

A Study of Japanese Picture Book (e-hon) and Possible Introduction to Kenyan Education

日本の絵本の調査とケニアの教育への導入の可能性

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Abstract:

The cultural, social, and environmental aspects of East Africa, Kenya, in this case, are rich and diverse. This region's growth and social-economic development rely on education and its appreciation in the early stages of child development. One way, as observed in Japanese culture and the education system, is art appreciation, especially for children through picture books (*e-hon*). Picture books have played a major role in children's interaction with culture, nature and creativity and a rich source of child entertainment. In Kenya's case, a child may be able to access a storybook either from school or a bookstore; this is not the case for many. However, there is a huge need for children to access something different, attractive and available that can keep them engaged through books with fewer words and more well-illustrated pictures. This can only be effective through picture books. This study finds out more about Japanese art development and the possibilities of having similar picture book culture in Kenya and East Africa as a whole.

Keywords: Kenyan and Japanese Education, art, picture book (*e-hon*)

1. Introduction and Background of Kenyan Education Situation

Art is the expression or application of human creative skills and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power. Art is better structured in Japan, and it is actually the key fulcrum to the country's culture. This document will try to draw parallels between art in the two countries with a possible objective of creating a sustainable exchange program with a bias towards picture books (*e-hon*) targeting elementary school learners.

Art remains integral and plays a crucial role in day-to-day activities in this modern world. Though in developing countries like Kenya, it is still looked down upon as just another 'blue collar' activity and yet fully recognized as a

proper profession. Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is a new education system designed by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) team and launched by the Ministry of Education in 2017. The CBC is designed to emphasize the significance of developing skills and knowledge and also applying those competencies to real life situations. With the introduction of CBC, there is hope that Art might make a comeback after being struck off the primary school level some years back. Therein still lay a big challenge as there are still not enough teachers who can competently, realistically, and professionally handle this subject. A good number of teachers and trainers who handle this level of learners are mostly trained in general education with a significant bias towards the other traditional subjects such as Mathematics, English, and Science. In any case, how many schools or colleges of Art are there in the

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country? Art is mostly visual and practical based, unlike other subjects that are more theoretical. (OKEYO, 2018)

Creativity varied amongst communities, which augmented their uniqueness. Even though colonization contributed towards uniting Kenya, traditional culture was gradually eroded in favor of the British where traditional Art became obsolete. Since independence has done minimal to promote Art education, the two education curriculums implemented in Kenya contributed to it being disfavored as a viable career option since it is classified under the blue-collar job group. Vocational training institutes, mainly a product design industry whose foundation is Art education, was established in Kenya to assist in job creation for those gifted in craftsmanship. Art education contributes towards developing problem-solving abilities with practical solutions and in their creative application. The Kenyan government hoped that the vocationally trained would eventually employ themselves; however, this sector is gripped by various challenges. Like their products being overlooked for imports, they lack finances to operate and invest in technology to improve their products and have a competitive edge over imports. Some of their products lack creativity and are poorly executed as compared to imports. They are also challenged with mass production since their products are handmade. Kenya is currently facing an unemployment crisis whereby the Kenyan workforce (employers) are struggling to find competent employees with problem-solving skills and coping mechanisms to endure with the work environment despite their university education. To address this issue, in January 2018, the Kenyan government implemented a new education curriculum with an emphasis on the relevance of Art education in equipping students with the above skills. In Kenya, CBC is in the initial years of implementation. This Competency-Based Curriculum of 2-6-3-3 system replaces 8-4-4, which in turn replaced the 7-4-2-3 education system adopted at independence.

The successful implementation of CBC depends not just on the classroom teacher who acts as a facilitator in the learning process, but also on the parent's involvement. This is because some of the demands of the curriculum transcend the boundaries of school. Parents are expected to play a very important role in the success of their children's education by providing an enabling environment that is conducive to learning. They can motivate learners to fulfill

their potential by completing assigned tasks, monitoring and guiding children in doing homework, providing required aids and materials for practical activities, collecting and sending evidence of children completing tasks assigned by teachers (GITAHI, 2019).

