

Assessing Wearers' / Observers' Understanding of the Ceremonial Significance of Academic Procession and Dress in Tertiary Institutions: Evidence from Kumasi Polytechnic

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Abstract

Being aware of the level of knowledge of observers and participants regarding the order of academic procession and the various dress distinctions and their components for the varied academic levels was very important. This is because many wearers don the academicals without the slightest knowledge about their ceremonial significance to the academic setting. This paper seeks to determine the knowledge level of the wearers at Kumasi Polytechnic. Using survey data obtained from the participants in the Polytechnic, the overall understanding of the significance of the academic procession and gowns among the sampled participants indicated that 50.6%, 19.1%, 16.4%, 13% and 1% of them believe that they have “poor”, “very good”, “good”, “very poor” and excellent overall understanding of the ceremonial significance of the order of academic procession and academicals respectively. Also from the result, majority of the respondents 56.3% either “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” that the academicals are borrowed tradition and are too cumbersome to wear and therefore their usage for academic ceremonies must be optional followed by 32.5% who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that irrespective of the nature of the dress its usage must be continued with the few 11.2% who chose to sit on the fence. Again most respondents 79.2% and 81.1% respectively claimed that both the Polytechnic’s colours and the faculty colours must be included in the design of the gowns for uniqueness and recognition. In conclusion, the Polytechnic community should be educated to know and appreciate the ceremonial significance of the academic procession and the academicals.

Keywords: Ceremonial Significance, Academic Procession, Academic Gowns, Academicals

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1. Introduction and Rationale

Just as most ceremonies are begun and ended with processions, so do the official ceremonies such as congregation, convocation, investiture and the like in the academic settings. In academic processions, dignitaries of colleges and universities march in well-defined consecutive order to the ceremonial grounds donning special costumes / regalia appropriate to their various degrees or status and are led by a chief Marshall or a Macebearer (umkc.edu). The academic dresses / gowns (academicals) have different compositions, designs and significance depending on their origins or where they were derived from. For instance, there are differences and similarities in the academic dress based on the degree or academic level of the wearer (i.e. undergraduate, bachelor, master, doctorate or principal officer etc.). Generally, the regalia consist of the gown, headdress, and hood and sometimes including other accoutrements worn largely to portray the wearer’s field of study / achievements and the institutions’ colour and other achievements.

All over the globe academic institutions organise important ceremonies like commencement, graduations, installations, inaugurations and other convocations as and when necessary (Wikipedia the free encyclopedia) and Ghanaian institutions are no exception. However, whether the participants and the observers really understand and appreciate the significance of such ceremonies and their appropriate costumes is uncertain. This concern necessitated a pilot study conducted on 50 respondents made up of, students, lecturers, and administrators at the Kumasi Polytechnic and past students from other universities in Ghana whose views were sought by sampling through questionnaire on 5th September 2014.

It emerged from the result of the study that 40% (20) understood, 42% (21) did not understand and 18% (9) understood to some extent, the purpose and significance of the various components of the academic dress while 54% (27) were aware, 38% (19) not aware, and 8% (4) were aware to some extent of the various distinctions existing in the academic dress. Most 88% (44) of the respondents said that it was either nice or very

nice to witness academic procession. The preliminary result therefore made the topic imperative for study on a larger scale to ascertain its veracity or otherwise.

Though there have been a lot of literature on academic ceremonies and their appropriate academic outfits concerning universities and other institutions in the world including a research on the departure of American Universities from the Academic Costume Code (Brown, 2009), the knowledge level of the significance of the outfits and the satisfaction of users and participants at Kumasi Polytechnic in Ghana has not been illuminated hence the essence of the study.

Kumasi Polytechnic is located in the capital city of the Ashanti Region of Ghana (Kumasi) and among the ten Polytechnics in Ghana. It was established in 1954 as then Kumasi Technical Institute and became a Polytechnic on October, 30th 1963. It was later upgraded to a tertiary institute following the enactment of the Polytechnic Law 1992, (PNDC Law 321). Prior to the inception of the law, it ran Technician and Diploma programmes and few professional courses. Presently it has 17 departments under 6 faculties and 1 school offering full time and part-time programmes at tertiary and non-tertiary levels.

This paper seeks to make contribution to the existing literature on academic processions and the appropriate regalia by determining the knowledge level of the participants, and their sense of satisfaction regarding the use of academic regalia. The rest of the paper dealt with the literature review, methodology, results and discussion in addition to conclusions drawn.

2. Definition of Terms / Abbreviations

Academic Dress in this paper refers to Academicals, Academic Regalia, Academic Gown, and Academic Costume.

Headgear include Trencher, Mortarboard, Cap, Bonnet, and Tam

KNUST- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology; UEW-University of Education, Winneba:

UG- University of Ghana; GIMPA- Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration

3. Foreign Academic Processions and Dresses

3.1 Foreign Academic Procession, Symbols and Insignia

An academic procession is a traditional ceremony in which university's dignitary's march together wearing traditional academic dress. This usually forms an integral part of College and University graduation exercises (Wikipedia the free encyclopedia).

