Diálogos sobre Educación
TEMAS ACTUALES EN INVESTIGACIÓN EDUCATIVA
año 9 | número 17 | julio-diciembre 2018 | ISSN 2007-2171
Recibido: 01 de noviembre de 2017 | **Aceptado:** 06 de abril de 2018

Police education and human rights

Luisa Carolina Arévalo Herrera*

Abstract

For several years we have observed in Central America a trend to create specialized police education institutions instead of the old police training academies in order to provide higher education to police forces. The curricula of any police training institution for a democratic society, especially within the framework of higher education, must identify the competencies in terms of performance that will be the goals of such an education, as well as analyze the ideological elements that contribute to the production of images and meanings that introduce in the classroom stereotypes and prejudice that lead to discriminatory practices and the violation of the rights and dignity of the people. All of this rests on the most valuable element of any educational system: the people who will be directly involved in the educational process and who promote the guidelines for the training of good police forces in the service of the community.

Key Words: Police – education – curriculum – democracy – human rights.

Introduction

For several years now, we have observed in Central America a trend to create specialized police training institutions to offer higher education programs instead of the old police academies. In Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador, there are police academies that have been authorized by their Ministries of Education to offer professional majors, thus becoming specialized higher education institutions.

What makes these specialized higher education institutions (HEI) special is that they only teach courses to aspiring or serving police officers, because their educational offer is oriented towards training professionals in an area of science, technology or art: police work. In this respect, we believe that this education must necessarily be founded on an education in human rights, as the key to reduce bad performance and improper behavior (Tudela, 2011), because when we speak of police education we are aiming towards a particular form of education whose main guideline must be the respect of human rights.

Nowadays, every Latin American country acknowledges the link between the function of police and a respect for human rights. A part of this statement is what is known as the police

* Psychologist with a Master's degree in Research and Application Design in Psychology and Health. "Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública" Specialized Higher Education Institute, El Salvador. luisa.arevalo@ansp.edu.sv

reform in Latin America, which has sought to substitute old police forces at the service of a small group in power for professional policemen and policewomen at the service of citizens or, more broadly, the population (Arias, Rosada & Saín, 2012; Rico & Chinchilla, 2006; Frühling & Candina, 2004).

In order to contribute to the professionalization of police forces we propose some ideas to consider on police training institutions beyond the usual terms of educational quality, such as the role played by the recruiting, selection of students and the educational model to be adopted, with the aim of strengthening the training process of the police as a preventive mechanism to guarantee the human rights of society by selecting those with the skills and attitudes required to carry firearms and use them in a given situation. We underscore that police training must be organized with an educational system vision by setting requirements, degrees and fields of work based on profiles associated to the development of an education in policing that links academic degrees with the ranks of police command, as elements linked to each other and to their context that include ethics and human rights as essential components.

The aim of such an educational system would be that all men and women who aspire to be part of the police force or perform similar duties identify themselves with democratic values as well as a police ethics and deontology that privileges human rights, behave with honor, values and integrity, and are honest with themselves, their family, the police institution and the community.

Such a view of police education as committed with enforcing human rights faces challenges and tensions because it runs contrary to deeply rooted beliefs in some political realms in Latin America and in the "prevailing police culture" noted by Tudela (2011), which see human rights as an obstacle to carry out police work efficiently, arguing that human rights are for developed countries and that process guarantees allow criminals to be free and multiply, thus increasing insecurity and violence.

In our view, it is necessary for those in charge of police training, both educators and administrators, to have a solid formation in human rights to avoid imprecisions and refer only to severe facts or situations, neglecting everyday aspects or, on the opposite extreme, regard any restriction or demand made by the police service as a human rights violation. Either case, imprecision or lack of knowledge, may feed into prejudice on human rights in students or future police officers (Rodríguez, 2012; Arévalo, 2001).

We begin by pointing out some distinctive features of a police force in a democratic society and, based on them, we reflect on what a police education – especially if it is intended as higher education – should offer on its close link with ethics and human rights.

The police in a democracy

The police is one of the institutions that give more visibility to a democratic rule of law, materializing its monopoly on exercising physical coercion to intervene in problematic issues of society. One of its basic prescriptions is to adhere its work to the Constitution and the laws, thus fulfilling the basic assumption of legality (Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, 2011). The aim of legal regulations in a democratic rule-of-law State is to guarantee citizens' rights against possible arbitrary actions from state agents through mechanisms that enforce the responsibility of those who violate them. This is the feature that distinguishes such a state from other forms of state organization (Domínguez Vial, 1998; Duce & González, 1998).

