



**ART EDUCATION FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: CASE STUDY OF VISUAL ARTEFACTS  
PRODUCED BY HEARING-IMPAIRED PUPILS OF TETTEH  
OCLOO STATE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF**

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**Abstract:**

Formal education becomes most authentic, inclusive, and learner-centred when Art is at its forefront. The Arts provide learners with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts, hands, and entire bodies. The general relevance of Art education for learners with special educational needs has been variously and solidly argued by previous studies. However, much is not known about the creative artefacts of learners with special educational needs. The focus of this qualitative case study was to artistically appreciate selected visual artefacts produced by hearing-impaired pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf located at Adjei-Kojo, a suburb of Accra in Ghana. Adopting triangulation of instruments (semi-structured interviews, field observation & photography), the study gathered in-depth data from sixteen (16) purposively sampled respondents with findings analysed using qualitative descriptive tenets. The study ascertained that the Creative Arts subject is dedicatedly taught in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf by Art specialist teachers. As a result, the study observed that the hearing-impaired primary pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf were able to produce intriguing Visual artefacts (ranging from drawings/painting, clay work & papercraft). Aesthetic appreciation of some of the artefacts revealed that the works represent the oral accounts of the pupils' worldview of salient experiences in their immediate social and physical environments. It is recommended that the Art specialist

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teachers of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf should continue to teach the Creative Arts subject with dedication as this would nurture and inculcate the needed creative, innovative, and inventive skills onto the pupils for responsible adulthood.

**Keywords:** arts education, hearing-impaired pupils, special educational needs, Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf, visual artefacts

## 1. Introduction

Formal education becomes most authentic, inclusive, and learner-centred when art is at its forefront. According to National Association for Gifted Children (2014, p. 1), "*the arts are essential to a balanced education*". Fiske (1999, p. 12) adds that "*the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts, and bodies. The learning experiences are real and meaningful for them*". Even, when no hopes and solutions remain in educational curricula, Art education could be a signal for hope (Salderay, 2015). Winner, Goldstein and Vincent-Lancrin (2013) posit that Art education could be viewed as a means of getting students to enjoy school and motivating them for learning other academic subjects. It is further argued that "*students enrolled in Art education courses display a more ambitious attitude to academic work as well as higher levels of commitment and motivation*" (Winner, Goldstein and Vincent-Lancrin, 2013, p. 8). Salderay (2015) emphasises that Art and for that matter, Art education could be adapted, corresponded with everything and applied to everyone irrespective of differences in age, gender, type of special needs, race or educational level. This makes Art education a reliable path for the holistic development of the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of all learners irrespective of their varied abilities and disabilities (Anttila, 2018; Lowe, 2016; National Association for Gifted Children, 2014; Fiske, 1999). Eisner (2002) agrees that "*Art Education is considered important for the development of cognitive abilities necessary for creating meaning in the world*" (as cited in Sjöqvist, Göransson, Bengtsson & Hansson, 2020, p. 1). Arts have the propensity to facilitate social change and adaptation; understanding, thinking, and perceiving the abilities of humans (Allahverdiyev, Yucesoy & Baglama (2017).

Also, Art education could be used to educate or integrate people with disabilities who need special education thereby helping learners to learn to live with their disadvantages, exceptional positions and special needs (Salderay, 2015). In a detailed discussion, Fiske (1999) outlines some of the profound benefits of Arts and/or Art education as the Arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached; the Arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached; the Arts connect students to themselves and each other; the Arts transform the environment for learning; the Arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people; the Arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful; the Arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work. The enormous contributions of

Arts' activities in fostering the holistic development of learners with varied learning abilities, as espoused, is one of the reasons why "Art education is seen as a significant part of schooling for pupils in need of special educational support" (Sjöqvist, Göransson, Bengtsson & Hansson, 2020, p. 1). In Ghana for instance, Art education (Creative Arts & Career Technology) forms a compulsory part of the Basic School curriculum implemented in general, inclusive and special school settings. Given the general relevance of Art Education in regular, inclusive and special educational settings, many studies have specifically focused on the teaching and learning of Arts in special educational settings (Sjöqvist, Göransson, Bengtsson & Hansson, 2020; Duku, 2017; Lloyd, 2017; 2009; Valentino, 2016; Lowe, 2016; Salderay, 2015; Finley, 2013; Coleman, 2012; Fiske, 1999) to assess or evaluate the status quo of Art activities for learners with various degrees of disabilities as well as recommend best practices. Duku (2009), for instance, investigated the teaching and learning of Creative Art activities in the Ashanti school for the Deaf at Jamasi to determine the pupils' preferences. The results of Duku's study revealed that:

*"Drawing was the major Art activity in the primary section while the Junior high school practiced sewing. Pupils never had a chance of selecting the vocational skill option as it was practiced in all other junior high schools in the country. It was also evident that the school did not have a separate studio for their art work. The teachers did not have training in art education."* (p. 373)

Also, a study was conducted on how to facilitate inclusive education in Ghana through Art Education where it was emphasised that Art could be used as a catalyst in the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in Ghana, and also, young people without disabilities became advocates of the rights of persons with disabilities for inclusive settings (Duku, 2017). Valentino's (2016) study focused on using Fine Arts to implement inclusive education through a schoolwide Art project involving every student in an elementary school in Northwest Montana. Arts as a precious part of special education and how principals do value and organise Art education in compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities in Sweden was studied by Sjöqvist, Göransson, Bengtsson and Hansson (2020). Lowe (2016, p. 14) investigated how exceptional students could be engaged through Art Activities and reports that "Art has the capacity to engage exceptional learners, regardless of the nature of their exceptionalities". In providing some basic ideas on how to make Art more meaningful for students with physical disabilities, Coleman (2012) reports that Art serves as an important means of communicating thoughts and feelings, and for students who have limited physical abilities, Art may prove to be an outlet for self-expression not found through other means. In a similar breadth, Finley (2013) examined access to Visual Arts; history and programming for people with disabilities and asserts that Visual Arts hold special importance in the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through participation in Visual Arts activities, individuals with disabilities could use their talents and abilities to explore and

express themselves and to connect and share; could lead to creative self-expression of one's internal state thereby increasing self-efficacy and self-determination; could facilitate choice-making, and when the participation in Visual Arts is created in an inclusive setting, it fosters community involvement and social skills. Also, in a position statement issued by the National Association for Gifted Children (2014) on Arts Education and gifted and talented students, it was concluded that Art education remains a vital aspect of the school curriculum for all children, and the specific Arts' experiences should vary according to students' needs. Fuss (2015) investigated the impact of the Arts on students with moderate to severe disabilities and it came to light that Arts activities have positive impacts on students with moderate to severe disabilities due to their increased interest in Art activities. The use of Visual Art forms in teaching and learning in five selected schools for the deaf in Ghana was equally studied by Obosu, Adu-Agyem and Opoku-Asare (2013). In that study, Obosu, Adu-Agyem and Opoku-Asare revealed that although the deaf is a visual learner, visual teaching in schools for the deaf is not adequately practised in a way that meets the visual needs of the deaf.

Amidst the several studies that focused on the relevance of Art education for learners with special educational needs, as discussed, little is known about the creative artefacts of learners with various disabilities. The current study, therefore, sought to artistically appreciate (analyse and interpret) selected visual artefacts produced by hearing-impaired pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf situated at Adjei-Kojo, a suburb of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This includes a holistic examination of the state of the teaching and learning of Creative Arts (Visual Arts) subject in the school while detailing (appreciating) selected visual artefacts produced by some of the hearing-impaired pupils of the school.

## 2. Empirical Review

### 2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings of Child Art

Historically, the root of child art is attributed to the pioneering efforts of Viennese artist and Arts pedagogue, Franz Čížek (1865-1946), who is credited as one of the leading pioneers of Art education and discoverer of the concept of child art (Hubin & Schneider, 2019; Viola, 1936; 1942; Laven, 2006; 2012). Cizek devoted himself to offering Art lessons (drawing & painting) for children between the ages of 3 and 14 in his privately established school which was later integrated as a training course for "*prospective freehand drawing teachers*" (Laven 2006, p. 86) and, "*as Jugendkunstklasse (juvenile art class) at the Vienna Kunstgewerbeschule (today's University of Applied Arts) in the academic year 1903/04*" (Hubin & Schneider, 2019, p. 5). Franz Čížek's pioneering enthusiastic devotion of effort and interest in facilitating children's artistic expressions in drawing and painting account for his worldwide fame and credit as the leading pioneer if not the father of child art (Hubin & Schneider, 2019).

