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## Dress Fashion in Feminist and Child Rights Campaigns in Ghanaian Public Sculptures of the 1990s

Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel  
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Isaac Opoku-Mensah  
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

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### Abstract

This article examines how dress fashion in outdoor sculptures of the 1990s in the Accra cityscape accentuated feminist activism, sensitised child right campaigns, and encouraged girl-child education in support of governmental efforts and activism of civil society organisations in Ghana. It gives attention to how dress fashion of the time was used in the social construction of feminist identities and the promotion of child rights through outdoor public cement sculptures. The study takes a multidisciplinary dimension of looking into the synergy of using public sculpture for multiple attention-seeking constructs: dress fashion, feminism, child right and education. Simple narrative analysis was used in the presentation of data gathered through observation and photographic documentation of selected public sculptures

of the 1990s in the Accra Metropolis. The study revealed that 'kaba' fashion and precolonial feminine wraparound dress styles, contributed to the creation of feminist identities and intensified feminist activism in Ghana in the 1990s.

### Introduction

Many feminist scholars hold the view that women are discriminated against socially, politically and economically (Hartsock, 1981; Andersen, 1983; Assimeng, 1990; Watkins, 2000) because of their sex. To them women have specific needs that have been 'negated and unsatisfied' (Freedman, 2001; Delmar, n.d, p.8). The specific needs vary depending upon how one perceives the idea of feminism and how s/he interprets the concept. The different viewpoints about feminism account for why there is a proliferation of feminist movements including socialist feminists, radical feminists, Marxist feminists, cultural feminists, liberal feminists and lesbian separatists. All these create divisive feminist identities. Goodfriend (2016) referred to these feminist movements as types of feminism. He identified four types of feminism, namely, radical feminism, socialist feminism, cultural feminism, and liberal feminism. He further explained that radical feminists believe that sexism is robbing women of their freedom and rights and, therefore, suggest the development of appropriate technologies that should help babies to be grown outside of a woman for the sake of equality between men and women. They also preach the rejection of the traditional family structure. Socialist feminism according to Goodfriend (2016) calls for the end to capitalism through a socialist reformation of the economy. The basis of the argument is that capitalism, to socialist feminism, favours men since they currently have power and money and are willing to share it with other men. Cultural feminists on the other hand argue that society must encourage feminine behaviours rather than masculine behaviours. Masculine behaviours in this context include all that is done to encourage males. An example is the high preference of boy-child education to girl-child education in the past, and men dominating key leadership positions in the Ghanaian culture. The term *girl-child* became a cliché in the fight for girl education and in feminists' discourses that advocated equal preferential support for girl education in Ghana. Ghanaian feminist scholars preferred the term *girl-child* education to *girl* education.

Though the types of feminism, including cultural feminism outlined are seemingly global perspectives of feminism, there are certain characteristics of these feminism types that reflect the happenings in Ghana. This observation by no means put forward that the types of feminism are explicit to Ghana. These issues are complex, and influenced by socio-cultural factors of the society. They have deep rooted historical twist, cultural boundaries and religious undertones. Liberal feminists are of the view that males and females are not necessarily different since they share common humanity, which supersedes their sexes (Lorber, n.d). Liberal feminists, therefore, see no reasons why male and female should be treated unequal in legislative matters. They put forward that, both males and females should have same right,

educational and work opportunities. The underlying principle of liberal feminism is the fight for equal right for both males and females and disregarding sex roles and differences. Liberal feminism is targeted at putting an end to sexist discrimination. Though scholars have outlined different types of feminism that have resulted in diverse definitions of the concept, there is no generally accepted version.

Historically, the coinage of the term *feminism* happened long after the emergence of women right groups and individuals who advocated the abrogation of male dominated society (Delmar, 1986, as cited in Freedman, 2001). The early women right organisations and activists did not refer to themselves as feminists until the late nineteenth century. The multiplicity of feminist movements and ideologies has caused deferring opinion on what constitutes feminism. These contrasting pathways of feminist ideologies have deepened the definitional complexity of the term. Alley (2001, pp. 194–195) points out, in this regard, that “if feminism is to be coherently defined, then ... it needs to be conceived as both singular and multiple – rather than as one or the other.” Such a definition must embrace the different schools of thought, which inform the types of feminism. Feminism suffers serious definitional crises (Motta, Fominaya, Eschle, & Cox, 2011; Freedman, 2001). However, feminism, in general terms, concerns itself with the idea that both men and women deserve equality in socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions, for males have enjoyed more opportunities as compared to women. Hooks (2000, p. 1) said ‘feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.’ Her description attacks sexism as the key enemy to feminism. Feminist activism is, therefore, a way to eradicate sexism. On the contrary, Paglia (2008, p. 17) warned that, “... we must stop seeing everything in life through the narrow lens of gender. If women expect equal treatment in society, they must stop asking for infantilizing special protections.” Paglia’s comment was, possibly, informed by the preferential treatments women expect in everyday life; be it at the workplace, on the street or in their respective homes.