The previous Kenyan education curriculum (8-4-4) had its many challenges among them, overworked and underpaid teachers, insecurity of teachers and pupils living in hostile environments, exam cheating, corruption in schools, the welfare of both students and teachers, and unfortunately, the phasing out the Arts programs in schools. The system required pupils to attain eight years of primary education, four years of secondary and university education. Unfortunately, the 8-4-4 system gave little regard to promoting the Arts program while giving much emphasis to the sciences and humanities. Art programs were in the process of being entirely phased out as the system solely focused on attaining high grades, and subjects like Art were not meeting school requirements. Parents were taking their children to school based on a school's average performance, and that meant that if a school attained a low mean grade, they would lose out on admissions, which would translate to loss. The Art program has been reinstated and strongly emphasized in this new curriculum as one of the subjects necessary to assist in developing the skills mentioned above that were lacking in the previous system. (WANJALA, 2017) The next crucial step now is to get the young learners, especially those who are in the elementary level to get to appreciate the Arts, and by extension, their parents, guardians, and the general public, especially those who grew up or who went through the previous program which generally treated the Arts as secondary.

2. Visual Media and Education

Teachers usually adopt visuals to support oral presentations, make the concepts clear and situated, and facilitate focusing on relevant elements. As it has been, and still is to no small extent, getting to have learners aged between 3-9 years to concentrate on something for more extended periods is a very daunting task. It is even worse and more challenging, especially when it comes to countries that do not have subjects like Art at the center of their learning programmes/curriculum. Therefore, it becomes a preserve for a few, more biased towards the

privileged who have the luxury of sparing a few bucks to have their children nurture their talents and skills on a ‘professional’ level and with professionals and under professionals. Much as the child/learner might be interested in the Arts, the fact still remains that their concentration span is low. Learning through pictures has a considerable impact, especially on the young ones, as one will often see them try to make their own modified sketches based on certain pictures or images they came across in the past. Fact is, everyone has some Artistry in them, and it is only that much later different people go into different professions, but it remains the fact that Art still plays a central pivotal role in day-to-day activities. Solving some complex or simple sums could prove daunting e.g., 10 multiplied by 10 gives us 100, but how does one get a 6-year-old to solve the same in a simplified manner? *E-hon* (picture book) would do this by simply having a picture illustrating a footballer kicking 10 balls 10 times each to make 100 goals.

3. Overview of the History of Japanese Visual Media

The *emaki*, a popular Art from between the end of the *Heian* Period and the *Muromachi* Period (roughly between the 8th and 14th centuries, reaching its peak in the 10th-12th centuries), functioned much the same way as the modern picture book. They consisted of long, illuminated narrative scrolls opened horizontally from right to left and told the story through a combination of text and illustration. *Emaki* such as *Shigisan Emaki* and *Bandai agon Ekotoba* revealed the visual narrative along with the words, as the scroll was unrolled. In Japanese history, *Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga* (12-13th century, Figure1) is painted frolicking animals; for example, anthropomorphic rabbits and monkeys are playing and wrestling. *Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga* is credited as the oldest work of *manga*.

The term *Edo* connotes a distinctive aesthetic sensibility that spans a wide range of Art forms, including screen paintings, scrolls, sculptures, ceramics, lacquers, textiles, and woodblock prints. *Edo* period, also called the *Tokugawa* period (1603-1867), the final period of traditional Japan, a time of internal peace, political stability, and economic growth under the shogunate (military dictatorship) founded by *Tokugawa Ieyasu*. There were artisans, merchants and a flourishing urban culture. *Tokugawa Ieyasu*'s victory and territorial unification paved the way for a powerful new

government. Artisans and merchants became important producers and consumers of new forms of visual and material culture.

During the *Edo* period, a bustling urban culture developed. Merchants, craftsmen, and entertainers helped shape cultural and artistic tastes through their products and programs. Collaborative linked-verse parties and new forms of entertainment like *kabuki* theater became staples of the urban lifestyle. In popularity, tourism gained popularity as travelers went on pilgrimages to shrines, temples, and famous sites, often associated with classical poems and traditional tales. All these cultural practices were mirrored in the popular paintings and prints known collectively as *ukiyo-e*. Literally, ‘pictures of the floating world’, *ukiyo-e* can be best defined as genre painting for and about ‘common people’ members of the middle class of *Edo* period Japanese society. Contemporaneous with the *ukiyo-e* master *Hishikawa Moronobu* was the painter *Iwasa Matabei*, who, like *Moronobu* and his followers, saw himself as an heir to the *Yamato-e* and *Tosa-school* traditions. Given his anecdotal painting style and his allegiance to Japanese subjects and painting techniques, *Matabei* is often regarded as a founding figure of *ukiyo-e* along with *Moronobu*.

