

From Posture to Acture: Developing Awareness in Movement and Performer Training in UK Higher Education using the Feldenkrais Method®

Kene Igweonu

PhD; Deputy Dean (Research & Knowledge Exchange), Faculty of Arts & Creative Industries, Middlesex University, London

Contact: K.Igweonu@mdx.ac.uk

Abstract

The last three decades has seen the Feldenkrais Method continuing to gain acceptance within UK Higher Education as a pedagogical tool which offers dynamic approaches to performer training that complements, and often challenges, established modes of learning and teaching that are body-centred and somatic. This article draws on a longitudinal study that I started in 2010, and which has been sustained through my teaching and practice research work. It discusses the growing practice of incorporating the Feldenkrais Method in movement and performance training within the UK Higher Education context and explores some of the strategies and approaches adopted by practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method in their work with performing arts students. The article emphasises that this growing interest in the use of the Feldenkrais Method in movement and performer training programmes have meant that practitioners often adapt their approaches to teaching the Feldenkrais Method in its 'pure form' and instead introduce a range of 'scaffolding' techniques in order to cultivate and sustain students' engagement with the learning process. Furthermore, it contends that the Feldenkrais Method does not function as a performer training technique in itself, but as a viable foundation for underpinning the learning and teaching of technique. The article concludes by iterating the case for foregrounding the Feldenkrais Method in movement and performer training within UK Higher Education due to its effectiveness for facilitating experiential learning, heightened psycho-physical awareness and efficient self-use among performing arts students.

Keywords

Feldenkrais Method, Awareness, Movement, Performer Training, Higher Education, Somatic, Reflexive Practitioners

Copyright ©: The copyright for this paper remains with the author(s).

Please cite: (First published in the) *Feldenkrais Research Journal*, volume 6; 2018-2019.

Service marks: The terms Feldenkrais®, Feldenkrais Method®, Awareness Through Movement®, ATM®, Functional Integration®, and FI® are service marked terms of the International *Feldenkrais*® Federation (IFF) and Feldenkrais professional guilds and associations in many countries. In keeping with academic



conventions, they will not be service marked in the entire text as may be required in nonacademic use, but only for the first and most prominent use of the terms. In recognition that these phrases are formal terms referring to specific practices within the Method, and to the Method as a whole, capitalization of all the words in each term has been retained.

From Posture to Acture: Developing Awareness in Movement and Performer Training in UK Higher Education using the Feldenkrais Method®

Kene Igweonu

PhD; Deputy Dean (Research & Knowledge Exchange), Faculty of Arts & Creative Industries, Middlesex University, London

Introduction

The use of the Feldenkrais Method in performance training dates to the work of Moshe Feldenkrais in the 1970s when he first taught actors and dancers in the United States and Israel. It was also during this period that the renowned theatre director Peter Brook invited him to teach the Method to actors at *Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord* in Paris. Following Feldenkrais' work in Paris, Monika Pagneux who, at that time, was Movement Director for Peter Brook's company went on to propagate the Feldenkrais Method through her own work. Even though Pagneux is not a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method, her approach to movement training drew extensively on the Feldenkrais Method. As one of the foremost teachers of movement in Europe, Pagneux's influence in performance training is quite profound and far reaching. Through her former students, Pagneux continues to play a key role in the recognition and acceptance of the Feldenkrais Method as a somatic discipline and practice that is suitable for training in the performing arts.