In this context of a democratic rule-of-law State, the police is conceived as a public service institution legitimately oriented toward the protection of the security of citizens that guarantees security as well as the free enjoyment of the people's rights and freedoms, expressing a police model more focused on the capacity of preventing crime and social conflict, together and in coordination with other elements of society (Faroppa, 2010). According to the 2009 Report on Citizen Security and Human Rights (*Informe sobre Seguridad Ciudadana y Derechos Humanos*) of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, the police is one of the institutions of the State in which several of the principles and values of democracy and human rights, such as participation, representation, equality, non-discrimination, gender equality and respect for fundamental freedoms, are expressed.

This modern view of the police is the product of the evolution of the concept of security after the end of the Cold War. According to White (2004), this marked the most important conceptual changes that have taken place on this subject, moving from an excluding and orthodox view of security in which the State (an abstract and intangible entity) was the object of security and whose only dimension was military/territorial, to focusing the efforts on the security of the person and the community, which has implications on the kinds of risks people face, the actors, the means used and the forms of prevention.

In Latin America, the end of the Cold War led to a wave of democratization and pacification of internal armed conflicts, allowing for debate and the academic study of the concept of security, as well as a rethinking of the police model outside of the military realm. This new model underscores the professional character of its members and the need for internal and external mechanisms of surveillance or control that enable the responsibility and accountability of the police to the community, which expeditiously prevent or neutralize improper police behavior. In this respect, Binder (2004) warns that, since the police is an institution that uses weapons and special forces and the danger of abuse or the power to exert violence on people will always be present, the mechanisms of control must be diverse and complex.

What distinguishes this new police is precisely the existence of broad and robust surveillance mechanisms in the legal regulations: preventive ones, such as the selection and training of

the members of the police forces, as well as those that monitor ethical prescriptions for officials in charge of enforcing the law, such as refusing to follow orders that break the law, and the duty to report when human rights have been or are about to be violated. These mechanisms make it possible to establish the degrees of disciplinary responsibility under the consideration that the good image of the police rests on the ethical and lawful behavior of all its members, and that its efficacy is the product of respect for the law, the dignity of people, and human rights.

The accountability of the police in the legal as well as political and economic realm contribute to maintaining order and security in a society; as stated by the Center for Human Rights (1997) of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, adding that if a State permits these rights to be violated it will be fostering rebellion and the deterioration of coexistence, as stated in the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law" (United Nations, 1948).

At the level of doctrine, the strength of the defining principles sustained by the respect for the dignity of the people can be identified in the police's ethical code and in its norms for the use of force and firearms, which Domínguez Vial (1998) summarizes as the democratic doctrine of the police, shown in *a)* the absence of political interference in police work, *b)* the demilitarization of the police service, *c)* full respect of fundamental rights, and *d)* the accountability of its work and control of its activities.

The absence of political interference in their work implies that police forces are primarily at the service of the community and oriented towards the security and protection of people and their property, and not following a political motivation that would turn them into an authoritarian institution at the service of a few. Being a public institution, it is required to be autonomous in its work against any kind of pressures, interests and agendas; that is, to be politically neutral and not to allow itself to be manipulated and used for the proselytism of a politician or government.

The demilitarization of the police forces led to a strengthening of the civilian character in all of its symbolic, organic and functional aspects, even though firearms and special forces are part of the institution. The doctrinal, functional and organic militarization of the police in Latin America has been the consequence of the historical evolution of security, where the command structures of police institutions was formed by military people who brought military forms and ways to the organization and functioning of professional regimes, the training and education system and the control systems, thus shaping a highly militarized institutional culture.

On the other hand, absolute respect for fundamental rights means that the police and all its members must follow scrupulously the concepts, values and principles that the basic instruments of human rights state clearly, such as respect for law and legality, full respect of human dignity, the ethical impediment for the police to accept, conceal or tolerate acts of corruption, lies, abuse of power, mistreatment, illegal or illicit acts, as well as the necessary responsibility

for their acts and to carry out their duties conscientiously, with quality, warmth and professionalism at all times.