Child art as a term is viewed from two major angles - children's creative products or adults' artefacts meant for children's use. According to Duku and Kemevor (2013, p 12), child art generally "*means any work [of art] made for the use of a child or a work of an adult that depicts children in them. But most importantly, child art refers to drawings, painting, and other artistic works created by children*". This means that child art, on one breadth, relates to children's self-created artefacts such as; scribblings, drawings, paintings, modelled objects, paper folding/art, and many others. On another breadth, child art could refer to artefacts (toys and others) created by adult artists purposely for the use of children as well as an artefact that contains child elements or representations. That notwithstanding, the current study is situated within the aspect of child art that specifically focuses on artefacts spontaneously created by children as profoundly theorised by Viktor Lowenfeld (1947; 1964; 1970; 1987). Lowenfeld's book (Creative and Mental Growth) which had witnessed a series of revisions theorised five stages of child artistic development known as Scribbling Stage (2 to 4 years old); Pre-schematic Stage (4 to 7 years old); Schematic Stage (7 to 9 years old); Drawing Realism (9 to 12 years old) and Psuedo - Realistic Stage (12 to 14 years old). At each of the aforementioned developmental stages, Lowenfeld outlines some drawing activities expectant of the child and their implications to child handlers especially (Art)educators and parents. The observations made by Lowenfeld on children's visual artistic expressions and their associated interpretations remain relevant theoretical framework to child art-related research, and for that matter, this study which sought to appreciate (analyse and interpret) selected visual artefacts produced by hearing-impaired pupils in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the deaf.

## **2.2 Interpretation of Children's Art**

Artistic expressions in diverse forms (scribbling, drawing, painting & others) are manifestly inherent in children's daily activities. It is said that children inherently explore the world around them and convey their fondest hopes, most profound fears and hilarious experiences through art (Lowenfeld & Brtittain, 1987; Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011; Aryaf, 2016). As a result, the artistic creations of young children have continued to attract the interest of many researchers, psychologists, teachers, and parents some of whom have conducted various researches to clarify and/or unravel the coded connotations of children's art (Lowenfeld, 1947; 1964; Lowenfeld & Brtittain, 1987; Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011; Aryaf, 2016). According to Aryaf (2016, p.1), "*children adore art because they use it as a language to express how they feel and to communicate with the outside world where words may fail*". This finds exact expression in Lowenfeld and Brtittain's (1987) observation that child art is primarily for self-expression. Duku and Kemevor (2013) concur that children's art, which is often characterised by omissions, distortions and exaggerations, reflects the trueness of their inner emotions and the perception of their world. Kayacan-Keser and Eren (2015, p. 137) corroborate that "*drawing is a candid narrative for children that can be used to reflect their emotions, thoughts, perceptions and observations. By exhibiting their perceptions of the outside world in their pictures, children give many clues to their inner world*".

This raises the issue of context and perspective when interpreting children's art, because, individual, social and environmental differences abound and stand to uniquely reflect in children's artistic expressions. It is probably based on this that Wilson (1997a p.158) stresses that "*when we study children's art, we must look at what the child has represented and expressed, at the conditions under which child art is made, and at ourselves and others in the act of studying it.*" To this end, Duku and Kemevor (2013) caution that the Art of children should not be taken for granted as it speaks more than the words they use. The authors call for the understanding of the symbols or schemas used by children in their art as well as their artistic development to increase adults' sense of appreciation and interpretations of children's art. In the considered opinion of Wilson (1997b) child art could best be understood by employing three main perspectives: the art world perspective which relies heavily on existing aesthetic theories and the values used by art critics and historians to evaluate art; the world of the child which covers the interests and motives of the child and social, cultural, and psychological realms in which the child exists, and lastly, the world of education which includes teachers, the curriculum they teach, the educational goals they strive to achieve and, psychology researchers who work to understand children's artistic development. Each of these perspectives brings a new set of values and alternative ways of understanding children's art and helps to shape the viewer's understanding of child art thereby leading to their comprehensive interpretations.

### **3. Material and Methods**

The study set out to artistically appreciate (analyse and interpret) selected Visual Artefacts produced by hearing-impaired pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf at Adjei-Kojo, Accra-Ghana. By so doing, the study employed the research protocols of qualitative case study. Qualitative case study is an empirical inquiry in which one or a few instances of a phenomenon are contextually studied in-depth (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2020; Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Given, 2008; Zainal, 2007). The specific study of pupils' artistic expressions in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the deaf amid the several special schools in Ghana buttressed the choice of qualitative case study methodology. The study was therefore specifically guided by the holistic single descriptive case study research design as espoused by qualitative scholars (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Baxter & Jack, 2008). A total of sixteen (16) purposively sampled respondents comprising twelve (12) primary pupils (2 each in class 1-6) with hearing (hard to hear) impairment; three (3) Creative Arts specialist teachers and the Headteacher were drawn from the generally accessible pupil and teacher population of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. While the pupil-respondents were purposively sampled based on the perplexity and intriguing nature of their artworks as observed during a series of practical art sessions organised for all the pupils in the school, the teachers were sampled based on their Art background and long service in the school with the Headteacher as a key respondent. Empirical data regarding the real-life experiences of the research

