

Police training: a pathway to the recognition of the “other”^I

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Abstract

This article offers a critical examination of police training within the context of the Brazilian Democratic Rule of Law, centering on the challenges associated with implementing Human Rights Education (HRE) as a viable mechanism for fostering the recognition the other as a rights-bearing subject. Drawing on a critical literature review of key theoretical perspectives, particularly those of Durkheim (2007), Freire (1996), and Soares (2024), as well as normative frameworks and recent empirical research, the analysis interrogates the fundamental tension between Durkheimian sociological logic and Freirean-inspired philosophy underpinning HRE. Despite the existence of a comprehensive legal-institutional framework, findings indicate that HRE is frequently reduced to a formalistic exercise, undermined by persistent barrier such as an entrenched “cultures of war”, insufficient pedagogical training among instructors, and the prevalence of “tunnel vision”, within law enforcement institutions. The article concludes that addressing these structural and epistemological obstacles is essential for reducing institutional violence and enhancing the legitimacy and democratic accountability of the police force.

Keywords: Education; human rights; humanization; public security; training.

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Formação policial: um caminho para o reconhecimento do “outro”

Resumo

Este artigo analisa criticamente a formação do policial no contexto do Estado Democrático de Direito brasileiro, tomando como eixo central os desafios para a efetivação da Educação em Direitos Humanos (EDH) como instrumento factível para o reconhecimento do “outro” enquanto sujeito de direitos. Por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica crítica de referenciais teóricos como Durkheim (2007), Freire (1996), Soares (2024); documentos normativos e pesquisas empíricas recentes, o texto investiga a tensão fundamental entre a lógica durkheimiana e a filosofia da EDH de inspiração freiriana. A análise aponta que, apesar de um robusto arcabouço normativo, a EDH é frequentemente reduzida a um conteúdo meramente formal. Isso ocorre devido a obstáculos como a persistência de uma “cultura da guerra”, a carência de qualificação pedagógica dos instrutores e o fenômeno da “visão de túnel”, que limitam a aplicação prática dos princípios humanistas. Conclui-se que a superação desses desafios é uma estratégia fundamental para a redução da violência e o fortalecimento da legitimidade da instituição policial.

Palavras-chave: Educação; direitos humanos; formação; humanização; segurança pública.



Formación policial: un camino hacia el reconocimiento del “otro”

Resumen

Este artículo analiza críticamente la formación policial en el contexto del Estado Democrático de Derecho brasileño, tomando como eje central los desafíos para la efectivización de la Educación en Derechos Humanos (EDH) como un instrumento factible para el reconocimiento del «otro» en tanto sujeto de derechos. A través de una revisión bibliográfica crítica de referentes teóricos como Durkheim (2007), Freire (1996) y Soares (2024); documentos normativos y estudios empíricos recientes, el texto investiga la tensión fundamental entre la lógica durkheimiana y la filosofía de la EDH de inspiración freiriana. El análisis señala que, a pesar de un robusto marco normativo, la EDH es frecuentemente reducida a un contenido meramente formal. Esto ocurre debido a obstáculos como la persistencia de una «cultura de la guerra», la carencia de cualificação pedagógica de los instructores y el fenómeno de la «visión de túnel», los cuales limitan la aplicación práctica de los principios humanistas. Se concluye que la superación de estos desafíos constituye una estrategia fundamental para la reducción de la violencia y el fortalecimiento de la legitimidad de la institución policial.

Palabras clave: Educación; derechos humanos; formación; humanización, seguridad pública.



Introduction

The Federal Constitution of Brazil (1988) represents a landmark in the country’s democracy. It established a commitment to a Democratic State based on the Rule of Law and highlighted values and principles inspired by the moment of redemocratization. Public Safety institutions were restructured, positioning the police as a guarantor of rights with the purpose of preserving public order, and protecting individuals and property. At this point, the Charter outlined the following paradox: aligning corporations historically marked by a culture of confrontation with the new principles embraced by the country’s legal framework, such as citizenship and human dignity.

With the new legal norm imposed by the Constitution, admission into police forces became subject to passing a public competitive examination. Consequently, with the entry of new professionals, the police forces gradually incorporated the initial training of these officers into their activities, which in most cases was conducted by instructor officers holding practical knowledge.

