









Exploring the Production and Usage of a Metal Wall Hanging to Highlight some of the Crucial Issues Confronting Girl-Child Education in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Despite constitutional guarantees of free and compulsory basic education, girl children in Ghana still face significant barriers to education, due to teenage pregnancy, socio-cultural beliefs, and limited resources. This study, therefore, explored and produced a Metal Wall Hanging that highlights some of the critical issues confronting girl-child education in Ghana. This study used descriptive and studio-based research techniques within the qualitative design. The metalwork was created using etching and laser cutting techniques, emphasizing key themes. The research pinpointed certain key actions that pose crucial issues in girl-child education, which include sexual harassment and abuse, teenage pregnancy, societal expectations such as early marriage, and domestic responsibilities over education, like *kayayo* (head porters). The study also showed that completing techniques of etching allows artists to build complex, 2-dimensional designs that express a variety of artistic and personal messages. This procedure produced a semi-rendition that successfully conveyed the goal of the project and demonstrated how combining technical and creative expression can result in relevant fabrication products, such as a wall plaque. The research portrays that artwork can bring to light the issues of girl-child education and its effects in Ghana. The research recommends that further awareness campaigns be initiated using metal artworks and other artistic media to advocate for girl-child education in Ghana. Collaborating with educational institutions, NGOs, and artists can expand the impact of such artworks, creating more platforms for discussions and solutions to the challenges faced by girls in accessing education.

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees education as a fundamental human right. Right now, this convention is the most generally ratified international agreement in existence.¹ According to Elijah, Education is now guaranteed by the Constitution thanks to Ghana's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Education is the process by which people become contributing

¹ Elijah Steve Karanja, "Socio-Economic Status of Parents and the Internal Efficiency of Selected Primary Schools in Kotulo Division, Mandera County, Kenya," 2011.

members of their community.² It is through the educational process that young people are equipped with the knowledge they need to realize their potential and apply it to a better society and themselves. Education is also claimed to be a way to enhance, preserve, and spread society's culture.

In line with this, every child of school age in Ghana is guaranteed free and compulsory universal basic education by the 1992 Constitution, regardless of their gender, religion, ethnicity, or place of residence. However, 'Universal Basic Education for All' is still a long way off from becoming a reality for many kids, especially the girl child. This is particularly clear in the situation of the girl child, whose needs and interests are frequently disregarded by educational policies and the objectives of their own family.³ There is ample evidence supporting the significance of educating girls. For instance, gender equality can be promoted, poverty can be decreased, and pregnancy and infant death rates may be decreased through education, making it the most pertinent human development indicator for girls.⁴ Additionally, Abu-Ghaida and Klasen have argued that apart from its intrinsic values, education is not only an essential development aim, but it is also essential to one's capacity to take advantage of the opportunities that development offers.⁵ One way that can be used to draw people's attention to girl-child education is through art.

Zaeri and Roozafza assert that "Visual arts, being a versatile form of communication, possess a unique ability to transcend language barriers, evoke emotional responses, and inspire critical reflection."⁶ Artists have historically reacted to societal issues by creating works that stimulate thought, question established norms, and motivate action. In today's world, as global problems like injustice, inequality, and oppression continue, art's role in tackling these issues has become more significant. Artistic expression has long been linked with societal challenges, acting as both a mirror of current conditions and a driver for change. Ancient societies utilized art to express societal norms, religious beliefs, and political ideologies. For instance, the frescoes of Pompeii illustrated everyday life, offering insights into the social structures and cultural practices of that era. Likewise, the art of ancient Egypt, with its impressive monuments and detailed hieroglyphs, not only demonstrated the power and authority of pharaohs but also conveyed religious symbolism and mythological stories.⁷ These artworks, including metal art, played a pivotal role in galvanizing public support and mobilizing activists to fight for civil rights reforms. Metal art, with its unique properties, aesthetic appeal, various techniques and fabrication processes such as chasing and repousse, casting, forging (hot or cold), welding, etching, etc., offers a distinct avenue for addressing crucial human issues, including girl child education. Metal sculptures, installations, and architectural elements can serve as potent symbols of resistance, resilience, and hope. For instance, *the Peace Bridge* in Calgary, Canada, designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, utilises metalwork to evoke themes of unity and cooperation.⁸

It is worth noting that art, including Metal Art, is a potent instrument for addressing crucial human issues by increasing consciousness, developing empathy, and motivating action. Through their creativity and innovation, artists have the capacity to effect meaningful change and shape a more equitable and sustainable world.

Many may think that the issues and challenges with girl-child education are a thing of the past. More often, when this topic is raised, people direct their attention to some outmoded religious beliefs and

² Venelin Terziev, "The Role of Education in Socialization of an Individual," *IJAEDU-International E-Journal of Advances in Education* 8, no. 22 (2022): 70–75.

³ Stefania Giannini, "20 UNESCO And The Futures Of Education," in *Education: A Global Compact for a Time of Crisis* (Columbia University Press, 2022), 361–78; Maren Elfert, "Lifelong Learning in Sustainable Development Goal 4: What Does It Mean for UNESCO's Rights-Based Approach to Adult Learning and Education?," *International Review of Education* 65, no. 4 (2019): 537–56.

⁴ Tabreek Somani, "Importance of Educating Girls for the Overall Development of Society: A Global Perspective," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 7, no. 1 (2017): 10; George J Sefa Dei, "Education and Socialization in Ghana," *Creative Education* 2, no. 2 (2011): 96–105; Barbara Herz, "The Importance of Educating Girls," *Science* 305, no. 5692 (2004): 1910–11; Angela Thody, *Educating Tomorrow: Lessons from Managing Girls' Education in Africa* (Juta and Company Ltd, 2000).

⁵ Dina Abu-Ghaida and Stephan Klasen, "The Costs of Missing the Millennium Development Goal on Gender Equity," *World Development* 32, no. 7 (2004): 1075–1107.

⁶ Parisa Zaeri and Zahra Sadat Roozafzai, "Visual Arts as a Catalyst for Social Change: Communicating Powerful Messages," *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2025): 268–74.

⁷ Zara Yousaf, "Artistic Responses to Societal Challenges: Addressing Issues of Injustice, Inequality, and Oppression," *Journal of Religion and Society* 1, no. 2 (2023): 44–56.