Within the past three decades in the United Kingdom, the Feldenkrais Method has continued to gain significance within the performing arts community through events like the International Workshop Festival. The International Workshop Festival started in 1988 as an annual festival of workshops and demonstrations by established practitioners from a variety of performing arts disciplines and backgrounds. Focusing on themes such as "the performers energy" in 1995 "...and movement" in 1996, the International Workshop Festival provided a platform for Gareth Newell, Educational Director of the first UK Feldenkrais Method training programme to teach the Method to professional performers in the UK. However, the inclusion of the Feldenkrais Method in UK Higher Education (HE) curriculum is traceable to the pioneering work of Richard Cave, Emeritus Professor of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. On qualifying as a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method in 1998, Cave went on to design and institute what is arguably the first UK Higher Education course in physical theatre that embeds the Feldenkrais Method as a distinct part of the curriculum at Royal Holloway's Department of Drama and Theatre. Following Cave's retirement in 2009, Libby Worth has continued to deliver

the Feldenkrais Method provision at Royal Holloway.

Like Royal Holloway, London Metropolitan University, University Centre Doncaster and University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Swansea Metropolitan) had the benefit of academic staff who are practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method - who had also been successful at embedding the Feldenkrais Method in their respective performing arts programmes. To this extent the works of Thomas Kampe, former Coordinator for Dance and Movement at London Metropolitan University and now at Baths Spa University, Dianne Hancock, Course Leader for Theatre and Applied Practice at the University Centre Doncaster, as well as my previous work within the Performing Arts programme at University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Swansea Metropolitan) and later at Canterbury Christ Church University, have sustained and helped to facilitate a greater recognition and acceptance of the Feldenkrais Method as a practice that is suitable for training in performing arts within the UK Higher Education. Many other universities have also gone ahead to integrate the Feldenkrais Method into their performing arts programmes as a result of working with academic staff members or visiting lecturers who are qualified practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method. More recently, this increase in number of qualified practitioners who are teaching in Higher Education has been boosted by the introduction of the second UK Feldenkrais Method professional training programme in London. A notable feature of the London training, which graduated its first set of qualified practitioners in August 2015, is that Scott Clark who introduced and leads the training programme under the educational directorship of Elizabeth Beringer, was a founding member of the Siobhan Davies Dance Company. As former dancer and someone who has trained a lot of dancers and taught functional anatomy at Roehampton University, Clark's London professional training programme continues to attract a lot of performing artists.

Key to the adoption of the Feldenkrais Method in UK Higher Education is its perceived usefulness for developing pedagogical ideas - as a pedagogical tool - and offering dynamic approaches to learning that complements and often challenge established modes of teaching and learning that are body-centred and somatic. However, the pace of this adoption has been rather slow, since it relies on the presence of a Feldenkrais practitioner on the teaching team, who is involved in curriculum design as a programme leader or one who is sufficiently empowered to introduce new ideas and materials to students. Therefore, to investigate and document the use of the Feldenkrais Method as a performer training methodology within UK Higher Education, I initiated a longitudinal research project in 2010, with funding from the Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE). In addition to identifying UK universities teaching the Feldenkrais Method as part of their movement and performance training programmes, my longitudinal study aimed to consider how movement and performance training pedagogies at other institutions could be expanded to include training in the Feldenkrais Method, as well as to generate interest in Feldenkrais Method as a useful performer training methodology. Since the commencement of the longitudinal study in 2010, there has been the publication of a special edition of the *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* journal (2015), which was dedicated to the Feldenkrais Method and performer training, as well as a seminal book titled *Feldenkrais*

Method for Actors by Victoria Worsley (2016). These developments have both continued to influence my Feldenkrais work with students. More significantly, they point to the growing acceptance of the Feldenkrais Method within UK Higher Education, as a viable tool for performer training.

The Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method was developed by Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984) as a method of somatic education which draws on his vast knowledge and expertise in physics, engineering and judo to help the individual discover new possibilities and choices in movement. The Feldenkrais Method is a somatic discipline that is based on sound mechanical and neurological principles which are easily accessible through unforced physical movement based on simple re/organization and re/alignment of the body in time and space. Kampe defines it as “an investigative practice focusing on self-awareness, reflective practice and analysis through modes of embodiment, self and peer observation” (2010a). In essence, the Feldenkrais Method is a pedagogical method which emphasizes experiential learning by helping the individual to gain a heightened psycho-physical awareness, providing more options and enabling the individual to make intelligent choices about everyday movement and action. This idea is equally identified by Alan Questel as being central to the practice of the Feldenkrais Method:

One of the basic tenets of the Feldenkrais Method is to increase our options and create more choices about how we do things. Rather than teaching the right way of doing something we evoke more possibilities. (Questel 2002: 14)

The Feldenkrais Method employs Awareness Through Movement® (ATM®) and Functional Integration® (FI®) as means of enabling the individual to experience the transformative miracle of efficient, integrated and aesthetically pleasing movement. This is because the Feldenkrais Method lessons are structured in such a way that enables individuals to develop in their self-awareness, and consequently discover and choose new patterns of movement which enables them to let go of old habits and patterns of movement for more efficient ones. Functional Integration is a hands-on approach that enables the practitioner to use his physical organisation and experience to guide the student to discoveries. In Functional Integration, lessons are bespoke and are selected by the practitioner to address the individual's movement habits and physical organisation.

Awareness Through Movement, on the other hand, is usually experienced through group lessons that involve verbal instructions in that exploratory journey to a more efficient and functional use of the whole self in movement. In Awareness Through Movement the practitioner uses verbal prompts and instructions to lead a group of students through a sequence of movements which are explored using gentle movement and repetition. At the heart of the teaching and practice of the Feldenkrais Method is the concept of “awareness” which it addresses using movement as a vehicle. Simply put, ‘Movement is the basis of awareness’ (Feldenkrais 1990: 36). Awareness, according to Moshe Feldenkrais, is ‘consciousness together

with a realization of what is happening within it or of what is going on within ourselves while we are conscious' (Feldenkrais 1990: 50). This awareness using the art of "questioning" is central to the teaching and practice of the Feldenkrais Method – as an inquiry-based system of learning and unlearning movement habits.

The Feldenkrais Method is quite useful to the performer in that it not only provides the vehicle of enquiry but, more importantly, it presents the performer with the clear indications as to "what to question" and "how to question". The Feldenkrais Method offers the performer a space in which to listen to himself and to enquire about his physical organisation and relationship to the world around him. This space equally provides the performer with the unique opportunity to notice, to be uncertain and to change long held habits that will in turn lead to greater ease, sophistication and creativity in movement, play and action. Writing on this Moshe Feldenkrais notes that 'the lessons are designed to improve ability, that is, to expand the boundaries of the possible, to turn the impossible into the possible, the difficult into the easy, and the easy into the pleasant' (Feldenkrais 1990: 57).

For some, uncertainty and puzzlement can often manifest at the early stages of a Feldenkrais Method lesson. However, as the enquiry deepens, and students begin to attain a greater sense of awareness, they will start to gain much better clarity about their subject of enquiry – their physical organisation and relationship to the world around them. In turn, they will achieve greater efficiency and fluency in movement, as well as the confidence that comes with the possibilities that this growing awareness presents. For the performer, this will most often lead to their being able to make better judgements about how they apply themselves in training and performance situations. In this system of enquiry, the answers are often not as important as the process of arriving at them. This is because, by emphasizing "awareness" of the process instead of finding the "right" answers, the Feldenkrais Method places the performer in the strong position to be an efficient and creative mover.

Research Design and Pilot Project

This paper draws on a longitudinal study that started in 2010 with a Higher Education Academy Teaching Development funding, and which has been sustained through my practice research work with drama and performing arts students, first at University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Swansea Metropolitan) and more recently at Canterbury Christ Church University. The research project that underpins this essay has as one of its key aims, the exploration and documentation of the growing practice of incorporating the Feldenkrais Method in movement and performance training within the UK Higher Education context. The project also looked at some of the strategies and approaches adopted by Feldenkrais practitioners in their work with actors, dancers, musicians and performers in general. The project employed qualitative research methodology in the form of teaching observation and interviews with fifteen Feldenkrais practitioners I had identified through the Feldenkrais Guild UK as being involved in performance training at higher education level. The teaching observation and semi-structured

interviews for this longitudinal project were carried out at the onset, between January and March 2010, and have continued to feed into ongoing practical explorations with different cohorts of drama students at my institution. In addition to the teaching observation and interviews, the initial phase of the project also featured a demonstration workshop led by Richard Cave and Garet Newell, which provided a unique opportunity for students and colleagues from other Higher Education institutions to further explore the Feldenkrais Method in its application to performance training under the guidance of these two respected teachers and practitioners.