There is a wide variation of customs concerning academic processions. In some institutions, the procession is led by a macebearer and in others by a chief marshal, and either may be followed by a colour guard (Sullivan, 1997) historically; the procession is a descendant of clerical processions (umkc.edu). On some occasions, the colours are displayed on stage and are not moved during the ceremony (Sullivan, 1997). Students who are receiving degrees lead the preliminary procession at the commencement of ceremonies, followed in a consecutive order by the faculty and deans, the presidents of the affiliated organisations, the trustees, curators, the chancellor and the president (umkc.edu). At others, the preliminary procession starts with the speakers, trustees, administrative officers and other members of the platform followed by the faculty with the candidates for advanced degrees and others, following in groups according to their degrees. After the programme, the subsequent order of procession assumes a reverse order (Sullivan 1997). With the baccalaureate service, the preliminary procession differs from that of the commencement exercises. In this case the platform party, faculty and degree candidates most frequently march in that order. Candidates for degrees are not required to march in a special order determined by the degrees to be conferred (umkc.edu).

In the event of a president or a chancellor of a College or University being inaugurated or inducted, the procession begins with delegates of colleges and universities arranged according to the dates when the respective institutions were founded, delegates of learned societies and associations, the faculty, the speakers and other dignitaries in the president's party, with the person to be inaugurated marching alone at the very end of the procession and the subsequent procession is the reverse order (umkc.edu).

The mace that leads the procession is a world symbol of tradition, a bond to centuries of academic rituals. In the mediaeval times, a mace was used as a hand combat weapon. By 1400 AD, its use became more ceremonial in nature, first as a wooden staff carried by royal messengers and then, as an instrument used by academicians in rituals such as commencement and inaugurations. The University mace is a symbol of legal and chartered authority of the University President. When the mace is present, the authority of the University is present. The honour of carrying mace is the reserve of a distinguished faculty member. The mace and the President's medallion symbolise higher education tradition. The mace (fig. 4a & b) and the chain of Office (fig. 17) are present only at ceremonies in which faculty members are in full academic regalia. Instead of the mace, the marshal can carry a baton. In U.S. traditionally, the mace is carried 45° (fig. 4a) across the chest of the Marshall and in England the bearer carries it over the shoulder (fig. 4b) (Academic Policy and Regulation, 2009).

3.2 Foreign Academic Dresses and their Significance

During the middle ages, scholars at the earliest English and European Universities wore garments of wool or fur in order to stay warm in their poorly heated buildings. Because most of the scholars were also monks and priests, who had been tonsured, they wore cloaks that included a hood that could be pulled up to warm their heads during bad weather (oakstate.edu). This mode of dress soon became associated with students in the 1300s and became the standard academic attire for Oxford and Cambridge universities (umkc.edu). As at that time education was under the control of the clerics and therefore a preserve of the monasteries (History of Academic Regalia.htm).

In 1754, when Columbia College was first established in New York, many of the regulations of the British Universities were taken to the side of the Atlantic. Later towards the end of the 19th century, more and more Colleges in United States started to adopt the academic attire at their commencement ceremonies. Due to the uniformity, dignity and sense of tradition that emanated from wearing of the robes, it became widespread among the colleges. In time, the need to bring flexibility in terms of design and colour adaptable to all institutions resulted in the setting up of the Inter-Collegiate Commission in 1895 (umkc.edu).

All the elements of academic regalia serve to announce the wearer's achievements in their area of study (Ashley Anderson, 2010) and each degree level equates to differences in the academic dress worn (figs. 3,7,9,12,13) (Herff Jones, 2014).

The most colourful and distinctive element of academic garb, the hood (figs.15 & 16), is a mediaeval relic from cowls monks wore in England to keep their heads warm (Academic Policy and Regulation, 2009). Apart from it originally being used as a head covering, it also functioned as a shoulder cape and as a bag for alms. It was also used by various faculties and academic institutions as the main means of identifying the degrees held by graduates in academic dress (Smith, Hugh & Sheared, Kevin, 1970). In the United States, the hood's colouring and size (fig. 15) represents the type and subject of degree earned as well as the institution from which it was awarded (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). The interior lining of the hood displays the institution's colour where the wearer received his degree (Sullivan; The Academic Costume Code, Hoods; Lining). The trimming of the hood denotes the academic field of the wearer or possibly closely to which degrees earned pertains (Sullivan, 1997). Some Bachelor graduates may wear the cape with the institutions crest or seal on the piece that comes around the front of the neck. Doctors are also awarded capes just as master's graduates at the commencement ceremonies (Ashley Anderson, 2010).

The headgear (mortarboard) may vary according to the level of academic achievement and to some extent on the individual's academic institution's specification (fig. 4b, 6, 21, 23, etc.). The mortarboard cap (trencher) is the traditional style for use with academic regalia. The mortarboard or Oxford type cap is derived from a simple round commoner's cap of the middle ages and its name was taken from its similarity in shape to the square mortar board commonly used for mixing mortar (umkc.edu). It is standard for all levels of degree, but can be substituted with a velvet tam (bonnet) at the doctoral level (fig. 3, 5, 14, 24, 28 etc.). The top middle of the cap, which is usually black, has a long tassel fastened onto it with a button; however, the cap can also be in the associated colour of the subject area. Doctoral degree holders may have a gold tassel if permitted by the institution awarding the degree. The bonnet has a coloured cord and tassel often indicating the colour of the institution they represent (History of Academic Regalia htm.). In France, graduate's cap looks like a Chef's hat and in Spain a female graduate wears headgear resembling a tiffany lampshade, a blue satin bowl covered with tiny glass beads (Academic Policy and Regulation, 2009). Some American Universities use berets and in other countries a variety of styles of head covering is worn with academic regalia (History of Academic Regalia htm.). As with other forms of headgears, academic caps are generally not worn indoors by men (other than the chancellor or other higher officials) but are usually carried. In some ceremonies caps are only worn by women at indoors only.

