

# **Impact of Good Leadership and Technical Attachment in the Outstanding Performances of University of Cape Coast Cross Country Team in the Unilever Inter-University Cross Country Competitions**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to obtain information on factors related to the consistently good performances of the University of Cape Coast (UCCs) cross country teams from 2002. The population of the study was made up of students and staff of UCC while the accessible population was sports administrators, coaches, cross country athletes and sportsmen and women in other sporting disciplines. Two hundred and fifty respondents were purposely selected for the study. Sports administrators, coaches, cross country athletes and athletes in other sporting disciplines who were present from the year 2002 were used for the study. The questionnaire was used for data collection. Frequencies, percentages and means were used to analyze the data. The results of the study portrayed that, the factors related to the consistently good performances of UCCs cross country teams were motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) recruitment and selection, technical attachment to the teams, sponsorship, facilities and equipment, financial support and other administrative policies and leadership employed by various leaders. It was recommended that the university should make more sponsorship packages available and increase allowances and other external rewards for university sportsmen and women.

**Keywords;** Cross Country Competition, Performance, Motivation, Athletes

## **Introduction**

Cross country running is a running event in which teams of runners' race on open-air courses over natural terrain. The course mainly 4 – 12 kilometers long, include surfaces of grass and earth. Athletes pass through wood lands and open country which includes hills and flat lands. It is both an individual and a team sport. Runners are judged on individual basis and a point scoring method for teams. Both men and women of all ages compete in this event.

Cross country running is one of the disciplines under the umbrella sports of athletics in which athletes often compete in long distance track and road events. Although open-air running competitions are pre-historic, the rules and traditions of cross country emerged in England with a game called "hare and hounds" or the paper chase in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this game, a runner or group of runners laid a trail by dropping pieces of paper or other markers while following a random course and a second set of runners then set out in pursuit, trying to follow the paper trail (International Amateur Athletic Federation [IAAF], 2005 – 2006).

The first formal competition was the Crick Run which was first held at Rugby School in 1937. Other schools including Oxford and Cambridge Universities followed suit. Later in 1876, the English National Cross Country association established competition runs. Two years later it was introduced to the United States by William C. Vosburgh of New York. In 1887, the National Cross-Country Association was formed and held its first championship event.

Later, City College of New York, Cornell University and University of Pennsylvania took part in the first intercollegiate meet in 1890. The sport became more popular at Cornell, which took the lead in organizing intercollegiate Cross-Country Association in 1998 when England and France met. Later, an annual championship meet involving England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales began in 1903 and became a true international event in 1907, when France sent a team to compete. By 1920s, other European countries had joined.

Cross country became an Olympic event in 1912, 1920 and 1924 but was later dropped because it was not suitable for summer competition. The International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF), which governs track and field worldwide took over jurisdiction in 1962 and established rules for both men and women. The first women's world championship meeting was held in 1967. Since 1973 the foremost elite competition has been the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) World Cross-Country Championship (IAAF, 2005/2006).

### **World Championships**

European dominated the early stages of the International Cross Country Championship. The first of its kind was held at the Hamilton Park Racecourse in Scotland on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1903. England won the first 14 titles, and 43 out of 59 titles until the IAAF took over the competition in 1973. France was the next successful nation and won 12 championships between 1922 and 1956. Belgium also won titles in 1948, 1957, 1961 and 1963. On individual basis also England dominated with an Englishman winning the individual title 35 times including three wins by Jack Holden (1933 – 1935).

On the women front, the first international cross country championship was organized in 1931. By 1972 it has been organized thirteen times England again won 12 of these early championships losing only in 1968 and 1969 to the United States. Interestingly, Doris Brown won five consecutive individual titles between 1967 and 1971.

The championship was renamed as World Cross Country Championship when IAAF took over in 1973. During the 1975 competition, the men from New Zealand and the women from United States won the gold medals, respectively. That was the first time countries outside Europe won the championship. In 1981, however, an African Nation (Ethiopia) won the men's race for the first time and a decade later their women counterparts from Kenya also made Africa proud by winning the women's race for the first time. Either Ethiopia or Kenya has captured every man's title since 1981 and every women's title since 2001 (I.A.A.F., 2005/2006).

