

EDUCAZIONE E FORMAZIONE IN CARCERE: DALLA PEDAGOGIA PENITENZIARIA ALLA PEDAGOGIA DEL BENESSERE

EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PRISON: FROM PENITENTIARY PEDAGOGY TO WELLNESS PEDAGOGY

Patrizia Belfiore

Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope
patrizia.belfiore@uniparthenope.it

Abstract

This paper analyses and interprets the importance of training activities in prisons. In the first part, the prison context is analyzed from a point of regulatory evolution and then move on to the role of training. The reflection on the nature of the training of persons detained in prison institutions, as well as on the current configuration of the same, starts first of all from a preliminary question, namely the meaning of training in difficult contexts. A reversal of the trend in the process of codifying training in prison organizations is therefore necessary, starting with the rediscovery of the classical sense of 'human training'. For this reason, it moves on to analyse, ultimately, the importance of the pedagogy of well-being in prison as an indispensable action for reintegration into civil society.

Il presente lavoro analizza e interpreta l'importanza delle attività di formazione in carcere. Nella prima parte viene analizzato il contesto penitenziario da un punto di evoluzione normativa per poi passare al ruolo della formazione. La riflessione sulla natura della formazione delle persone detenute nelle istituzioni penitenziarie, oltre che sulla configurazione attuale della stessa, prende avvio anzitutto da un interrogativo preliminare e cioè sul significato di formazione in contesti difficili. Si rende pertanto necessaria una inversione di tendenza nel processo di codifica della formazione nelle organizzazioni penitenziarie che deve partire dalla riscoperta dell'accezione classica di 'formazione umana'. A ragion di questo, si passa ad analizzare, in ultima istanza, l'importanza della pedagogia del benessere in carcere quale azione indispensabile per il reintegro del soggetto nella società civile.

Keywords

Prison; education; training; well-being

Carcere; educazione; formazione; benessere

Introduction

In a state of law, the prison system represents a pena theory that overcomes the distinctions between absolute and relative theories, becoming to define the multidimensional character of the sentence construct: punishment and opportunities for transformation. It is from the perspective of transformation that penitentiary pedagogy is placed. La penitentiary pedagogy (Benelli, 2012) represents a frontier of marginality pedagogy that moves in situations of disadvantage, marginalization and those “border places”, those spaces that inhumanize the subjects who live there and that precisely for this reason need adequate research paths. If detention is considered as a temporary condition, delimited to a defined period and limited in time, with respect to the entire existence of the subject, then it can be seen as a subject in a situation of marginality also temporary. In this context, the school presents itself, therefore, as an opportunity to review its existential choices and build a new life path. Already at the end of the last century there was talk of a correctional direction, which introduced the principle of the re-education of the offender to social life (Bortolotto, 2002) and finalized the penalty to social recovery and the prevention of his possible recurrence.

A brief legislative framework of pedagogy in prison

In the past, prison served as a punitive tool and used violence to quell other violence. In this historical period, the prison system is directed towards the protection of human dignity. In Italy, the 1975 prison reform came to light after joining the Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners promulgated by the United Nations in 1955. With the reform of 75 there was a radical change in the prison institution with the introduction of numerous laws in favour of treatment. The prisoner becomes the bearer of all rights except that of personal freedom: the right to health, to work, (which must of course be compatible with the prison regime), culture and education (Ministry of Justice). The Gozzini Law of 1986 less believes in re-education within the prison, favoring the process of reintegrating society with alternative measures to prison (Flick G.M. 2015). The theoretical framework of penitentiary education in Italy therefore proceeds towards the targeted re-education of the prisoner who must be strongly targeted and subjective and must accompany him on the path of social reintegration, promoting new skills in the person. For this reason, institutions must offer a variety of experiences: laboratory (painting, writing, poetry, music...), sports, training, cultural, school, etc. to support the development of the inmate’s own skills, attitudes and creativity. Through non-formal educational activities, the subject has the opportunity to express feelings and moods that would be repressed with the sole detention; at the same time, formal education through the school within the institute also collaborates in re-education. The school is considered an important and indispensable tool for the training of the prisoner, an opportunity for reflection improvement of the self. Provision is made by prison law for the organization of compulsory schooling and vocational training courses, and secondary schools may also be set up. Unfortunately, however, the reality of the facts is different from the pedagogical framework described: prison struggles to build effective educational paths that focus on the customization of each path, it is easy instead to fall into homologation processes that eliminate the differences and needs of each person who participates in his or her own treatment path; individualisation of treatment would instead lead to more effective and lasting changes.