Ukiyo-e images were made available in a variety of formats, from paintings to picture books and loose woodblock prints, often conceived in series. Some of the best known *ukiyo-e* masters and an emblem for Japanese Art in the western world are *Katsushika Hokusai* (1760-1849) and *Tōshūsai Sharaku* (birth and death unknown, Figure2).

Ukiyo-e, the ‘floating-world’ pictures reproduced by woodcut, became very popular at the end of the 18th century. They consisted of one-page pictures that were folded to make small narrative booklets for children. *Akahan* belonged to a group known as *Kusazoushi*: picture books of high quality characterized by a printed design combining image and word on each page.

Having been in closure for about 200 years, the *Meiji Period* (1868-1912) began when Japan introduced European-American culture, including the Education System.

4. After Meiji Period (1868-1912)

Modern Japan begins with Emperor *Meiji*'s reign, whose name, meaning ‘enlightened rule’, was intended to symbolize the new age. During this brief period, Japan

experienced radical social and political shifts and a host of reforms that propelled Japan to modernizing its government to contend on equal terms with the major international powers. Japan adopted an imperial constitution guaranteeing freedoms previously unimaginable. This freedom, coupled with the importation of foreign ideas and technology, reversed centuries of exclusion and encouraged new Art forms for the age. The *Meiji* government admired Western ideas and invited foreign artists to teach at official schools to bring knowledge about European Art to Japan. Japan's initial stages of Art education was greatly inspired by ideas from overseas, mainly Western countries.

The elementary school system was revised in 1903 with the government issuing textbooks. The system was revised in 1947. Drawing was still not compulsory in public elementary schools in 1904, but it became compulsory in 1907.

The *Meiji* Revolution of 1868 made possible the compulsory educational system established in 1872 and raised the literacy rate, which resulted in the burgeoning of magazine and periodical publication. Monthly magazines for children were targeted at distinguished audience based on sex and age. Japanese children were introduced to a small number of picture books from abroad, one of which was the German picture book *Max und Moritz* (BUSCH, 1865). It was introduced as *Wanpaku Monogatari* (The Story of a Naughty Child) and illustrated with woodcuts, but it had little impact on Japanese picture books. In the 1910s, several Japanese magazines for children, such as *Kodomo no Tomo* (The Children's Companion) and *Akai Tori* (Red Bird), were launched one after the other. Against the backdrop of the prosperity that arrived in Japan after World War I (1914-1918), a period known as the *Taisho* Democracy, highly artistic illustrated magazines and picture books emerged from the movement at the time promoting fairy tales, nursery songs and pictures for children.

Following World War II (1939-1945), picture books enjoyed resurgence thanks to *Chihiro Iwasaki's* contributions and other unique artists.

In the *Taisho* Period (1912-1926), several picture magazines were issued for children, notably, *Kodomo-no-tomo* (The Child's Friend) and *Kodomo-no-kuni* (Children's Land). These magazines covered various subjects, normally one subject in a double-spread, which provided different types of artists with opportunities to design for children. Those whose work is recognized as of particular importance include *Kiichi Okamoto*, *Shigeru Hatsuyama*, and *Takeo Takei*.

In 1926, the Kindergarten Act was passed, and the following year, kinder book, the first monthly picture book to be directly distributed through kindergarten, appeared. In 1936, *Kodansha*, one of the country's biggest publishers, began publishing their influential series *Kodansha's* Picture Books, which presented four titles every month. In 1938, the Home Office began to take an interest in picture books and prepared a list of high-quality picture books.

Gradually an integration of Japanese tradition and European-American culture has come through visual media such as *manga* (comic, Figure 3), *anime* (animation), and *e-hon* (picture book, Figure 4), Picture books mostly famous among the children's education. This integration would help the East African community since both sides have a rich sensation of culture, values, and the environment.

5. Methodology of Questionnaire and Research

To know a situation about picture book(*e-hon*) in Japan nowadays, a qualitative and quantitative research was carried out, using a questionnaire, class observation with video, and ordinary interview.

