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EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

**USING THE LENS OF PAUL CHANCE’S BOOK: THE TEACHER’S CRAFT: THE TEN ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING TO TOUR THROUGH THE NATIONAL TEACHERS’ STANDARDS FOR GHANA.**

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***INTRODUCTION-***

The Student of this work would like to think that teaching rises to the level of art of which art, rests on craft. The aspiration of every teacher would be, seeing his or her student excelling. Students’ progress should be the yardstick by which a teacher’s quality should be assessed. How then do we enhance teaching effectiveness? A textbook is like a city, said Paul Chance, it never finished. Textbooks are there for formation of teachers and so, applaud should be accorded to all who have made it possible to come out with the necessary skills for teaching. As it interests the student, this paper wants to look at *National Teachers’ Standards For Ghana* using the lens of Paul Chance’s book: Teachers Craft: 10 essential skills for teaching. Interesting ones come into existence to help students, teachers and wide readers to enhance growth and maturity.

To enroll yourself to the level of teaching in Ghana, there are some expectations, philosophy, manner of transmission of knowledge, tools one uses in teaching you must attain; in short, there are some code of conduct or skills one must possess. Like any actor, teachers must master techniques which can be executed at a moment’s notice. Laying your hand on Paul Chance’s book without devouring it from cover to cover is to let go great opportunity. The authors, Paul Chance and the guidelines for Ghanaian teachers, are of the view that there is a body of evidence that shows how to teach so that students will learn far more than we have today. Teachers struggling to teach, students preparing to teach, experienced teachers eager to hone their skills and even self-coaching people, will find these books very essential for various nourishments and improvements. In fact, ‘Teacher’s Craft: The Ten Essential Skills of Effective Teaching’ is a treasure any person in academia must possess.

In view of that, this paper aims at expatiating evidence-based principles of effective teaching in Ghana.

***On National Teachers’ Standard For Ghana***

The National Teacher’s Standards is the first ever collectively agreed standard aim at guiding teacher preparation and practice in Ghana. It is developed as a professional tool to guide teacher educators, teachers, student teachers and other stakeholders in education to identify in clear and precise terms what teachers are expected to know and to be able to do, qualities they are expected to possess and some behavior they are supposed to exhibit. The book set a clear baseline of expectations for the professional knowledge, practice, conduct, attitude, rights and obligations expected of teachers working in schools at the pre-tertiary level. All teachers are assessed against the National Teachers’ Standards after their completion of their profession course.

It should not be left in oblivion that the National Teachers’ Standards swaps the diversity of standards being used in the various institutions offering initial teacher education or providing continuing professional development with a consolidated set of national standards to ensure that student teacher’s training and development is guided by the same set of standard. This is to effect good and approved knowledge approved by the country.

Uniquely designed and approved, the ‘Standard’ helps to improve the quality of teachers’ delivery and students’ performance and should therefore be used as a reference tool for student teachers, teacher educators, practicing teachers, head teachers, mentors, school inspectors and personnel working in the training student teachers. This manual will help coaches to direct their efforts rightly to the areas student teachers need most aid.

The contents of the Standard, comprises: what the standard stands for, who are the Standard for, Teachers’ standards[[1]](#footnote-1), how the standard could be used, roles teachers play and others. As could be deduce from the above, teachers play very vital role in motivating and challenging students to realize their potential that their preparation and successive development required the highest possible standards in knowledge, conduct and practice[[2]](#footnote-2) in their workplace.

To whom where the Standard made for? Since it is a great asset for scholarship, it is good for all but in the mind of the board, it was made for student teachers on pre-service teacher training courses working towards meeting the standard by the end of their course. Moreover, is meant for new teachers in their induction year in schools. How can practicing teachers in schools decide not to go in for this treasure? The standard serve as a point of reference for all standards and competencies. The National Teaching Council uses the Standard to assess cases of any misconduct by any member of the teaching profession. The standard, in short, is meant for all any member who finds himself or herself in the category of the teaching profession, institutions, teachers educators and wide range readers.

It is good for this paper to look at some of the professional Values and Attitudes given in the Standard. The teacher (s) critically and collectively meditates to improve teaching and learning. He or She improves personal and professional development through lifelong learning and continuous professional development. Such a coach, must demonstrates effective growing leadership qualities in the classroom and wider school. As profession, one must conduct himself or herself in a way that is in line with the code of conduct of the profession which would not in any way tarnish the image of the profession.