In this scenario, academia, albeit timidly, began researching certain aspects of police training. Encouraged by scientific research and the need to build a culture of human rights, the Public Power created national public policies. Examples include the National Human Rights Education Plan (PNEDH), with its latest update published in 2013, and the National Curricular Matrix (MCN), whose latest version was officially instituted by the National Secretariat of Public Safety (SENASP) in 2014. Both serve as a guide for educational entities, including police academies that promote the initial and continuing education of public safety professionals.

Despite this orientation, these documents left a void regarding the recognition of the “other” as a subject of rights. Through scientific research conducted over the years, a concern regarding the legal normative content can be inferred, but it fails to convey a knowledge that goes beyond. The need to reach ethical, political, and anthropological dimensions in training became



evident as the PNDHs evolved in depth and in the scope of their guiding axes. In this bias, the following question arises: how can there be a change in the police officer’s culture and critical consciousness, aiming to foster respect for human dignity and the perception of the “other” as a subject of rights?

Based on this question, the present study aims to critically analyze how Human Rights Education (HRE) can contribute to enabling this officer in training to develop the capacity to recognize the “other.” This critical literature review was constructed based on a survey of sources in consolidated scientific repositories.

To optimize search strategies and refine the textual cohesion of the theoretical foundation, the methodological support of the Gemini (Google) artificial intelligence model was utilized, ensuring subsequent critical validation and full conceptual responsibility by the authors. It is through this scientific and critical pathway that theoretical foundations related to alterity, human dignity, and citizenship will be addressed, confronting them with the documents that serve as the basis for structuring police training courses. It also seeks to debate the challenges faced in training, in an effort to promote institutional and cultural changes within the police.

Human Rights Education: Concepts and Dimensions

When thinking about Human Rights Education, it is necessary to understand that we cannot be limited solely to cognitive learning. It is also essential to consider the social and emotional development of the learner and to view learning as a strategic instrument to promote, through training, the dissemination of democratic principles and a culture of promoting Human Rights.

To this end, the National Human Rights Education Plan (PNEDH) established guiding dimensions:

acquisition of historically constructed knowledge about human rights and its relationship with international, national, and local contexts; affirmation of values, attitudes, and social practices that express the



culture of human rights in all spaces of society; formation of a civic consciousness capable of being present at cognitive, social, ethical, and political levels; development of participatory and collective construction methodological processes, using contextualized teaching materials and language; strengthening of individual and social practices that generate actions and instruments in favor of the promotion, protection, and defense of human rights, as well as the redress of violations (Brasil, 2007, p. 25).

The PNEDH points to a multidimensional approach, making it clear that the process of Human Rights Education is not restricted to formal content. It requires an articulation of knowledge, values, and practices capable of transforming the learner into an active agent of citizenship and respect for human dignity. We must conceive it as a pedagogical process that must encompass cognitive as well as affective, social, ethical, and political development, in order to foster a critical and reflective capacity regarding the reality, inequalities, and rights violations with which police officers contend (Brasil, 2007, p. 25).

The ethical dimension of Human Rights Education (HRE) creates opportunities for cultivating empathy and recognizing diversity. Consequently, it promotes the valorization of alterity, understood as the capacity to recognize the “other” as a subject of rights, possessing differences and singular characteristics worthy of respect and protection. Castor Ruiz states that “alterity is inherent to the subject’s openness to relationship. It is necessary, a condition of possibility for subjectivity itself. It fulfills itself as ethics. Ethics is inherent to our openness to the other” (Ruiz, 2010, p. 196).

Human rights education is not restricted to the transmission of legal rules; rather, it is intimately linked to the formation of subjects capable of recognizing alterity and holding themselves ethically responsible for the “other”—in particular, the “other” who is affected by injustice. Justice, in this context, is not measured by compliance with formal rules; it is measured by the capacity to promote the restoration of dignity to those who are harmed or victimized.

Ruiz is categorical in stating that “justice is realized as the justification of my freedom toward the other, as a response to the responsibility I have



toward their rights” (Ruiz, 2010, p. 223). It is through the critical lens of alterity that an education is proposed that develops empathy, ethical responsibility, and sensitivity in the face of unjust situations. Alterity presents itself as a foundational dimension of subjectivity and citizenship, as a path toward the recognition of the rights of the “other.”

In the political dimension, the focus is on fostering the strengthening of critical consciousness as a citizen, endowed with the capacity to act consciously and responsibly toward building a plural and democratic society. The National Human Rights Education Plan embodies this provision by establishing that “the strengthening of individual and social practices that generate actions in favor of the promotion, protection, and defense of human rights constitutes a central objective of the educational process” (Brasil, 2007, p. 25).