As for the use of force, these instruments underscore its legitimacy when they state that the purpose of a police force is to ensure the peace and tranquility of the people, adhering to the following parameters: *a)* to use force only when it is strictly necessary to maintain security and order or when their physical integrity or that of another person is in danger, safeguarding the integrity of people; *b)* to employ non-violent methods first; *c)* to show moderation in their actions; and *d)* to heed ethical concerns when not following orders that represent violations of human rights.

Transparency and accountability enforce Article XV,[1] acknowledged in the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen, which states the right of people under a government to expect accountability from public officials. Police forces are like any other State institution and not beyond the scope of this article, but since unlike most of the others they almost have a monopoly on the use of force – up to and including lethal force – they must be under stricter and more effective control mechanisms. Among these are those created in order to ensure the subordination and surveillance or police work,[2] the existent ones that regulate police behavior within the institution, favoring adherence and a commitment to democratic values, political authorities of the State and the standards that establish the functions and the mission of the police, and also those employed by society through judges, prosecutors, court officials, human rights advocates, the media and the citizens themselves.

The police counter-doctrine

So far we have described the ideal police in a democratic State of law. However, neither do Latin American states behave according to this model nor do their police forces act in a professional manner or with a commitment to human dignity, as a brief perusal of journalistic reviews will illustrate. It would seem that a police counter-doctrine is promoted that uses police forces as a mechanism for political control, improperly fosters the militarization of police forces, and endorses improper behavior and violations of rights.

Both the absence of political interference and the demilitarization of the police are unfinished tasks for Latin American police forces, partly because democracies are still imperfect and partly because, although there are no more *de facto* regimes, Latin American states are still controlled by political elites and financial power groups. This transition from militarized police forces with Manichean doctrines of good versus evil towards a professional, ethical and law-abiding police force under different forms of control entails multiple reforms made through

1 The society has the right to request an account from any public agent of its administration.

2 Including a) establishing a legal framework that delimits the functions of the police; b) creating and operating an effective structure in the Executive Power, and c) developing the function of parliamentary control.

time and not merely declaratory events. In a study of police reforms in Latin America, Arias, Rosada and Saín (2012) describe the recurrent ineffective policies adopted by state authorities that, far from being effective, coherent and permanent solutions to the problems of insecurity in the region, have "generated or maintained other types of conflicts, among them a deep mistrust towards the institutions of public security […]", where drug trafficking and gangs become oversized and particularly dangerous enemies and threats, creating a greater risk of a renewed intervention of the armed forces in politics when they are given the task of "fighting drug traffickers or the *maras*" (Arias, Rosada & Saín, 2012; Urcuyo, 2009).

The sentences of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights show how far we are from this ideal of police forces respectful of human rights. This may be explained by the fact that in this continent human rights are intangible for many people, "mere statements of good intentions, abstract propositions far away from everyday life" (Cruz, 2012), and since police forces are institutions made up of people from the same community they serve, they show its potentials and limitations. They are not people from another world, but the expression of the prevailing culture of the society to which they belong, understood as a number of private verbal behaviors (thought) and explicit behaviors carried out and maintained socially through shaping, modeling and verbal rules which perpetuate prejudice and social stereotypes that legitimize and justify discriminatory and violent ideas or behaviors against some social groups (Tudela, 2011; Trujillo, Moyano, León, Valenzuela & González-Cabrera, 2005).

This would explain a certain degree of discrimination against women that manifests itself in different levels of the police institutions, both within and around them. In this context, police work is seen as exclusively for men, with features that María Eugenia Suárez (2006) calls *hipermasculinity*, expressed in terms of "toughness, extreme strength, risk, daring, fearlessness" and other traits of brutality to exercise command and authority, at the expense of professionalism and the capacity to guarantee freedoms and rights, thwarting the acceptance of egalitarian and gender equality views, even if the number of women in a police force increases.

There are also stereotypical beliefs about police work that extol as heroic violent behavior and harassment against dwellers of working class neighborhoods and allow dangerous practices such as the use of ski masks in police interventions, justifying them with purportedly technical arguments. A study published by Watson and another one by Silke (cited by Trujillo *et al*., 2005) reveal that people in security forces with their faces covered or camouflaged are more likely to carry out punitive actions against people and behave more aggressively than those whose face is not covered, which together with the anonymity of a group in uniform (a de-individuation phenomenon), unleashes behavior that people would otherwise be incapable of.

Along with this are the consequences of the prevailing economic model in modern interpersonal relationships, which praises the virtues of consumerism and the possession of ma-

terial objects as a supreme value even above life and human dignity, but that as Víctor Frankl rightly points out only lead to an existential emptiness. The members of the police forces are not exempt from the influence of this model, or from being tempted to use the powers that their profession gives them for their own benefit.

