoughts and feelings of the human condition, in an ever changing set of paradigms as every part of the instrument is in potentially perpetual motion. As all the optimal settings (breath, posture, vocal fold contact, resonator, and articulators are in transit, and susceptible to mood, temperature, health, air conditions, tensions and stresses, the sound of the human voice is of variable and inconsistent potential.

Warming up the Human Voice up, from its ordinary, functional mode of usage, to one of optimal usages of power, pitch, range, and resonance, requires a series of stepping stones. If you consider the processes of starting the engine of a car, getting all the working parts to serve the same purpose is systematic and incremental. If you put the car into gear before the engine is switched on you will stall the engine. You need to begin to depress the accelerator as your begin to release the clutch. The need to look into the rear windows is imperative before you begin to reverse. There are a multitude of different tasks to perform, and the order of each function adding and building on the next activity creates finally a state of readiness for the car to move safely and efficiently.

My observation was two fold, that in covering so many exercises in voice over the students two years of skills training practice, there were possibly too many exercises to choose from, and in not

addressing the nature of a vocal warm-up structure sufficiently, the students were possibly confusing teaching exercises with training exercises.

Donald Scion's Hierarchy of Reflection Model, observes how much reflection is required, to uncover the as yet intangibles in the Action Research Project.

- 4.....reflection on the description of the reflection in action
- 3.....description of the reflection in action
- 2.....reflection in action
- 1.....action"⁴

Therefore, more specifically to my proposal, what are the incremental steps, which enable the voice to move from habitual to optimal usage in twenty minutes?

The answer to this question, created the Bullet draft One, (See Appendix 5).

Literature Review

These are the pedagogic models of Practice, and Frameworks of understanding that underpin my research, and enabled me to interrogate my Research Data in order to achieve a level of objectivity and rigour and in order to monitor, prioritise and select, the relevant results. The following theories, and teaching frameworks that I have been introduced to on the PGCLTHE that have impacted my

⁴ Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. (2007, Second Edition) *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*. Berkshire: SRHE and Open University Press. p.92.

practice and my action research, are the Higher Education teaching models of practice that I will be working from : reflection and reflective practice, my values and how this impacts my teaching and learning environment, TLA (Teaching/Learning Activities for large groups, some teacher-led, some peer-led and some self-directed,) Constructive Alignment (the ensuring that the learning activity and the assessment methodology have a direct and transparent correlation), and International Students (and the impact this has on understanding how we teach).

Action Research is about questioning the status quo, where the teaching outcomes are falling short of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) and by setting up a living experiment where the researcher and the practitioner are one and the same as against a theoretical or critical research, where the researcher is on the outside of the research activity, implementing change. In Action Research the practitioner is at the heart of the research and becomes teacher and learner, researcher and theorist, inviting other learners to become active participants in order to become learner teachers, for the betterment of all.

My first Action Research (if I am to become a life long learner, I do not intend this to be my only Action Research) therefore is to investigate and construct a series of exercises that I will teach to the actors that the actors learn, and ultimately do for them-selves, from memory. I propose to construct a Vocal Warm-Up which is self contained, incremental and effective, in warming up the actor's voice ready for using at an optimal level, in a twenty minute period.

Methodology

This quote aligns with my values, and underpins my methodology.

“The idea of developing human capability is core to action research.”⁵ (McNiff and Whitehead)

McNiff and Whitehead also wrote (2012)

“Your ontological values (the study of being) are what give your life meaning and purpose. These values are embodied....these transform into your epistemological (the study of knowledge) standard of judgement....the critical judgement you use to test the validity of a claim to knowledge. ⁶

I have strong personal values concerning person-centred learning: autonomy, self-motivation, self-reliance and self-development, based on my own experience of the acting world having limited resources for in-house training, and actors either not having the funds for additional coaching, or being too far away from training and coaching facilities to make coaching led warm-ups, pre-audition warm-ups or pre-rehearsal warm-ups impracticable.

As Carl Rogers (1983) the eminent psychologist and theorist describes in his book “Freedom to Learn for the 80’s” -

“The person centred way....it is a set of values...placing emphasis on the dignity of the individual, the importance of personal choice, the significance of responsibility, the joy of creativity. It is a philosophy built of the democratic way, empowering each individual.”⁷

I have always taught actors to do their own vocal warm-ups but been increasingly aware that despite rigorous training involving nine contact hours per week on the vocal curriculum they appeared to find it a difficult task, to do for themselves a regular vocal warm-up.