In this perspective, Paulo Freire (1967) asserts that education is the “practice of freedom,” a space for problematizing reality and for the collective construction of knowledge that enables critical consciousness and social transformation. Adopting this pedagogical vision is extremely important so that HRE goes beyond an education of a merely formal character and becomes an effective instrument of cultural and institutional change.

In the sphere of professional training, such as in public safety, it is important to realize that Human Rights Education must transcend the normative and instrumental realm to integrate a sociological vision and a humanizing approach. This is closely linked to recognizing the learner and the “other” as subjects of rights, disseminating ethical practices that align with democratic values and the principles of human dignity (Balestreri, 1998).

Education as Socialization and Cohesion

To understand the structure upon which training was built throughout history, we turn to the classic sociological thought of Émile Durkheim. This choice is made to enable an understanding of the functionalist logic underpinning the coercive institutions of the State. For Durkheim, education does not aim at the



development of the individual; rather, it aims at the imposition of a methodical socialization of the learner to ensure the continuity and cohesion of society (Durkheim, 2007).

According to Durkheim (2007), education is a “social fact,” as it is a process that is neither natural nor intrinsic to individual development, but rather an imposition. It exerts coercion on the individual to mold them according to the requirements of life within society. Over time, the individual may cease to perceive this coercion, because everything taught becomes internal habits and tendencies. The purpose of education is to create a “social being” (a term designating the system of strictly collective ideas, beliefs, and habits), an individual who integrates into a system composed of collective norms and values that exist independently of individual consciousnesses.

Within this line of thought, the author defines a “social fact” as “every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint” (Durkheim, 2007, p. 13). This constraint manifests when someone attempts to violate the rules. At that moment, society asserts itself with the intention to prevent, invalidate, or cause the transgressor to suffer the consequences of their transgression. This external force exists and reveals itself when the individual moves in the opposite direction.

Society, by surpassing the individual “infinitely in both time and space,” is capable of imposing “ways of acting and thinking that it has consecrated with its authority” (Durkheim, 2007, p. 104). It is through repetition and consolidation that social facts acquire a kind of consistency.

Indeed, some of these ways of acting or thinking acquire, through repetition, a kind of consistency that precipitates them, so to speak, and isolates them from the particular events that reflect them. They thus assume a body, a tangible form peculiar to themselves, and constitute a *sui generis* reality, distinct from the individual facts that manifest it (Durkheim, 2007, p. 7, emphasis added by the authors).



The body and consistency acquired through the crystallization of the social fact form an institution, which carries within itself exteriority and coercion, exercising an imperative power over the individual.

This theoretical perspective becomes pertinent in the analysis of police academies, which function as a kind of microcosm of this theory. In them, the “individual being” (the Durkheimian concept for the subject’s personal and mental states) is subjected to an intense process of socialization to become a public safety professional, representing the corporation’s “social being.” Elements such as hierarchy, training rituals, close-order drill exercises, and an emphasis on discipline are not coincidental.

In reality, they are tools of coercion used to “erase” individualities in order to create a collective identity and a set of conditioned reflexes for professional practice. These methods aim to form an agent who assimilates and incorporates existing rules and acts as a representative of the State in maintaining order.

The implicit goal of this type of socialization is the creation of internal social cohesion, known as *esprit de corps*. This loyalty is essential for an institution operating in high-risk situations, whose efficacy depends on mutual trust among the members of the organization. In this context, discipline is not conveyed as oppression, but as an indispensable factor for morality and for conducting coordinated actions in the name of public order.

It is upon this conservative educational model that the logic of police training and of the institution itself is grounded. It aims at adapting the individual to a structure that does not propose critical transformation.

This logic, focused on guaranteeing order, stands in stark dissonance with the objectives proposed by Human Rights Education. HRE proposes the pursuit of awareness to promote freedom, social justice, and critical consciousness, paving the way for the recognition of the “other” as a subject of rights.

Education as the Practice of Freedom and Critical Consciousness



In the context of professional training for public safety personnel, human rights education should not be restricted to a normative, instrumental, or merely legalistic approach. Beyond the transmission of technical content, it must be viewed as a dialogic, critical, and liberating process, anchored in critical, emancipatory, and ethical perspectives. In this way, it will contribute to forming individuals capable of recognizing themselves and “others” as subjects of rights.