When examined in relation to the other areas of the performing arts, dance practitioners have the longest tradition of using the Feldenkrais Method, possibly due to the fact that many dancers come to it as a result of injury. The composition of the interview sample of practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method was fairly evenly distributed among the subject discipline areas even though, as I anticipated from the start, dance and physical theatre practitioners using the Feldenkrais Method were better represented than those involved in drama and acting programmes. For each interview, I travelled to the interviewees' institutions or practice locations to conduct a face-to-face interview with them. The focus of each interview was on their processes and experiences of working with, or training, performers within the Higher Education environment. Interviews were semi-structured, and after going over the participant information sheet and the project aims, interviewees signed consent forms allowing me to make audio recordings of the interviews. Each interview lasted an average of one hour.

Interviews generally began with the interviewees giving a brief background to their Feldenkrais practise and their thoughts on using the Feldenkrais Method in performer training. The interviews focused specifically on the tutor led approach of "Awareness Through Movement" as opposed to the hands-on, one-to-one approach of "Functional Integration". The rest of the interview was structured loosely around a number of questions which explored perceived value of the Feldenkrais Method in performer training, the level of institutional support available for developing this work with students, and whether the practitioners adapted the Feldenkrais lessons to suit the specific training needs of the students they are teaching, and how students received or responded to the lessons. The interviewees were also encouraged to, where necessary, digress and talk about other aspects of their Feldenkrais work with students that were not directly addressed by my questions. This approach resulted in interviewees identifying a number of concerns about the practicality of assessing the Feldenkrais input on performer training programmes. Given that assessments are vital in appraising students learning and achievement of set module or programme outcomes, the practitioners were encouraged to share their views on how best to measure and assess the impact of Feldenkrais lessons on students. Some of the practitioners work as guest lecturers at institutions where they are often called upon to teach students on courses with set assessments which address specific module outcomes. Consequently, they were not required to assess any aspect of the Feldenkrais Method work undertaken with the students. One such practitioner, Maggy Burrowes, reported that she sees her teaching of Feldenkrais as an opportunity to engage the students' curiosity:

I have often found myself teaching students in a format that is not overseen by other members of the teaching community and not assessed as part of the students' qualification. I always approach these situations as an opportunity to stimulate the curiosity of the student and encourage their confidence in their capacity for self-development. (Burrowes 2010)

On the other hand, there are other practitioners who were interviewed as part of this project who teach modules that have the Feldenkrais Method written into it in ways that mean they could be assessed. This latter group hold the view that "reflective journals" by students have proven an effective means of assessing the Feldenkrais Method within a performer training context as individual students learn and experience the lessons differently. This is primarily because a key benefit of the Feldenkrais Method is its ability to transform the way students' approach training and performing as they develop a heightened awareness of their physicality.