### **Organization of Inter-University Cross Country in Ghana**

Cross-country as an event to test the endurance of athletes was part of the events competed in during Ghana University Sports Association (GUSA) meets until 1996 when it was separated from the main competition. This was the result of the importance attached to this event by the university authorities and stakeholders. The hosting of this competition therefore was made rotational among the five public universities we have in the country which coincidentally form the membership of GUSA. The event is held annually and it is aimed at selecting athletes to represent GUSA at both national and international levels. It is also aimed at producing long distance runners for the nation.

Unilever Ghana Limited which took over the sponsorship from Tractor and Equipment (CAT) in 1998 has since played their role effectively in the promotion and development of the sport in the universities and the country at large. This has been made possible by fulfilling their part of the agreement in the form of funds for organization and prizes every year (Nkpeh, 1998).

Since its inception in 1996, the competition has been hosted at least twice by each of the five public universities. The maiden one was hosted by University of Ghana – Legon, in 1996. The University of Science and Technology (UST) now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) took their turn the following year. This was followed by University of Cape Coast (UCC) in 1998 and then to the University College of Education – Winneba (UCEW), now University of Education – Winneba (UEW) in 1999. In 2000 it was the turn of University of Development Studies (IDS) in Tamale. The hosting followed the same trend with University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University hosting the 2006 and 2007 editions, respectively. (Nkpeh, 1996 – 2001; Buami, 2002 – 2007; Apaak, 2008).

The distance covered by female athletes was 8 kilometers while the males covered 12 kilometers. Since the inception of the competition various individuals from almost all the universities have won the first position in both male and female events before. Almost every university with the exception of UDS has also won gold in terms of team placement.

### **Competitions held from 1996 – 2008 and UCCs Performance:**

After separating cross-country from other organized GUSA games, the University of Ghana was the first institution that was given the mandate to host. The entire programme was under the sponsorship of Tractor

and Equipment (CAT). University of Cape Coast (UCC) was fairly represented. The following people represented the school and came out with an average performance. They were Seth Effah, Charles Nyame, Dery Ankrah, James Oblie, Alex Akomea and John Ofori just to mention but a few. The ladies were Shirley Hoffman, Comfort Dzivor, Janet Ampong, Christina E. Ameyaw and Naomi Poku. The men and the women placed 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, respectively (Nkpeh, 1996).

The following year – 1997 was the turn of University of Science and Technology (UST) to host. The UCC men in the persons of Seth Effah Ansah, James Oblie, P. Duah Boateng, C. N. Karmissah propelled their team to place second. The ladies on the other hand with the likes of Christiana E. Ameyaw, Comfort Dzivor and Mercy Ankamah placed third (Nkpeh, 1997).

The 1998 edition of the competition was held at the University of Cape Coast. It was the first time Unilever Ghana Limited took over sponsorship from Tractor and Equipment. This time round, the University of Development Studies (UDS) took part. Apart from University of Ghana (UG) and University College of Education – Winneba (UCEW) who presented 9 and 8 athletes respectively, the rest of the universities presented the required 10 athletes each for both divisions. After a keenly contested competition, the UCC men urged by the home support won the ultimate but the ladies placed third. Almost the same squad of 1998 represented both men and women (Nkpeh, 1998).

In 1999, it was the turn of University College of Education to welcome the rest of the universities to Winneba as host. At the end of another hot contest the men from UCC placed third in the men's division and fourth in the women's division (Nkpeh, 1999). University of Development Studies had the opportunity to host theirs in 2000. All the Universities down South moved up there to compete for laurels. Once again it was a keenly contested event which the men and the women from UCC did their best by placing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, respectively (Nkpeh, 2000). The 2001 edition was hosted, by University of Ghana (UG) for the second time. Once again, UCC was present and performed creditably in both divisions. The men and women both placed third (Nkpeh, 2001). Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology was the venue for the 2002 edition of the Inter-University Cross Country. Coincidentally, that marked the beginning of UCC teams' consistent good performance in Cross Country. UCC was represented by the likes of Issaka Mohadi, Christopher Yarkwah, Paul Owusu Badu, Modesai Wiredu, Michael Bruce Ennin, Kwadwo Agyeman, Kenneth Kanbilige and colleagues for the men. The females were Emefa Agbo, Fati Larley, Charlotte Adoma Diabour, Rita Ahengua, Beauty Esi-Doh Nani and the rest. The men won the ultimate and the women were first runners up (Buami, 2002).