Paulo Freire (1996) advocates an education conceived as a practice closely linked to individual autonomy and freedom. For Freire, educational practice must be understood as a political and ethical act, guided by the concrete reality of the learners and their insertion in the world. It is through the problematization of the world itself that educators and learners recognize themselves as historical subjects, equipped with the capacity to intervene critically in social structures. Freire argues that “teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its production or construction” (Freire, 1996, p. 47).

This constitutes an exceptionally suitable environment for knowledge construction in which dialogue, active listening, and sensitivity toward the experiences of the “other” are essential and fully appropriate for professions that interact directly with the public.

Applying this pedagogy alongside HRE enables the formation of a subject committed to social justice, ethical responsibility, and the overcoming of inequalities and violations to which historically marginalized groups are subjected.

This ethical and transformative commitment highlights the importance of its implementation, especially in police training. As guarantors of rights, police officers act either to protect and guarantee fundamental rights or to deny them; for this reason, their training must be directly tied to a critical education. It is also imperative that it be linked to creating conditions for the development of empathy, civic consciousness, and the capacity to act based on democratic legality and respect for diversity. For, as Paulo Freire noted: “education does not



transform the world. Education changes people. People transform the world” (Freire, 1996, p. 68).

Complementarily, Balestreri (1998) argues that police officers must be trained based on a culture of human rights, dismantling the authoritarian and repressive logic that has historically marked the training of public safety professionals—a culture that remains alive, albeit covertly, in many police academies. For this author, it is imperative that police education not remain restricted to technique and discipline—criteria considered important, but insufficient. Training must integrate content that enables a process of constructing meaning regarding their role as public agents, responsible for and committed to defending human legitimacy and dignity (Balestreri, 1998).

Human Rights Education, when understood as the practice of freedom, becomes a vehicle for humanizing the training of these professionals, expanding the understanding of justice beyond a formal comprehension of the law and assimilating ethical, political, and social principles. The goal must be to train individuals capable of recognizing their fellow citizens, including those in vulnerable situations, as subjects endowed with rights and dignity that must be protected, respected, and promoted.

In this regard, it is possible to revisit Émile Durkheim’s sociological theory to examine the tension between an institution designed to mold the individual—functioning as a mechanism for producing the social being (Durkheim, 2007)—and an HRE proposal grounded in the formation of critical and liberated consciousnesses. This requires abandoning coercion as the pathway to achieving educational goals in favor of active, value-centered practices that integrate technical content and mutual respect with practice founded on democratic legality and respect for a plural and diverse society.

Bringing this concept to police training allows us to understand Human Rights Education as a social fact, to the extent that it bears the responsibility of transmitting values shared by a social group, such as human dignity, justice, and respect for differences, to new members. Thus, HRE is not limited



to conveying information about rights and duties; it promotes awareness and the development of values and attitudes that drive the defense and promotion of human rights, regulates expectations, and structures professional practice based on socially legitimized standards.

Incorporating HRE systematically into civil police academy curricula will contribute to the internalization of these values by corporate members, acting as a mediator between the individual and society’s normative framework. Such an approach demonstrates that HRE is not merely pedagogical content, but an instrument of social cohesion, the preservation of legitimate democratic coexistence, and the defense and self-recognition of police officers. It is an expression of the moral organization of a community itself.

Thus, implementing HRE in police academies can be seen as an effort to institutionalize a new social fact, based on democratic legitimacy, which collides with the historically crystallized social fact of a culture of confrontation. The challenge lies in determining which of these cohesion models—blind obedience or civic responsibility—will become hegemonic in police training and practice.

Civil Police Training and the Challenges of Integrating HRE

Police training is a process of moral and professional socialization operated on the basis of norms, values, and practices consolidated over time. Integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) into this training process represents a major challenge, especially when facing an institutional culture that mirrors a structure with verticalized authoritarian paradigms (Balestreri, 1998) and pays little attention to alterity (Carbonari; Pequeno; Bartolomé Ruiz, 2010).

For Durkheim, education is an instrument through which norms are transmitted to new generations, molding them based on collective patterns. For him, “education is the action exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and develop in the child certain physical, intellectual and moral states which are required of him by society” (Durkheim, 2007, p. 54).