By studying the theories and political strategies of gendered social order of feminist perspectives of the last 35 years, Lorber (n. d.) categorised them into three, namely, *gender reform feminisms*, *gender resistant feminisms*, and *gender revolution feminisms*. She described the *gender reform feminisms* as those of the 1960s and 1970s which begun the second wave of feminism. Feminists in this categories are *liberal feminists*, *Marxist feminists*, *socialist feminists* and *development feminists* that centred on the idea of individual right, anti-colonial politics and national development. *Gender resistant feminisms* of the 1970s, according to Lorber (n. d., p. 16), were borne out of the awareness that sisters had no place in any brotherhood. ‘They are *radical feminism*, *lesbian feminism*, *psychoanalytical feminism*, and *standpoint feminism*.’ The third category is the *gender revolution feminism* of the 1980s and 1990s that ‘attack the dominant social order through questioning the clearness of the

categories that comprise its hierarchies.’ Lorber listed gender revolution feminism of the 1980s and 1990s as *multi-ethnic feminism, men’s feminism, social construction feminism, post-modern feminism* and *queer theory*.

Feminism in the African context has ‘multiple currents and undercurrents that defy simple, homogenising descriptions’ (Ahikire, n. d, p. 8). This is because the complex nature of African feminism is depicted by its philosophical, experiential, and practical nature. African feminists play multiple advocacy roles of women and children’s right and fight all forms of patriarchy that subjugate women and children. It is observed that Ghanaian feminists have been most successful in their advocacy roles (Prah, n. d) in search of societal change. In Prah’s study that focused on the advocacy roles of women’s organisations in pushing the agenda for the enhancement of the status of Ghanaian women in pre-independence and post-independent era, Opong (2012) acknowledged that women have significantly contributed to the major historical events of Ghana, but have received little scholarly attention from historians.

In Ghana, the issue of feminism tows the path of cultural and socialist feminism. Cardinal amongst the issues raised in support of feminist ideology in Ghana is the low participation of women in party politics, leadership, and formal school education. Successive governments over the years have contributed in one way or the other in empowering women through policy direction. Through this, the perceived wide gap between males and females socially, culturally and economically keeps dwindling for the betterment of all.

This article examines how dress fashion in outdoor sculptures of 1990s in the Accra cityscape accentuated feminist activism, sensitised child right campaigns, and encouraged girl-child education in support of governmental efforts and activism of civil society organisations in Ghana. It gives attention to how dress fashion of the time was employed in the social construction of feminist identities and the promotion of child right through outdoor environmental cement sculptures. The study takes a multidisciplinary dimension of looking into the synergy of using public sculpture for multiple attention-seeking constructs: dress fashion, feminism, child right and education. Through this lens, the study sheds light on the silent, yet, powerful positive impacts of how dress fashion announced feminist presence and its role in socio-cultural development of the nation; and advocacy role in women empowerment, child right and girl-child education. It employs simple narrative analysis in the presentation of data gathered through observation and photographic documentation of selected public sculptures of 1990s in the Accra Metropolis. Two Korean sculptors produced the selected sculptures with assistance from sculptors in the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