According to the Burgon Society, there exists a distinction between different types of academical dress. The BA gown has bell-shaped sleeves while the MA gown has long sleeves closed at the end with the arm passing through a slit above the elbow (fig. 7 & 12) (Shaw, 1995). There are two distinctive shapes used in UK for doctor's gown: The Oxford doctor's shape and the Cambridge doctor's shape. The former has bell-shaped sleeves and the latter has long open sleeves. The Cambridge Mus.D (fig. 8) which is a cross pattern between the two, is another variation of the doctor's dress. Additionally there is another doctor's gown which is used at the older universities where the academic gown is usually worn known as the 'undress' (fig 13) - a black gown worn to lectures (Shepherd & Woodward). There is yet another form of dress referred to as 'the habit', only identified with Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Newcastle which are essentially reserved for very formal ceremonial occasions and to a specific group of academics or officials. Undergraduates at many older Universities also wear gowns (a smaller knee-length version of the BA gown or the Oxford Commoners one (fig. 9) (Shepherd & Woodward). Officials of the University generally wear distinctive and elaborate dresses. The Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor may wear black damask trimmed with gold or silver lace and frogs (fig. 6 & 10). In US, bachelor's and master's gowns are similar to their UK counterparts though bachelor's gowns are worn closed

and master's gowns in US are worn either open or closed (Wikipedia the free encyclopedia). Both of them do not have trimmings (History of Regalia –University of Missouri, 2014). The master's gown has oblong sleeve and though the base of the sleeves hangs down in a typical manner, it is square cut at the rear part of the oblong shape. The front part has an arc cut away and there is a slit for the wrist opening but the rest of the arc is closed (fig.7 & 12) (Sullivan, 1997). Doctoral robes are typically black but may be in the colours specified by the awarding Institution (fig. 5). Generally the robes are similar to that of the bachelor's graduate with the addition of the three velvet bands on the sleeves and velvet facing running down the front of the gown. The gown trimmings may either be black or of the colour of the field of study of the wearer. The PhD gown trimmings are usually dark blue velvet signifying the philosophy rather than field of study. The robes have full sleeve instead of the bell-sleeve of the bachelor's gown with exposed necktie or cravat when closed. Other types have a cape like form that is designed to be worn closed. As and when required the academic regalia are researched into and revised (Burgon Society, 2008; Groves & Nicholas, 2011). Having dealt with the foreign aspect of academic processions and their respective dresses we shall look at the local ones.

3.3 Local Academic Processions and Dresses

3.3.1 Academic Processions in Ghana

Academic universities and institutions in Africa and Ghana in particular also observe and celebrate academic ceremonial events either annually (matriculation for fresh students and congregation for completed students), and investiture to install a Vice Chancellor or Chancellor as and when it becomes necessary just like the other academic institutions in the world. The designs of academic processions and costumes of the European and American academic institutions have mostly been the basis for that of their African counterparts. Nevertheless some notable modifications such as the inclusion of traditional drumming and dancing coupled with the horns (mmensoun) (Fig. 32) to sing appellations as well as the indigenous kente and adinkra designs, institutional logo's and others account for the differences. In any of these ceremonial events and others, academic processions characterise the beginning and the end as it happens in the foreign academic institutions. Often academic events in Ghana are dignified and steeped in tradition with pomp and pageantry. The drumming and dancing emanating from the appropriate music provides observers / participants the impetus to enjoy and appreciate the meaning of the day and its grandeur. There exists a wide range of customs in respect of academic processions in Ghanaian institutions just as their foreign counterparts.

Example, in matriculation ceremonies marking the formal conferment of studentship on fresh students, processions are also led by the Macebearer, and is followed by the Registrar, the Convocation, the Chaplain, Deans, Principal Officers, Principals of Affiliated Colleges, Principals of the University's Colleges, Pro-Vice Chancellor, and Vice Chancellor in that order (UEW).

During congregation ceremonies for awarding certificates, diplomas, and degrees to students and other personalities, the order of procession assumes a bigger dimension than the matriculation. Generally, the processions are divided into two divisions. In some universities, the two divisions are the Convocation procession and the Council procession. The first division is led by the mmenoun group and followed in a consecutive order are the Registrar, the Convocation Members in the order of seniority and the professors at the rear also in order of seniority, the second division of the procession is preceded by the mmenoun group, and then the Macebearer, the Registrar, the University Chaplain, Deans, Principals of affiliated Colleges, Principals of the University's Colleges, Council Members, Guest Speaker, Former Principals/Vice Chancellors, Vice Chancellor, Council Chairman, and the Chancellor in that order (UEW) (fig. 31).

Investiture is basically a grand celebration in honour of the installation of a new Chancellor or Vice Chancellor and its object is to introduce the new Chancellor or the Vice Chancellor and offer an opportunity to publicly express their vision. It is a moment on which the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor is bestowed upon with a symbol of office and also for the university community to welcome a new leader. The order of procession is similar to the congregation already discussed but the SRC representative, Alumni representative, and Guests from affiliated institutions precedes the Convocation. Additionally the honorary awardees come between the Principals of the University's Colleges and the former Principals. There is also a Medallion bearer coming before the Chairman of the Governing Council with the new Chancellor or Vice Chancellor following and then the Head of State in that order (UEW), this being different from some of the foreign institutions where the person to be inaugurated matches alone at the tail end of the procession. In GIMPA, the Macebearer leads the procession, and followed subsequently in a consecutive order are the Representatives of Colleges and Universities, Faculty Marshals, Faculty of the Institute's Academic Board, Members of the Platform Party, Members of the GIMPA Governing Council, Minister of Education, Chairman of the GIMPA Governing Council and the Rector (Programme for the induction of a Rector, 2012) almost similar to the foreign counterparts. In all the academic processions, the recession takes the reverse order of the processions (Handbook on Academic Ceremonies, 2012) see (fig. 21) just as the foreign institutions discussed above.