⁸ Hala Mreiwed, Mindy R Carter, and Claudia Mitchell, *Art as an Agent for Social Change* (Brill Sense Leiden, 2021).

societal perceptions; that a girl only belongs in the kitchen and not a school, that there is no need to educate the girl-child because she will eventually end up as a housewife and therefore back in the kitchen.⁹ One would think these are things of the past since there has been a lot of work on education and awareness around this topic. However, there are other factors that threaten the education of the girl-child. Teenage pregnancy has become one of the most dangerous and most rampant hindrances to girl-child education. While advocating for girl-child education has garnered attention. For instance, Croll and Sutherland-Addy have posited that not many interventions have had a significant impact on the lives of girls.¹⁰ This calls for an increase in creating awareness of the crucial issues that confront the girl-child. Hence, this study seeks to design and fabricate a Metal Wall Hanging that highlights some of the crucial issues confronting Girl-Child Education in Ghana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education System in Ghana

Education is a fundamental human right that promotes social mobility, empowerment, and economic prosperity. It fosters initiative, independence, self-esteem, and confidence, enabling individuals to make good decisions and actively engage in public life.¹¹ Education also helps people from different backgrounds move up the social hierarchy, reducing inequalities and promoting social cohesion.¹² The growth and advancement of a nation are intricately tied to the caliber of its human resources. This is because an educated populace can devise strategies, create and implement tools, and make efficient and effective use of resources to foster socioeconomic development.¹³ UNESCO emphasizes the importance of education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting environmental stewardship, gender equality, and social cohesion. By investing in education, societies can create durable communities, encourage inclusive growth, and help each person reach their full potential. In Ghana, the education system has evolved over time, with the introduction of free primary education in 1961 as a key turning point. However, some challenges still persist, such as access issues in rural and underserved areas, quality differences between urban and rural schools, and insufficient investment in teacher training and professional development.¹⁴

Overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and inadequate teaching materials pose obstacles to delivering quality education. Despite these challenges, Ghana's education sector holds immense potential for improvement and innovation. The government's commitment to education reform, such as the Free Senior High School program, demonstrates a willingness to address access and promote equity in education.¹⁵ A shift in paradigm towards holistic education, incorporating skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and citizenship, can improve the applicability and efficiency of the education system. Furthermore, one tenet that illustrates a shift in paradigm is the recognition of holistic education to incorporate not just academic pursuit but skill acquisition, entrepreneurship and citizenship.¹⁶ Education constitutes the bedrock for the vision of Ghana being on the path of sustainable development and inclusive growth. By addressing these challenges and seizing opportunities for innovation, Ghana can build a more equitable, resilient, and prosperous society where every individual has the opportunity to fulfil their potential through education.

⁹ E. A. C Okeke, U. M. Nzewi, and Z. Njoku, "Tracking School Age Children's Education Status in UNICEF A-Field States," *Enugu: UNICEF*, 2008, 31.

¹⁰ Elisabeth J Croll, "From the Girl Child to Girls' Rights," in *The Politics of Rights* (Routledge, 2013), 111–23; Esi Sutherland-Addy, "Impact Assessment Study of the Girls' Education Programme in Ghana," *UNICEF Ghana*, 2002, 75–76.

¹¹ Giannini, "20 UNESCO And The Futures Of Education."

¹² Meenu Sharma and Priyam Ankit, "Importance of Education in This Challenging World," *Smart Moves Journal IJELLH*, 2023, 10–21.

¹³ Abdulai Kuyini Mohammed and Ahmed Bawa Kuyini, "An Evaluation of the Free Senior High School Policy in Ghana," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 51, no. 2 (2021): 143–72.

¹⁴ Manos Antoninis et al., "All Means All: An Introduction to the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report on Inclusion," *Prospects* 49, no. 3 (2020): 103–9.

¹⁵ Abdulai Kuyini Mohammed, "Does the Policy Cycle Reflect the Policymaking Approach in Ghana?," *Journal of Public Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2020): e2078.

¹⁶ St. Nicholas, "Holistic Education: What It Is and Its Importance in Shaping Global Citizens," October 15, 2024,

<https://stnicholas.com.br/en/blog/holistic-education/#:~:text=How does holistic education learning, and responsibility for their learning.>

Child Education in Ghana

Child education is a crucial aspect of societal development and individual growth, encompassing cognitive development, socialization, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness.¹⁷ Education plays a significant role in shaping children's cognitive abilities, attitudes, and behaviors, which in turn influence their academic and personal success. In accordance with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, kids actively create their worldview through interactions with their environment, making early education pivotal in fostering critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities.¹⁸ Additionally, cultural background, educational philosophies, and contextual requirements all determine, to a large extent, how children acquire education. In recent times, traditional teaching methods, such as rote learning and lecture-based instruction, have been replaced by some early childhood educators with more active methods like the Montessori Method and Reggio Emilia Method, which focus on the person's whole education.¹⁹ Yet, child education faces numerous challenges, particularly in underserved sections and developing countries.²⁰

Quality education remains an issue, with many children being out of school due to poverty, discrimination, armed conflict, or poor infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these educational inequities, exposing gaps in technology access and access to education online.²¹ Investing in child education, especially for the young generation, can ensure every country's future security and fully utilize its young population. Addressing systemic barriers and fostering partnerships among stakeholders can create inclusive and fair education systems that enable children to realize their potential and contribute positively to the world.²²

Inclusive education is crucial for the socio-economic growth of Ghana and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ghana has made significant progress in extending the availability of basic education, with the introduction of free primary education in 1995 and the implementation of the Universal Free Compulsory Policy for Basic Education in 2005. Enrolment rates have risen significantly, with gender parity achieved. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly in rural areas, due to socioeconomic issues, illiteracy, and forced child labor. To ensure quality and inclusive education, Ghana needs a multifaceted approach that includes infrastructure, capacity building, poverty alleviation, and social inclusion strategies. If the state invests in child education, especially for the girl child, embracing pertinent practice, there is no doubt that the country's future will be well secured and its young population will be fully utilized.²³

Crucial Issues that Confront Girl Child Education

The Global Education Monitoring Report highlights the challenges faced by the girl child, particularly in terms of health and wellbeing.²⁴ Despite progress in eradicating gender gaps, girls still face numerous challenges, including the feminization of poverty, practices that limit women's participation, and barriers such as female feticide, child marriage, and exclusion from schools.²⁵ Despite these obstacles, education remains a crucial tool in empowering girls and eradicating poverty and inequality. The report highlights the importance of quality education, particularly in rural and war-torn areas, as social constructs, poverty,

¹⁷ Frank S Arku, Emmanuel N Angmor, and Isaac K Tetteh, "Girl-Child Education Outcomes: A Case Study from Ghana.," *Educational Research Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2014): 3–26.

¹⁸ Pia Sanghvi, "Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development: A Review," *Indian Journal of Mental Health* 7, no. 2 (2020): 90–96.

¹⁹ Haifa Aljabreen, "Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia: A Comparative Analysis of Alternative Models of Early Childhood Education," *International Journal of Early Childhood* 52, no. 3 (2020): 337–53.

²⁰ Emma Davies, Charles Crothers, and Kirsten Hanna, "Preventing Child Poverty: Barriers and Solutions.," *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* 39, no. 2 (2010).