⁵ McNiff, J and Whitehead, J. ((2012, Second Edition) *Action Research : All You Need To Know* , London: SAGE. p.56

⁶ *ibid.* p.84

⁷ Rogers, C. (1983, cited in Brockbank and McGill 2007, p. 54)

This has been evidenced by the numerous attempts made by myself and colleagues to instigate amongst students group led vocal warm-ups prior to their first class, prior to rehearsals and prior to performances. They have a pattern of starting off initially with commitment, and then there is a steady falling away of numbers, and participation. This despite acknowledging and understanding the importance and value of warming up the voice prior to rigorous usage.

This is also not something which is confined to student actors, but also professional actors, many times, in my experience, find it difficult to instigate and sustain a series of exercises to exercise and support the voice for usage out with its habitual range of sounds.

On a recent trip to the Theatre to visit two recent Graduates from the college in their first professional engagement in the theatre, one of them said to me after the show

“None of the Actors do a Vocal Warm-Up!?”⁸ Adam

In the beginning of my work as a Voice Teacher I made an assumption that my teaching ability was not sufficiently able as a new teacher to create a sufficient knowledge transfer to enable the actors to be proficient at warming up their own voices. As I became more experienced and I made enquiries with other Voice Teachers, they agreed that the exercise was a difficult one due to the diversity of the voices being collectively warmed up, and possibly a lack of self discipline on behalf of actors for self directed training

Each actor is different, each character requires different usage of the voice, each play a different style, each scene a different criteria, and the sum total of all this is that although the actors may assemble to share a group vocal warm-up, they have different specific needs, and are themselves a different musical instrument, with many unique differences to work on, than their peers. This observation was one which had increasingly been drawn to my attention, by the diversity of the questions the actors themselves had but as yet I had no answer, and although I believed I had a suitable set of theories, I had no solution, a critical theory which reflects in order to understand why, but not an action research which takes this further to understand how this might be changed in practise and in implementation.

⁸ Adam. Rose Bruford College Graduate Acting Student, Sept 2012.

I had never been in a Teaching and Learning Activity whereby I shared with the students I wished to research an aspect of the work that I needed some help to find a solution for, Due to my own respect and the high values I personally placed on autonomy, individuality, the artist as custodian of what creates the best context for their work, and also to avoid the possible monotony of repetition, (mine and the actors), I had always changed the focus in my class taught warm-ups onto different aspects of the vocal warm-up, and always used different exercises from our shared language of practice exercises for each of the sections of the warm-up. In this way, one day the stretching at the beginning of the warm-up would be swings, on another day, shoulder rolls, on a third day, spine curls – all of them performing the same function within the warm-up, but what was not explicit was the underlying structure and form of the warm-up.

Account of the Conduct of my Investigation.

My action research project, using the process of *observe, reflect, act, evaluate, modify, new direction taken*, (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010) occurred across several months, and following the initial introduction to the actors of the area of my research, one of my original assumptions was challenged. My assumption that the subject area was un-stimulating and actors would not want a single warm-up set of exercises to do regularly, collectively. The response was the opposite, very positive, and a collective desire to actively engage in this subject area with a shared sense of the importance of this research, and its shared usefulness.

Building in the opportunity this presented for the ongoing collection of research data, both qualitative and quantitative, mixed method studies, and the creation of a learning community in which to explore the work, I began my investigation, with the hesitancy of a Professional Practitioner, not the confidence of a Professional Researcher.

“These techniques are neither paradigm- nor method-linked; researchers' orientations to inquiry and their methodological commitments will influence how they use them.”⁹

The first stage was to design the Warm-Up, select the study group, device the implementation, (outside of the curriculum, so that my studies did not interfere with the students studies), I researched the theories that would be the framework of my analysis and understanding, namely: constructive *alignment*, *reflective practise*, and *solo taxonomy*.

Here are some of the qualitative responses I received which effected my adjustments to the second draft. (See Appendix 6)

- “It quickly and effectively touches base with everything needed.”¹⁰ Tom
- “It’s almost like a work-out plan; you just have to follow it.”¹¹ Sidy
- “I felt like everything got touched but none actually warmed.”¹² Phoebe
- “Would find it really useful to have a structure.”¹³ Helen
- “Often humming, blowing and pitching can make one feel self conscious if doing it on their own.”¹⁴ James

A week later, I began stage two, having received eleven written responses, I read all the responses and based on the student centred observations I drafted a second version of the warm-up, which was delivered to the students.

⁹ Sandelowski, Margaret. (June 200) *Research in Nursing & Health* Volume 23, Issue 3, pp.246–255.