3.3.2 Local Academic Dresses

During academic processions, the matchers don special academic regalia that either depicts their degrees, ranks or offices. Like the foreign academics, the regalia are distinguished according to the level of degree or rank (i.e. undergraduates, bachelors, masters, doctorates, principal officers and the like). The differences may lie in the gowns / robes, caps, and the hood design as it pertains to the foreign academic institutions. Moreover the gown designs may vary from one academic institution to the other depending on their philosophies. Whilst some use the collegiate system to differentiate the bachelor gowns and on the other hand same design for equivalent masters' degrees gowns (KNUST), others use equivalent degree system to categorise the gowns for bachelors, masters and doctorate degree graduands and holders (UG). There is yet another who uses different colours to indicate academic departments or faculties (Handbook on Academic Ceremonies, 2012). For example UG has eight different academic gowns used by students:

- The plain black undergraduate gown is used only during matriculation ceremonies.
- The traditional black Bachelors gown with yellow "Akyeampon" kente facing with corresponding colour in hood lining including black mortarboard and tassel is for non-professional programmes (fig. 20).
- The traditional black Master's degree gown with white "Akyeampon" kente and corresponding colour in hood lining with black mortarboard and tassel to match signifies master's degree holder (fig.19).
- The PhD gown in crimson colour with "Akyeampon" kente and corresponding colour in hood lining with black bonnet and gold tassel to match denotes the highest degree attainable at the university (fig. 22).

Other gowns representing professional degrees are: Law, Purple; Engineering, Gold; Medicine Crimson kente; and Dentistry, Yellow, blue and lilac colours.

In KNUST, bachelor's degree gowns, hoods, mortarboards and tassels are generally of the black colour with the university's logo at the back of the neck. However the colleges are differentiated from each other by the different colours of the satin materials used for the strips forming the facing panels with the colleges logos embossed on them at the chest level. Significance of their respective colours may be explained as follows:

- College of Arts and Social Sciences' purple colour signifies a representation of human heritage dealing with the Visual, Performing, Liberal, Body, and Literal Arts which the College engages in (fig. 26).
- College of Engineering is also represented by the gold colour (Fig. 35) as a symbolism of the treasures of the society. Gold is a hidden treasure which takes wisdom and technology to mine for the benefit of mankind thus the college trains up students to uncover this treasure of man through Science and Technology for development.
- College of Health Sciences is also denoted by the deep green colour standing for growth and vitality and underscoring the colleges mandate to train up students who will be able to investigate and sustain life.
- College of Sciences on the other hand has light blue as their distinctive colour, associated with the sky. This symbolises the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical environment for which the college seeks to nurture in its students (Fig. 35).
- College of Agriculture and Natural Resources' leafy green colour is connected to the green vegetation being the colour of nature. Natural resources are the live of civilisation because nature depends on it for existence and for man to effectively understand his or her environment. Man also turns to nature for the answers of life, hence their selection for the colour (Fig. 23).
- College of Architecture and Planning also uses crimson as their designated colour (Fig. 35) and this colour happens to be one of the earth's colour of nature and since the colour deals with building and activities relating to housing and the environment, it is deemed fit to adopt it to identify the college (Amoakoh, Koranteng & Nketiah, 2006).

They continue that the six provosts also have wine gowns with the facing panel in the colour of the college and with the college's logo situated at the chest level on them with the university logo also at the back of the neck. The part of the hood that comes around the front part of the neck is also wine, and the colour of the college and black is used to design the lining. The gown is worn with black bonnet and a tassel depicting the college's colour to match. Master's degree gowns nonetheless do not portray college differences. The gowns, mortarboards and tassels, are of blue colour with yellow and green hood lining and the university crest on both sides of the front panels at chest level (fig. 25). Doctoral gowns symbolise the highest level of degree attainable at the University. This may be wine, with three black velvet bands across the sleeves and black velvet front panels, black bonnet with gold tassel and cord with yellow hood lining to match. Lecturers may also don the academic costumes of the institution that awarded them the degree (fig. 37).

UEW's PhD gowns are red with velvet facings and three velvet bars across the sleeves either black,

PhD blue, or the faculty colours of the academic discipline to which the degree pertains and a ‘tam’ with a corresponding colour of the gown to complement. The gown is worn either open or closed with the universities logo embossed on the panels (fig. 28). Master’s degree gowns are black in colour made of either silk or polyester fabric with smooth finish and no designs or patterns. The hood is made of a similar fabric as the gown with the edging or binding of velvet in the colour pertaining to the degree for both masters and PhD. The hood is three feet long for bachelors, three and half feet long for masters and four feet for PhD depicting the type of degree and field of study through their length and the colours of the lining and binding which is akin to some of the American institutions. The mortarboard is black and of the same fabric as the gown with a tassel according to the approved faculty colour. The bachelor degree gowns as well as the diploma ones are also black falling just to above the ankle in length. Whereas the bachelor’s gown has pleated yolk and drape, the diploma one has not. Diploma degrees do not wear hood (Handbook on Academic Ceremonies, 2012).