During the 2003 edition of the competition that was hosted by University of Cape Coast, the host was represented by the same squad in the men's division with few new faces from the women's side. The UCC's team performances were par excellent as they retained the positions they won the previous years (Buami, 2003). The 2004 and 2005 editions were not different from the former as the UCC men and women led by Paul Owusu Boadu and Audrey Owusu Adjei, respectively, repeated the excellent performance by their predecessors. They were first and second once again (Buami, 2004/2005).

Though the 2006 and 2007 competitions hosted by Legon and KNUST, respectively, saw new faces like Prince Odoom, Francis Cudjoe, Clement Amartey, Betty Wiafe Akenteng, Sarah William, Sally Coffie and colleagues, they maintained the goodwill their leaders had established for the school. The previous positions were maintained, that is, the first and second positions (Buami, 2006/2007).

The 2008 edition hosted by University of Cape Coast was not an exception from the previous ones in terms of UCCs performance. Even with new faces like Matilda Ofori Boateng and Engman Gladys the ladies were able to maintain the second position while Veteran Prince Odoom led the men to win the ultimate (Apaak, 2008).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cross country running formed an integral part of the Ghana University Sports Association's organized sports festival until 1996 when it was separated from the main event. Different times and dates are agreed on and all public universities take part in this event.

Since the inception of this competition, interesting results have been produced by the various universities of which no one particular university could boast of dominating the event for even three consecutive years in both male and female division (Nkpeh, Buami, & Apaak, 1996 – 2008). Starting from 2002 to 2008, the University of Cape Coast Cross Country teams for both men and women have been able to win the gold medal,

and the silver medals, respectively, in the Unilever Ghana Limited sponsored cross country organized for public universities every year. It is therefore prudent to consider and critically examine the variables responsible for such a consistently good performances

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the variables responsible for the consistently good performances of the University of Cape Coast's cross country teams.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the association between financial support from the University authorities and the consistently good performances of UCC's cross country teams?
2. What is the association between good leadership and the consistently good performances of UCC's cross country teams?

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. This design according to Ary, Jacobs and Razavich, (2002) has the advantage of wide scope as well as great deal of information that can be obtained from moderately large sample from a particular population. It also creates a good platform for accurate picture of events where inferences could be made about perceptions, characteristics and attitudes on basis of data gathered at a particular point in time.

The target population was 1,826 made up of 122 sports administrators 10 coaches 140 cross country runners and 1,554 other athletes. The accessible population was made up 49 sports administrators, 10 coaches from the Health, Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) Department 90 cross country runners and 104 other athletes (present and past) totaling 250.

A sample of 250 respondents was selected for the study made up of four sports and recreation committee chairmen and secretaries, three sports coaches from the sports coaches' office, four SRC sports presidents and 35 team captains. Others included 10 coaches or trainers, 90 cross country athletes made up of men and women and 104 athletes from other sporting disciplines (past and present athletes).

The multistage sampling technique was used which included purposive and quota sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was employed because it is these people who are directly involved with the cross country event and it is their views that are being sought after. The purposive sampling method was used to select sports committee chairmen and secretaries, chief sports coaches and their assistants. Quota sampling was also used so as to allocate specific numbers for the various disciplines so as to give equal representation. The above techniques were employed because the research responses were provided by experts or people who were knowledgeable in the various sports fields in general and cross country in particular.