²¹ Wong Sing Yun, "Digitalization Challenges in Education during COVID-19: A Systematic Review," *Cogent Education* 10, no. 1 (2023): 2198981.

²² Dennis Van Roekel, "Parent, Family, Community Involvement in Education," *Policy Brief. Washington, DC: National Education Association*, 2008.

²³ Bethany Johnson, Adam Weber, and Chris Ying, "USAID Education Progress Report, 2018-2021.," *US Agency for International Development*, 2021.

²⁴ UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Team, *Gender Review: Meeting Our Commitments to Gender Equality in Education*, 2018; Stephen Appiah Takyi et al., "An Overview of Ghana's Educational System and Its Implication for Educational Equity," *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 24, no. 2 (2021): 157–82.

²⁵ Tamsin Bradley, "Global Perspectives on Violence against Women and Girls," 2020; Joacim Ramberg, "Global Education Monitoring Report 2021–Central AndEastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia–Inclusion and Education: All Means All," 2021.

and lack of facilities often hinder girls' education, exacerbated by illiteracy and skill acquisition gaps. UNICEF emphasizes the need for healthcare, sensitization, and regulations that protect girls' overall health.²⁶ Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, trafficking, and harmful cultural practices, continues to pose a significant threat to girls' safety and security. To combat these issues, new laws, support systems, education, and norms should be written, and gender-based violence should be addressed through new laws, systems, and education.

Economic empowerment is also crucial for girls to contribute to society, but they often lack access to financial resources, vocational training, and employment opportunities. Strategies to improve girls' economic independence and socioeconomic status include promoting entrepreneurship, vocational training programs, and financial sustainability.²⁷

Notwithstanding the progress made in promoting girls' rights and opportunities, there are still challenges that need to be addressed by governments, civil societies, and communities worldwide. Prioritizing investments in education, health, protection, and economic empowerment will contribute to a better and equal world for all.²⁸

The concept of the girl child in Ghanaian law is central to the country's legal system. The constitution is designed to promote and protect the rights of the girl child, including equality, non-discrimination, right to education, freedom from abuse, and the right to healthcare. Article 17 is elaborated upon, guaranteeing that no one shall be discriminated against women or girls in all liabilities or issues. The constitution also ensures the protection of the rights and dignity of every citizen, regardless of sex and age. The right to education is enshrined in Article 25, ensuring that every parent sends their child to free compulsory and primary education. The constitution prohibits acts that victimize the girl child, such as abuse and neglect, and emphasizes the state's commitment to protecting the health and rights of all, including the girl child. Article 34 of the constitution emphasizes the importance of promoting and fulfilling the health and welfare of all, including the girl child, to ensure their growth and development.

Modification of Art Reflecting human experience and societal values

Art serves as a profound reflection of human creativity and expression, transcending time and space. Artists have played a significant role in shaping society, addressing issues such as politics, social justice, love, and spirituality.²⁹ According to Nin, "The function of art is to renew our perception. What we are familiar with, we cease to see. The writer shakes up the familiar scene, and, as if by magic, we see a new meaning in it".³⁰ Art serves as a mirror reflecting societal values, beliefs, and struggles. Throughout history, artists have acted as both critics and chroniclers of their times, addressing issues ranging from politics and social justice to love and spirituality. For instance, the works of Picasso during the Spanish Civil War or the anti-war sentiments conveyed by artists during the Vietnam War era illustrate the power of art to provoke social change and awareness.³¹

Art has evolved over time, adapting to cultural, technological, and ideological shifts. Abstractionism emerged in the 1900s, allowing artists to discipline their emotions and deepen their perceptions.³² Technology has played a key role in art, making outreach to the public struggle possible through digital pictures, video installations, and immersive virtual installations. Art is a habit of effective action, affecting and transforming culture. From digital pictures and video installations to content-rich

²⁶ UNICEF, *Global Annual Results Report 2018: Gender Equality*, 2019.

²⁷ Sowjanya Shetty and V Hans, "Role of Education in Women Empowerment and Development: Issues and Impact," *Role of Education in Women Empowerment and Development: Issues and Impact (September 26, 2015)*, 2015.

²⁸ Bradley, "Global Perspectives on Violence against Women and Girls."

²⁹ Julia Lossau and Quentin Stevens, *The Uses of Art in Public Space* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

³⁰ Anaïs Nin, "Quotable Quotes," n.d., <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/29052-it-is-the-function-of-art-to-renew-our-perception>.

³¹ Rebecca Barry, "War on Pablo Picasso's Art," accessed January 10, 2025, <https://www.myartbroker.com/artist-pablo-picasso/articles/influence-spanish-civil-war-pablo-picasso-art>.

³² Ujjwal Kakarla, "The Evolution of Contemporary Art: A Journey Through Cultural Shift," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Invention* 11, no. 4 (2024): 8119–22.

and immersive virtual installations, art has become ubiquitous and more accessible to people and artists alike all around the world.³³

It reproduces dominant values and constructs new ones, allowing artists to bridge communities, resist oppression, and imagine a better future. Recent works, such as *Accepting the AIDS Crisis: The Controversial Connections* and the Black Lives Matter movement, call out for justice and equality.³⁴ Similarly, the trend around the Black Lives Matter movement has been the rise of potent works of visual art that call out for justice and equality for oppressed people.³⁵ Art forms are fundamentally social yet fluid, crossing time and space boundaries to reach people. As a legacy of culture and social development, art serves as a source of motivation, stimulation, and enrichment in human life. The *Controversial Connections* contains a wide range of works that call for justice and equality for the oppressed people. Most art forms are fundamentally social yet extremely fluid, crossing through the boundaries of time and space to reach people. Art serves as a source of motivation, stimulation, and enrichment in human life, as Pablo Picasso famously said, "Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction."³⁶

Art as a Tool: Creating Awareness of Social Issues

Contemporary art has long been an effective medium for addressing and eliciting discussion on social issues.³⁷ Artists worldwide use various forms of visual protest, performance art, community murals, and multimedia works to fight against dispassion, abuse of human rights, disparity, degradation of the environment, and corruption. Art can inspire, generate compassion, and stimulate change, making it an effective medium for addressing social problems.³⁸ Artists like Kara Walker, Banksy, and Ai Weiwei have used visual art to address issues related to race, population control, and classism.³⁹ The *Me Too Movement* highlights the issue of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence through visual art, poems, and theatre. Artists like Emin Tracey and Ono Yoko express trauma or vulnerability through art, appealing to people and veering from traditional standards.⁴⁰

In Ghana, traditional narrative, music, and contemporary visual art and performance are used to tackle major issues such as poverty, gender inequality, environmental degradation, and political corruption. Ghanaian modern artists use traditional art forms, such as storytelling, drumming, and dance, to convey education and social perspectives over the ages. Ghanaian modern artists also embrace other artistic techniques to address issues of today and give voice to the muted. Artists, through painting, sculpture, photography or mixed media, engage with urbanization, migration, globalization and cultural otherness in the contemporary world.⁴¹ For example, artists such as El Anatsui, Ibrahim Mahama, or Serge Attukwei Clottey are concerned with such problems as environmental issues, overconsumption, and social disparity. Artistic undertakings in Ghana not only create awareness regarding social concerns but also incite conversation, concern, and action. The Annual *Chale Wote Street Art Festival* in Accra helps achieve creative interaction between artists, performers, and audiences around contemporary art and societal problems.⁴² By engaging disadvantaged people in art-making activities, art continues to be a potent weapon in the fight for social awareness among people in Ghana.⁴³

Art has emerged as a potent weapon in the fight for social awareness among people in Ghana, using both traditional forms and contemporary art. Art practitioners in Ghana encourage conversations,

³³ Nabirye Amina Okwir, "Art and Activism: Exploring the Works of Contemporary Artists," *Research Output Journal of Art and Management* 4 (n.d.): 18–24.