The regalia worn by the Principal Officers are elaborately designed to communicate their positions and authority. For instance, the Chancellor and Governing Council Chairman’s regalia are specially crafted designs aimed at portraying a sense of lordship or mastership during the ceremony and are worn on special occasions in full. The designs are after traditional emblems or signs in connection with the University and its environment with a great deal of culture influencing the cutting and the finishing. The tam is of the same shape as the Vice Chancellor’s but bigger in size. Uniform robes are worn by University Council members during academic ceremonies to make them appear dignified on the dais during matriculation or congregation. The gowns should be four feet long and in University’s colours with hoods designed to complement the gowns. These regalia are not intended to connote a degree; rather the purpose is to demonstrate Respect and Hospitality. The SRC representative must either don the bachelor’s degree gown or diploma holder’s gown with mortarboards. The tassel should remain on the right side to indicate that the degree is not yet granted. The distinctive regalia of Vice Chancellor symbolises the University and the rank and authority of the office holder, as the Chief Executive, and not his or her academic credentials. The Vice Chancellor adorns these regalia on all ceremonial occasions including matriculations, congregations, honorary degree ceremonies, and selected academic speaking engagements. A Vice-Chancellor can also correctly wear his or her own earned regalia in lieu of a special costume.

The Pro- Vice Chancellor’s regalia follow the one worn by the Vice Chancellor. In the absence of the Vice Chancellor at the ceremony, he or she may wear the regalia appropriate to the Vice Chancellor’s. The Registrar being the custodian of the University’s seal must wear ostentatious regalia dignified as he or she leads the academic processions. The preferred colour of the Registrar’s gown is mauve, as it represents the colour of the law profession. The hood is of the doctoral type with a tam to match. For the purpose of distinction and recognition, a special set of regalia is recommended for designated Principal Officers. Since the office of the Principal Officer may not necessarily have the same qualification that goes with the various gowns or hoods suitable for the office, it is appropriate one is modeled after the one worn by the Registrar (Handbook on Academic Ceremonies, 2012). In some universities, the regalia for the Principal Officers and that of the Registrar are similar. One of the differences lies in the length of the tassel. The Chancellor has the shortest tassel while the Pro -Vice Chancellor has the longest. Another distinguishing difference is the number of gold bands on the sleeves. The Chancellor has five bands; Chairman of the Council has four, Vice Chancellor three, whilst Pro-Vice Chancellor and Registrar have two each indicating their degree of authorities. Essentially the robes are exquisitely designed with green velvet fabric and with gold embroidery designs in the gown and the same material are used for the headgear. The front panels are of red and gold, worked to the upper back forming a square-like cape with gold tassel to match (fig 24). These colours represent the University colours (KNUST 48th congregation programme, 2014). Other academic institutions may differentiate their designs by incorporating special traditional emblems and kente designs with the institutions logo on the facing panels and on the sleeves with the intention of showcasing their authority and rank. University of Ghana’s Principal Officers and other Officers wear black velvet ceremonial robes and mortarboards with a strip of gold fabric around the base of the cap and with gold tassel to complement except the Council Chairman who uses wine colour with gold tassel (fig. 21). The University Registrar though uses an ensemble made of black fabric material for the robe, mortarboard and tassel the nature of the fabric is different (Congregational Manual, 2010).

4.Methodology

This study’s primary data was collected from self-administered questionnaire administered by the researchers at the Kumasi Polytechnic campus. The study was conducted in October, 2014 and data was gathered on variables relating to the ceremonial significance of academic procession and dress in Kumasi Polytechnic.

A sample of 415 participants made up of students, technical officers, lecturers and administrators who were either writing examination, invigilating or at their officers was sampled through purposive and accidental sampling and the response rate was about 99%.

A mixed-method approach such as questionnaire, personal interviews and observation were adopted to

gather data (resourcecentre.foodrisc.org.). The areas covered by the questionnaire included;

- (1) Bio data /Personal records (e.g. age, gender, educational background, academic level or status and faculty/office/school etc.)
- (2) Knowledge about academic procession (e.g. frequency of witnessing and participation in academic procession, level of understanding, and so on)
- (3) Views about academic dress design (e.g. knowledge about the hood's significance, awareness of the significance of colours, the design opinions of academic dress etc.)
- (4) Knowledge about symbols and insignia (e.g. the mace and other symbols and (5) the overall understanding of the academic procession and dress.

Data was gathered through appropriate Likert scales. For instance, a five point Likert scale ranging from "not very much" to "very much" was employed to gather data in respect of respondents' understanding of the order of academic procession, "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" helped in eliciting data concerning their agreement about academic dress design whereas "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied" were used to collect data regarding the level of satisfaction of the organisation of academic ceremonies in the study area with "very poor" to "excellent" applied to gather information bordering on the overall understanding of Academic procession and dress (Osuala, 1993; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). Apart from the questionnaire, both structured and unstructured interviews including observation (Depoy and Gitlin, 1998) were used to generate data from key informants such as Registrars from the study area and Deans, Provosts, Registrars as well as some lecturers from the Universities such as University of Ghana (UG) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) for more information about the topic. For data credibility, participants were made aware of the rationale for the study and were assured of the utmost anonymity and confidentiality required (Frankael and Wallen, 2003).

Statistical analysis was carried out with the use of SPSS windows (version 16.0) and frequency analysis was employed to evaluate the data.