participants were elicited through the use of detailed multiple (triangulation of) data collection instruments such as; field observation, interviews, and photography (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Baxter & Jack, 2008). The study relied on the assistance of a professional sign language interpreter to accurately gather detailed interpretations offered by the pupils about their visual artefacts through sign language mode of communication due to the pupils' profound hearing impairment and speech loss. The selected artefacts were analysed using qualitative descriptive analysis situated within Lowenfeld's theoretical interpretations of child art. Ethical considerations were also of importance to the study. Given that, written consent of the research participants was sought through the administration of informed consent forms to officially pave way for entry into the study area and ensure a successful data collection process. This also included ethically securing the data as well as protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents during the analysis of the findings through the use of pseudonyms to replace their actual names (Akaranga & Makau, 2016; Arifin, 2018). However, the use of photographic data in the study was under the permission and approval of the respondents.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Background of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf

Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf is a special Basic School (Figure 1A&B) meant for the education of pupils with varying degrees of hearing impairment. The study ascertained that the school was privately established in Osu, a suburb of the Greater Accra region in Ghana, by Seth Tetteh Ocloo in 1966 with Osu Deaf Mission Centre as its originating name. In 1969, The school was renamed from Osu Deaf Mission Centre to State School for the Deaf with its administration fully taken over by the government of Ghana. The school experienced overwhelming enrolment increments and had to relocate many times (but within Accra) to its current location, Adjei-Kojo in Tema West Municipal Assembly in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Subsequently, the school was, again, renamed as *Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf* in honour of its founder. The founder of the school, Seth Tetteh Ocloo, is himself a person living with hearing impairment; one of those who helped Reverend Foster in the opening of the maiden school for the deaf in Ghana; the first Ghanaian to establish a private school for the deaf (Osu Deaf Mission Centre); founder of the Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD); first Ghanaian hearing-impaired to acquire Doctor of Philosophy degree and now a retired lecturer of Gallaudet University, USA (Runnels, 2020; Amoako, 2019). Ocloo's pedigree and selfless contributions to deaf education in Ghana as afore-stated might have accounted for the Ghanaian government's decision to rename the school in his honour.

Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf is not only a renowned institution in Ghana but the only special basic school (Mixed Day and Boarding) in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana specifically meant for the education of learners with hearing impairment. The school, as of the time this study was conducted, has a total enrolment of three hundred

(300) pupils and fifty-five (55) members of staff (34 teaching staff & 21 non-teaching staff). It is noteworthy to state that Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf, through the able leadership of the current Headmaster established a vocational department in 2019 with twenty-two (22) students' enrolment. The vocational department provides training options in courses such as; carpentry, hairdressing, dressmaking, and shoemaking specifically meant for hearing impaired Junior High School leavers, school dropouts and others who have no hope or means to further their education. This is to provide skill training opportunities to interested students for the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for self-employment and meaningful livelihood.

**Figure 1 (A & B):** School Environment of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021

#### 4.2 State of Visual Arts Education in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf

Given the case that the study set out to artistically appreciate (analyse & interpret) visual artefacts produced by hearing impaired pupils in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf, it was imperative to holistically examine the state of teaching and learning of the Visual Arts component of the Creative Arts subject in the school as embedded in the Ghanaian Basic School curriculum. The accounts of the Headteacher, Creative Arts teachers of the school, coupled with the researchers' field observation, revealed that the Creative Arts subject, particularly the Visual Arts component, is taught in the school just as the core subjects (English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science & Social Studies). In explaining the dedicated attention paid to the teaching and learning of the Creative Arts (Visual Arts) subject, the Headteacher pointed out that three (3) teachers with Bachelor's degrees in Special Education who minored in Art education during their professional training at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana were specifically assigned to teach Visual Arts in the primary school because of their background in Art education. The three (3) teachers have been assigned as Creative Arts subject specialist teachers to each handle two of the Primary (P) classes (P1 & P2; P3 & P4, and P5 & P6 respectively). The dedicated teaching of Creative Arts (Visual Arts) subject in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf by the Art specialist teachers with a background in Art education, as