³⁴ Christopher J. Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

³⁵ Gabriel B Tait, "Understanding the Meanings of Visuals: The Motivations and Values of Black Lives Matter and Social Justice Art Activists," in *Research Handbook on Visual Politics* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 268–83.

³⁶ Amit Goswami, "Creativity and the Quantum: A Unified Theory of Creativity," *Creativity Research Journal* 9, no. 1 (1996): 47–61.

³⁷ Peggy Albers et al., "Art as a Critical Response to Social Issues," *Journal of Literacy and Technology* 20, no. 1 (2019): 46–80.

³⁸ M F. Annku and J Adu-Agyem, "The Impact of Globalization on the Arts in Contemporary Ghana," *Ghana Mining Journal* 13 (2012): 86–91.

³⁹ Eric J Schruers and Kristina Olson, *Social Practice Art in Turbulent Times* (Routledge, 2019).

⁴⁰ Samara Klar and Alexandra McCoy, "Partisan-motivated Evaluations of Sexual Misconduct and the Mitigating Role of The# MeToo Movement," *American Journal of Political Science* 65, no. 4 (2021): 777–89.

⁴¹ Robert Kingsley Ayiku, "Symbolic Meanings in the Ghanaian Arts: A Step towards Developing Cultural Literacy" (Concordia University, 1998).

⁴² Isaac Butias Yakubu, "The Impact of Chale Wote Street Art Festival in James Town, Accra" (University of Education, 2020).

⁴³ Jean-Pierre Daogo Guingané, "The Role of Art in Reducing Poverty," *Museum International* 62, no. 3 (2010): 9–12.

disrupt patterns, and galvanize collective efforts through narratives, images, and community participation. In spite of the fact that social, economic, and environmental issues in Ghana persist, art is still one of the ways through which people hope, endure and work towards justice, and assumes within all of us a sense of community and hope for change.

METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive and studio-based research techniques within the qualitative design. The metalwork was created using etching and laser cutting techniques, emphasizing key themes.

Brainstorming and Analyzing Ideas

The brainstorming and analysis stage of this project was important because it determined how the researcher would present the message about the important factors of girl child education. This phase mainly focused on outlining concept ideas as well as image research in an attempt to be able to achieve the themes that the researchers had in mind. The researchers commenced with a series of pictures, which focused solely on depicting the positive aspects of girl child education. But soon realized that these cartoons avoided the most important aspects, which would help girls complete their education, the issues at hand, even while the aforementioned focused on positive aspects like a lot of jobs and empowerment. Thus, had to change the approach because of this superficiality. Understanding the logic of why a story should be two-sided, the researcher turned the focus to the disadvantages of girls' education along with the advantages (Figure 1, 2 & 3).

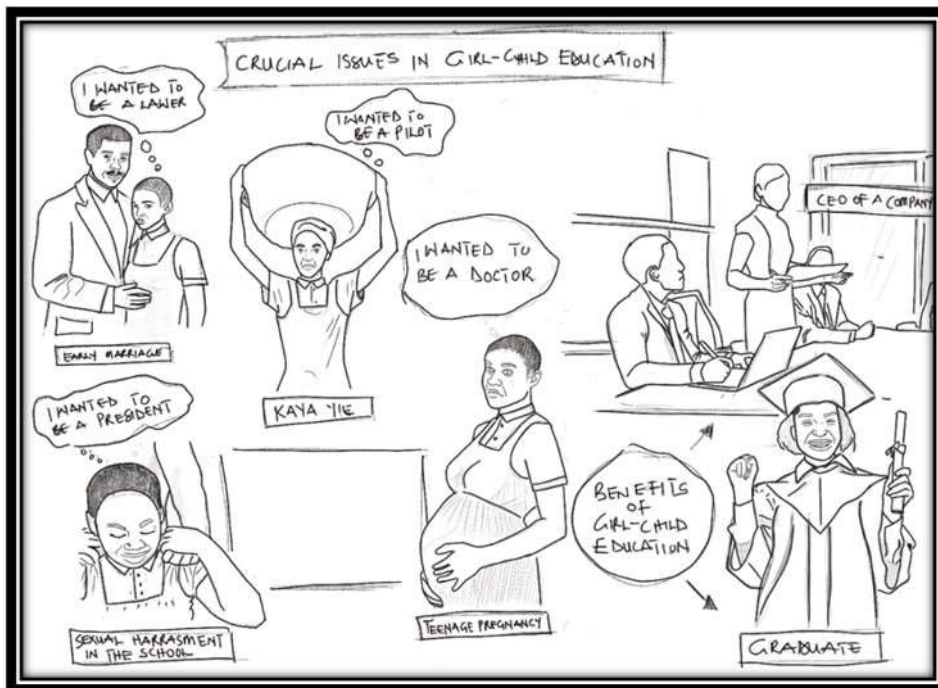


Figure 1: Final Sketch of some crucial issues of girl child education and benefits of girl child education (Source: Field Work)

