

Form@re Journal – Call for Papers 3/2025

The Educational Dimension of Penal Execution Inside and Outside Prison Walls: 'Treatment' Approaches Between Annihilation and Rehabilitation of Incarcerated Individuals

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The rehabilitative or “re-educational” function of penal execution remains a principle more often asserted than genuinely implemented. This is clearly evidenced by recidivism rates, which remain alarmingly high—reaching 70% in Italy (CNEL, 2024) whilst the worldwide figure is between a third and a half of imprisoned people that reoffend within 2 years after release (Yukhnenko, D., Sridhar, S., Fazel, S., 2020).

Nonetheless, scholarly research on the prison system and its various components is substantial and benefits from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, including penitentiary andragogy, philosophy of law, criminology, criminal law, labour law, sociology, anthropology, forensic psychiatry, and prison architecture, among others.

The contribution of educational research is also noteworthy, albeit still confined to specific thematic domains—such as the methodological approaches to be adopted in prison education, certification pathways accessible to incarcerated individuals (e.g., diplomas and vocational qualifications), the design of training programmes for teaching staff operating within correctional settings, and the consolidation of targeted educational initiatives (e.g., Prison University Hubs, and similar projects).

Despite the proliferation of research, prisons continue to perpetuate longstanding issues.

The (de)learning potential of the prison system—including its impact on victims of judicial errors—and its persistent capacity to generate recidivism remain undeniable facts, acknowledged by policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and civil society alike.

In Italy, the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Penitentiary Law (1975) invites the entire society to reflect critically on, and denounce, the inhumane conditions of penitentiary institutions—not only from a material and infrastructural standpoint, but also in terms of their deep educational and human degradation.

Since 1975, even an Ordinary Law—though enacted 27 years after the constitutional principle—has acknowledged the central role of “re-education”. This principle permeates every penitentiary practice, involving not only convicted individuals but all incarcerated persons, as well as the

professionals who work with them. The notion of “treatment” is omnipresent: every moment of the prison day—experienced by staff, professionals, and inmates alike—carries a “treatment”-oriented purpose, either hindering or fostering educational and learning outcomes. This is to say that (mis-)education is embedded into any penitentiary component of the daily and professional life of inmates as well as penitentiary professionals.

These interactions contribute to the construction of meaning that shapes the lives and behaviours of both detainees and professionals.

Institutional leadership is in crisis, undermined by organisational and managerial inefficiencies.

Custodial staff often retain cultural and identity-based legacies that hinder their effective participation in shaping and influencing the actual educational and learning processes of inmates. At the same time, “treatment” or “rehabilitation” personnel struggle to define and enact a professional identity grounded in education. Their role should not be limited to managing formal or non-formal educational activities for inmates; rather, it should encompass the intentional planning, design, and implementation of educational interventions aimed at fostering processes of meaning-making, through which incarcerated individuals can develop new learning, awareness, and behavioural change *while serving time*.

Moreover, volunteers, religious representatives, and external experts—who often play a decisive role in enabling inmates to engage in meaningful activities—remain key contributors to a “treatment offer” that would otherwise be virtually nonexistent. Yet this raises pressing questions: under what conditions do they operate, with what kind of preparation, and with what actual impact?

Healthcare staff (doctors, care assistants, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists) represent another critical point of focus. Their professional practices—typically guided by healthcare protocols and institutional procedures—often fail to recognise that the experience of receiving medical assistance in prison can itself constitute a space for learning, the creation or validation of assumptions, decision-making, and behavioural change. These processes have the potential to qualify and enrich the educational conditions of incarceration.

Critical incidents—often poorly concealed—are on the rise (as of June 2025, the number of suicides in Italian prisons is the highest ever recorded in recent years on a national level). These events are analysed from various disciplinary perspectives, yet there remains a lack of focus on understanding them as symptomatic of the erosion of the educational function embedded within the penal system and its various actors—from healthcare professionals to judges and prison police and thus forth.

Enhancing awareness of the educational dimension of incarceration at every stage and strengthening the capacity to manage the educational potential embedded in everyday prison life, represents the core objective that this thematic issue of *Form@re* seeks to reaffirm and promote.

Based on this analytical perspective—centred on the educational dimension of penitentiary practices at the level of Systems, Policies, Organisations, and Interventions—this Issue of *Form@re* welcomes contributions (in forms of Scientific Articles and Practices/Considerations) that explore, among others, the following topics (by way of example):

- Suicides and acts of self-harm among incarcerated individuals
- Suicides and burnout phenomena among prison system professionals
- Leadership in prison administration
- Penal populism and cognitive warfare
- The role of healthcare services in prison
- Inmate labour inside and outside prison: educational valencies, “educational reparation” processes, and their impact on social reintegration

- Emotional and affective relationships in prison
- The incarceration experience of LGBTQ+ individuals
- Parenting and parenthood in the daily lives of incarcerated persons
- The detention of foreign nationals in prison
- The condition of minors in juvenile detention facilities
- The role of the judiciary in enforcing sentences aimed at the “re-education” of convicted persons
- Models of penitentiary systems oriented toward genuine rehabilitation, re-education, and educational reparation for inmates

Accepted contributions may be selected for working sessions and discussions during an international seminar that the University of Florence plans to organise in December 2025. The seminar aims to “build a broad alliance among all those committed to upholding Article 27 of the Italian Constitution” and to counteract “penal populism” (Antigone, 2025).

Manuscript Submission

- Each manuscript in the form of “Article” shall be up to 50.000 characters in length (spaces, cover page, references included). ***See and use the editing rules and template.***
- Each manuscript in form of “Practices/Considerations” shall be up to 30.000 characters in length (spaces, cover page, references included). ***See and use the editing rules and template.***
- Submitted papers must not have been previously published nor currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- The cover page must contain a title, an abstract and up to five key words; all these elements must be in English and Italian. The papers must contain first name, last name, affiliation and e-mail address of the authors (the editors will remove all the personal details for a double-blind peer review process).
- Completed manuscripts and their subsequent revisions will be submitted only via the Form@re website (<https://oaj.fupress.net/index.php/formare/about/submissions>). ***Follow the guidelines of the journal to submit your contribution.***
- To submit a contribution, you will need to register as an “Author” on the journal website.

Languages of the contributions: **Italian, English, Spanish.**

Deadline for submitting full manuscripts for Call 3/2025: **September 26, 2025** (contributions received after September 30, 2025 will be considered for the following Issue of the journal).

Publication of Issue 3/2025: **December 31, 2025.**