Focusing assessment on students' reflexive accounts of their embodied learning and engagement with the process, provides them the freedom to build on the awareness of their habitual patterns to move in ways that are most useful for the creative tasks they want to achieve. This is observed by Questel who notes that 'to be able to fulfil one's intention in action is essential to the ability to create a role and to tell a story' (Questel 2002: 13). When it is taught effectively, the Feldenkrais Method can enable students and performers to develop a heightened awareness of themselves in stillness and in action. In other words, students are encouraged to take advantage of their increased somatic awareness in ways that enables them to sense how they are organised, moment by moment, in performance and everyday life and to eliminate "parasitic efforts" that are not necessary for the specific actions or movements they are trying to accomplish. The general view among the practitioners interviewed was that any assessment framework for articulating benefit to students should not be performance based but should consider the students' developing awareness of habitual patterns of stress associated with particular movements and actions. The Feldenkrais Method develop students' capacity as reflexive practitioners by creating a safe space for students to be curious, experiment with ideas and potentially "fail" without repercussion. This reflects Questel's position that 'the quality of the environment created by the Feldenkrais practitioner is one of safety, where people are free to make mistakes and to explore without having to succeed' (Questel 2002: 13).

Creating a supportive environment is essential for learning in general, and this is also true for teaching a Feldenkrais lesson. The support structure can take many forms including the use of small groups, with students observing and offering feedback to each other. This helps to create a community of enquiry as a supportive framework in which learning can take place. It creates a "scaffolding effect" around the learners by providing individual, tailor-made support, utilizing small group work and feedback as a mechanism to support and encourage enquiry and focus the students on the process instead of the outcome. Regarding the value of experience and collaboration in the learning process, Moshe Feldenkrais argued that 'not everybody is capable of identifying himself easily, and one may be greatly helped by the experience of others' (1990:

23). Such collaborative or “assisted” enquiry encourages curiosity and experimentation within a framework that is both supportive and mutual. This process of assisted enquiry is possible because, as Libby Worth observes, the ‘non-judgemental approach that the method supports encourages creative response and personal exploration/ discovery’ (2010). Kampe further argues that ‘as a non-corrective, and thus inclusive open-ended system focusing on the facilitation of learning through experience, questioning, and problem solving, it [the Feldenkrais Method] has had a tremendously empowering impact on my students in all areas of practical study - movement for actors, dance education and training, choreographic and performance making syllabi’ (2010). Adopting this approach to teaching the Feldenkrais Method encourages students to build on peer and tutor feedback to ask further questions about their physical organisation and relationship to the world around them. In this way, students working in small groups, act as co-enquirers by asking similar questions about their own physical organisation and relationship to the world around them as they work with each other. This relationship as co-enquirers also operates when a student is working directly with a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method. Both of them function as “learners” in the sense that the practitioner can gain new and useful insight from the enquiry process of the student. However, in this relationship, the practitioner retains his primary role as a guide, helping the student to make sense of their experience of the enquiry.

Recent Developments: Encouraging Curiosity and Experimentation

Movement is an integral part to the actor’s ability to tell the story. This is true not only in terms of what is to be expressed and communicated, but also in terms of tuning, refining, and developing the instrument. The Feldenkrais Method presents a unique opportunity for the actor to create a role, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the creative process. (Questel 2002: 11)

A key issue that emerged from the pilot study is that the Feldenkrais Method must not be construed as a technique that students have to learn and adopt to be good performers. Instead, it must be seen as helping to develop a viable foundation of awareness on which different techniques can then be built. Seen from this perspective, one can argue that the Feldenkrais Method is most useful for underpinning the teaching and learning of technique primarily because it does not function as a technique in and of itself. Since the pilot, I have continued to implement this approach and some of the strategies it fosters in my work with undergraduate drama and performing arts students. The strategies are useful as they operate in such ways as to encourage curiosity and experimentation in performer training. Principally, strategies for teaching the Feldenkrais Method in my work with students focus around its more generic use for developing embodied awareness or physical control, which can have a significant impact on their learning of techniques with regards to aspects such as balance, stability, range of movement, comfort and ease.