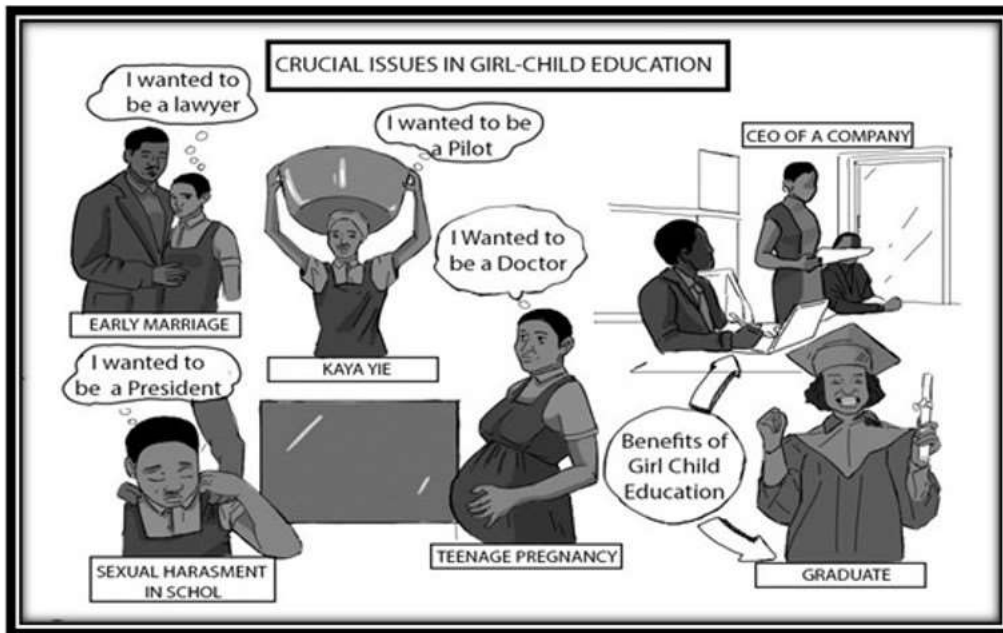


Figure 2: Final design in monochrome (Source: Field Work)

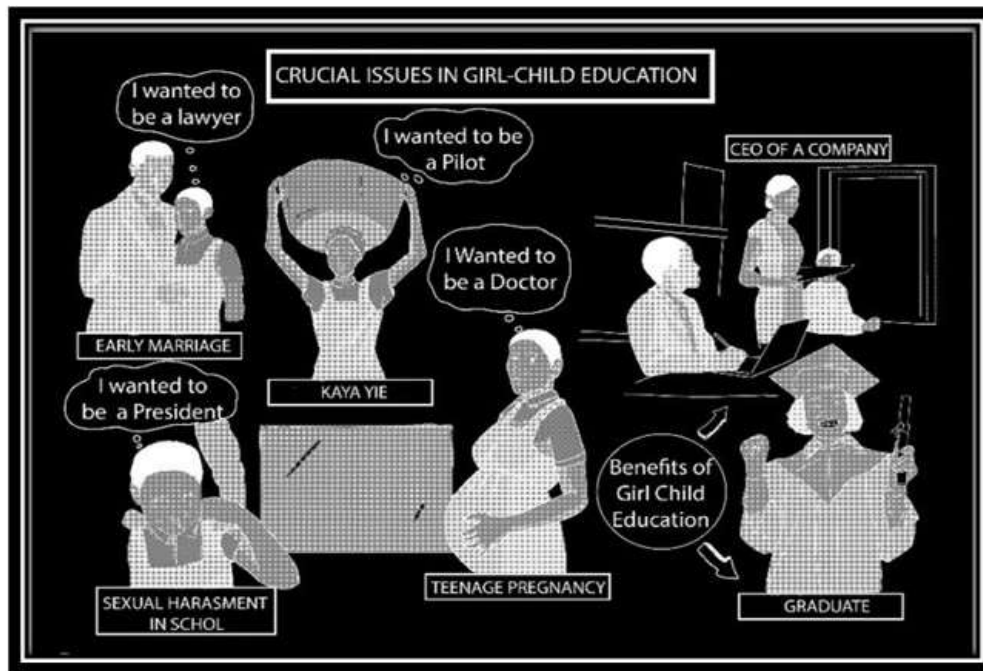


Figure 3: Final design in monochrome pointillism effect (Source: Field Work)

Tools and Materials

For very successful fabrication processes, there are appropriate standard tools and materials that should be employed. When making the Metal Wall Hanging using etching techniques, some tools and materials that were used to execute the task include a stippler, wood, scissors, glue, mesh, lightbox, and spray wash (screen printing). Others are asphalt, rubbing alcohol, acid and copper sheet metal of 2mm thickness.

Exploring Artistic Prototype

In this phase, the researchers conducted a series of brainstorming and investigations, including material exploration and the development of a prototype (Figure 4a-e). An aluminium sheet was employed for the creation of the project's model. This led to the creation of a successful prototype of the Metal Wall Hanging piece.

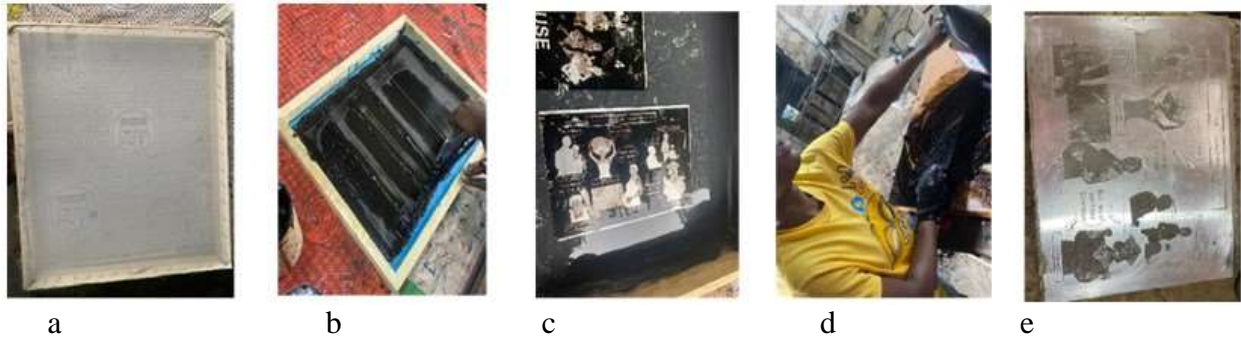


Figure 4: (a) final screen printing, (b) applying asphalt on the aluminum sheet to transfer image, (c) etching of the prototype, (d) cleaning process, (e) final prototype work (Source: Field Work)

Fabrication Process

The fabrication process describes the procedures and methods utilized to turn raw materials into finished goods or components. This is an important industrial procedure that can change greatly depending on the materials used and the desired end product. The fabrication process deals with the step-by-step processes that were used in the production of the project work, such as screen printing with a pointillism effect, applying asphalt on the copper sheet to get the design on it, etching of the artwork, Laser cutting of crucial issues of girl child education, Lacquer, Framing of the artwork.

Screen printing (or serigraphy) with a pointillism effect

This stage is the process that was used in the creation and development of the screen. Firstly, the work was shaded in black and white so the researchers could figure out the parts that were going to be etched. The researchers went ahead and developed a 23.39-inch wide by 33.11-inch (A1 size) screen. In developing the screen, the mesh was fixed on the wooden frame (Figures 5a, b & c) with the help of a stapler and light-sensitive photographic liquid emulsion was applied (Figures 6a & b) to the framed mesh, after which the design was shot onto the screen.