observed by the study (Figure 2 A, B, C & D), is in sharp contrast with previous studies that report that the Creative Arts subject at the Basic School level is either not taught at all or taught by generalist teachers who lack the requisite skills, the understanding, knowledge, and confidence (Artwatch Ghana, 2017; Opoku-Asare, Tachie-Menson & Ampeh, 2015; Boafu, 2010; Ross & Opoku-Asare, 2009). The Headteacher of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf asserted that the enthusiastic focus on the teaching and learning of the Creative Arts subject is to nurture creative, innovative and inventive skills in the hearing-impaired pupils at the early stages of their lives, which when pursued further, would earn them lucrative employment for independent and dignified adult livelihoods instead of being on the streets as arm seekers just because of their hearing impairment. In emphasising the insightful nature of Visual Arts practical lessons in the school, the Headteacher (personal communication, September 20, 2021) had the following to add:

*“Practical lessons of the Visual Arts aspect of the Creative Arts subject are very interesting activities to observe in this school. Because at these sessions, you will see how the pupils enjoy the practical lessons themselves as they communicate among themselves through sign language. At the end of each Visual Arts practical lesson, the pupils under the guidance of their Art specialist teachers do produce beautiful and interesting artefacts using clay, crayons, coloured pencils, pencils, papers, and many other tools and materials. In all of these, I give credit to the Art specialist teachers for their professionalism and show of dedication to the Visual Arts practical lessons and all the sacrifices they have been making in terms of provision and improvisation of suitable teaching aids.”*

The accounts of the Headteacher of the school (Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf), as espoused, were consensually corroborated by the three (3) Art specialist teachers who have continuously taught Creative Arts in the school for the past ten (10) to twenty-nine (29) years. Generally, the three Art specialist teachers interviewed indicated that their choice of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) and pedagogical strategies, at all times, were informed by the topic to be taught, the pupils' age, and hearing impairment. The most compelling pedagogical strategies adopted by the Creative Arts teachers, as ascertained by the study, pivoted on child-centred approach to teaching and learning. This includes the utilisation of diverse but visible TMLs as well as varied but effective pedagogical strategies such as; demonstrations, hands-on activities, project work; group/teamwork; motivation, and positive reinforcements while relying largely on the visual means of teaching and learning due to the pupils hearing impairment (Figure 2 A, B, C & D). One of the teachers emphasised that the creative works of the hearing-impaired pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf are the visible and concrete testimonies of the fact that the Creative Arts (Visual Arts) subject is taught and learned in the school with a high level of dedication.

This notwithstanding, the Headteacher together with the three Creative Arts teachers listed several challenges confronting the teaching and learning of the Visual Arts component of the Creative Arts subject in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. These included but not limited to: lack of Art studio; inadequate provision of art-based equipment, tools and materials; inadequate Art specialist teachers; inadequate time allocation; lack of funds to organise educational trips and many others. The teachers opined that the holistic resolution of the aforementioned challenges by the government of Ghana or Non-Governmental Organisations, institutions and philanthropists, would lead to more efficient and effective teaching and learning of the Visual Arts component of the Creative Arts subject in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf.

**Figure 2 (A, B, C & D):** Visual Arts Practical Sessions in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

### 4.3 Appreciation of Visual Artefacts Produced by Hearing-Impaired Pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf

In the course of conducting this study, some Visual Arts' practical lessons were observed by the researchers in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. Out of the field observation

of the teaching and learning of the Visual Arts component of the Creative Arts subject, the study ascertained that the hearing-impaired pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf did participate in all the practical sessions with a high sense of enthusiasm. The hearing-impaired pupils under the tutelage of their Art specialist teachers did produce intriguing visual artefacts worthy of appreciation. Some of these intriguing visual artefacts produced by the hearing-impaired pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf represent the oral accounts of their worldview of salient experiences in their social and physical environments as herein appreciated.