A second approach has to do with its more nuanced usage as material for creating performances, which draws on the students' experiential knowledge of the Feldenkrais Method and the heightened psycho-physical awareness it engenders to uncover new possibilities and choices in movement. It is however worth noting that both approaches are not mutually exclusive and can indeed be applied alongside each other. Writing about her work in introducing the Feldenkrais Method within the undergraduate theatre programme at University Centre Doncaster (UCD), Dianne Hancock notes that:

The Feldenkrais Method was introduced into the curriculum at UCD as an extension of the teaching in voice and movement. The application of Feldenkrais Method within an actual performance is left to the interpretation of the student and the challenge of bringing Feldenkrais Method into theatre performance has had varying interpretations. While Feldenkrais Method teachers such as Richard Cave and Libby Worth at Royal Holloway encouraged students to integrate FM lessons into their performances, students at UCD have opted to use the work as an underpinning skill for physicality on stage. (2015: 169)

Even though Hancock's approach to teaching Feldenkrais to her students seems to focus on what I have described as its more generic use for developing embodied awareness or physical control, students were also given the opportunity to experiment with integrating and applying it to performance making. However, from Hancock's account, it is evident that colleagues at Royal Holloway encouraged this approach outright. This approach can also be found in the work of Thomas Kampe who further explores 'the possible applications and resonances of the Feldenkrais Method within the context of performance making rather than performer training' (2010b: 38). While my approach, like Hancock, has mainly centred on the generic use of the Feldenkrais Method for developing embodied awareness or physical control, I have nevertheless retained a keen interest in exploring its potential for inspiring curiosity as students experiment and push the boundaries of possibility in performance making. In this respect, I would often introduce a creative task as a starting point for the Awareness Through Movement enquiry, which may take the form of an improvisation or characterisation task.

I would often start by asking the students to walk around and explore the studio space. While walking, students feel how they shift their weight around the pelvis, how they carry their heads and hold their shoulder. I ask them to explore the sounds they make as they walk around the room, both vocal sounds, their breathing and the sound of their feet against the floor. I encourage them to pay attention to these sounds as they continue to move and explore when they feel or sound the strongest/ clearest or weakest/ faintest. After some minutes of self-observation, I ask the students to lie down on the floor and take them through a mini Awareness Through Movement of an adapted "pelvic clock" lesson lasting about 15 minutes. This use of mini Awareness Through Movement's emerged from the pilot study, which found that students, particularly those new to the Method, often found it difficult to remain engaged for the 45-60 minutes it usually takes to complete a full Awareness Through Movement lesson.

However, 'spending an average of 15-20 minutes on each lesson when working with students at undergraduate level is recommended in order to retain their attention. The time spent on lessons can then be extended as the students develop in their training' (Igweonu 2010: 21-22). After 15 minutes of exploring the "pelvic clock" while lying on the floor, students stand and continue to explore the lesson in standing. This is where the characterisation work begins. Drawing on their curiosity and sense of fun, the students move around the space once more while continuing to shift the weight of their pelvises in different cardinal directions and to experiment with sensations, postural shifts and changing sounds that each variation of pelvis conjures. Finally, I ask the students to reflect on their experiences of developing characterisation from this exercise and to share feedback with the group.

Generally, I find that it is crucial, in working with undergraduate students, to introduce Feldenkrais lessons using appropriate "scaffolding" techniques such as peer observation and feedback. At this point it is helpful to clarify that throughout this article, indeed throughout the research project that underpins it, I have directed my attention to undergraduate students studying at universities as opposed to those training at conservatories. Traditionally, conservatories have a much stronger vocationally-oriented training focus than universities, which have a more broad-based educational remit. Due to this emphasis on vocational training, conservatories are more highly selective than universities, and instead of a limited number of contact hours per week that university students would receive for practical training, conservatory students receive substantially more contact hours often encompassing a 09:00 to 17:00 daily routine, which is entirely training-oriented. So, while a scaffolding approach is beneficial in working with students in general, it has a crucial role to play in a university context where the contact hours devoted to practical training are limited.