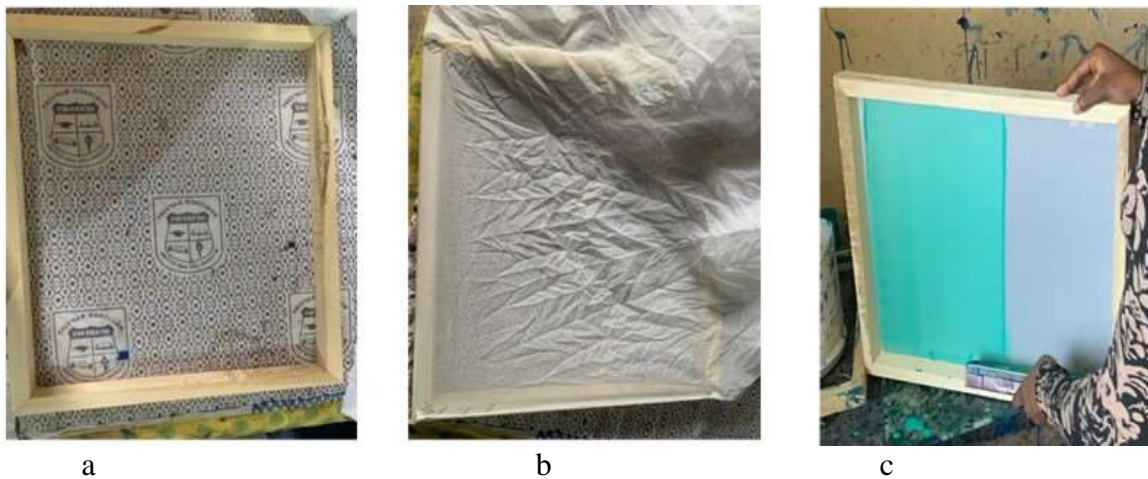


Figure 5: (a) Frame to fix the mesh on (b) a fixed mesh on the frame (c) Painting of the mesh (Source: Field Work)



Figure 6: (a) A light box aiming for the transparency of the design (b) Washing the paint of the screen (Source: Field Work)

Application of the asphalt on the copper sheet to get the design.

The back of the copper sheet was coated (Figure 7a) with asphalt mixed with turpentine paste and was left to dry for a day. The researchers subsequently used the same asphalt mixed with turpentine paste to print (Figure 7b) the design on the metal (copper) sheet.



Figure 7: (a) Coating the back of the copper sheet with, b) printing the designs on the metal sheet by applying asphalt paste (Source: Field Work)

Etching Processes

A mixture of 5 cups of nitric acid and 5 cups of water was prepared and used as the etching solution (Figure 8a). The copper sheet, which measured 23.39 inches wide by 33.11 inches, was then placed in the solution for 80 minutes and was removed to check how deeply the acid was able to etch (Figure 8b). The work was removed from the solution, and turpentine and foam were used to clean the asphalt from the copper sheet (Figure 8c).



Figure 8: (a) Making of the etching solution, (b) Checking of how it has etched, (c) Turpentine cleaning of the asphalt (Source: Field Work).

Oxidation process

Oxidation is a chemical reaction where a metal reacts with oxygen, resulting in the formation of oxides. This can happen naturally through exposure to air and moisture or can be induced intentionally during metalworking processes. The researchers oxidized the images in the design which constitute the Crucial Issues in Girl Child Education in Ghana, on the metalcraft. The oxidation of the work was achieved through the application of Caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) and Sulphur.⁴⁴

Laser Cutting and Fixing Process

Laser Cutting is usually utilized to accurately cut intricate shapes and patterns on metal sheets. The researchers used a brass sheet to cut letters out (Figure 9) from CRUCIAL ISSUES IN GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN GHANA, after which the letters were fixed on the etched copper sheet to obtain the Metal Hanging that depicts Crucial Issues in Girl Child Education in Ghana.

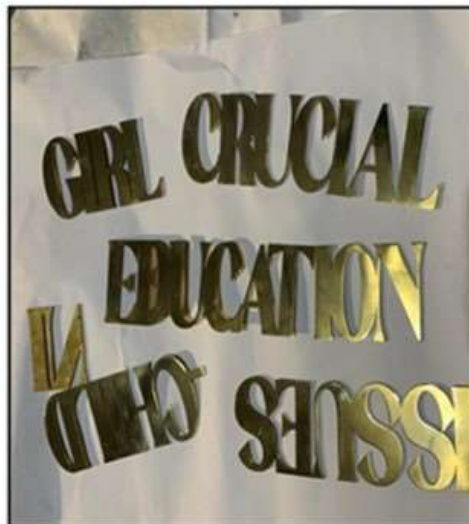


Figure 9: Laser Cut letters in brass (Source: Field Work)

⁴⁴ Albert T Fromhold Jr and Regina G Fromhold, "An Overview of Metal Oxidation Theory," *Comprehensive Chemical Kinetics* 21 (1984): 1–117.

PRESENTATION FINDINGS

The design (Figure 10) that was used to produce the Metal Wall Hanging centers on major challenges that are negatively impacting girl-child education in Ghana. It highlights critical issues like early marriage, which often forces young girls to leave school, trapping them in poverty. The piece also draws attention to the issue of *Kaya yei* or street hawking, where girls are required to work to support their families, leading to school dropout.

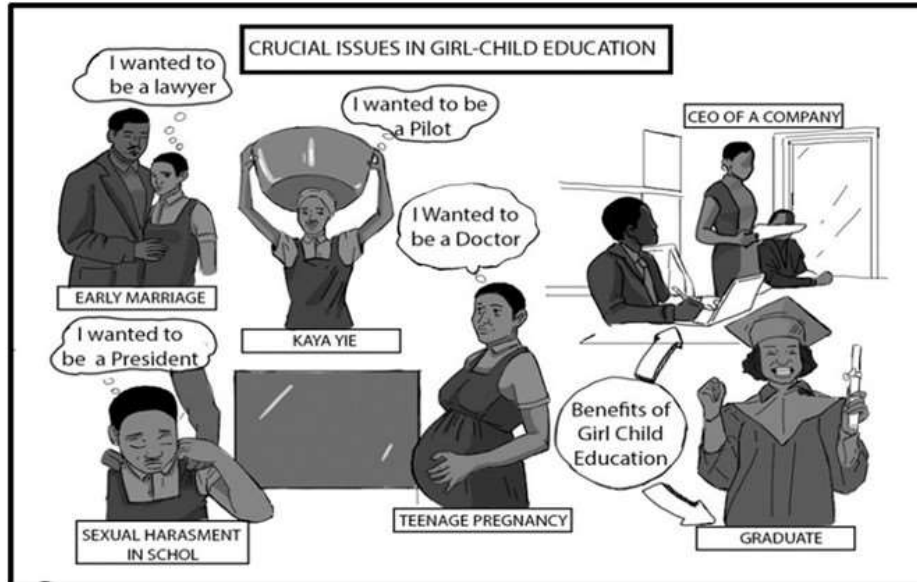


Figure 10: Final design in monochrome (Source: Field Work)

Furthermore, it highlights the sexual harassment girls experience in schools, disrupting their academic progress, and teenage pregnancy, which often results in girls abandoning their education and future opportunities. In addition to these challenges, the artwork showcases the benefits of educating girls, demonstrating potential paths to academic success, graduation, and leadership roles, such as becoming a CEO.