Under this approach, when HRE is effectively incorporated into the training curriculum of police academies, it can function as a social fact—that is, a collective way of thinking and acting that exerts legitimate coercion and integrates police officers into an institutional culture guided by democratic values, respect for legality, and human dignity. However, when HRE is included in curricula merely to fulfill a normative requirement and is applied without altering the dominant logic of training, it fails in its socializing function and loses its transformative potential.

This is why Paulo Freire advocates for a concept of education as a space for collective construction, critical consciousness, and ethical responsibility. Thus, education must not be a mechanism of passive adaptation, but rather an exercise of reading the world and acting upon it. For Freire, “no one educates anyone, no one educates themselves, men educate each other, mediated by the world” (Freire, 1987, p. 44).

HRE will only fulfill this transformative function if it manages to develop a questioning perspective on the role of police officers in society, the use of state authority, and the complexity of human relations marked by historical inequalities. Adopting this approach reflects a departure from the already familiar verticalized model of teaching still found in academies, enabling the creation of pedagogical environments that encourage dialogue, reflective evaluation, and the recognition of the “other” as a subject of rights.

Ricardo Balestreri (1998) also aligns with this critique of the traditional model of police training, stating that a large portion of the educational practices executed in safety institutions remains anchored in a “culture of training/conditioning” (*cultura do adestramento*). In his view, it is necessary to replace the persistent model with an ethical and reflective training capable of recognizing police officers as public servants committed to protecting life, dignity, and justice. The author thus emphasizes human rights education so that it may be lived, rather than merely taught: “It is not a matter of teaching human



rights as a standalone discipline, but of experiencing them as a structuring principle of police practice” (Balestreri, 1998, p. 24).

Looking toward this same horizon, Carbonari, Pequeno, and Bartolomé Ruiz (2010), among other authors, reiterate that HRE must constitute an ethical and political experience sustained by the recognition of human dignity and alterity. For them, “human rights are not realized solely by decree or technical training, but through the construction of a culture that recognizes the other as a legitimate other” (Carbonari; Pequeno; Bartolomé Ruiz, 2010, p. 73). This presupposes that police training considers Human Rights Education as a structuring axis rather than merely a complementary content.

Overcoming the challenge of integrating HRE into the training of these professionals therefore demands a greater effort than mere syllabus adjustments. It requires promoting structural changes in organizational culture, training instructors who are committed to the subject, re-evaluating pedagogical methods, and opening permanent spaces for debate, self-critique, and listening.

These changes can remove HRE from a purely formal position and bring it closer to real, everyday practices. Throughout this process, HRE ceases to be just an item in the curriculum and comes to serve as a space for institutional socialization, critique, and freedom, as well as an ethical pillar of police function and a culture directed toward dignity and justice—thereby establishing a newly and properly institutionalized social fact.

Critical Analysis of Normative Documents and Curricular Practices

The analytical pathway adopted in this section was directed toward a critical analysis of curricular practices. To this end, it was supported by a literature review guided by the selection criteria of recent empirical studies published in qualified journals. Studies by authors such as Oliveira (2024), Lustoza et al. (2021), Azevedo and Coura (2024), and Santos and Gontijo (2023) were selected because they directly investigate pedagogical frameworks and the



lived experiences of instructors in civil and military police academies following the implementation of the National Human Rights Plans. These references were included as they highlight the empirical gap between existing regulations and daily teaching practices, providing substance to the debate on the limitations of teacher qualification and corporate structures.

Throughout the evolution of the National Human Rights Plans (PNDH) and the establishment of the National Human Rights Education Plan (PNEDH), the training of public safety agents—with an emphasis on a role guided by human rights—gained substance and specific guidelines. Analyzing the historical trajectory of these plans points to a progressive realization of the imperative to align police practice with democratic principles and respect for human dignity.

As initial steps, PNDH-1 and PNDH-2—the two versions launched in 1996 and 2002, respectively—began outlining the importance of this topic within public safety. Reflecting the period of redemocratization in Brazil, PNDH-1 focused primarily on civil and political rights. Despite this core focus, it already signaled a concern regarding police violence and the need to control police activity, albeit in an incipient manner regarding training (Oliveira, 2024).

In PNDH-2, a broadening of its scope can be observed, encompassing economic, social, environmental, and cultural rights. This second plan brought advances by outlining more concrete actions for the operations of the justice and public safety systems, incorporating human rights education as one of its central axes. From this document onward, it became clear that ongoing professional training aligned with democratic principles and human rights directed at public safety personnel began to be articulated with greater clarity (Oliveira, 2024).