Penitentiary pedagogy

According to Caterina Benelli, in her book *Cultivating training courses, the challenge of emancipation in prison*, the theme of training in prison is linked to the pedagogy of marginality in a perspective where training and education can be valid tools for social inclusion and active citizenship. Although prison is a closed place that limits the freedom of the person and therefore hinders his choices and self-determination, the author of the book, wondering how much it is possible to cultivate training courses within prisons, notes that this path is passable through formal education (such as school) and non-formal education (theater, writing workshops, etc.).

Proposing training interventions in prison is a duty of our society as it is primarily a constitutional duty (reference to Article 27 of the Constitution) to ensure the right to training, treatment and the possibility of reintegration into society; It is therefore essential to develop training courses that allow marginalized people within this context to recover from their condition. The training course in prison that is forced to develop in a difficult context and imprisonment can create uncomfortable situations not only for prisoners but also for operators involved in the promotion of rehabilitation and training processes, such as educators, teachers and volunteers. In addition to these figures, custody officers could and should be placed on training courses together with educational staff to offer a different look at inmates, based on daily observations in the sections. The prisoner, during the period of imprisonment, has the opportunity to review and change his behavior thanks to the proposals of the penitentiary institute of educational paths within a pedagogical plan. In an environment of imprisonment such as prison, it is extremely necessary to develop pedagogical pathways to prevent situations of temporary marginalization from ing. Educating in the hope of change, in the redemption of one's life through training paths is the predominant task of educators, teachers, trainers and volunteers working in this context. Prison and its protagonists are often the victims of forgetfulness in our society: the term prison *derives from the Latin coercere* and means segregating, in fact it is born as an institution that has the task of isolating the subjects, considered dangerous, from the rest of society, depriving them of their freedom and at the same time eliminating every aspect of their social, human and affective life. Although this concept of prison is at least formally outdated, educational practices still face extreme conditions in which individuals are denied their freedom: the rhythms of the days decided and planned by the institution, the social interactions other than the daily dynamics of social life, the rigid mechanisms of the institution. According to Goffman, the detainees thus find themselves living a more or less long part of their lives 'in a closed and formally administered regime' (Goffman, 1968). The legislative system that guides educational action in prison uses 'treatment' which, however, is not always effective and incisive in its aims, sometimes risking reinforcing the negative aspects instead of those useful for resocialization. These negative traits must not, however, block the constant creation of new educational interventions that focus attention on the person involved in the rehabilitation process, interventions that must try to lead to a continuous improvement of the situation, despite the challenge being difficult.

Education and well-being in prison

Having noted the start of a cultural and ideological revolution in Italian prisons, it seems intuitive to rethink the prison education system.

For those who, above all, like the educator, take charge of 'human training' in a context of imprisonment, the objective risk is that the reference to a fragmented and stereotyped vision of the re-education-rehabilitation-training process, limited to the so-called 'elements of treatment', continues to prevail. While we wish to recognize each individual element of the treatment as its own educational value, it is important to stress the importance of the educator's basic adoption of a holistic training design for the detained human person, taking into account the simultaneous nature of all the educational needs of the latter (in terms of education, work, culture, sport, external contacts, affectivity, spiritual sphere, etc.) and its experiential heritage. If this were not the case, the person would not be recognized and respected in his unity and complexity, and the very scope of the training would be reduced to a mere attempt to fill the gaps that each prisoner could potentially bear. As it still appears today in accordance with the law. Artificially understanding the elements of the treatment as watertight compartments of which only the training-treatment proposal of each individual prison institution can be made, could lead the re-education professionals themselves to wonder whether there is a hierarchy of training value and functional importance in charge of the individual elements of the treatment.

The aim is to reduce differences and inequalities which are all too often evident and which, at present, due to organisational, economic, structural and system constraints and deficiencies, do not allow all prisoners to experiment in school activities, participation in which, unfortunate-

ly, for many it is defined by exceptional and not daily normality.

The role of educator in prison

Having at heart both the improvement of psychophysical conditions and the preservation of the personal identity of those who are imprisoned, the prison educator is duly called upon to play the role of possible and desirable guarantor of equal educational opportunities. These must be defending against the objective risk of depersonalisation of prisoners, inherent in prison realities (Turco, A. 2011). It is no coincidence that the Same Penitentiary System provides that in each institution at least one representative of the educational staff is identified and becomes a part of the law of: committee responsible for drafting and amending the rules of procedure related to the methods of treatment to be followed in the institution; Committee on the Training of The Rankings of Prisoners to be placed at work; committee responsible for the organization of cultural, recreational and sporting activities.