**Figure 3:** A Colourful Composition Produced by a Basic Five Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

The colourful pseudo-realistic composition in Figure 3 was produced by a fourteen (14) year old Basic five girl, anonymously labeled as hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 3, of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. The work (Figure 3), is an imaginative composition of a market scene as identified and coherently interpreted by the hearing-impaired pupil-artist. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 3 identified the composition as a market centre located within her area of abode. With the exhibition of draughtsmanship, the pupil-artist made use of pencils of varied colours to register the images on white cardboard as observed by the study. The hearing-impaired pupil-artist gave an inventory of the items in the composition as; a market shed stocked with goods (foodstuffs) such as; bottles of edible oil, a crate of eggs, ripe tomatoes among others, and two salesladies. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 3 indicated that the colourful detailed rendition of the ladies shows that they were well-fashioned and smart-looking business ladies in the market from whom she and her mother do buy foodstuff. The pupil-artist explained that she liked the two salesladies because of their ability to communicate with her through sign language. However, the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 3 registered a red symbol and described it as the human heart (symbol of love) on the dress (chest) of one of the salesladies (on the right of the work) to highlight

her extreme love for the saleslady due to her welcoming nature and the gifts she (hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 3) always received from the said saleslady during shopping. The hearing-impaired pupil-artist further explained that the counter/table of the goods was rendered in different colours to show its various sections for different goods (food products) as observed in Figure 2. The interpretation of the composition by the pupil-artist reflects the candid narrative of her emotions, thoughts, perceptions, observations, and the inner world about happening in her immediate social environment which is consistent with the findings of previous studies on child art (Lowenfeld, 1947; 1964; Lowenfeld & Brtittain, 1987; Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011; Lowenfeld & Brtittain, 1987; Kayacan-Keser and Eren, 2015; Duku & Kemevor, 2013; Aryaf, 2016).

**Figure 4:** A Composition Produced by a Class Six Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The imaginative composition in Figure 4 is the artistic creation of a sixteen (16) year old primary six (6) hearing-impaired girl of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. For the purposes of anonymity, she was assigned hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 1. The detailed composition depicts a woman and three children (a boy & 2 girls) interpreted by the hearing-impaired pupil-artist as members of her nuclear family. The interpretation of the composition (Figure 4) by the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 1 revealed the psychological trauma she often goes through at home due to her hearing impairment. It was ascertained that the two children (girl & boy) in joyous mood (playing football) represented in the composition (Figure 4) were the siblings of the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 1 who have always denied her (left, with hands placed behind) the opportunity to play with them because of her hearing impairment. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 1 further added that her mother (right, with arms folded) was not always happy, as observed in the composition (Figure 4), anytime she saw her (hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 1) in a sad isolated mood while her siblings

played on. According to the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 1 (personal communication, September 20, 2021), “my drawing is about how my siblings maltreat me at home. Because they can hear and speak and I cannot, they do not allow me to play with them. My mother will talk and warn them but they do not allow me”. The pupil’s interpretation of her work (Figure 4) represents what she goes through in her immediate social environment which is in tandem with child art being reflective of children’s world of experiences (Lowenfeld, 1947; 1964; Lowenfeld & Brtittain, 1987; Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011; Lowenfeld & Brtittain, 1987; Kayacan-Keser and Eren, 2015; Duku & Kemevor, 2013; Aryaf, 2016).

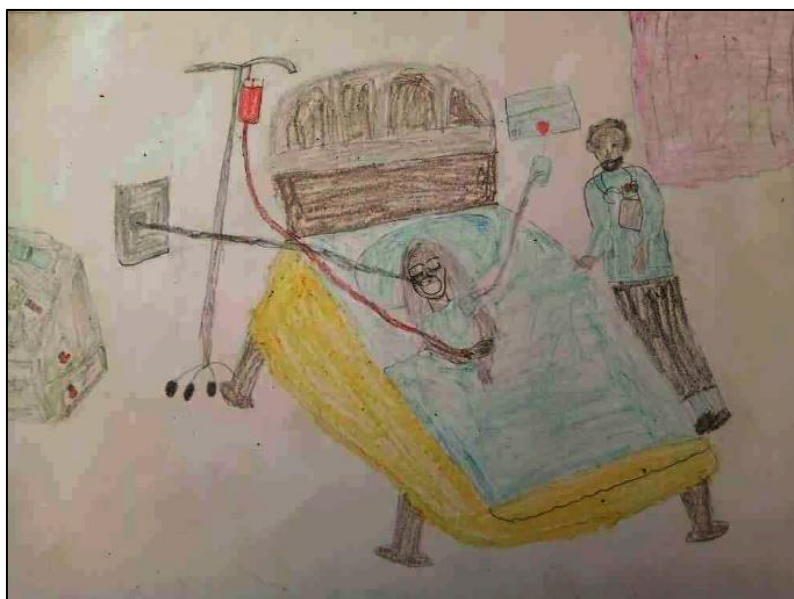
**Figure 5:** A Monochromatic Composition of Corps’ Parade Produced by a Basic Four Hearing-impaired Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2022.