The consolidation of human rights education as a State policy occurred with the National Human Rights Education Plan (PNEDH). It was constructed through a process that began in 2003 and culminated in its official launch in 2007. The PNEDH originated from Brazil’s commitment to the realization of human rights and from a historical process driven by organized civil society



(Oliveira, 2024). Consequently, there was a deepening of issues related to this area that were already present, though timidly, in previous national programs. The work developed during this process sought to “realize the centrality of human rights education as a public policy,” recommending an emancipatory character along the path toward the “full exercise of citizenship” (Brasil, 2013, p. 11, cited in Oliveira, 2024, p. 318).

Iconically, the PNEDH was structured into 5 (five) axes of action, placing Human Rights as the core of public safety policies—especially regarding police training, which was viewed as a strategic instrument. One of these is the “Education of Professionals in the Justice and Public Safety Systems,” which established clear programmatic actions, such as: the inclusion and promotion of this topic in training curricula; the creation of basic programs and curricular content for initial and continuing police training; the encouragement of research to broaden reflection on the subject; and the promotion of forums, centers, commissions, and research and extension centers in higher education institutions aimed at training these professionals (Brasil, 2007).

Within this framework, the importance of training that transcends theoretical knowledge is emphasized, with the aim of building educational and ethical practices committed to the dissemination, defense, and promotion of human rights.

In 2009, the National Human Rights Program III (PNDH-3) was published, representing the peak of the systematization of public human rights policies, stemming from broad national debate (Lustoza et al., 2021; Mendonça, 2021). This Plan was expanded relative to its predecessor. It was structured into 6 (six) guiding axes and contains strategic guidelines and objectives, bringing greater depth to provisions regarding police training.

In PNDH-3, two axes linked to this theme stand out: Guiding Axis IV, concerning Public Safety, Access to Justice, and Combating Violence; and Guiding Axis V, concerning Education and Culture in Human Rights. Guiding Axis IV is directed toward a proposal for the democratization and modernization of



the public safety system, setting strategic goals for the recognition and ongoing training of these professionals.

The second axis reinforces the magnitude of implementing PNEDH guidelines in order to cement a culture of rights. As a path toward achieving these objectives, it proposes strengthening democratic and human rights principles within the institutions that train public safety professionals. It promotes transdisciplinarity and transversality of this topic across academic activities, engaging with other dimensions of knowledge.

It becomes evident that the approach adopted by PNDH-3 centers on the need for humanist, civic, and critical professional training for public safety agents (Mendonça, 2021), capable of preparing officers to operate within a democratic and pluralistic society (Lustoza et al., 2021).

The World Programme for Human Rights Education (UN, 2005), in proposing the construction of a universal culture of human rights through knowledge, skills, and attitudes, points higher education institutions toward the noble task of educating citizens who are equipped to participate in a free, democratic society that is tolerant of ethnic-racial, religious, cultural, territorial, physical-individual, generational, gender, sexual orientation, political option, and nationality differences, among others (Brasil, 2007, p. 38, cited in Lustoza et al., 2021, p. 4).

The connection between PNDH-3 and PNEDH forms a normative foundation capable of transforming the education of public safety professionals. However, inserting and operationalizing these guidelines remains a continuous challenge that depends on the commitment of safety institutions, civil society, and political will (Mendonça, 2021; Lustoza et al., 2021). This is especially true when encountering deeply entrenched practices within public safety training and qualification courses that utilize methods of conditioning and discipline. Compounding this practice is the lack of appreciation for police officers as authors and promoters of human rights (Oliveira, 2024).



Recently published scientific articles bring this issue explicitly into debate and analysis—such as those by Azevedo and Coura (2024) and Santos and Gontijo (2023)—pointing out that while the topic is included in course curricula, it is frequently restricted to theoretical and expository lectures. The practice of training through a “banking concept of education” persists, in which the instructor “deposits” content without stimulating or applying critical reflection, nor proposing a behavioral change toward acting humanely (Azevedo; Coura, 2024). Academic research reflects this panorama, demonstrating that this gap is not an isolated problem but a recurring challenge across different police academies in Brazil.

Santos and Gontijo (2023) reveal that a considerable number of police officers serving as instructors at the Higher Police Civil School of the Federal District do not feel effectively capable of using active learning methodologies. A gap was detected regarding pedagogical-didactic training: while instructors possess deep knowledge of their field of practice, they lack preparation for teaching and applying techniques such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL). The researchers conclude that professional experience is prioritized over the necessary pedagogical and didactic knowledge. This choice ultimately results in teaching that focuses solely on “know-how,” failing to promote effective attitudinal and reflective competencies.