A self-structured questionnaire with assistance from the principal supervisor and co-supervisor was used for data collection. The data for the study were tallied under the various items and analysed statistically according to the format required by SPSS windows version 16.0. Each questionnaire was vetted and numbered serially according to the sequence in which they were received. The responses were quantified and coded on broad data summary sheet to facilitate easy loading into the computer. The value labels assigned to the categories on the Likert scale were as follows:

### **Results/ Discussions**

#### **Research question 1: Did financial support and other administrative policies contribute to the good performances of the teams?**

Table 1 shows mean values regarding financial support and other administrative policies resulting in consistently good performances of UCCs cross country teams. Considering the first item on the table 1, 58 respondents representing 25.2% strongly agreed, 135 respondents representing 58.7% agreed, 33 representing 14.3% disagreed and 4 representing 1.7%. On item 2, 10 respondents representing 3.4% strongly agreed, 64 respondents representing 27.8% agreed, 105 respondents representing 45.7% disagreed and 51 respondents representing 21.1% strongly disagreed. On item 3, 86 respondents representing 37.3% strongly agreed, 101 respondents representing 43.9% agreed, 37 respondents representing 16.1% disagreed and 6 representing 2.6%.

On item 4, 101 respondents representing 43.9% strongly agreed, 119 respondents representing 51.7% agreed, 7 respondents representing 3.0% disagreed and 3 representing 1.3%. On item 5, 56 respondents representing 24.3% strongly agreed, 110 respondents representing 47.8% agreed, 44 respondents representing 19.1% disagreed and 20 respondents representing 8.7% strongly disagreed. On item 6, 112 respondents representing 48.7% strongly agreed to the statement, 93 respondents representing 40.4% agreed to the statement, 19 respondents representing 8.3% disagreed to the statement, and 5 respondents representing 2.2% strongly disagreed to the statement. Taking the responses under the various categories into consideration, greater number of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed positively to statement on research question 1 while lesser number of agreed positively to statement on research question 1 while lesser number of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed to positive statement on the same research question.

**Table 1: Financial Support and Other Administrative Policies**

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	
Adequate funds were released on time for intra-mural sports competition and preparation towards external ones and good administrative policies contributed to good performance	58 (25.2)	135 (58.7)	33 (14.3)	4 (1.7)	1.81
Camping and competition allowances were too small for athletes and player to give off their best	51 (22.1)	105 (45.7)	64 (27.8)	10 (4.3)	1.50
Funds were released for proper care such as medical during training and competitions	86 (37.3)	101 (43.9)	37 (16.1)	6 (2.6)	1.71
Interpersonal relationship that existed between the administrators and other stakeholders such as coaches and athletes were cordial	101 (43.9)	119 (51.7)	7 (3.0)	3 (1.3)	1.69
The dedication of one afternoon to sports by the university authorities contributed in a way to encourage participation in internal competitions hence good performance in external ones	56 (24.3)	110 (47.8)	44 (19.1)	20 (8.7)	1.88
Policies such as none payment of residential user fee by some outstanding athletes boosted their moral to give off their best	112 (48.7)	93 (40.4)	19 (8.3)	5 (2.2)	1.90

Mean values less than or equals to 1 falls under strongly agree, mean values less than or equals to 2 falls under agree, mean values less than or equals to 4 falls under disagree, mean values less than or equals to 5 falls under strongly disagree equals to 2 which represent agree. Therefore majority agreed that financial support and other administrative policies in place contributed to the good performance of the teams.

Due to the expensive nature of organizing both intramural and extramural sports competitions and the money involved in managing the affairs of student athletes right from day one of training to the last day and then through competition periods as well as students awkward behaviour towards university sports in Ghana, there is the need for authorities in tertiary institutions to have a strong financial base and good administrative policies to push the sports agenda of the institution forward.

No sports training or completion can go on successfully without adequate funds to provide for the needed materials. Most athletes are now taking part in university sports due to the fat allowances, winning bonuses and the per diems they receive from the authorities during and after competitions. Others also compete for their universities because certain good policies have been put in place to enhance their performances on the field and at the same time enjoy certain benefits from the authorities which hither they were not enjoying. On the statement as to whether authorities provide strong fancied base for sports management and adopt good administrative policies to encourage athletes to perform, majority of the respondents agreed to it.