### **Role of Women in Traditional Leadership**

Women's performance of household chores and parenting is common to many countries though there have been gradual changes of males active involvement. The perception created in global perspective is that African women are totally neglected in the selection of societal leaders and rulers. However, the subjugation of women is a global affair (Assimeng, 1990) and not necessarily an African phenomenon. The biological distinction between males and females determined how socio-cultural identities and constructs such as power, status, rights and responsibilities were constructed and constituted in pre-colonial African societies. This socio-cultural and political thoughts in pre-colonial African societies influenced how authority is shared in their family systems, the succession and inheritance, affiliation, residence rules, and economic power (Aidoo, 1995 as cited in Prah, n. d.). Oblivious to the African cultural setup, social organisation and way of life, the early non-African scholars who encountered Africa portrayed and gave much prominence to social disparity and biological roles of women and men in the African society. Though some of the socio-cultural practices subjugated women progress, a monstrous picture generally displayed in the account of the scholars were that African women were objects of molestation, humiliation and disdain by their male counterparts. This grotesque image, among other things, has fueled much research interest in women studies in the continent (Assimeng, 1990). Generally, pre-colonial Africa considered certain occupational activities such as carving and blacksmithing as menial jobs and, therefore, proscribed women in taking part. It was one of the ways of protecting the interest and fragility of women due to their physiology and strength. Also, in traditional leadership, the role of women in training and helping in community development was paramount. For instance, in Ghana, queen mothers are regarded as the superior representatives of all women in the society; are key advisors of the king/chief; and are inevitable pillars in the enstoolment and destoolment of kings/chiefs. The consent of a queen mother is needed before a king/chief is enthroned. Their relevance is much more emphasized in the assertion that the 'most enigmatic figure at the court of the traditional ruler is the queen mother' (Pam, December, 13, 1966, p. 1). Women are regarded as custodians of evolving histories of society and good advisors. Amongst the Akans (Akans constitute the largest ethnic majority among the multi-ethnic population of Ghana according to 2010 Population and Housing Census), it is a common practice to consult aged women for counsel in societal issues affecting the youth or the entire community. When people are burdened with understanding certain societal occurrences, they often say *Yereke bisa abrewa*, which means 'we would seek the counsel of an old lady.' The *Omanhema* (queen mother) and her elders are responsible for appointing a linguist for a king/chief (Antubam, 1963, p. 98).

### **Feministic Activism in Ghana**

Male domination in political, socio-cultural and economic aspects of life is a global trend

since time immemorial. However, questioning the status quo to cause better economic and political development to the marginalised group remains important. Tackling this issue of equality through feminist lens is quite complex since it has serious cultural connections, perceptions and socio-political strings. Torto (n.d., p.44) attributes dismal representation of women to ‘lack of funds to support women’s campaigns, verbal and psychological threats from male counterparts, harassment and insults from fellow women and men, chieftaincy and political affiliations and cultural stigmatisation.’ In order to minimise gender inequalities in socio-political life of women in Ghana, successive governments made attempt to increase women representation and participation in leadership. President Kwame Nkrumah’s administration saw the formation of the Ghana Federation of Women (GFW); a non-political women’s organisation in 1953, which later merged with other women leagues and organisations to form the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW) in 1960 (Prah, n.d). Delving into the civilian and military political journey of Ghana (1957 – 2001), Prah (n.d.) observed that, the military regimes reinforced patriarchy in the socio-political life of the people.

In the early 1950s, President Nkrumah’s gradual efforts of increasing female participation in politics and education, amongst others, were faced with negative attitudes from some female parents. Asumah (1951, p.5) reported that, some parents at the time were pessimistic that girls’ education ended in the kitchen. Essel and Opoku-Mensah (2016, p.205) further explained that:

Girl-child education perished at the very beginning of formal school education in Ghana. It was subdued by boy-child education. Traditionally, it is perceived that the kitchen is the ‘office’ for the girls since they grow up, get married and do all household chores for the general up keep of their respective families. As a result many parents considered spending their financial resources in the education of their girl-child only to end up getting married to man the homes of their husbands as an exercise in futility. They preferred to spend on their males who will become breadwinners of their future families.

Taking a general glance of daily happenings in the larger society, Tsikata (2009) said men’s demarcated social role of shouldering most of the financial responsibilities such as rent, utility bills and school fees promote their status as the main breadwinners while women do invisible everyday responsibilities such as cooking, washing and sweeping. Though there were few numbers of females in relation to males at the top echelons of leadership and economic wellbeing in Ghana, some measures were put in place to encourage female participation in nation building. For instance, in 1965, Ghana had her first two female pilot officers namely Ayeley Kome and Melody Danquah who received presidential award for their efforts

(Ghana's First Women Pilots, 1965, April, 17). There were also pockets of female magistrates, doctors, lawyers, and teachers across the country. A study conducted by Torto (n. d., p. 44) revealed statistics that showed oscillating under-representation of women in leadership from the 1960s through to 2012 (Figure 1). Ghana's 1992 constitution sought to address women's right and gender issues but the critique by pro-feminists and gender experts (Torto, n. d.) was that, such constitutional provisions were scattered and lacked rigorous implementation and enforcement. It was simply an issue of *tokenism* of an insignificant representation of women.