¹⁰ Tom, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 6. The Bullet, Draft One

¹¹ Sidy, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 6. The Bullet, Draft One

¹² Phoebe, Actor-Musician, BA (Hons) AMU 2010-2013, See Appendix 6. The Bullet, Draft One

¹³ Helen, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 6. The Bullet, Draft One

¹⁴ James, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 6. The Bullet, Draft One

There was a marked decrease in the *quantitative* data received back from the second week of my research; only four forms were received from the second draft. Several students commented that they had shared their feedback in the first draft, and did not feel the need to for the second draft.

Also as the second draft was better in the time allocated to the key areas, with the omission of several exercises which had received no feedback either way, the students I observed were keen to keep this copy, and use outside of the classroom for solo warm-up purposes. (See Appendix 7)

Stage three was a collation of the *qualitative* data from the returned questionnaires (see appendix) and to motivate as many of the students as possible to offer feedback on Draft Three.

I offered to put the Draft Three version onto an audio file, and to offer the students the opportunity to have an audio led vocal warm-up before each of the three performances which their current body of work culminated in. This meant that each of the three rehearsal groups would each be given the opportunity to have a led Vocal Warm-Up, for three performances each.

I participated in the knowledge transfer, in the teaching stage of the warm-up, I observed several of these Warm-Up's take place in the theatre (using the audio version), and I filmed several extracts of one of these warm-ups as a research artefact. The final audio version of the Bullet Draft Three, Audio Version was a group warm-up and yet *student centred*, in that each actor was interacting with the audio taped version, as much or as little as they chose to be, with the focus on their individual needs within that. At times staying with an exercise for longer than prescribed, at times opting out to do a different exercise, but working around the warm-up option, and adjusting to suit their increasing knowledge of specific needs.

It was after this that I received the most *qualitative and quantitative* data to analyse and evaluate, 15 detailed outcome reports, students at different levels of reflection and understanding working with the tool to enable the place that they were at, to facilitate the vocal warm-up they had an understanding of, as the outcome for them. (See Appendix 8)

An unexpected outcome of this data was to take the Action Research further than I had originally anticipated.

My original plan was as follows:

1. The Student Hand-Out Version, with all the exercises explained
2. Extra curriculum Warm-up sessions, pre rehearsal time to teach the Warm-Up
3. A week later having review the student feedback data (11 out of 40 returned.), draft two devised and taught
4. A week later envisioned, having review the student feedback data (4 out of 40) draft three devised and taught
5. A week later, evaluate, modify, and design process of action in the implementation and monitoring of my results for the next year curriculum.

But then, led by the primary researchers, the actors: the project began to take a further and very natural plan of development.

Findings

The student data from my findings is in Appendices 6, 7 & 8 in which each Draft of the warm-up is written out, and the actor's feedback is on the reverse. On these data forms I have made comments on my responses to the actors' feedback. Here are my observations from this aspect of the research.

Here are some of the feedback responses to the Third Draft (the final draft in this instance).

- "I feel the Bullet is a great resource. You wake up and think, what do I need vocally? And sometimes the answer is 'I have no freaking clue, don't know where to start, I don't feel

anything'...in these instances I think the bullet would be immensely helpful, it's like a key into the world of the vocal warm-up that can guide you when you're lost, inspire you when you're drained and prepare you when you're on schedule."Georgia¹⁵

- "I loved the final version especially the recorded one with the metronome." Phoebe¹⁶
- "Results...were maximised upon having been supported by the order, and specificity of the warm-up." Rowan¹⁷
- "...Whereas the Bullet touches base with every aspect of a vocal warm-up and in a routine that actually feels like you're layered onto the last exercise, feeling your voice being prepared." Rachel¹⁸
- I would find that helpful as I could keep it on my laptop and iPod which I can then also dock into speakers. Having exactly the same warm-up every day would also be a good way to chart progress or see where more input on a specific area is needed." Nicola¹⁹
- "Subconsciously I've learnt it by heart now so I can always bring out the bullet whenever it's needed." Holly²⁰

- "It was incredibly focused and organised, a time saver." Holly²¹
- "No sheets of paper just the voice in our ears! Perfect!!!" Georgie²²
- "I feel that people are still conscious about how their voice sounds and preferred to keep it personal, However the Bullet gets rid of all this." Tom ²³

¹⁵ Georgie, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

¹⁶ Phoebe, Actor Musician, BA (Hons) AMU 2010-2013, See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

¹⁷Rowan, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

¹⁸ Rachel, Actor Musician, BA (Hons) AMU 2010-2013, See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

¹⁹ Nicola, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

²⁰ Holly, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

²¹ Holly, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013, See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

²²Georgie, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013 See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

²³ Tom, Actor, BA (Hons) Acting 2010-2013 See Appendix 8, The Bullet Draft 3

- “Alone I would definitely forget something, or get bored with warming up and stop without doing so properly. Group warm-ups always end up feeling uneven for the same reasons, and because different people need different things at different times.” Henry²⁴

These are my discoveries as a result of this research and as evidenced in Appendices 6,7 & 8,

Evaluations

Yes the students wanted and felt they needed a basic vocal warm-up and found it useful and helpful but it was the structure that they needed most of all, and after spending a great deal of time with this one warm-up they developed their own needs around finally understanding a structure and a framework for the warm-up.