This corroborates with Abdul (1998) that availability of funding has a great influence in facilitating an effective organization of physical education and sporting programmes. Provision of funds in adequacy and on time for both intramural and extramural sporting activities will go a long way to promote sports participation and development.

He emphasized that, at the planning stage of every sporting activity, it is the responsibility of administration to ensure that funds are available. Lack of funds to carry out specific functions at a given time may hinder smooth flow of work. Backing this view, Asabia (2002) highlighted that prompt financial assistance or funding by the administrative body of any institution or body provides a sound footing for organization of sporting programmes. It may also facilitate preparation towards competitions as well as making planning easy for leaders such as coaches, committee chairman and other stakeholders.

On good administrative policies it was realized that relationship between authorities and subordinates is cordial, likewise policies on students welfare. This is in agreement with, Akintunde (2001) who asserts that educational administrators are charged with the responsibility of promoting good relationship among organizational members.

Thus when relationship between administrators and subordinates such as coach, team captain and team members are mutually satisfying, peace, harmony and high staff morale are seen to be essential for the improvement of teaching and learning. Also, the institution of a scholarship in the form of non-payment of residential user fee for outstanding athletes for a stipulated period of time within a particular year is in line with the Senate Committee into Women in Sports and Recreation in Australia (2005) who confirmed that as a result of a move to improve sports and recreation opportunities for women and girls it had instituted three scholarship schemes.

**Research question 2: Did good leadership contribute to the good performances of the teams?**

Table 2 deals with mean values regarding good leadership as having effect on the consistently good performances of UCCs cross country teams.

**Table 2: Leadership and Performances of UCC teams**

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	
Most leaders demonstrated an authoritative behaviour by being leader centered, task oriented, very instructive and deciding without consultation	48 (20.7)	87 (37.8)	74 (32.2)	21 (9.1)	1.89
Most leaders demonstrated a democratic behaviour through openness transparency, tolerance, shared responsibility and concern for team members	62 (26.9)	126 (54.8)	20 (8.7)	22 (9.6)	1.78
Least leaders demonstrated a laissez-faire leadership attitude by acting as consultants and constantly remained passive	45 (19.6)	103 (44.8)	46 (20.0)	36 (15.7)	1.85
Most leaders combined democratic and autocratic styles of leadership to achieve teams' objectives	49 (21.3)	92 (40.0)	47 (20.4)	42 (18.3)	1.86



Mean values less than or equals to 1 falls under strongly agree, mean values less than or equals to 2 falls under agree, mean values less than or equals to 4 falls under disagree, mean values less than or equals to 5 falls under strongly disagree. Considering the first item on the table 2, 48 respondents representing 20.7% strongly agreed, 87 respondents representing 37.8% agreed, 74 representing 32.2% disagreed and 21 representing 9.1%. On item 2, 62 respondents representing 26.9% strongly agreed, 126 respondents representing 54.8% agreed, 20 respondents representing 8.7% disagreed and 22 respondents representing 9.6%. On item 3, 45 respondents representing 19.6% strongly agreed, 103 respondents representing 44.8% agreed, 46 respondents representing 20.0% disagreed and 36 representing 15.7%. On item 4, 49 respondents representing 21.3% strongly agreed, 92 respondents representing 40.0% agreed, 47 respondents representing 20.4% disagreed and 42 representing 18.3%. Taking the responses under the various categories on the various leadership styles that are mainly used in university sports administration into consideration, majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that democratic leadership style was popular and therefore employed in dealing with athletes. Autocratic leadership style according to the responses was averagely used by leaders in dealing with issues concerning athletes whereas laissez-faire was seldom used by leaders. All the mean values fall under the scale of less or equals to 2 which represent agree. Therefore majority agreed that democratic leadership style is more applicable and suitable in dealing with issues concerning athletes and therefore contributed to the consistently good performances of the teams even though autocratic and the combination of democratic and autocratic leadership styles cannot be ruled out completely.