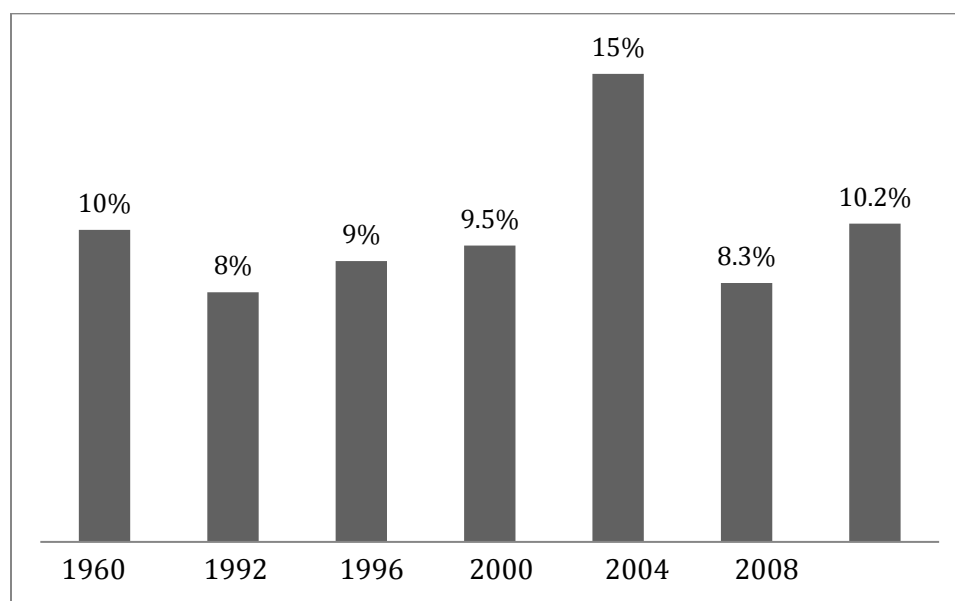


Figure 1. Female representation in the national assembly/parliament (Source: Torto, n.d., p.44)

The low representation of women in decision-making, and gender related issues called into being the Affirmative Action Bill which has still not been passed into law by Ghana's parliament. The drafting of the Affirmative Action Bill, in Ghana, began in the 1960s, and has witnessed lots of debate till now. This Bill is a major step to ensuring high representation of women in decision-making processes of nation building in Ghana. 'Affirmative action is a set of measures adopted by governments and public and private institutions including political parties, educational establishments, corporations and companies to address a history of systemic discrimination and exclusion of particular social groups or to encourage the efforts of particular social groups in the interests of certain development goals' (Tsikata, 2009, p.5). It began in 1960 as Affirmative Action Act (AAA) and gained much public support and attention in 1980s and 1990s under the regime and constitutional rule of former president Rawlings. The Act was to encourage active participation of women in key leadership

positions, eliminate any form of discrimination of persons based on sex or gender and make a mandatory 40 per cent inclusion and participation of women in public positions. Affirmative action policies for women have appeared in several documents of the United Nations such as Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BFA).

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) sprang up to add their voice to the fight against discrimination, inequalities and weaker feminine voices in terms of their participation in governance and decision-making. One of such organisations was the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM) founded by Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, a first lady of the fourth republic of Ghana (Mensah-Kutin, 2010). The organisation was a women's right group that reigned from 1979 to 1999, with a focus on empowering women to improve their living conditions. In continuation with government's effort to dislocate social injustice, inequalities and gender related issues, the Kuffour led government in 2001 established Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), which built on the existing gender oriented policies to protect women and children. A year to 2004 general elections in Ghana, the Ghanaian Women's Manifesto idea was born. There have been gradual upsurge of organisations with interest in gender issues. They include Women's Manifesto Coalition (WMC), Women in Law and Development (WILDAF), Network for Women's Rights In Ghana (NETRIGHT), Domestic Violence Coalition (DVC) and ABANTU for Development (Mensah-Kutin, 2010). The advocacy roles of these organisations have contributed directly or indirectly to the metamorphosis of Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP). The renaming of the ministry was done in January 2013 by an Executive Instrument 1 (E. I. 1) for the purpose of policy formulation, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of issues on gender, children and social protection for national development (Government of Ghana, 2016).