Figure 5 was produced by a thirteen (13) year old hearing-impaired Basic four girl (respondent 5) in Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. In a monochromatic display (Figure 5), the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 5 skilfully registered bluish uniformed corps in what she interpreted as *morning parade*. The hearing-impaired pupil-artist explained that she lived with her parents (the father as a naval officer) in Tema naval base where she, many a time, witnessed the Ghana navy officers in Tema naval base conducting early morning parades. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 5 further indicated that she had always admired the parade activities of the uniformed naval corps and therefore decided to depict them in action. The aforementioned interpretation offered by the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 5 means that the artefact (Figure 5) serves as a language she (the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 5) adopted to express her admirable feelings of the parade activities of Tema naval base and to communicate same with the outside world where words have failed her due to her speech loss (Aryaf, 2016).

**Figure 6:** A Hospital Scene Produced by a Basic Two Girl of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Figure 6 is the handiwork of hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 9, an eleven (11) year old basic two pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 9 interpreted her composition (Figure 6) as a fearful and worrisome moment she had witnessed when she joined her father to visit her ailing mother who was admitted at the emergency care unit of Tema General Hospital. According to the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 9, the sight of her beloved mother in critical condition as she was kept on oxygen while undergoing blood transfusion kept her wailing and remains fresh in her memory. The composition (Figure 6) serves as an imaginative representation of the critical state of her mother receiving medication in a sickbed. The artefact (Figure 6), therefore, proves to be an outlet for the hearing-impaired pupil's concrete self-expression of her sad memories which could not be done through verbal means (Coleman, 2012) due to her speech loss as a deaf pupil. A close view of the composition (Figure 6) depicts a lady in a sickbed receiving medication under the care of a medical practitioner.

**Figure 7:** A Cityscape Produced by a Basic Four  
Hearing-Impaired Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



**Source:** Fieldwork, 2022

The composition in Figure 7 is an imaginative crayon work produced by hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 6, a thirteen-year-old hearing-impaired Basic four boy of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 6 interpreted the composition (Figure 7) as the Tema motorway interchange in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 6 indicated that he had been passing through the interchange to school as he stayed with his parents in Tema. Some of the key items identified by the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 6 in the composition included cruising vehicles cum motorbikes on both the down and overhead lanes of the Tema motorway interchange, as represented, with arrows pointing in the right directions of passage. A cloudy sky (grey spots captured above the horizon line), rising sun (yellow spot captured at the right end of the background), green tress, telephone mask, and street light pool erected at the extreme left side of the middle ground to illuminate the interchange during night times.

**Figure 8:** A Pottery Ware Produced a Basic Six Hearing-Impaired Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

The greenware in Figure 8 was hand-built by a thirteen (13) year old basic six hearing-impaired girl-child, labelled as hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 2, of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 2 potted the ware during clay moulding session facilitated by the Basic six Art specialist teacher as observed by the study. The hearing-impaired pupil-artist defined the greenware (Figure 8) as a cooking pot that was carefully decorated with incisions drawn from the shape of a garden egg.

**Figure 9:** A papercraft Produced by a Basic Three Hearing-Impaired Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021



The papercraft, as observed in Figure 9, was produced by a hearing-impaired girl labelled as respondent 7. She is an eleven (11) year old basic three hearing-impaired pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. In one of the Visual Arts' practical sessions, as observed by the study, the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 7 creatively cut out a green manila card into four human figurative shapes. The pupil-artist interpreted the papercraft (Figure 9) as the memorable occasion of her 11th birthday where she (the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 7) together with her friends had lined up, holding hands and joyously singing birthday songs amidst merriment. According to the hearing-impaired pupil-artist, she decided to write her name (Ampong Elizabeth) on both legs of her image (as observed in Figure 9) to distinguish her from her friends.

**Figure 10:** Imaginative Representation of Pigeon Produced by a Basic Two Hearing-Impaired Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



**Source:** Fieldwork, 2021

The colourful representation in Figure 10 was executed by an eleven (11) year old Basic two hearing-impaired boy (respondent 10) of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. The basic two hearing-impaired pupil identified the crayon-based polychromatic painting as a pigeon (Figure 10). With the exhibition of adroitness and draughtsmanship, the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 10 accurately captured the pigeon on plain cardboard detailing its blue beak, shaded grey feet, brown neck, green wings, light blue body, red tail and shaded brown eye. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 10 revealed that pigeons were some of the commonly found birds in his neighbourhood which he admired most. The polychrome (Figure 10) therefore represents one of the pigeons found at the hearing-impaired pupil-artist's immediate environment.