Figure 11: Final Fabricated Metalwork (Source: Field Work)

The final work piece of art (Figure 11) effectively captures some crucial issues confronting girl-child education in Ghana. Among the issues are Teenage Pregnancy, Early Marriages, *Kaya yie* (Street Hawking) and Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Schools. Others are Graduate Mode as well as Celebrating Academic Achievement.

Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is one of the most significant barriers to girl-child education in Ghana. Many girls, especially in rural areas, face societal pressures, inadequate sexual education, and limited access to contraceptives, which often result in early pregnancies. Once pregnant, most girls are forced to drop out of school, either because of the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy or the need to care for their babies. The metal wall hanging visually represents this challenge (Figure 12) by illustrating the emotional and social toll teenage pregnancy takes on young girls, as well as its long-term effects on their educational opportunities.

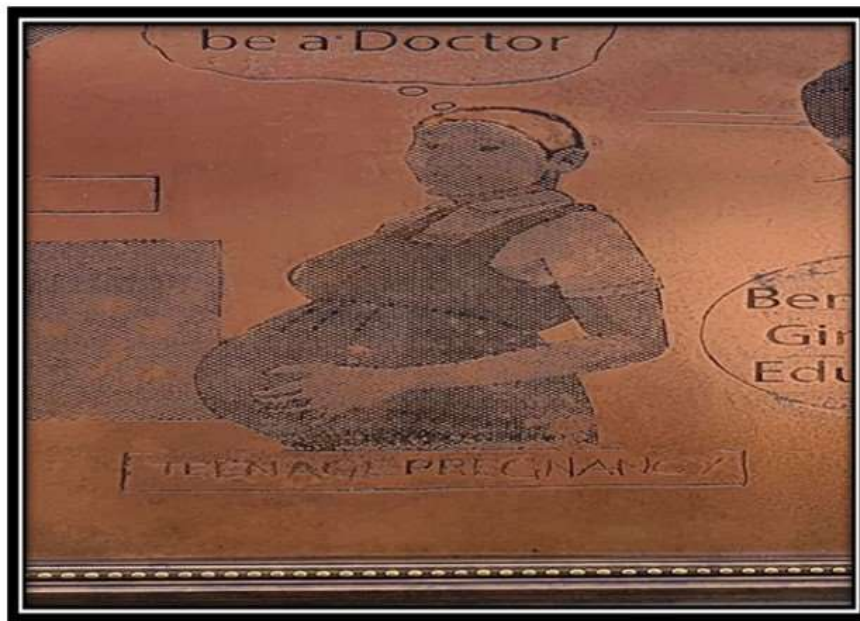


Figure 12: Final Fabricated Metalwork (Source: Field Work)

Early Marriages

Another major issue highlighted in the Metal Wall Hanging is early marriage. In many parts of Ghana, cultural norms and economic pressures lead families to marry off their daughters at a young age, often before they complete their education. Early marriage disrupts a girl's educational journey, limiting her ability to build a career and achieve financial independence. The artwork (Figure 13) emphasizes the urgency of addressing this issue by depicting the contrast between the potential for a brighter future for the girl child through education and the harsh reality of forced early marriages.



Figure 13: An etched artwork of a girl and a man explaining early Marriage (Source: Field Work)

Kaya yie (Street Hawking)

Kaya yie or street hawking is a cultural practice in which young girls from rural areas migrate to cities in search of work. Often, these girls are forced into menial jobs, including carrying goods in markets, in order to support their families financially. This prevents them from attending school and accessing the education they need for future opportunities. The metal wall hanging portrays *Kaya yie* (Figure 14) as a barrier that not only affects girls' education but also traps them in a cycle of poverty, highlighting the need for policy interventions to prioritize education over child labor.

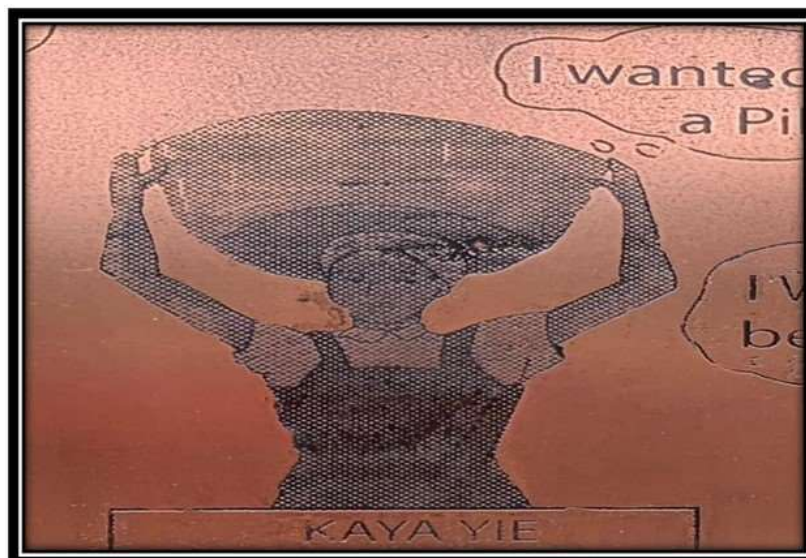


Figure 14: An etched artwork of a girl carrying a pan explaining early kaya yie (Source: Field Work)

Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Schools

Sexual harassment and abuse within educational institutions are serious issues that discourage many girls from continuing their education. Fear of harassment by male peers or even teachers can create a hostile learning environment, leading to absenteeism or dropping out altogether. The Metal Wall Hanging uses imagery (Figure 15) to bring attention to this hidden but pervasive issue, pushing for creating safer, more supportive school environments where girls can learn without fear.