### **Dress Fashion in the Early 1990s**

The contributions of the Nana Konadu led 31st December Women's Movement, ignited the spirit of women's activism which consequently imparted on feminist scholarship and advocacy in Ghana in the 1990s. Noted for her elegant Kaba fashions, Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings (Richards, 2015; Essel, 2013; Gott, 2010; Dzramedo, 2010), became a beacon of new *kaba* designs in the 1990s. By her leadership influence and high feminist activism voice, she served as a role model for many old and young females in the society. She fought tirelessly for legal institutionalisation of gender equality, economic empowerment and de-marginalisation of women and children in formal educational matters for physical, psychosocial and economic victories for women. With this active advocacy voice, feminist sculpture (Figures 2, 3 and 4) began to surface in Accra public spaces for visual representation of Ghanaian feminists' ideologies and identity in the 1990s. Feminist sculptures in this



context are public sculptures meant to preach and draw attention to feminist activism, women right and child right. This was to break the monotony of displaying male sculptures in public spaces, and to signify the awakening and emergence of feminist activism and ideological consideration in policy issues affecting women and children at large.

Wearing a gentle smile on the face, a life-size feminine figure elegantly dressed in *kaba* (slit and blouse) fashion, flashy coiffure partially covered with a headscarf, and a pair of shoe is flanked on the left by a girl-child, and on the right by a boy-child (Figure 2). Her outfit manifests one of Ghana's fashion classics – *kaba* couture. *Kaba* dress is a three-piece ensemble consisting of a stylised blouse top, slit and a wrapper cloth usually worn in different positioning prescribed by the wearer. The wrapper or cover cloth is sometimes folded and draped on the neck regions, left shoulder or hand to complement the looks of the wearer. The ensemble may come with headscarf or other accessories fashioned from the same or similar fabric. Adding more touch of 1990s fashion, is the dreadlock hairstyle that stretches to cover the nape of the central feminine figure. This hairstyle is locally called *rasta* (Figure 2).

Ghanaian *kaba* ensemble is a high fashion classic produced by fusing features of European blouse styles and pre-colonial unsewn wraparound fashion (Gott, 2010; Dzamedo, 2010). What makes *kaba* classic unique in Ghanaian female fashion is its outstanding contribution to the bespoke sartorial culture and the promotion of creativity through the designs released onto the fashion market of Ghana. Undeniably, hundreds of new *kaba* designs are released everyday as compared to the seasonal release of collections in the Western fashion scene. Gott (2010, p. 13) observes that the term *kaba* is used synonymously in reference to the three-piece Ghanaian *kaba*; the *kaba sloht* dress of Sierra Leone; and the smocked *kaba* dress style worn in Cameroon in West Africa. Characteristically, *kaba* dress is considered as a dress that covers the breast regions of the wearer, hence, its encouragement by the early Euro-Christian missionaries to their Ghanaian new converts. It became a symbol of anti-nudity since it was considered modest for use by Christians and other so-called pristine individuals. Feminine elites of the nineteenth century and beyond wore this dress to signal their elitist nomenclature.

Costuming the central feminine figure in *kaba* fashion sent a figurative message of feminist elitism, readiness to fight marginalisation and subjugation of women that breeds inequality. Another figurative message offered by this feminist sculpture (Figure 2) is its academic conjecture of critiquing the preference of boy-child education to girl-child education. The juxtaposition of both boy-girl figures by the central feminine figure carries an allusive interpretation of girl-child education subjugation. By way of making this visual iconographic allusion clear, the girl-child received considerable figural height in comparison to the boy-child, perhaps, signaling the time to switch fully to concentrate on girl-child education. The educative role of this composition is that, it reminds viewers of giving equal priority to girl-

child education in bridging the gap.



*Figure 2.* A woman dressed in kaba fashion and flanked by two children. Kawokudi Junction, N1 Highway, Accra. Image courtesy of authors.