As shown in Table 1, in the first phase of the study, an online and physical exploratory questionnaire about

Table 1

Phase	Research Tool	Subject	Goals
1	Questionnaire	Teachers	Exploring frequency and use of different kind of images
2	Video Research	Teachers	Observing
3	Video Research	Learners	Observing
4	Virtual Research	Experts/Learners/ Teachers	Collecting perceptions about the experience and its implications

the educational use of visuals is to be administered to elementary level teachers. Data is to be availed to focus on representations and orientations of use, deeper into subsequent qualitative field research.

6. Findings of Questionnaire

As Table 2, a total of 130 people were interviewed via online questionnaires on the Kenya side, and 124 people, mostly Hirosaki University students, participated in filling the Japanese online questionnaire. The following display and breakdown show the respondents' analysis from the questionnaires, questions being of a similar kind. The questionnaires were made through Google Forms.

The main respondents were from both Kenya and Japan. With regards to Kenya, most of them were the teachers and students. However, it was possible to reach a number of other people to give their views from the questionnaire. The Japanese students, mainly in the Education faculty,

were able to share their responses. This was made easier through the university Microsoft Teams Platform. For the Kenya side, the target group was majorly reached through WhatsApp social network.

The first two representations display the degree to which the respondents enjoyed reading storybooks and a picture book regarding Kenya and Japan, respectively, followed by the age bracket when they were able to read the books. Most Kenyan people read storybooks between ages 7-8 years while most respondents read picture books mostly at 4-5 years in Japan's case. Three main areas that were identified by Kenya respondents to be the main problem facing storybook industry in Kenya were the lack of reading culture, the cost of storybooks, and the negative influence of social media.

Japanese language was very rich in onomatopoeia. I inquired how much they used onomatopoeia in the conversations. It was clear that most of them were used to

Table 2

Question		KENYA 130 respondents	JAPAN 124 respondents
Did you enjoy reading story books(e-hon) in your childhood?	enjoyed very much enjoyed much enjoyed enjoyed a little did not enjoy	7 people (5.4%) 7 people (5.4%) 25 people (19.2%) 17 people (13.1%) 74 people (56.9%)	64 people (51.4%) 46 people (37.5%) 31 people (8.9%) 2 people (1.6%) 1 person (0.8%)
At which age level did you read story books (e-hon)the most?	4 years old 5 years old 6 years old 7 years old 8 years old forgot and other	2 people (1.5%) 3 people (2.3%) 13 people (10.0%) 17 people (13.1%) 92 people (70.0%) 16 people (12.3%)	35 people (28.2%) 33 people (26.6%) 20 people (16.1%) 5 people (0.4%) 0 people (0.0%) 31 people (25.0%)
What captivated you most in the story books (e-hon) that you read?	characters illustrations story content songs poetry and onomatopoeia	13 people (10.0%) 73 people (56.2%) 25 people (19.2%) 12 people (9.2%) 14 people (10.8%)	26 people (21.0%) 50 people (40.3%) 16 people (13.0%) 17 people (13.7%) 23 people (18.5%)
Question		KENYA 130 respondents	
Would you be interested to learn and be able to read simple books written in Swahili/English and foreign language?	very much interested very interested interested almost not interested not interested	77 people (59.2%) 23 people (17.7%) 12 people (9.2%) 6 people (4.6%) 7 people (5.4%)	
Question		JAPAN 124 respondents	
There are onomatopoeic phrases in Swahili language, for example, ndondondo(dripping water sound), bwebwebwe (barking dog sound), kwa kwa kwa (sound of laughter), fo fo fo (sleeping soundly). How interested are you in learning Swahili?	very much interested very interested interested almost not interested not interested	41 people (33.1%) 46 people (37.1%) 28 people (22.6%) 7 people (5.6%) 1 person (0.8%)	

it as they unconsciously involve onomatopoeic words in their language. Most of the students knew about the Swahili language and preferred to read a picture book that could involve English and Japanese, or English, Swahili, and Japanese. However, for the case of Kenya, even if most respondents preferred a picture book with English and Japanese. Reading Japanese proved to be a difficult task due to the different characters. That is *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*.