In line with the Professional knowledge, the teacher demonstrates familiarity with the education system and core policies guiding it. Securing content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge for the school and grade they are must always be at the core. It is the duty of the teacher to understand how children develop and learn in diverse contexts and help students so as to help them bring their talents out. Respecting learners’ cultural, linguistic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds in planning and teaching should be the aim of every teacher.

What are some of the professional practices in the Standard? Managing the learning environment is very important. The teacher plans and delivers varied and challenging lessons, showing a clear grip of the planned outcomes of teaching. The teacher must carry out small-scale action research to improve practice. There should be a sound environment suitable for learning; this should be created by teachers.

In a nutshell, Standards are clear expectations of skills that teachers should be able to demonstrate. Its usage is helpful in training institutions, schools, inspectorate bodies, continuous professional development at an individual, school, training, induction and self-development. As a key point of reference, mentors, teachers, tutors, college principals, head teachers as well as students may develop the habit of using this manual. Various roles of teacher education institutions are stipulated which makes it very useful for all.

***On Paul Chance’s Book: Teachers Craft***

Paul Chance’s masterpiece, ‘The Teacher’s Craft: The Ten Essential Skills of Effective Teaching (2008) is a classic piece that teachers and students must possess. Writing primarily for teachers of Grades K through 12. The book is systematized into ten modules that are designed to distillate on discrete aspects of an effective teaching gamut. His book is well written and should appeal to teachers of all levels. In the field of education, there is no perfection in our discovery. There are always fissures which later scholars are to build upon. Therefore, although it could be strengthened by the inclusion of more research and exclusion of weak research or suggestions not currently supported by research, it is certainly a welcome addition to the how-to-teach books that correctly flood the market. Paul has a strong track record of writing about behavioral analysis mostly for students and broad audiences. He is credited for coming out with some books like, *Learning and Behavior*[[3]](#footnote-3), *Applied Behavior Analysis*[[4]](#footnote-4), and of course *The Teacher’s Craft: The Ten Essential Skills Of Effective Teaching*[[5]](#footnote-5). As the title depicts, *The Teacher’s Craft*, is an effort to offer what the best available evidence says about effective teaching. The book is best read from beginning to end. One interesting thing in the prologue is that Chance points out, large number of books written about teaching fail to define teaching at the outset.

Credit goes to Chance for clearly operationalizing what “teaching” connotes.[[6]](#footnote-6) Even though the target of the book is not for college-level instructors, a great deal of the material offers itself to ready espousal with only slight adaptations in the college setup.

Paul Chance add spices to the book with frayed tricks of the behavior-analytic trade. Many are familiar but are likely to quite novel to the intended audience. A classic example is in chapter one; there, Chance vouch for teachers clearly state the things that are expected of students and this, he suggest that, if possible, classroom rules should be stated in terms of what ***to*** do, rather than what ***not*** to do. In his rendition, he gave a simple motive behind that; he said: clearly stating what not to do does nothing to clarify what one should do instead.

The importance of positive comments over negative ones should be emphasized. In observing this, teachers are to pay attention to various comments they make during classes hours and weigh the two (positive and negative comments), knowing the one they often use in class and work on them if the negative comments outweigh the positive comments. This is a simple, basic, low-tech change teachers can make that will likely improve student behavior fairly quickly.

Chance again urges a number of commonly held beliefs about educational practices. For instance, in chapter 6 of his book (Teacher’s Craft), he denies the modern notion that “to drill is to kill” and suggests instead that thoughtful, retention or retaining, transfer and that reaction from teachers that is short, specific, and public allows students to improve on their current performance. In building upon his point, he provided examples for how to accomplish various goals of erudition through training or practice of which he cited some examples of research that suggests that differences between “experts” and “novices” are mainly a matter of a decade or more of this type if practice, rather than some inherent innate ability.