### **Women Empowerment, Gender Equality and Child Rights Campaigns**

Reinforcing a more gender sensitive statement in sculptural format, is a four figured composition comprising of a central feminine figure thrusting a boyish baby in the air, and flanked by two children – a boy and a girl – in standing postures. The two feminine figures, that is, the central figure and the girl-child clanged to it, are depicted in profound sizes in

relation to the boy-child figures. An interesting twist to this sculptural rendition is that all the child figures take anchorage from the central feminine figure. There is equality of male-to-female figures representation in this composition (Figure 3) and sends a message of gender equality. It is located in front of the General Post Office at the busy Asafoatse Nettey Street, Accra Central. The sculpture plays multiple educative roles on viewers: the preachment on gender equality and the promotion of Ghanaian fashion classics.



*Figure 3. A four figure sculptural composition preaching gender equality. Located at Accra General Post Office. Image courtesy of authors.*



*Figure 4: A nurse carrying a boy-child and holding hands with a girl-child. Located at Ridge Hospital roundabout. Image courtesy of authors.*

It makes a silent statement about annulment of women subjugation and patriarchy or male domination to create equal platform for gender parity. This statement embedded in the sculptural composition (Figure 3) has been echoed by many Ghanaian feminists such as Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings; Nana Oye Lithur, former minister for Gender, Child and Social Protection (MoGCSP); Dzodzi Tsikata, Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT)

convenor; and Rose Mensah-Kutin, West Africa programme manager for ABANTU for Development. Apart from this, the sculpture questions why women's representation in governance and socio-economic development is woefully minimal in Ghana, although their contribution is crucial to the growth and development of the nation. The thrust of the child in the air (Figure 3) raises concerns about the fundamental right of children. Children's right enshrined in the Ghanaian constitution became more rigorous when the Child Law Reform Advisory Committee was set up in 1995 to review the laws on child rights. The work of the committee brought a legislative reform that resulted in the enactment of the Children Act 1998 (Act 560) (Appiah, n.d). Child rights included right to protection from abuse, child labour, neglect and sexual contact with adults; protection from customary practices that degrade and humiliate them; right to health, and education (Appiah, n.d.; PAAJAF foundation, 2016). The Departments of Children and Gender under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection have the respective responsibility of children and gender related matters (Ghana NGOs Coalition on the Rights of the Child, 2014).

With respect to the costuming of the sculptures (Figure 3), the headscarf and the unstitched wrap-around fashion of the dominant central feminine figure is another Ghanaian classic that has influenced cosmopolitan bare-chested dress fashion. Dressed in pre-colonial Ghanaian style, the dominant female figure represents all Ghanaian females, whether formally educated or not, and recognises their presence in the society. Choosing such dress fashion in clothing the figure is to accentuate its simplicity and fashionable appeal. This dress style is also considered modest in different Ghanaian ethnic fashion contexts.

One of the sculptures (figure 4) located at Ridge Hospital roundabout is a potent visual iconography of children's right to good health. It is composed of a central feminine figure mimetic of a nurse carrying a boy-child while it holds hands with a girl-child on its left hand. The costuming of the central feminine figure reveals her occupation as a health worker, while its strategic placement in proximity to the Ridge Hospital, Accra tells the message it carries across. The recently refurbished Ridge Hospital is one of the largest health facilities in Ghana that serves thousands of people in surrounding suburbs including Accra New Town, Legon, Kanda, Adabraka, Airport Residential Area, Kotobabi, Maamobi and Achimota. Users of the hospital facility encounter the sculpture that advocates for children's right to good health, which must lead to reduction, to the barest minimum, in infant mortality rate in Ghana. Apart from the aesthetical function of this sculpture, its overt iconographic messaging about the need for all (parents, health workers, policymakers and other stakeholders) to prioritise child health concerns gives the sculpture an educational tone. It, therefore, plays a silent pedagogical role to viewers in child health matters.

### **Implications of Dress Fashion Feminist Sculptures to Art Education**

*Public art* as a term has no generally accepted definition. Variations in definition confirm the sophisticated nature of the term. Zebracki (2011) as cited in Qadri (2016, p. 30) defined it as ‘permanent or temporary artworks on sites that have open public access and are located outside museums and galleries.’ Hunting (2005) and Carter (2010) share similar definitional concept. This definition, categorically, excludes artworks found in galleries and museums. Meanwhile, galleries and museum are also open to the public for their reception. Carter (2010) added that public art is for the public domain.