5. Results and Discussion

There was the need to establish participant's / observers' knowledge about the academic procession and their requisite dresses. In so doing issues like their knowledge about academic procession, opinions regarding dress design (table 2), satisfaction level of the organisation of academic ceremonies (fig.1) and overall understanding of academic processions and dresses (fig 2) were dealt with. The study revealed that, about 40% of the participants either do not have 'very much' or 'much', close to 40% have either 'much' or 'very much' whereas the rest have only 'moderate' understanding of the academic processions. Further to this in table 2, the respondents indicated that 12.1% of them either 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed', 8.7% 'neither agreed' nor 'disagreed' whilst almost 80% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the colours of their institution must have a place in the design of the academic regalia. More than 80% of the respondents were of the opinion that the colours of their faculties must be distinct and included in the design of the academics whilst 11.9% either 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed', and the rest 'neither agreeing' nor 'disagreeing'. Colours play a vital role in the design of the academics and in the Americas and Europe standardised colours earmarked for faculties and institutions are included in the design of the academic dress. Such codified colours are associated with different academic disciplines and institutions which enables easy identification and recognition. Thus the knowledge about their significance becomes important in this case. Also respondents' continued support for the usage of academic dress for academic ceremonies showed that 52.3% either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed', 11.2% 'neither disagreed' nor 'agreed' with the rest 32.5% either 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that the academic gown is cumbersome and therefore its usage must be optional. It is believed that when varied colours of the faculties and those of the Institution are factored into the design of the academics we can envision a colourful plumage as wearers march and gather at the ceremonial grounds. In fig.1, 35.3% are either 'very dissatisfied' or 'dissatisfied', 24.7% are 'neither satisfied' nor 'dissatisfied'; whereas 40% are either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the organisation of academic ceremonies in the institution. From fig. 2, the results show that 63.3% have 'either poor' or 'very poor', 16.7% 'good', whilst 19.9% have either 'very good' or 'excellent' overall understanding of academic processions and dresses. It can thus be inferred from the result that those who may have good, very good or excellent overall understanding of the subject may perhaps be regular in participation or observing the academic ceremonies. Essentially the symbols and insignias symbolise higher education tradition (University of Idaho, Academic Policies and Regulations, 2009) and this should be understood by academic communities. Basically all the elements of academic regalia serve to announce the wearers' achievements in their area of study (Ashley Anderson, 2010; Low, 1895) and each degree level equates to differences in the academic dress worn (Herff Jones, 2014) and lack of knowledge about them is a course to worry. With majority of the respondents, having either 'poor' or 'very poor' overall understanding of the significance of the subject the need for education becomes imperative.

According to the Registrar of the Kumasi Polytechnic, the order of procession for the academic

ceremonies like the matriculation, congregation and the investiture is similar. In all the three ceremonial events, the procession is led by the school choir and is followed by the Macebearer, the Convocation Members then the Registrar, Council Members, and Rector at the tail end of the procession. The invited guests in both congregation and investiture follow the Registrar and following in consecutive order are the Council Members with the Rector and Chair of Council at the back making the difference. The recession takes the reverse order of the procession as it happens elsewhere. Graduands and other participants of the ceremony put on special academic regalia specific to their ranks and status to mark the day. Mostly a greater percentage of the costumes are hired from universities and churches for the students and the PhD holders at higher costs, for which reason the Polytechnic has begun to acquire its own in collection by engaging the Production unit of the Fashion Design and Textiles studies to produce some gowns for the HND graduands. However, the details of the design and its corresponding philosophies were undisclosed probably because it has not been thought through yet. Currently the Polytechnic has special gowns for the Principal Officers (fig. 30) and that of the non-PhD lecturers are insufficient. The regalia for the non-PhD lecturers comprise blue-black gown of bell sleeves and mortarboard with gold tassel and strips of kente design of multiple colours forming the front panels of the gown. The hood's shell is of the same material colour as the gown with gold lining to match. The kente design signifies our Ghanaian tradition and culture (fig 33). Those of the PhDs are hired from the KNUST, and consist of a wine gown, with black velvet panels and three velvet bars across each sleeve, gold lining, trim, green bindings, as well as a black bonnet with a gold cord and tassel to complement (fig. 36). The Principal Officers including the registrar wear wine gowns with long sleeves with blue velvet bars across the sleeves, blue bonnet with gold tassel and the Polytechnic logo embossed on the front panels of the gowns. The gowns are designed to be worn open, and fall to the ankle (fig. 30).

Osei-Poku (1999), writes that academic costumes must be designed to reflect the aims and philosophies of the institutions for which they are meant. This is because they are official outfits that identify and distinguish one academic institution from another; therefore, the designs must have relevance to Ghanaian culture and identity visually. It will be therefore out of place if wearers don outfits to depict the identities of institutions other than their own (fig. 35), thus creating identity crisis, and defeating the very essence of the ensemble.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has assessed the understanding of active participants, regarding the ceremonial significance of the academic processions and dress at the Kumasi Polytechnic. The result generally suggested that about 63.6% of the participants have either 'very poor' or 'poor' overall understanding of the significance of academic processions and dresses whilst 35.5% have either 'good' or 'very good' overall understanding with only 1% with 'excellent' understanding. The result further showed that a greater proportion of the participants that is about 80% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the colours of the Polytechnic must have a place in the design of the academic dress with a little over 10% either 'disagreeing' or 'strongly disagreeing' with the opinion. Similarly, the sample indicated that more than 80% of the respondents are in support of the inclusion of faculty colours in the design of the academics since it can bring about remarkable distinctions for easy identification during gatherings. In addition, a majority of the respondents (56.3%) favoured the continued usage of the academic dress for academic ceremonies, whilst 32.5% were against it, with the rest remaining neutral.