7. Observation of Step-by-Step Detailed Breakdown of *E-hon* Practical Class

The lesson took place at Attached Elementary School, Faculty of Education, Hirosaki University. The class consisted of 31 learners aged between 7-8 years of grade 2 level. The lesson was conducted in Art and Craft by the teacher, Takayuki Yashima. (Figure-10) The engagement involved first discussing with the teacher on how *e-hon*, and onomatopoeia could be involved in an Art class. The teacher came up with a simple picture-book that depicted the sound (onomatopoeia), the progression, and creative forms that were created in relation to the onomatopoeia. The teacher came up with a well elaborated lesson plan outlining the three lessons' objectives, and outcomes. The lesson plan also depicted his intention to see how the students could arouse their imagination from their prior knowledge of onomatopoeia or just from their own creation. The teacher highlighted all the needed materials.

During the first lesson, the teacher introduced the picture book titled *shiroi kami* meaning white paper, which is likely to be read by 3-year-old children in Japan and their parents. The teacher clarified his intention and with examples, explained how he intended to carry out the activities of the first lesson.

The students were very excited to see the picture book since it looked like a 'baby's book' and the fact that they were familiar with onomatopoeia. Furthermore, it was amusing to them that just through some white paper and a camera, a simple and interesting book for children was made. The explanation was done with the help of a projector. The learners listened attentively and were given the opportunity to ask questions where they did not understand. The teacher engaged the learners further by asking them to name other onomatopoeia examples they knew. The students were quick in naming a number of

them.

As the lesson progressed, the learners, in an organized manner, collected the provided materials. Each had at least three pieces of rectangular white paper of the same size. Every learner used a pair of scissors and crayons or used their hands to come up with different forms from their imagination. They also did consult with each other. They used glue sticks, crayons, scissors, and the papers to write their onomatopoeia. It wasn't easy at first for some learners to come up with their own forms that could depict their onomatopoeia. However, as the lesson progressed gradually, they were able to come up with some nice and creative forms along with the sounds they represented. At the end of the lesson, the teacher collected and took pictures of each learner's work. The photos were taken after placing the form on colored paper, which involved the sun's lighting creating shadows. The lesson concluded with all the learners having managed to have their work recorded on camera. During lesson number two, the teacher had already printed out pictures and arranged them into their respective groups. He had also made the QR codes for each group to access their 'Created Books'. This was done using 'Book creator', and thus the learners were and would always be able to access their books on the group iPads.

8. Appreciation of Lesson

The teacher introduced the lesson by reviewing their previous work by projecting it. The learners were required to respond based on what they saw. Then the teacher gave out papers with questions requiring the learners to respond based on their lesson experiences.

The questions were:

1. What was the impression of the white paper as you were making shapes/forms?
2. What did you want to make or create?
3. What title did you choose and what was the most appealing point in your creativity?
4. What ideas did you get from your own or friends' work? What did you learn or discover from the lesson, and how do you want to move forward?

In this lesson, they were also given a paper having each group's work QR Code. They could easily scan the Codes and see what the other groups did. This enabled the learners to answer the questions both orally and in writing.

Some of the responses of the learner were:

1. "I think it's wonderful that I can create lots of expressions from one paper form"
2. "I realized we have different perspectives"
3. "I found it interesting how we can change onomatopoeia even using the same form" —

The second part of the lesson hugely involved discussions centered on the lesson experiences. Here, the learners expressed themselves freely, as the teacher recorded their contributions on the board as he also asked simple, clear, and precise questions about 'White Paper Lesson'.

This experience triggered the following responses:

1. "I am surprised by my friends' imagination of shapes like these. I couldn't come up with such ideas myself"
 2. "it is fun just taking a normal paper, folding, tearing, crumpling and so forth...changing it in different ways"
 3. "the face we made in each group was interesting to me"
 4. "there were lots of shapes looking similar, but each shape had different onomatopoeia"
 5. "we can experience different feelings from the same shapes"
 6. "even if we have the same words, the imagination from the words may be different"
 7. "I felt that my friends expressed their onomatopoeia properly using a paper"
- "I discovered there were different ways to think, feel and imagine"
- "I was able to make many shapes"
- "I would like to use the paper for other artworks"
- "I enjoyed the differences in the ways of expression"
- "I found that just from paper, we can do many things and use it in some ways"
- "I could get lots of imagination"
- "I discovered that there were some shapes that did not correspond with similar words/sounds"

The lesson ended with the learners putting their newly created picture books at the display corner and the QR Codes for each group. Learners were well engaged throughout the three lessons. Learners had a good interaction in their groups and were quite familiar with technology through the iPads. The introduction, practice and appreciation were well defined. Time was well managed with a timer so that every activity was carried out within a specific time. A student would start the class with a voiced group motto, and there was a concluding remark.