Despite the non-existence of universal definition for the term, public art serve many purposes. Its purpose include urban revitalization; economic development; the attraction of tourists and investors to an area; social benefits such as civic pride; social interaction; a sense of community and local identity or the public good (Qadri, 2016; Carter, 2010); public education and aesthetic enjoyment. Public artworks play pedagogical role (Qadri, 2016). The pedagogical role of public art operates in two ways: through the narratives and knowledge it projects; and through its authorship and placement, which teaches the authority behind its placement for public consumption (Qadri, 2016). These pedagogical roles Qadri (2016) identified are applicable to the context of the dress fashion feminist sculptures (Figures 2, 3 and 4) discussed in this article. Figure 2, composed of three human figures: a mother and two children, the costuming of the figures, especially, the central mother figure in kaba, headscarf and dreadlocks and the entire compositional rationale reinforced the narrative and the contemporary cultural knowledge about the artwork. It plays a silent educative role of the kaba dress fashion politics; and the use of kaba as feminist elitist symbol in contemporary Ghana. The entire composition educated and encouraged viewers about the need for formal school education for children – whether boy or girl. These overt visual cultural educative message expressed by this sculpture (Figure 2) contributed to public education through the arts in the 1990s.

In Figure 3, the equality of male-to-female figures representation made an iconographic reference to the need for observation and active implementation of gender equality preached during the era. Another pedagogical role it played was cataloguing and promotion of Ghana’s fashion classics; and served as visual public statement against patriarchy and under-representation of women in governance. Children’s right to good health was also presented in sculptural format (Figure 4). Pressing issues such as dress fashion politics, child education, gender equity, representation of women in governance and child health concerns, plaguing the contemporary Ghanaian society in the 1990s were packaged through fashion and sculpture art for the purpose of public art education. These visual public imageries initiated contextual dialogue for the Ghanaian public good. It implies that all these public-funded artworks done for public consumption contributed in one way or the other in educating the public thereby

playing a silent, yet, powerful pedagogical role.

### Conclusions

It is a common knowledge that environmental sculptures educate, inspire and beautify public places. Beyond its educative and entertaining role in public spaces, it plays an iconographic role of portraying identities. By studying selected sculptures of 1990s found in public spaces in the Accra metropolis, the study revealed that feminist activism of Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings' 31st December Women's Movement and the contribution of other civil society organisations reinvigorated feminist voices in Ghana. The leadership influence and high feminist activism voice of Nana Konadu brought a positive change of mounting feminists' statues in the capital city, Accra. This broke the monotony of displaying male sculptures in public spaces, and signified the awakening and emergence of feminist activism and ideological consideration in policy issues affecting women and children at large. Through pre-colonial and contemporary dress practice used in the costuming of these outdoor sculptures, the messages of feminist activism, women right, child right and girl-child education became apparent in the sculptures, which the citizenry were able to relate to. The *kaba* fashion and the unstitched wrap-around fashion of Ghanaian origin that characterised the sculptures influenced cosmopolitan fashion. For instance, *kaba* became a symbol of anti-nudity since it was considered modest fashion. Female elites of the nineteenth century and beyond wore this dress to signal their elitist nomenclature while the wraparound dress style that depicted bare-chestiness influenced contemporary fashion of Ghana. The dress fashion of these feminist sculptures created and promoted feminist identities and intensified feminist activism and advocacy role in Ghana in the 1990s. *Kaba* and wraparound fashion are still in vogue in Ghana. The sculptures continue to play silent pedagogical role on viewers in the nation's quest to achieve gender equality, economic empowerment of women and promotion of girl-child education. It also reminds viewers of doing all within their means to promote child right to health and education. This implies that the 1990s public sculptures in the Accra Metropolis are still relevant since they have pedagogical implications in Ghana today.

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### **About the Authors**

Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel teaches at the Fashion and Textiles Education unit in the Department of Art Education of the University of Education, Winneba. He is an African fashion and textiles historian, a practising sculptor and leading member of Artwatch Ghana, an arts-based think tank that advocates for better positioning of Ghanaian art in national development. As a practising sculptor, he has worked individually and with team of sculptors in producing public artworks. His research interest is in textiles and fashion history and sculpture. He is a member of European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK; ACASA and Artwatch Ghana.

Isaac Opoku-Mensah is a Senior Lecturer who teaches art history and sculpture at the Department of Art Education of the University of Education, Winneba. He is one of the renowned contemporary sculptors in Ghana who has produced a good number of public sculptures found in Ghana. He has served as a chief examiner for sculpture at West Africa Examination Council for over two decades.

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