As part of the scaffolding approach, it is important not to underestimate the usefulness of allowing ample time for peer feedback after each lesson. In my practice, this includes encouraging students to use the time to record their experiences in their journals and logbooks as part of their reflexive practice. Comments from feedback sessions with students point to the effectiveness of scaffolding approaches that privilege group reflection and feedback. For instance, reflecting on the group feedback after a lesson in 2015, one student recounted how 'two other participants in today's session commented that after the session, they felt as if they could 'float' home. They also agreed that they have experienced a positive release in their mind and body [...] They both observed that they felt grounded to the floor in today's Feldenkrais lesson, and also that their chests felt open with their shoulders loose and pushed back' (personal communication, 2 October 2015). Reflecting on another lesson in the same year, a second student observed that 'at the end of the session, when we were asked to walk around the room, I and others commented that we all felt taller; upright. Our horizons were directed up towards the top of the wall ahead rather than tilted down. The neck felt light and flexible in movement when looking over the shoulder both left and right. I felt a sense of confidence and

alertness, which could be connected to walking upright and straight.” (personal communication, 2 October 2015).

Conclusion: Looking to the Future

There is a growing amount of work being done within UK Higher Education performer training programmes, which recognises the immense benefit of the Feldenkrais Method to students. There is also considerable enthusiasm among the practitioner community to continue to explore creative ways of embedding the Feldenkrais Method within Higher Education performer training. It remains the case that only few performing arts programmes at UK Higher Education institutions have a Feldenkrais Method component as a distinct part of their curriculum, mainly due to the influence of individual practitioners employed at these institutions who are in positions that allow them to influence curriculum development. Even though many of the practitioners that took part in the pilot study contribute to courses that do not have the Feldenkrais Method fully embedded in them, they all expressed enthusiasm about some of the positive changes that are beginning to take place as more performing arts academics train to qualify as Feldenkrais practitioners. Nonetheless, there is still much work to be done in exploring the application of the Feldenkrais Method to performer training and performance making processes and embedding it more firmly within the performing arts curricula in the UK.

The Feldenkrais Method supports many other techniques and training methods by facilitating efficient self-use and bodily awareness which can be applied to all other physical activities required by the actor. This is because at the heart of the Feldenkrais Method is the development of a heightened awareness of the self in stillness and in action. This need to awaken and develop awareness and self-reflection in students is key to the adoption of the Feldenkrais Method in performer training. The Feldenkrais Method has much to offer performing arts students as a heightened psycho-physical awareness and the ability to make intelligent movement choices can contribute immensely to their success as creative practitioners. What my work, and that of many other practitioners working in Higher Education, has shown is that the Feldenkrais Method is essential as a foundation in physical training and should be placed at the forefront of performer training in UK Higher Education.

References

- Feldenkrais, M. (1990) *Awareness Through Movement*. New York: Harper Collins
- Hancock, D. (2015) ‘Teaching the Feldenkrais Method® in UK higher education performer training’. *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* 6 (2), 159-173, DOI: 10.1080/19443927.2015.1043468

Igweonu, K. (2010) *Feldenkrais Method in Performer Training: Encouraging Curiosity and Experimentation*. Project Report. Swansea: Centre for Innovative Performance Practice and Research

Kampe, T. (2010) 'Weave: The Feldenkrais Method as Choreographic Process'. *Perfformio* 1 (2), 34-52

Questel, A. S. (2002) 'The Feldenkrais Method: Application for the Actor'. *Feldenkrais Journal* (14), 11-16

Worsley, V. (2016) *Feldenkrais for Actors: How to do less and discover more*. London: Nick Hern Books

Interviews

Burrows, M., interviewed by Igwenou, K., February 15, 2010

Kampe, T., interviewed by Igwenou, K., February 26, 2010

Worth, L., interviewed by Igwenou, K., February 2, 2010

Biography

Dr Kene Igweonu is Deputy Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange) for the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries at Middlesex University London. His research and publication interests are in actor and performance training, directing, black British theatre, theatre and performance in Africa and its Diasporas, as well as the Feldenkrais Method in health, wellbeing and performance training.