Learning through Touch: Opportunities and Challenges for Haptic Learning in Kenyan Higher Education

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Sub Theme: Arts Social Sciences and Entrepreneurship for Societal Transformation

ABSTRACT

Purpose /Design: to call attention to the presence and importance of haptic learning in Kenyan institutions and daily life.

Methodology /approach used: Participant observation over several decades

Finding (s): Haptic intelligence, haptic skills and haptic data collection are inadequately identified, recognized or incorporated in learning processes in Kenyan academic and general life.

Practical Implication: There is ample opportunity to develop greater recognition and incorporation of hapticity in learning for everyone in Kenya

Originality /value: There has been long-term consensus among educational theorists and practitioners that the greater the range of senses deployed to the process of learning, the more effective the learning process becomes. However, in practice, Kenya’s education system places disproportionate emphasis on the visual and auditory “gateways to knowledge”. This emphasis has not only made learning less attractive to students in general, but also resulted in great disadvantage to students with visual disabilities by limiting their choices to the humanities and social sciences. It also ignores the validity of the many kinds of haptic learning, both inside and outside academic institutions, notably manual production skills and skills to interpret touch–based data.

This paper examines the opportunities and challenges associated with haptic learning for students with and without visual disabilities in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. It suggests ways of incorporating haptic learning into teacher education curricula, and how to identify and make it part and parcel of the learning process for all students in Kenya’s higher education institutions.

Keywords: touch, haptic data, haptic learning, manual learning, education