I discovered from the Actors and from my own observations that warming up the voice is a self conscious experience, even for the trained professional, and a series of exercises to follow enables the actor to feel less self conscious.

Repetition is reassuring, and enables a deeper level of learning through the natural discoveries that happen as a direct result of a surrendering of conscious thought through the comfort of knowing the order and sequence of things.

The actors found freedom by having a structure and format they could fall back on when their minds were blank and that the shared use of the same vocal warm-up exercises gave them a stronger sense of shared purpose and collaboration as an acting company.

Those that worked consistently with the Bullet then went on to create pre- Bullet warm-ups, and Post Bullet Warm-ups, as they became more aware of the needs of their voice, and even began to

request different bullet vocal warm-ups for different occasions, i.e. the solo vocal warm-up, the group vocal warm-up, the audition vocal warm-up, the character vocal warm-up moving from a quantitative phase of learning to a qualitative phase, where they themselves are able to theorise, hypothesis and reflect (SOLO taxonomy moving through the five levels of learning (See Appendix 9, P91 Effective Teaching and Learning for Today's Universities.)

I had avoided teaching repetitious vocal warm-up exercises as I had wanted to avoid putting the actors into a state of passive learning, instead I had worked to facilitate a state of active presence. This was challenged by how willing the actors were to participate with me on researching a single warm-up exercise to be repeated as required. They really wanted a structured and prescribed warm-up, because I discovered they needed to have a structure to pin the work onto and I therefore derive an understanding as to why they were collectively (See Appendixes: 6,7&8) welcoming of a warm-up which was fixed, learnt, and repeated.

What was not happening (and had been an assumption of mine,) was that the actors were not getting bored by the repetition of the warm-up. It was giving them security, structure, stamina, and safety from self-consciousness. Self-consciousness was something I had never even factored into my critical theories.

I observed them as I taught and delivered The Bullet, and indeed they did become passive, obedient, and quiet, but it was not the silence (mental silence) which I had presumed would be passive and unhelpful, they became quiet in their mind, and therefore more aware of their bodies, and they surrendered to the instructions, and the more they recognised the instructions the deeper they were able to surrender, to relax, to become at one with the act of making sound, to find comfort in repetition, and to go on the journey of assimilating the knowledge of the structure, as the subconscious began to take over.

I realise as a result of the various stages of discovery involved with reflection in action that I had, through simply using critical reflection only been focusing on the diversity of each acting group, and the differentials this created, and how ineffective a shared warm-up was in that narrow perspective of rationale.

This was as a result of my hearing male and female voices, some high some low, some tense some overly relaxed, some using head resonance, some using chest resonance, some needing to soften the jaw and relax the tongue others needing to engage the musculature and precision of the tongue and the lips, and not instead hearing what was the same.

Diversity and individuality is a wonderful and celebratory thing, but this is all I came to hear, particularly as my expertise grew, and my ability to discern the subtle differences in sound became, it became more apparent to me, that a shared warm-up was less than ideal. I wanted to enable the individual, and I could not do this (I believed) in a shared warm-up format.

I discovered from the feedback sheets and a dialogue with the actors involved, throughout this process, that actors can feel very self-conscious in making sound in a vocal warm-up as voice work can result in messy sounds, sounds which are categorically not beautiful.

When doing a singing warm-up for instance the sounds are focused to achieve an aesthetic of beauty, and in a warm-up for the speaking voice, warming up the voice could make an actor feel very vulnerable, without a vocal permission, to make a sound which is without aesthetic beauty in itself, and a voice instruction to allow it to be as it comes out, a specific quality, for instance “yawn with an extravagant over the top quality where the voice also yodels,” the Bullet gives permission that is at times difficult to give to oneself.

I observed with fresh eyes, how the actors received the Bullet Instructions, and I read with keen ears the feedback that they gave me every week, which, although we are all increasingly aware of the importance in Higher Education of the Students Voice, we do not get as a norm, direct feedback, on the teaching we are delivering, and how we might deliver it more effectively. I received really useful feedback, for instance “exercise two was too fast for me,” “I needed some labio-dental tongue twisters as well as uvular ones.” “I touched all the vocal key areas but did not feel that any of them were warmed up.” They began to prescribe more of this, and less of that, and longer on this, and remember to give us a little of this, and the Bullet Drafts got more and more defined, not by my hand alone, but by those who were using it, and feeling the results.