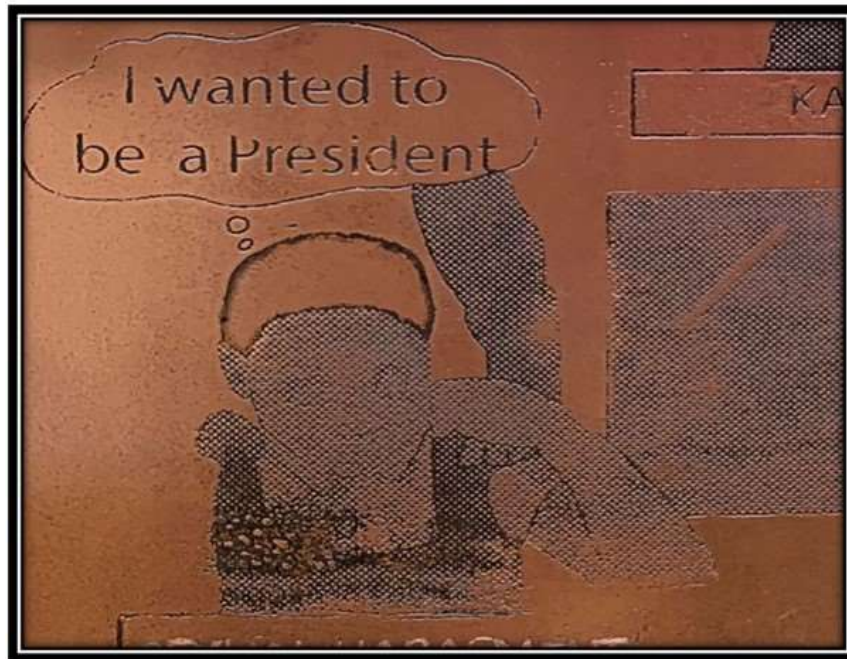


Figure 15: An etched artwork of a girl being sexually harassed (Source: Field Work)

Graduate Mode

The etching technique was also used by the researcher to create the image of a girl in graduation regalia (Figure 16) that symbolizes the attainment of a higher education level. This symbol conveys a message of hard work and academic accomplishment. The images that were etched were an assertion of the empowerment that comes with education to prevent societal ills like teenage pregnancy and early marriage.



Figure 16: An etched artwork of a young graduate (Source: Field Work)

Celebrating Academic Achievement

The study has showcased the success stories of girls who overcome obstacles and pursue education, highlighting their potential to become leaders (Figure 17). The design is artistic yet information-laden, encouraging girls to dream of making great changes through education. The metal wall hanging is designed to create awareness about these issues and advocate for girl-child education in Ghana.



Figure 17: An etched artwork of a young CEO (Source: Field Work)

DISCUSSION

A Meta Wall Hanging created using etching techniques on a copper sheet symbolizes the social and cultural barriers to girl-child education in Ghana. The artwork visually communicates key challenges such as early marriages, teenage pregnancies, sexual harassment, and economic burdens like *Kayayo* (hawking), which often result in girls dropping out of school.⁴⁵ The choice to depict these issues on a durable, symbolic medium reinforces the permanence and seriousness of these barriers in the lives of young girls. The screen-printing technique allows for precision in detailing the visuals, while the 2mm-thick copper sheet adds strength to the piece, symbolizing the resilience of girls who continue to strive for education despite these obstacles. The etching process parallels the societal effort to eliminate the barriers to education for girls, with each etched portion symbolizing the struggles girls face while leaving room for hope through the remaining parts of the copper sheet.⁴⁶ The Metal Wall hanging is a visual representation of the potential benefits of girl-child education, highlighting the pathways to success, such as graduating from university and achieving leadership roles. This powerful narrative serves as a reminder of the challenges girls face and the opportunities education provides, encouraging reflection and action.⁴⁷ The study brings art and advocacy together, using metal as a medium for engaging with social issues. The Metal Wall Hanging acts as a conversation starter about girl-child education, encouraging viewers to think critically about the importance of educating girls and the collective effort needed to overcome societal and cultural barriers. This creative approach reflects the power of art as a tool for social change, suggesting that art can serve as a medium for advocacy, influencing mindsets and fostering dialogue about the need for more robust support systems for girl-child education in Ghana.⁴⁸

The artwork uses a skillful representation of etching and screen printing to portray these issues. However, screen printing may be problematic for large designs due to limitations in screen preparation. The etching process helps achieve fine and detailed pictures, while screen printing techniques maintain uniformity and accuracy in the resist material. Oxidation is another technique used in the production of Metal Wall Hangings, improving the definition between coated and uncoated portions of the design, increasing its dimensionality, and acting as a barrier or mask against adverse conditions.⁴⁹ Oxidation treatment deepens the contrast between etched and non-etched areas, enhancing the artwork and

⁴⁵ Bradley, "Global Perspectives on Violence against Women and Girls"; Ramberg, "Global Education Monitoring Report 2021—Central And Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia—Inclusion and Education: All Means All."

⁴⁶ UNICEF, *Global Annual Results Report 2018: Gender Equality*.

⁴⁷ Shetty and Hans, "Role of Education in Women Empowerment and Development: Issues and Impact."

⁴⁸ Albers et al., "Art as a Critical Response to Social Issues."

⁴⁹ Fromhold Jr and Fromhold, "An Overview of Metal Oxidation Theory."

providing protection against wear and tear. It also aids in enhancing smaller parts of the design, which are less visible. Over-oxidation darkens most details, making the end product lose its initial purpose and focus towards the artwork mark. Despite these limitations, the combination of these techniques resulted in a beautifully detailed, durable, and socially significant metal wall hanging capable of relaying critical issues concerning girl child education in Ghana.⁵⁰

The report addresses urgent concerns such as school dropouts among young girls, early marriages interrupting schooling, and the situation of young migrants from poorer regions who move for jobs but are denied their chances of education. The piece critiques the rampant sexual harassment of learners within learning institutions and seeks solutions using a safer framework. The artwork is gleeful and proud of the girls fighting against all odds, showing off their determination to graduate and make a career. The artistic creativity complemented by socially relevant themes in the metal wall hanging acts as an advocacy tool, bringing to the fore the issues affecting girls' education in Ghana.⁵¹ This innovative approach of bringing to the fore crucial issues affecting girl child education has shown that art and for that matter metalsmithing, have the potential of creating awareness of social issues to attract the needed solutions. The wall hanging serves as a powerful tool for raising awareness and advocating for girls' rights to pursue education in Ghana.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations should promote the use of metal art in education campaigns to raise awareness about girls' education. By using etching techniques and creating metal objects, they can raise awareness about issues like early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and social pressures. Partnering with artists and teachers can create role models and promote awareness. Advocacy through art can also address sexism and stereotypes. Art classes should be regularly held for young girls to enhance their artistic skills and provide a space for them to share their struggles.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has brought out some of the critical issues affecting girl child education in Ghana by studying the conceptualization and expectations of changes that can occur due to the use of metal wall hangings as a tool for influencing people's understanding and inspiring action. Educational advocacy for girls can be facilitated through artistic methods, such as engaging artists and educators, promoting art for activism and reform, and providing art workshops for girls. By addressing issues in an integrated manner, artistic exploration can be equally effective as any other campaigning technique in promoting girls' right to quality education. By incorporating metal art into educational campaigns, girls can overcome barriers to accessing quality education and achieve change.

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⁵⁰ Bradley, "Global Perspectives on Violence against Women and Girls."

⁵¹ Albers et al., "Art as a Critical Response to Social Issues."

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