It can thus be concluded that, wearers and would-be wearers, prefer wearing the academic dress during such special occasions because of its prestigious status. However, the design of such dresses must include the colours of both the faculty and the Polytechnic as it pertains elsewhere in the academia in other parts of the world. Above all, with over 60% of the sample registering poor overall understanding of the significance of the order of the academic processions and the academic dresses, education becomes imperative. This would be to engender the requisite knowledge and a deeper sense of appreciation of the target groups, for the various dresses used in the varied academic ceremonies. The relevant information of education on the academic gowns can be in official documents, the students' handbook, and rehearsals for academic ceremonies, to bring a gradual change over a period. Institutions can also publish special publications on the institutions academic costumes, colours, and symbolisms.

An established trend emerged from the interactions with the majority of the Academic Institutions' Officials (Registrars, Provosts and Deans) including Lecturers visited mostly suggested that they possessed superficial knowledge in respect of the issue. It appears that they only wear the regalia for the annual academic rituals to perpetuate the status quo and for fun without a considerable knowledge about the design philosophy and interpretation. In the study area itself since most of the academics are hired from other academic institutions and the churches whose philosophies and aims might be entirely at variance with that of the institution in question, there is bound to be identity crisis when those gowns are used. There is thus an imperative need for customised academic regalia specific to the Polytechnic. These should reflect the faculty and the Polytechnic colours, as well as incorporate the indigenous traditional designs relevant to the aims and philosophies of the institution, as practised in some older universities in Ghana.

Hindrances such as difficulty in obtaining reading materials and other vital information from the institutions in Ghana for review among others were notable due to lack of documentation and red-tapeism associated with information acquisition in Ghana. It is necessary that academic institutions such as the Polytechnics start documenting information concerning academic ceremonies, their mode of processions, and requisite costumes as pertaining in the UEW and other foreign academic institutions. Factors like the significance of colours, designs, logo's, /crest, symbols and insignias should be prominent in the documentation for the perusal of the academia and other interested groups. Future research should look at the other Polytechnics and Universities as to whether the picture painted here is different or otherwise.

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Appendix 1

Table 1: Bio Data / Personal Records of Participants

Variables	Frequency	Valid %	Variables	Frequency	Valid %
Gender			Faculty/Office/School		
Male	227	55.4	Administration	15	3.6
Female	183	44.6	Applied Sciences	60	14.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>100</i>	Built & Natural Environment	31	7.5
Academic status			Business & Management Studies	51	12.3
Students	275	66.7	Creative Arts & Technology	124	30
Technical officers	50	12.1	Engineering	40	9.7
Lecturers	59	14.3	Institute of Distance & Continuing Education	16	3.9
Administrators	28	6.8	Institute of Entrepreneurship & Enterprise Development	46	11.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>412</i>	<i>100</i>	Kumasi Poly Institute of Technology		
Age bracket			Medicine and Health Sciences	16	3.9
≤ 20	43	10.4	School of Graduate Studies, Research & Innovation	11	2.7
21-30	227	54.7	<i>Total</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1.0</i>
31-40	89	21.4		<i>414</i>	<i>100</i>
41-50	47	11.3	Educational background		
51-60	9	2.2	Undergraduates	290	69.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>100</i>	Bachelors	33	8.0
			Masters	78	18.8
			Doctorates	14	3.4
			<i>Total</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 2: Respondents' Opinion about Academic Dress Design and Usage

Variables	Level of Agreement					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
Institution's colours for dress design.	22(5.3%)	28(6.8%)	36(8.7%)	213(51.6%)	114(27.6%)	413(100%)
Faculty colours for dress design.	24(5.8%)	25(6.1%)	29(7%)	114(27.6%)	221(53.5%)	413(100%)
Continue use of dress.	72(17.5%)	160(38.8%)	46(11.2%)	87(21.1%)	47(11.4%)	412(100%)

Note: Missing values are not shown in the table

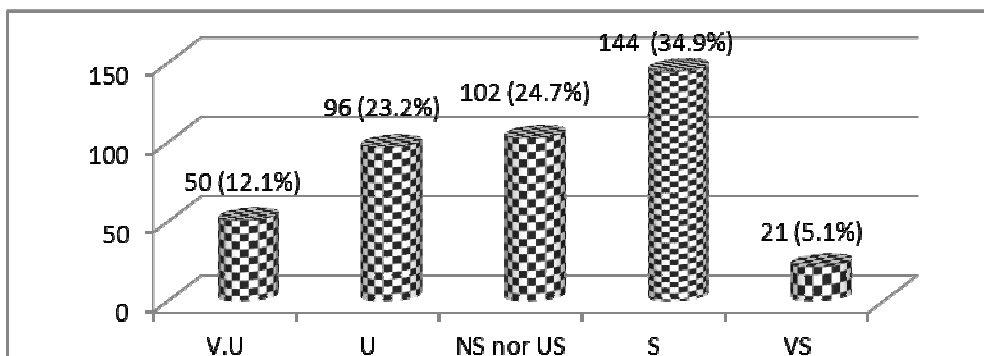


Figure 1: Respondents' Satisfaction Level as to the Organisation of Academic Ceremonies in the Polytechnic