“And as it says in *Teaching and Learning at University*, (Biggs and Tang, 2011)

“1/ Persistent teaching problems lie not in the student but in the teaching.

2/In our teaching, we should focus on the similarities between students rather than the differences. Differences obviously exist, but to focus on them is counterproductive.”²⁵

As a result of this research I could see that there were many common needs and common goals, and that the beauty of voice comes from having a safe, stable, open, and comfortable physical instrument, and the ritual of routine, the camaraderie of a shared purpose, and the intimacy of a common language created a strong and enabling crucible in which to layer the voice on it's journey from the mundane to the expressive.

I overestimated my own value judgements, and made many assumptions that simply needed exploring outside of my own head, in the realms outside of my own patterns of thought.

I have since engaged in warm-ups with the Royal Shakespeare Company, a professional engagement I have performed over the last seven years, with an increasingly heavy heart.

This summer, after completing my Action Research, I brought in a modified version of The Bullet (as the RSC only facilitate a 15 min onstage Vocal Warm-Up for the Acting Company, but buoyed by the analysis and evaluations that my research had given me, I stuck to the same exercises for the ten warm-ups I delivered. Instead of feeling that I was doing something mundane, I valued the fact that I was enabling safety, structure, ritual, routine and that my Voice leading the Warm-Up was a permission which their voices could respond to.

²⁵ Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2011, Fourth Edition) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: The Society for Research into Higher Education*. Berkshire: SRHE and Open University Press

The actors attending my warm-up grew over the ten warm-up period, which is the opposite of the results I usually experience, as a show gets into a run, there is more likely to be a falling off of attendance. I can now speculate that by changing the exercises, the actors felt at a loss as to the structure, and did not want to be in a teaching situation, when they were about to do a performance.

I have therefore decided to keep this Action Research Project live, and have already made enquiries to create a Draft Four Version of the Bullet based on the Feedback I have received for Draft Three and to upload, a downloadable version onto the VLE for students to download onto any portable devices they wish to carry and use it on.

I have also made contact with the American Theatre Arts Course, who I know do not receive as much vocal training as they would like to, and I am in conversation with the Course Director to teach the Bullet to the ATA students, so that they can have a Virtual Vocal Warm-Up, via the tool of The Bullet, and again by downloading this from the College website.

I am already considering my next action in light of my discoveries that is to take this research into the Professional arena, and piloting an Action Research version of The Bullet for the Profession Actors, who have come from a variety of different back grounds and training contexts, or indeed, theoretical training contexts, or training from other specialisms but not necessarily in voice, to find a version of the Bullet which does not presuppose that we all share the same training pedagogy, but still touches the same essential key areas for warming up the professional voice users voice, which is structured, incremental, lasts 15 mins, and takes the voice to a position of effortless flexibility and freedom.

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APPENDICES/ TESS DIGNAN/ ACTION RESEARCH/ PGCLTHE/ OCT 2012

Appendix 1: Fig 1.1 An Action Reflection Cycle, p.9, McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. (2011)

Appendix 2 : Jayne Stevens : The Performance Reflective Practice Project De Montfort University.
Based on Gibbs (1988) cycle of reflection and adapted from a framework for reflecting writing devised by Penny Tremayne

Appendix 3 : Fig 4.1: Desired and actual level of engagement, approaches to learning and enhancing teaching, p.57. Biggs (2003, Second Edition),

Appendix 4 : Table 7.2 Some more ILO verbs from Bloom's revised taxonomy, p.124. (Biggs and Tang, 2011, Fourth Edition)

Appendix 5 : Fig 5.1 A Hierarchy of verbs that may be used to form intended learning outcomes. p. 91. (Biggs and Tang, 2011, Forth Edition)

Appendix 6 : The Bullet, Draft One, Mon 28th May 2012 (Eleven Pages)

Appendix 7: The Bullet Draft Two, Mon 4th June 2012 (Four Pages)

Appendix 8 : The Bullet Draft Three, Mon 2nd July 2012 (Fifteen Pages)

Appendix 9 : Ethics Consent Form, 2nd Oct 2012 (One Page: Emails on request)

Appendix 10 : Audio File, The Bullet, Draft Three, CD

Appendix 11: DVD File, The Bullet, Draft Three, Cymbeline Company, June 2012, DVD