Furthermore, the implementing regulation relating to the same System, provides for the pedagogical manager of the treatment area among the members of the school teaching committee, set up for the formulation of the annual educational project, with advisory and proactive tasks (Di Natale, P. 2005).

It is not to be underestimated, among other things, how the in-depth knowledge by the educator about the people with whom he relates, the observed relational dynamics and the context of imprisonment in which he moves, acts as an aid for the prison administration itself to decode the values, expectations and real functions that the prisoners themselves attribute to training activities: expansion of their relational network in prison; greater protection in terms of psychophysical healthiness from conditions of isolation and a sense of loneliness; promotion of *one's status* as a prisoner compared to the rest of the most indistinct and inexperienced prison population; recognition in the eyes of educators and treatment practitioners; possibility of avoiding expulsion from the territory of origin or family reference points or transfer to another institution, which would involve the interruption of the training courses started; acquisition of a margin of bargaining with the judicial and penitentiary institution, called to judge progress in terms of 'good conduct' and resipiscence (Freire P, 2014; Freire P, 2018).

Prison and wellness pedagogy

Education, training and work are central aspects in the life of each individual, essential for the conscious construction of one's own identity, including professional and independence. This centrality is also confirmed for the population of the restricted: denying the right to education, training, the development of one's personality, work to those who have made mistakes is not the same as penalising prisoners for crimes committed, but depriving them of reports, future planning and educational compensation of which we have said. The point of arrival of the learning process in a transformative perspective is the reconstruction by the inmate of a relationship with society, which represents the context and cause of his crime. In this regard, there is also talk of the amending function of the penalty, suitable to change the mental attitude and the value of the detainee-rehabilitating him before himself and society. To reconstitute this relationship, also recognizing prison institutions as "cognitive systems" (Federighi, Torlone, 2015), able to transform the knowledge available there into an educational function, means putting the prisoner in a state of conscious redemption. From a pedagogical point of view, the interest is to understand and reflect on the meaning of the penalty, possibly combined with the recognition of reward, with respect to each individual educating, within a project of personal and social realization with the same defined and built, going beyond stimuli coming from criminal law and the practice of punishing normad by it. The pedagogical intent in the study of penitentiary contexts isto enhance everything that can promote the growth of the restricted person, developing its potential andenhancing, on the other hand, the educational potential of the environment in which he dwells, helping to activate transformative processes (respecting the dignity of his human being). The important pedagogical issue concerns the design and implementation of

appropriate educational actions, with those who perform an educational function with respect to the population of the restricted, depending on the full completion of the re-education of each individual, starting from the penitentiary context (Dewey J, 2014). These actions, combined with other interventions provided for in the treatment programme, must aim to improve the culprit, to re-educate him and to resocialize him so that he can find his full implementation and that it is not dangerous for society. The recovery and integral development of the personality of prisoners also contributes to the set of educational interventions that the prison institution with its rules, procedures and restrictions (also of a physical nature due to the impossibility of interacting with the outside world) offers to each prisoner. As a place of mere custody, prison is an institution which in itself has educational components for the promotion of the person and for his rehabilitation, personal and social. The ‘controlled persons’ (Goffman, 2001) become an active part and co-builders of systematic and critical educational actions, which originate and take place within the Institute, constantly revisited and adapted to new paths of individual improvement. The pedagogical specificity therefore lies in the analysis of the educational values of context, as well as in the study of the value of educational purposes and methods in activities, relationships, dynamics that permeate the penitentiary environment. Last but not least, pedagogy is called upon to identify those who, by virtue of the solid knowledge of the individual prisoners, are in a position to manage actions of individual growth (Nussbaum M.C, 2013).

Conclusions

Training activities in prisons should take the form of empowerment interventions aimed at improving the *capacity* for individual self-determination and resilience, as well as placing the emphasis on learning processes, which must encourage prisoners to resume a thoughtful exercise and the simultaneous critical rereading of the difficult contingent situation, as the nuns inevitably be incarceration. From this point of view, it must be stressed, the same elements of treatment would no longer appear to be disconnected from each other, but would represent resources for training, and to speak in terms of *training* provision would mean responding more appropriately to the constitutional mandate of the penalty also in terms of training. Only in this way could the same rationale of re-education be recovered within *training*, which must be based on the in-depth knowledge of the prisoner, that is, of his personal characteristics, his existential condition, his real contingent needs and his present and future aspirations. What needs to change?