Legend: Very unsatisfied (VU); Unsatisfied (U); Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied (NS nor US); Satisfied (S); Very satisfied (VS)

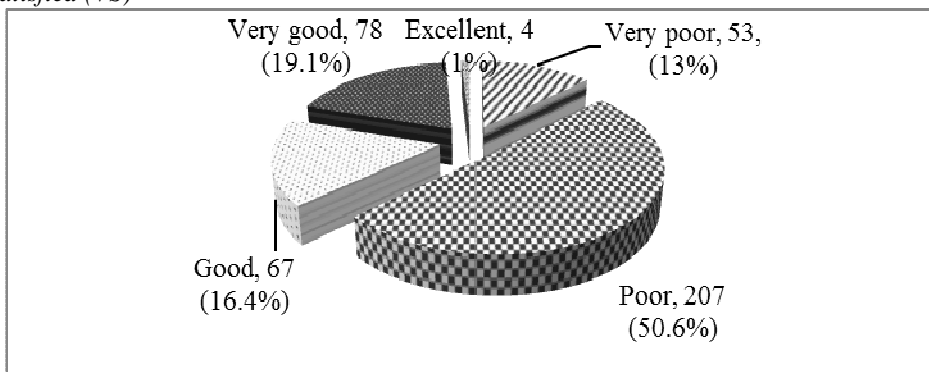


Figure 2: Respondents' Overall Understanding of the Significance of Academic Procession and Dress

Appendix 2a
Foreign Academic Robes of various Status and Forms



Fig 3: Back view of Ceremonial regalia



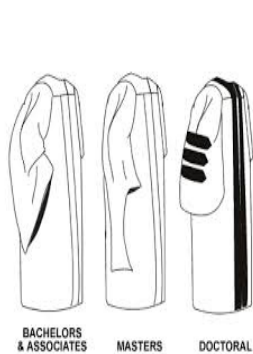
Fig 4a & b: Ceremonial robes for the macebearers (US & UK)



Fig 5: Senior / Principal Academic members in robes



Fig 6: Oxford Ceremonial robe



BACHELORS & ASSOCIATES MASTERS DOCTORAL



Fig 8: Mus.D dress



Fig 9: Undergraduate dress



Fig 10: Black damask robe



Fig. 11: Oxford ceremonial gown



Fig 12: Levels of academic robes



Fig 13: Doctors' undress

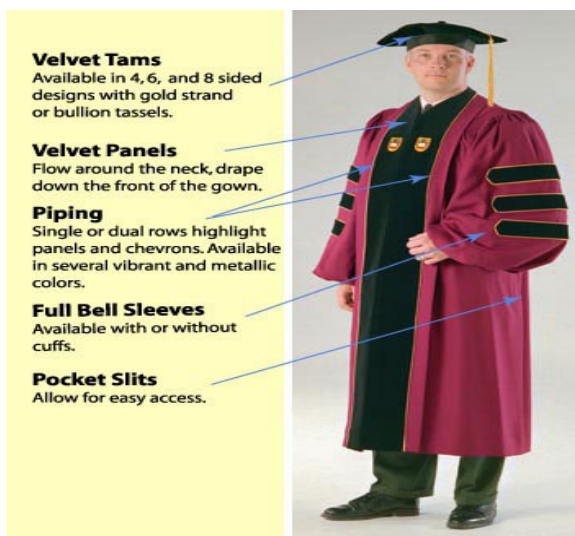


Fig. 14: Labeled PhD Gown



Fig 15: Hoods for different academic levels



Fig 16: Oxford hood

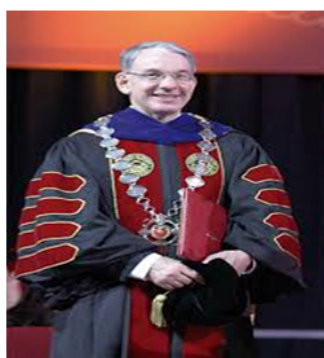


Fig 17: President wearing medallion and robe



Fig 18: Higher Doctorate Dress

Source: Google search-Ceremonial academic robes

Appendix 2b

Some of the Local Academic Dresses & Processions Depicting Various Levels and Status

Source: Google search- Ghanaian universities and polytechnics



Fig 19: Master degree graduands of UG



Fig 20: Bachelor degree graduands of UG



Fig 21: Academic recession at UG



Fig 22: PhD graduands at UG



Fig 23: Bachelor graduands of College of Agriculture and Natural Resources in robes -KNUST



Fig 24: The Provost, Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of KNUST



Fig 25: Master degree graduands of KNUST in robes



Fig 26: Bachelor graduands of College of Art and Social Sciences in robe - KNUST



Fig 27: Graduands at UEW in their robes



Fig 28: Honorary degree awardees in UEW robes
[Former Heads of State: Abubakar of Nigeria and Rawlings of Ghana]



Fig 29: The Principal Officers of UEW and a First Class Graduant



Fig. 30: Principal Officers at K-Poly in robes and invited government officials



Fig.31: Academic procession at UEW



Fig 32: Mmensoun group leading procession at UEW



Fig 33: Macebearer leading the convocation members in academic procession at UEW



Fig 34: Graduands at K-Poly in the institution's gowns



Fig 35: Graduands at K-Poly displaying the various college gowns of KNUST



Fig 36: Some lecturers at K-Poly in hired gowns



Fig 37: Academic procession at KNUST