**Figure 11:** *"Night Scene of our House"* Produced by a Basic Five Hearing-Impaired Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Figure 11 is an imaginative crayon-based composition created by a hearing-impaired pupil labelled as respondent 4. The hearing-impaired pupil-artist is a fifteen (15) year old Basic five boy of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 4 interpreted his work (Figure 11) as a night scene of their residence. According to the hearing-impaired pupil-artist, his parents were police officers one of whom had been assigned a police saloon car for official duties. He added that when his parents returned from their hard day's work, they parked the police saloon car in their yard as represented in Figure 11. The study observed a mastery display of draughtsmanship during the drawing of the various elements and choice of colour scheme for the composition. A cursory view of the composition (Figure 11) reveals key items such as a saloon car (extreme left of the foreground) coloured in blue with red and blue siren indication on it suggesting police official car. Behind the car is a yellowish representation of the house's fence wall; a reddishly roofed apartment with two adjacent street light poles erected with yellowish lamplight buttressing the hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 6 claim of a night scene of their residence.

**Figure 12:** A composition of petty trading scene Produced by a Basic Three Hearing-Impaired Pupil of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf



**Source:** Fieldwork, 2021

Figure 12 is a representation of a petty trading scene produced by hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 8, a fourteen-year-old basic three hearing-impaired boy of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 8 indicated that his mother was engaged in petty trading of foodstuffs in their neighbourhood. He added that, on every Saturday, he goes to support his mother in the sales of the items. The imaginative composition (Figure 12) is therefore a representation of the petty trading engaged by his mother. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 8 interpreted the items starting from the foreground as bunches of bananas (greenish items at the extreme right), tubers of yam (brownish items at extreme left) and tubers of cassava (extreme left of the middle ground). The rest of the items include; five (5) baskets with each containing garden eggs, onions, carrots, red guava and tomatoes, respectively, as represented in the background. The hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 8 indicated that the woman in a blue apron and yellow headgear (Figure 12) represents her mother who was ready for her daily sales. The detailed nature of the elements in the composition (Figure 12) shows that hearing-impaired pupil-respondent 8 was doing extremely well as far as drawing/composition in art is concerned.

## 5. Conclusion

The primary focus of the study was to artistically appreciate (analyse and interpret) selected visual artefacts produced by hearing-impaired pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf located at Adjei-Kojo, a suburb of the Greater Accra Region in Ghana. The study observed that the Creative Arts subject, particularly the Visual Arts component, is dedicatedly taught in the school just as the core subjects (English

Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science & Social Studies). The study ascertained that the management of the school specifically assigned Art specialist teachers to teach the Creative Arts (Visual Arts) subject at the primary level. This, according to the management of the school, is to nurture the creative, innovative and inventive skills in the hearing-impaired pupils at the early stages of their lives, which when pursued further, would earn them lucrative employment in any of the Visual arts' vocations for independent and dignified adult livelihoods instead of being on the streets as arm seekers due to their hearing impairment. As a result, the study observed that Visual arts practical sessions in the school were well organised with the use of varied Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) and child-centred pedagogical strategies such as; demonstrations, hands-on activities, project work; group/teamwork; motivation and positive reinforcement while relying largely on the visual means of teaching and learning due to the pupils' hearing impairment. This is to provide a favourable platform for every pupil to harness his/her creative potentials irrespective of their hearing impairment.

The study further observed that the hearing-impaired primary pupils of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf, under the dedicated tutelage of their Art specialist teachers, did produce intriguing visual artefacts. The intriguing visual artefacts which range from drawings/painting, clay work and papercraft represent the oral accounts of the pupils' worldview of salient experiences in their immediate social and physical environments. It is recommended that the management and the Art specialist teachers of Tetteh Ocloo State School for the Deaf should continue to teach the Creative Arts (Visual Arts) subject with dedication as this would nurture and inculcate creative, innovative and inventive skills onto the pupils for responsible adulthood.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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**Kwame Kyere Diabour (PhD)** is a faculty member in the Department of Art Education, University of Education, Winneba with over ten years of teaching and research experience. He believes in the potential of education through art as a bridging channel for teachers who handle learners that require special educational needs. He also has particular passion for progressive Art Education, cultural development and sustenance. He believes that the Arts are the panacea for meeting the educational needs of school going children in his country, Ghana.

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