“Intrinsic” is another widely held belief; Chance did refute this in chapter 8 either students have it or don’t. In citing some research that motivation is an outcome of other variables, many of which are under the control of the teachers. Throwing more light on this, one may vehemently argue that it is an outcome of poor environment or teaching rather than an intrinsic condition of students. He highlighted Skinner’s suggestions that natural under pinners be encouraged.[[7]](#footnote-7)He echoes this opinion when deliberating on assessments and the mechanics of learning; he offers several recommendations for how teachers might use assessment as a formative tool.[[8]](#footnote-8)Most research that support the use of frequent, brief assessments that can also serve the function of providing additional practice for students were cited. He did credit Skinner in a form of conclusion, for ascertaining that students are more probable to evoke a wrong answer on a multiple-choice test except the teacher straightaway reviews the precise answers after the test is completed.

In chapter 9, an interesting and more important skill is found: “assessing what students learn.” Research shows that the largest dichotomy or differences between poor students and good students often have less to do with genetic abilities but have to do with practice and the acquisition of specific skills. Flowing from the above point, he provides some suggestions for teachers to use which will aid students to learn.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Based on what is obvious in scholarship based on educational research, it is sad to know that a lot or reasonable amount what is indorsed has not been put to direct pragmatic test in the classroom, even if it might have been tested in other settings with other populations.[[10]](#footnote-10) With this, one can say that Chance’s book attends or serves as a catalyst or foundation for students and teachers who are interested in research ideas.

It is true that flipping through Chance’s book, most chapters are on effective teaching, the book do contain strong and clear references to relevant research. Reading the STANDARD as presented in the 3rd page of this paper, one could easily points out this lapses; it lacks the citation of references. It is probably taken for granted that even though most are teachers, being familiar with educational research, but in many instances demands are made for clear research supported with reference citations exist or could be easily found. With Chance’s book, especially in chapters 3, 4 and 10, one could easily be find an antidote to this. Most of the suggestions have intuitive appeal but not supported with reference citations. For instance, Chance suggests that teachers “show students the way” by using graphs, pictures, drawings, modeling, the Socratic method, coaxing, and verbal guidance.[[11]](#footnote-11)

***Conclusion***

What an interesting course: Educational Psychology! It is a branch of psychology concerned with the scientific study of human learning. This learning processes emanates from both cognitive and behavioral perspectives, which allows researchers to understand individual differences in intelligence, cognitive development, affect, motivation, self-regulation, and self-concept as well as their role in learning. Being exposed to this course, the student of this paper have been introduced to two most essential books; one from the National Teachers’ Standard For Ghana (Guidelines) and that of Paul Chance, Teachers Craft: 10 Essential Skills of Teaching. This is indeed a golden opportunity that AIU has granted to the student for such a deep acquisition of knowledge. The Standard is designed especially for teachers and would-be teachers in Ghana. It contains the code of conduct for the field of teaching. Coupled with that of Chance, this course peppers the student with a lot of teaching and learning skills like: Effective teaching[[12]](#footnote-12), Assessment for learning, successful leadership, and above all, the book could be used as a reference book.

The two books are well written and should appeal to teachers of all levels. Although they could be strengthened by the inclusion of more research and exclusion of weak research, they are certainly welcomed addition to how-to-teach books that are numerous in the market. These books should be recommended for new teachers in Ghana and suggest that they read these books cover to cover and then return to them for particular issues they wish to address.

Using these two books, this paper is of the conviction that when a person uses these two books together, such a person will not only be able to deliver as a good teacher but also forms him or herself.

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1. It comprises Professional values, professional knowledge and professional practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The National Teachers’ Standards set out the minimum levels of practice that all trained teachers must reach by the end of their pre-service teacher education course in order to play such a critical role. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 1998 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Chance explain ***teaching*** in his prologue as “doing things that improve the rate, durability, and transfer of learning.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Even though Skinner’s idea but this is often overlooked by his critics. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Chapter 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. He clearly removed any ambiguity in this point by adding that some of these strategies are backed by solid empirical support like acronyms and others are simply intuitively appealing like knowledge mapping. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Even though, in chapter 5, feedback with sailors rather than students is cited but the obvious is factual that in our educational system, much attention has not been given to the practical aspects. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Chapter 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This paper understands this by having the strong conviction that teachers are one of the key elements in any school and effective teaching is one of the key propellers for school improvement. Definition of who effective teacher is acquired. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)