Guided by the Japanese Education objectives for Grade 1 and Grade 2 below, I think this was quite a successful lesson right from the teacher's idea and the learners' creativity.

1. Objectives

- (1) To enable children to savor the joy of creating something while fostering an attitude of wanting to see and express things for themselves.
- (2) To enable children to activate sensations and skills over the whole of their body while deriving enjoyment from molding activities and generating a rich fund of ideas.
- (3) To enable children to take in the curious and the enjoyable aspects of the works of Art in their immediate environment.

9. Interdependence of the Japanese Art Class, School and Home Environment.

Good interaction among students and the teacher during the lesson was noted, from introduction to conclusion. These interaction and communication skills are acquired mainly from a child's home. A good home environment is ideal for creating well-rounded students, especially at their young age. It's always a special moment for a child to have their parents read them a picture book or tells them a story. However, this culture is definitely facing the challenge of negative social media influence, work or family-related issues, among others. The teachers, for instance, in Kenya's urban areas are left with considerable roles to play while the parents, if available in the evening, help their children finish the given homework. Storytelling has been left to grandparents, and children have few opportunities to meet them. For Japan, parents try their best to have some time to read picture books to their children. The local libraries are well-equipped with very friendly children's reading spaces. For example, a parent will use *Inai Inai Baa* (Peek-a-boo) for a 2 or 3 years old baby, with the picture book's captivating images, the child is thrilled as they read through. Whenever the child laughs, the parent can feel the response of childcare, which helps build a good parent-child relationship, enhancing communication.

As it was also observed in the Japanese Art class, the students were also actively involved in tidying up the papers in their desks and on the floor before the end of the lesson. It's observed vividly how the students follow the rules and carry out the tasks naturally. This is mainly

through cleaning activities in school, where students use 15 minutes at the end of the day for cleaning, *Souji*. Cleanliness is paramount. From home, they learn how to separate garbage for disposal at different days of the week, through Moral Education lesson, *Doutoku*, they learn more on values such as respect for people, culture, responsibility, and respect for the environment. Since most of the schools have their lunch together in the classroom, the Home Economics lesson, or *Kateika*, plays a significant role in instilling valuable skills such as hygiene. The New Curriculum in Kenya has a ray of hope in erasing such a mindset that cleaning is a vocation for low-paid workers.

10. Picture Book in Classroom *Kamishibai*

In conclusion, the targeted age group, so are most readers, seem to enjoy a story more, especially when it is interestingly illustrated, accompanied by song and onomatopoeia. *Kamishibai*, meaning “paper drama” is a kind of drama performance in which characters act out a story that is represented in a series of pictures. It is a popular form of performance Art in Japanese early childhood institutions because it is inexpensive and easy to perform even for a non-professional. *Kamishibai* might be the first Arts-based pedagogic activity that most Japanese children encounter. Adults perform ready-made *Kamishibai* for audiences of children. It is 'a form of story-telling or performance art that developed in Japan in the late 1920s'. In this multimodal drama, actors use a series of pictures to narrate or perform the story. *Kamishibai* is often used as a form of story-telling in kindergartens and nursery care institutions. The performer is usually an adult — a teacher, parent, or another facilitator.

Reading picture books aloud to children is known to positively affect young children's academic performance. The teacher usually involves the children in discussing the book's content and supports their learning of vocabulary, conceptual development, comprehension, and content knowledge. *Kamishibai* can be similarly effective for children's cognitive development. This study focuses on two forms of *Kamishibai*: adult-initiated collaborative story-making and child-initiated *Kamishibai*. The pedagogical application of *Kamishibai* for children to make their original story is not common practice in Japanese preschool institutions but a few practitioners do promote this activity in their daily program. Recently, *Kamishibai* has been

recommended for school children even outside of Japan. Kenya could borrow a leaf to use this rich method in the early school level and involve her rich culture and nature embedded in traditional stories through picture books.