According to research conducted by Mota (2022), the Police Academy of São Paulo faces similar problems regarding the lack of instructor qualification. In this training institution, the underlying assumption is that “he who knows how to do, knows how to teach” (Cunha, 2008, p. 10, cited in Mota, 2022, p. 111). Thus, they follow the logic that a professional responsible for training, by virtue of having practical daily knowledge, is fully capable of training peers—as if there were no requirement for them to possess specific pedagogical and methodological qualifications for teaching.

This problem is also found in Military Police training academies. Oliveira (2024) published research on the Military Police of the Federal District showing



that educational planning prioritizes operational courses of a repressive nature. The author even notes the cancellation of a course for Human Rights multipliers in 2023. These actions demonstrate the institution’s lack of commitment to preventive training (Oliveira, 2024).

This research leads to the inference that a logic of thought woven into the “culture of war” exists within the police milieu, standing above normative and constitutional guidelines and generating actions that run counter to a democratic society and, consequently, to Human Rights (Soares, 2024).

It remains evident that the training of these professionals still faces major challenges, even amidst the advancements of the National Human Rights Plans and the National Human Rights Education Plan (PNEDH). These are practical, cultural, and pedagogical challenges, given the observed predominance of traditional pedagogical models. Tied to gaps in faculty qualification and an institutional culture trapped in the logic of confrontation and discipline, this highlights the gulf between what is valued in public policies and what is practiced in police academies (Mota, 2022; Azevedo; Coura, 2024; Oliveira, 2024).

This gap between theory and practice compromises the training of these professionals. To narrow this divide, Human Rights Education must enter daily institutional life rather than remaining confined to a curricular discipline based solely on legal rules. It can serve as a tool to influence values and behaviors.

Through methodologies that foster critical and humanized reflection, it is possible to develop capabilities for “knowing how to do” (skills), “knowing how to be” (attitudes), and “knowing how to live together” (social interaction). This will contribute to reducing institutional violence, strengthening respect for human dignity, recognizing the “other” as a subject of rights, and enhancing the value of police work (Azevedo; Coura, 2024).

Reflections and Perspectives for Recognizing the “Other” in Police Training



Overcoming these challenges in police training requires an approach that goes beyond technical instruction and compliance with rules. It is essential to build an institutional culture that enables the recognition of the “other” as a subject of rights rather than a potential enemy to be combated. Deconstructing this “logic of war” demands critical reflection firmly grounded in the principles of Human Rights Education (Soares, 2024). In doing so, pathways will also be found to dismantle the “tunnel vision” based on confrontation and the “friend-or-foe” dichotomy, as cogently argued by Soares (2024).

In a democratic society, the recognition of the “other” is the primary element for the legitimacy of police action. For this reason, the training of these professionals must be continuous and humanized so that they can perceive themselves as agents of social transformation and active promoters of citizenship (Balestreri, 1998; Oliveira, 2024).

[...], it is fundamental that the police-citizen feel motivated and proud of their profession. This can only be achieved from a baseline of “existential meaning.” If the police function is emptied of this meaning, turning the men and women who practice it into mere order-followers without a personally embraced ideology, the result will be a tarnished self-image and low self-esteem. Rescuing the educator within each police officer allows for the re-signification of the police’s social importance, with the consequent awareness of the nobility and dignity of this mission (Balestreri, 1998, p. 24).

Guiding police officers to view themselves as promoters of human rights is an essential requirement for this transformation. By recognizing themselves as part of the solution, they will be encouraged to adopt a more active stance in defense of human dignity, moving beyond the restricted role of a “hunter” (Oliveira, 2024).

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to go beyond “knowing” and “knowing how to do” (*saber e saber fazer*); efforts must concentrate on developing competencies related to “being” and “living together” (*ser e conviver*). Following the acquisition of these skills, through methodologies that foster dialogue,



participation, and critical reflection, police officers may come to confront their own perceptions, biases, and stereotypes (Azevedo; Coura, 2024).

This paradigm shift requires Human Rights Education to serve as the overarching transversal axis of the training curriculum, encompassing all disciplines and activities. This will guarantee that the principles of human dignity and respect for the “other” form the foundation of police practice—ranging from routine field interventions to the application of force when strictly necessary (Azevedo; Coura, 2024).