These elements, among others, materialize in this sort of not-quite-overt counter-doctrine or organizational culture that perpetuates myths about human rights as a hindrance to police efficacy and allows law enforcement to be seen as a war against crime in which offenders are the "enemy" to be defeated. What is also manifest is a disdain for investigation and education, which are pejoratively labelled as "theoretical", and a belief that the true police officer's school is the street. Even, as Carlos Basombrio Iglesias (2004) describes, physical abuse and humiliation of new students have been copied with the bogus argument that they build character, without realizing that they generate the risk that such behavior will be repeated against the citizens they are entrusted to protect.

The exercise of rank in a hierarchy often rests on contempt and abuse of the subordinate, ignoring the fact that this person is the one who carries out most police procedures and is in daily contact with the people. The rights of police officers are a pending matter in Latin America. It is known from reliable sources that most police officers work in extremely poor conditions, with low salaries, and are subjected to cruel, humiliating and degrading treatment under the indifferent eye of authorities and politicians.

Police education as a contribution to police reform

Faced with this scenario, Arias, Rosada and Saín (2012) argue that the transformation towards models of democratic police must be carried out by adopting a comprehensive plan founded on a diagnosis of the institution in all its dimensions, including the institutional culture, the educational system, and the mechanisms for police surveillance and control, to counteract the ethical decline and other distortions, as well as the functional deviations observed.

Taking this road towards the transformation of the police requires gathering internal structures around a coordinated vision of the different levels of the police forces and the society they serve, one in which the professionalization of its members entails a break with traditional police instruction and training towards a relevant formal education that translates into higher levels of police performance and reduces improper behavior to a minimum (Tudela, 2011; Ales, 2011). In this respect, we may wonder how alternatives for action may be designed in order to overcome old schemes and views of police education.

Some countries, like Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Chile, have undertaken actions to professionalize the members of their police forces based on the definition of the police education system, with the aim of strengthening the quality of training more permanently. Central American countries have opted to transform their old police academies into institutes of higher education for the police offering a number of degree programs and extending the length of

these programs. The goal is to address police education through a rational, committed, responsible and comprehensive vision, to generate honest and respectful attitudes, skills and behavior towards the others that ensure the respect for human rights (Rodríguez, 2012).

It is also vital to provide the educational task of a police training institution with a philosophical foundation, defining clearly what is to be delivered to orient the teaching/learning process, articulate the components and the philosophical, educational, administrative, admittance, follow-up and evaluation guidelines to train police professionals according to the functions they perform in a democratic society (Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública, 2013). In Tudela's (2011) terms, since the brief experience of the first stage of training in the police officer's professional life cycle is not enough to obtain an optimal performance, the police education system must include an initial training, ongoing updating, and specialized training to develop competencies and skills, going beyond an essentialist training that prioritizes operational training towards an innovative ethical formation that includes an education in human rights.

Attending to democratic principles, this educational system must set the requirements for admittance, graduation and fields of work based on profiles linked to the development of a career in the police and consulted with the society they serve, grounded on the new paradigm of professional training with a strong component of training in ethics and human rights, and not only in police intervention techniques. What must be clear is that police forces cannot continue to be trained as they were in the past, because there is a new social reality that privileges first democracy and then globalization with scientific and technical developments at the touch of a computer key.

Threats to the security of people have changed enormously in recent years. Drug trafficking, corruption, drug addictions, organized crime, migration, consumer society, human trafficking, cybercrime, money laundering, criminal gangs and some others are current problems that require new police intervention strategies and highlight the importance of reinforcing in police officers and those aspiring to be members of the police the values and principles of the police doctrine defined above. Along with this there are scientific and technological advancements that have an effect on the ways of learning and teaching new generations. Education sciences are continuously nourished by discoveries in psychology and neuroscience that enable us to better understand how our brains learn and perform the executive functions involved in learning (Frade, 2009; 2012). Mass media and social networks have changed young people's ways of learning and making decisions, which underscores the need to modify police training and promote teaching (pedagogy and didactics) that favor the use of complex thought to decide what is convenient according to ethical principles.

Adopting the elements described above requires an updated education that prepares future police professionals for an ethical and professional practice with a commitment to human rights.