11. How will introducing Picture books be of benefit in Kenya?

1. Looking at how poor the reading culture is in Kenya, picture books will arouse the interest in young readers, but it will act as a preamble to the main topic or subject taught. It will make the learner and the reader want to know more about a particular subject, and thus the need to take this interest to a whole new level.
2. If, for instance, a picture book is based on a story that was well loved by an adult in their earlier years, then this might be a good starting point for the adult's involvement; they would have the interest to want to share the same experience with their children. Also reading it for their children will offer the opportunity to jog their memories back. A famous story like *The adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain, is a story that most of the past generation enjoyed, fast-forward and have the same in a picture book, who interacted with this story in the past wouldn't like to get a hold of it?
3. A book that is originally written in a foreign language but is very well illustrated will always resonate well with young learners and readers, which could arouse the learner's interest in knowing and understanding what the foreign language is trying to communicate to them. This could even arouse their curiosity further in them wanting to create their own characters in drawing form based on what they might have seen and read.
4. Young children, readers, and learners are among some of the most faithful and loyal enthusiasts and followers of something. If picture books sit well with this demographic, then it could in turn be a new avenue to creating alternative opportunities for new job creations. Illustrators, authors, publishers, including online content producers and suppliers of books, might easily find an alternative avenue of production with a ready market.

12. Areas of further research and consideration

Seeing that the targeted group and age brackets are aroused by picture books as far as enhancing learning is concerned, there is the need to involve the Kenyan

government and the process could be lengthy. Kenyans, in general, don't like reading especially physical books and to a large extent, it is mostly a preserve of the cultured. Plus, there is the question of middle-men, gatekeepers and brokers.

Take these unique times for instance, the Kenyan government is already facing a major challenge in getting the learners to go back to normal learning during this period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus one of the major challenges that this research and its positive findings might face, is what the government and the Kenyans are putting their priority in.

The libraries could be put into broader use to encourage local enthusiasts by encouraging them to visit, take up membership and possibly borrow copies of the picture books on short loan and even encourage sharing. With gradual progress and funding, then there would be no need to put the copies up for commercial purposes, but rather encourage free reading and accessibility as bait, while at the same time encouraging the learning of the Japanese culture, which is slowly finding its way into the Kenyan education system.

By targeting the informal areas through the mobile libraries, the local communities could be encouraged to interact with the picture books by engaging the local visual and performing artists. Parental engagement is another area that might be exploited, however as earlier mentioned, there is a poor culture of reading, and thus to some extent it might be a tall order to get the parents to at least read and possibly share the picture book stories with their children just before bedtime. Other countries are also trying to promote their cultures in other countries, and possibly through similar ideas, and thus this could also be an area of completion scrambling for the same attention and space, hence the targeted group and bracket might be overwhelmed. Then there are geographical factors, including issues to do with infrastructure and language barriers.

13. Implications

Art and, by extension, picture book Art or illustrations, especially targeted towards a younger audience, has a huge impact on the learner. If well implemented in Kenya as compared to Japan, or simply by borrowing a leaf on how the Japanese government is handling Art and the picture book industry, then this could be the key to unlock doors to many other opportunities as based on research every individual has some artistry in them. Further research in Kenya and the world over shows that a good percentage of the working class are stuck up in careers and jobs that they may not be passionate about.

If well packaged or better still if some certain skills are encouraged and nurtured at an early age, especially the bracket of 2-7 year olds, it could have a huge impact at the later stages of their lives. This could, in turn, give birth to local solutions and heighten innovation.

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figure① *Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga* (Unknown author, 12-13th century)



figure② *ukiyo-e*
(author: Tōshūsai Sharaku, 1794)



figure③ *manga*
(author: Araidō Kagiri, 2018)



figure④ *e-hon*
(Poplar Co. Ltd., 2020)

Step-by-Step Detailed Breakdown of E-hon Practical Class



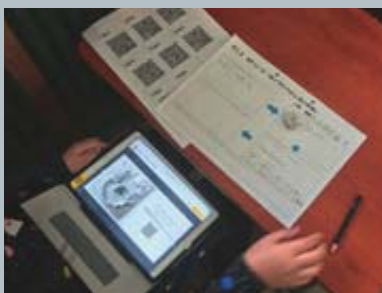
figure⑤



figure⑥



figure⑦



figure⑧



figure⑨



figure⑩