Curricula must be designed around a pedagogy that acknowledges the complexity of police work and contemporary society, preparing officers to mediate conflicts ethically and justly. It is essential to break away from traditional instruction focused on the passive “depositing” of information, which fails to foster critical reflection or behavioral change (Azevedo; Coura, 2024; Santos; Gontijo, 2023).

The process of knowledge construction occurs through debate and the search for solutions to a problem—a complex situation that does not have a single right answer nor only one possible solution (Santos; Gontijo, 2023).

Public safety professionals must be prepared to navigate the daily ambiguities and uncertainties of field work, developing the capacity to adopt balanced and just postures (Morán, 2015; Santos; Gontijo, 2023). In this perspective, effective police training must enable the recognition of the “other” as an ethical imperative and a fundamental strategy for violence reduction. By prioritizing a culture of respect and dialogue over the logic of confrontation, the police institution consolidates its legitimacy, becoming an indispensable asset in building a safer, more just, and humanized society.

Final Considerations

This research sought to analyze civil police training through the guiding lens of Human Rights Education. To this end, it was grounded in the premise that the foundation for a humanized, professional, and ethical practice lies



in the recognition of the “other” as a subject of rights. This trajectory reveals that despite normative advancements, such as the PNEDHs and the National Curricular Matrix, HRE still faces multi-faceted challenges.

The persistence in retaining traditional pedagogical models, coupled with the lack of training for those acting as instructors and the institutionalized influence of a military culture, creates a gulf between the ideal and reality. This compromises the professional training of police officers, rendering them incapable of acting fully within a Democratic State based on the Rule of Law and of effectively applying the rights and constitutional guarantees established by law.

A critical analysis of curricular practices allows for the inference that HRE is treated merely as formal and complementary content, rather than being integrated as a structural axis of the training process. Studies by Santos and Gontijo (2023), Mota (2022), and Oliveira (2024) reveal an evident disconnect, characterized by the dominance of the “banking concept of education” and the exaltation of “know-how” at the expense of attitudinal competencies (Azevedo; Coura, 2024).

This gap extends across various police academies in Brazil, within both military and civil police forces, producing officers who are technically trained but may be ethically unprepared to handle the complexity and ambiguity inherent in contemporary society (Mota, 2022).

Adopting new paradigms is essential. The necessary path involves training police instructors so that they become mediators of knowledge rather than mere providers of information—it is necessary to transform (Freire, 1996). The adoption of active, dialogic methodologies can place the officer-in-training at the center of the learning process, fostering empathy, the recognition of alterity, and an ethical commitment to social justice (Santos; Gontijo, 2023; Azevedo; Coura, 2024).

The recognition of the “other” in police training is not merely a humanist ideal, but a key strategy for public safety. By departing from the “culture of



war” and establishing a stance grounded in dialogue and respect, the police institution consolidates its legitimacy and becomes more effective in protecting human dignity (Soares, 2024).

In a context of intense violence and inequality, the coming years for public safety in Brazil will largely depend on the capacity of its institutions to recognize the importance of Human Rights Education as an instrument for cultural transformation and for restoring trust between the police and society.

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Note

- 1 Artificial Intelligence Usage Statement: During the preparation of this text, the Gemini (Google) large language model (LLM) was used as a tool for methodological, editorial, and translation support. The technology was employed specifically to optimize search terms, conduct a preliminary literature review regarding the topic under discussion, and assist in translating the manuscript into English. The editorial team and authors emphasize that all conceptual content, critical analysis, theoretical synthesis, and translated text were conceived, reviewed, and validated by human researchers, who assume full ethical and scientific responsibility for the article.





How to cite

SANTOS, Leila Lima; CORRÊA, Edwiges Conceição Carvalho. Formação policial: um caminho para o reconhecimento do “outro”. **Educação em Análise**, Londrina, v. 11, p. 1-26, 2026. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5433/1984-7939.2026.v11.55303>.

Submitted on: May 20, 2026.

Accepted on: July 31, 2026.

Published on: September 8, 2026

CRediT

Acknowledgments:	Not applicable.
Funding:	Not applicable.
Conflict of Interest:	The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interests that represent a conflict of interest concerning this manuscript.
Ethical Approval:	Not applicable.
Author Contributions:	SANTOS, L. L. declares having performed the drafting – original manuscript. CORRÊA, E. C. C. declares having performed supplementation and revision.

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