In any educational institution, a curricular proposal to train police officers for a democratic society, especially within the framework of higher education, must necessarily identify competencies in terms of performance that are the object of such an education, and also conduct an analysis of the ideological elements that contribute to the production of images and meanings which introduce into the classrooms the stereotypes and prejudice that lead to discriminatory practices and the violation of the rights and dignity of the people, keeping in mind that such elements do not make any reference to explicit norms but are embedded in subtle social practices, or what is known as the "hidden curricula" in education or the "organizational culture of the police" (Zabalza, 2011; Tudela, 2011).

Basombrio Iglesias (2004) points out that one of the concerns in police training is the excessive number of hours taken by the learning and practicing of military rituals that bear no relationship with the activities they will carry out in the future. He also sees as an obstacle that the training takes place within the confines of police barracks, a notorious influence of the armed forces that, although it creates bonds and loyalties among students that may continue throughout their lives, isolates them from community life and generates the perception that the police institution must be separated from the rest of society. A bold proposal would involve the existence of a broad educational system that managed to incorporate police officers or aspiring members of the police in college classrooms to learn certain competencies, and not only opening a door for college teachers to teach subjects in police academies.

In a promotion course aimed at middle levels of command at the police education institution of El Salvador, an agreement was signed with a university so that scientific research subjects could be taught in its classrooms, having students take classes in the university. At the end of the course the students regarded that experience as very positive, and some even regretted not having had a higher education due to their long-held prejudice against college education.

On the other hand, the specialized educational institution must offer police officers a comprehensive and professional education based on efficacy criteria for the functions and duties of its students, as well as their individual responsibility in the performance of their work, by adopting their code of behavior and being inspired by the philosophy contained in the international instruments of human rights and the laws that regulate the police.

The police educational system must be able to provide training within the framework of human rights and oriented towards strengthening a professional ethos, where the subjects and the quality of police training respond to the expectations of democratic coexistence and governability, such as legitimacy and trust in the police (Tudela, 2011).

If the police officer profile required to set in motion this police model is that of a proactive professional, that is, one who acts before conflicts break out or tries to scale back its intensity, who is polite and amicable with citizens, with a certain level of maturity and emotional stability, and sensitive to individual and social problems (Chandler, 1990, cited in Soria Verde, 2006), then professional training

must be aimed at developing thinking skills to perceive the social context objectively and the social skills to interact in an optimal way with citizen, take responsibility for his or her actions, and contribute to emotional maturity, without setting aside the instruction and training in police techniques and a responsible use of firearms.

Police training must therefore consider a triple training context: *a)* that of knowledge, because police officers must acquire all the knowledge that is at the foundation of professional work or *know-how*, *b)* that of professional skills, where the police officer must *know and do* or apply a number of techniques as a security professional, and *c)* that of the attitudes and values needed to carry out his or her police functions, *knowing how to be and how to coexist*, which insofar as they are adopted individually and collectively, will be the guarantee of proper police work (Rodés, Antony, Mayorca, Remillard, Welander & Knippenbert, 1991).

In this context, police education centers must engage in a comprehensive management of the knowledge required for the students' successful performance, linking specific competencies originated in police practice to other key o human/social competencies having to do with the attitudes and values of a responsible citizen with rights and duties, and those related to the ability to assess their own knowledge (metacognitive competencies) (Tobón, 2014). Laura Frade Rubio (2012) defines competencies as the adaptive cognitive/behavioral ability to cope with demands presented in different contexts and with different levels of complexity. It is the know-how to be able to do, be, and live in society. It is cognitive/behavioral because it includes cognitive elements (knowledge and thinking skills) and behavioral elements (skills and attitudes), which in turn involves the values and emotions expressed in concrete performance.

Police education centers must therefore conduct continuous diagnoses and evaluations to determine if all the competencies required of different positions in the police are properly defined and identified in order to verify the operational correspondence of the subjects taught, as well as review and update the teaching methodology.

Thus, police education requires teaching how to think in a complex fashion, guided by ethical and human rights standards; that is, using thinking skills so that students can perceive clearly the consequences of the decisions they will make in daily police work, addressing directly and explicitly the hidden curriculum of police functions to eradicate absolutist and Manichean beliefs that support social prejudice and prevent the comprehension of human rights.

This implies using teaching strategies that provide answers to situations, conflicts and problems similar to those police officers encounter in real life and finding out which human rights are involved, in a complex process of personal construction on the social, interpersonal, personal and professional areas, with progressively difficult exercises according to pre-written action protocols that specify the performance levels expected according to the different characteristics of the students (Tobón, Pimienta & García Fraile, 2010).

