

**Law and Order: Using Sentencing Theories from American Law to Prepare Agricultural
Education Interns for Managing Student Behavior**

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Need for Innovation

The education profession requires teachers to expertly utilize their toolbox of scholarly knowledge to overcome the ever-changing challenges that might prevent the learner from achieving the intended outcome (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The capstone internship serves as a setting in which preservice teachers can begin to practice applying that acquired body of knowledge (Miller & Wilson, 2010). One of the areas in which teaching interns engage in this practice is management of student behavior (Miller & Wilson, 2010). Found to be one of the most common challenges among new teachers (Goodwin, 2012), the necessity for building a body of knowledge in classroom management at the preservice teacher level is crucial. This innovation explores the application of sentencing theory from the law profession into instruction on classroom management to encourage preservice teachers to consider the broader implications of the consequences they employ within the classroom.

How it Works

During the Spring 2019 [University] Agricultural Education Internship Block, preservice teachers about to engage in their capstone internship participated in a two-hour sentencing theory seminar led by a law professor from [Department, University]. The seminar utilized the case of Roman Polanski, a world-renowned film director who was convicted of statutory rape then then fled the country in 1978, to guide students through the process of determining appropriate sentencing based on the goals of that punishment. The seminar was co-hosted by an agricultural education professor, who posed questions to encourage students to consider the similarities between the process of determining appropriate sentencing for Mr. Polanski and the process of considering appropriate consequences for student misbehavior. The theories of sentencing discussed within the seminar are summarized below.

Sentencing theories are used to enact punishment in a way that preserves public order by both encouraging the wrongdoer to become a better-behaved citizen and discouraging those who witness the punishment from committing the behaviors that led to the punishment (Girma & Feleke, 2013). Theories of sentencing include retribution, deterrence (general and specific), incapacitation and rehabilitation (Girma & Feleke, 2013). Retribution enables the governing body to convert punishable offenses into common currency to exact punishment in a manner similar to the offense (Girma & Feleke, 2013). The justification for the exact consequence comes from the offense itself; it is in retribution theory that we find logic in exacting “an eye for an eye”. General deterrence utilizes the knowledge of punishment as the result of an offense to deter a body of people from committing the offense (Girma & Feleke, 2013). According to this theory, while the punishment is exacted on one person, the whole population will be less likely to

commit the offense in the future. Specific deterrence is similar to general deterrence, except that the original offender is the focus; after experiencing the punishment, the offender will be less likely to commit the offense a second time. Incapacitation uses physical means to reduce the capability of an offender to commit an offense a second time; while law frequently uses prison to remove the offender from the situation in which he or she might commit the crime again, schools often use suspension, expulsion, and even sending students to the office to remove them from the classroom in which they are likely to commit an offense. Finally, rehabilitation utilizes punishment to initiate change in the offender and his or her behavior so that he or she no longer takes action that leads to criminal behavior. Often, rehabilitation requires education and/or skill training in order to change behavior (Girma & Feleke, 2013).

Results to Date

Following the seminar, preservice teachers were asked to create classroom management plans outlining student expectations and the consequences for violating those expectations at all possible levels. Conversation among students during the activity frequently utilized terminology from sentencing theory. Anecdotal evidence suggested the preservice teachers found the seminar useful, as they each recommended the seminar be continued in future internship blocks. Below is an excerpt from the narrative of one of the students' management plans:

An example would be a student misuses the privileges of the food science lab by leaving blood on countertop surfaces after a chicken cuttings lab. When this happens one of two punishments could be an option. The first option is rehabilitation, which would have the student clean the countertops at the end of each day regardless of cleanliness or not, by working with education and psychological methods to have the behavior not occur again. The next option is deterrence, which works through fear of the "law" (student handbook) and the consequences; the student didn't clean the countertops so they don't get to go to the food lab the rest of the week.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Because of the positive anecdotal feedback provided by the students, and the integration of sentencing theory tenets in preservice teachers' classroom management plans, we plan to continue to offer the sentencing theory seminar to future preservice teachers before their capstone internships. We also plan to collect data investigating the longitudinal impact of the seminar on interns' management of student behavior.

Resources Needed

Resources needed were non-monetary in nature; there were no financial costs for this innovation. A strong collaborative relationship between the agricultural education and law professors was crucial, as the two had to come to a solid understanding of the purpose of the seminar for this group of non-law students.

References

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