Leadership of any kind has an influence on sports performance. The performance may be either positive or negative depending on how that type of leadership is used at preparation stage of the athlete and at competitions. Studies have revealed that leadership of a group such as team captain, coach, teacher, president or chairman is a critical element that affects the overall performance of a group. Leadership is regarded as any behaviour that moves a group closer to attaining its goals. Institutions which have problems with good leaders to lead their athletes are bound to fail because every team needs directives which should be provided by a sound and reasonable leader. In a suggestive statement as to whether most leaders demonstrated a democratic behaviour through openness, transparency, tolerance, shared responsibility and concern for team members, the respondents once again strongly agreed and agreed to it. This means that democratic type of leadership stands tall when it comes to the use of leadership styles leaders employ in dealing with their athletes in UCC. This meant that in line with Wesson et al. (2005) a good leader must possess certain qualities such as good decision-making and interpersonal qualities motivating by giving appropriate feedback, being tactful and diplomatic, visionaries with idea about goals and objectives and should be confident and show initiative in organizing and directing the group. They went ahead to claim that a democratic leader will exhibit qualities such as performer centered, use of cooperative approach to allow performers input into decision making and contributes in teams effort Daft and Marcic, (2004) were of the view that democratic leaders by and large are successful coaches as compared to autocratic and laissez faire because when athletes are involved in decision making they develop an every ready attitude to perform and excel.

As to whether most leaders demonstrated an authoritative behaviour by being leader centred, task-oriented, very instructive and deciding without consultation, there was almost fifty-fifty response to agreement and disagreement. Whatever the case may be autocratic leadership style may also have some advantages and may be useful under certain circumstances. In relating this type of leadership to sports performance, Avery (2005) emphasized that autocratic type of leadership is more likely to be effective in team sports with greater number of performers. In agreement to the usefulness of autocratic leadership, Wesson et al. (2005) remark that, although autocratic leaders rely heavily on their personal authority and generally make decisions concerning training tactics and goals, they are likely to succeed due to the task-oriented nature of their leadership but in contrast.

The statement as to whether few leaders demonstrated a laissez-faire leadership attitude by acting as consultants and constantly remained passive, responses were mainly positive. In fact, any team with a coach who only acts as a consultant and remains passive in most stages of preparation and training is likely to fail in achieving the team's goal. In line with this, Hartigan, (2005) argues that laissez faire is not the best type of leadership to be exhibited at any level of sports performance as sports is full of uncertainties, so poor supervision may lead to rise in injuries on athletes. Bowling, (2000) therefore says that, it is very dangerous to entertain the laissez-faire type of leadership in secondary and tertiary institutions, the reason being that the athlete is not handled only on the field of play.

The effective combination of autocratic and democratic type of leadership may work effectively in university sports. Quizzing whether most leaders combined democratic and autocratic styles of leadership to

achieve a team's objectives, most of the respondents agreed. This finding is in line with the views of Agyeman-Boateng & Frimpong (2000) that certain leaders focus on setting goals and getting tasks done thereby meeting the objectives by concentrating on performance and productivity whilst others focus on developing and maintaining good interpersonal relationship with permissive and considerate approach. It is established that effective use of these leadership styles at any level of learning can help improve athletic performance of any kind.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings it concluded that motivation, recruitment and selections, technical attachment to the teams, sponsorship, facilities and equipment, financial support and other administrative policies and leadership were responsible for the consistently good performances of UCCs cross country teams from 2002 in the inter-university cross country competitions.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. University authorities must create room for picking people with special sports talents. If possible, the entry grades should be modified to pave way for some below average students who are endowed with sports talents to showcase them at the tertiary level.
2. It is also recommended that experts in the field education should be continually used to help universities in achieving laurel in cross country races. Also, services of physical education lecturers and teachers could also be sought to help in this direction.
3. Stakeholders and University Authorities should continue to sponsor athlete.
4. Authorities must make sure that equipment and facilities are always available, accessible and in good condition.
5. School authorities should continue to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to make funds available and released on time for use by athletes.
6. Authorities must continue with the good leadership styles that they have exhibited.

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