Firstly, the adoption of a design logic and the plural consultation of social and professional actors, however motivated by educational purposes, should be tried at national level. In order to prevent the varied training courses proposed in prisons, however innovative, from often becoming experiences of passage, fragmentary, promoted and spread locally by bodies, associations of the territory or individual experts in the sector, rather than favoring points of view, common objectives aimed at offering as many prisoners as possible the opportunity to redefine their personological and social components and positive aspects of themselves (Freire P, 2014).

From this point of view, the recommendation addressed to those who work in prison, with nuances of deontological-pedagogical obligatory, so that the right of every human being to assist and take part in the integral development of one’s deep self must not seem superfluous, without limitations of any kind that may derive from the judgment (moral, specialist and criminal) formulated on his conduct and that they can obfuscate or silence the right to respect for their own interiority. The implicit reference to the proper attention of pedagogy to “address the adult subject in its entirety through an educating formation can ensure that he can express as much as possible his identity and his abilities, can recognize, face and overcome manipulations and conditionings, can find the tools to go beyond the given situations”, in fulfillment of the full expression of himself and realization of his personal identity (Palma M, 2016).

This is the ethical value with which each educational professional imbues his educational action in dealing with the recipients of his formative and humanizing action, with the awareness

of the delicacy of the role played and, above all, of the effects that can result. The interpretation of training also in terms of care, not only of the person but also of the organizational context, therefore, serves as a further call for the educator in the first *place and* for each prison operator to pay particular attention to the contents of their services and to relational methods (based on respect, understanding, availability, sharing, coherence, cooperation). Setting up as 'ethically competent' people in the complexity of prison organizational contexts, to meet the specific needs and identity needs of each individual prisoner, all too often left unheeded and compressed in the mesh of the asymmetries of power exercised by the prison institution itself (Rollino S, 2018).

Professionals and specialists of treatment in prison, therefore, are asked to wear and combine the dual role of educators and trainers: in an attempt to work a synthesis between educational practices, experienced in an operational framework of a constrictive nature and aimed at returning people deprived of freedom to be socially idealized citizens, and the 'human training' understood as a project for the realization of a subject in the process of evolution and transformation.

A point of arrival to which it is possible to reach, even in the awareness of the pedagogical utopia that is underlying it, only by returning centrality to the subject himself in a path of growth that would like him and would see the main social actor, independently committed to giving himself the form that is most congenial to him, without necessarily having to conform and adapt to models established by others.

References

- Benelli, C. (2012). *Cultivating training courses, the challenge of emancipation in prison*. Naples: Liguori.
- Bortolotto T., L'educatore penitenziario: compiti, competenze ed iter formativo. Proposta per un'innovazione, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2002.
- Dewey J, 2014, *Experience and Education*, RaffaelloCortina, Milan
- Di Natale, P. (2005). *The non-Places of Education. Prison and hospital between history and research*. Lecce: Think MultiMedia.
- Flick G.M. (2015), *I Paradossi del Carcere*, «Rassegna penitenziaria e criminologica», pp. 325-338.
- Foucault M., 1976, *Sorvegliare e punire*, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Turin.
- Freire P., 2014, *Pedagogy of autonomy: knowledge necessary for educational practice*, Abel Group, Turin
- Freire P., 2018, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Abel Group, Torino
- Gadamer H., 2014, *Educating is educating*, Il melangolo, Genoa
- Goffman, E. (1968) *The total institutions: the mechanisms of exclusion and violence*. Turin: Einaudi cit. in Benelli 2012
- Ministry of Justice, Extract from the main rules of Law No. 354 of 26 July 1975 on the rules on the law of prisons and on measures for the right and restricted of *liberty* (*Legislative Committee 30/6/2000, No 230*).
- Nussbaum M.C., 2013, *Social Justice and Human Dignity. From individuals to people*, Il Mulino, Bologna
- Palma M., 2016, *The educational device. Experience, training and pedagogy in the work of Riccardo Massa*, Franco Angeli, Milan.
- Rollino S., Pieroni G., 2018, *External criminal execution and adult testing*, Pacini Giuridica, Ospedaletto
- Torlone F. (2015), *La Formazione al Rispetto dei Diritti Umani. La Sperimentazione nel Sistema Penitenziario*, in P. Federighi, F. Torlone, *La Formazione al Rispetto dei Diritti Umani nel Sistema Penale*, Firenze University Press, Firenze, pp. 135-182.
- Torlone F., Vryonides M. (2016), *Innovative Learning Models for Prisoners*, Firenze University Press, Firenze.
- Turco, A. (2011). *Educational paths of penitentiary pedagogy*. Rome: Carrocci publisher.