In this respect, it is important to take advantage of each and every moment the student spends in the school premises so that all activities are seen as an opportunity to learn about human rights, and not only within the classroom. To be clear, the knowledge of legal norms and human rights do not by themselves guarantee that people will follow the concepts, values and principles contained in them, and much less if these go against previously held beliefs, prejudice and stereotypes. There must be a linkage with other processes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge, such as emotion, thought and performance, to exercise self-control and the self-regulation of behavior.

Thus, discipline becomes relevant to develop such self-control and self-regulation of behavior. And not the kind of discipline generated by fear of punishment or of being expelled from the institution: discipline needs to be fostered and promoted by the whole educational center and not only by those who teach ethics and human rights or who enforce discipline. Police education institutions must seek to foster professional and ethical police performance.

The evaluation parameters of the curricula must be clearly defined when setting the levels of performance and suggesting forms of evaluation, comparing notes with other participants in the educational process to discuss observations. It is advisable to use different evaluation techniques and instruments that allow for a closer approach to an actual individual performance situation, which can be achieved by comparing notes based on observation, interviews, documentation, questionnaires and videos, among others, in order to issue a value judgment that contrasts such evaluation parameters with the evidence obtained on the competencies expected (Pimienta, 2008; Tobón, Pimienta & García Fraile, 2010).

Any educational course must consider or be complemented by a period of practice or training in police work, which should take place after completing the academic courses determined as required to achieve the level of professionalization in the position to which the students aspire. This practical on-the-job training must be regulated by a protocol or instruction manual, and it would be highly advisable that each student was assigned a trainer police officer who supervises and evaluates him or her through direct observation, according to attitude and police values parameters. At this stage, it is also advisable that students are not considered effective members of the police forces since they are students in training whose distribution in police headquarters must correspond to the objectives of the educational activity that seeks to place them within the operational activity as participant observers and actors of their own learning, to acquire the mechanisms to interact with the citizens and the members of the police forces from their position in these forces.

In the case of police education, admittance to an educational institution must not be interpreted either as being hired by the police institution or as an effective promotion, since the training course seeks to be one more element in the selection process. What is valuable about the training is that those who do not meet the professional expectations can be detected throughout the process even if they passed the initial selection tests.

As in any educational system, all of the above rests on the people who are directly involved in the teaching and learning process, since the success of an educational institution is closely linked to its faculty. These people who work as teachers, whether they are police officers or not, are the ones who favor the guiding line of the educational process of good police officers in the service of the community. They are the pillars of police education and, most of all, they must have a key competence in ethics and human rights, defined as making conscious decisions on a given teaching/learning process by choosing the subjects that will guarantee the improvement of the quality of life of those who learn and conduct police work ethically and being respectful of human rights (Frade, 2009).

Besides having this ethical competence, police officer teachers must have the professional and teaching experience that makes them examples of good behavior. Pimienta (2012) and Zabalza (2011) highlight the specific competencies that learning mediators must have in order to improve the teaching/learning process, which results in the benefit of the students' professional performance.

Final comments

There is now a notion of a service police force oriented towards guaranteeing the freedoms and rights of people as a fundamental part of a democratic State of law. In this respect, a democratic police force, the goal of police reform, is characterized by the professionalism of its members and the existence of control mechanisms that guarantee the self-correction of the police, allowing for its responsibility and accountability to the community it serves, which is a marked difference from the police of the past.

In Latin America, changes regarding the States and their police model have been significant. However, their completion has been difficult because they have been conceptual changes. They generate disappointment about what democracy has to offer, perhaps because the policies adopted by the authorities favor and maintain the citizens' insecurity issues, instill a dangerous nostalgia for authoritarianism to confront them, and create a higher risk of getting the armed forces involved in their resolution.

As for the police reform processes, experts in the subject highlight the importance of grounding them on a comprehensive diagnosis to plan interventions in order to guarantee the human rights of the population – including those of police officers – and strengthen the mechanisms of police force surveillance and control to counter ethical decline and other functional distortions and deviations of the institution.

One of the most substantial elements of that, although not the only one, is to rethink the police education system as part of the control mechanisms. Osse (2009, cited by Tudela, 2011) points out that good police performance starts with and depends on early processes such as selection and training, which reinforces our opinion that the police education system must have at its core

an education in human rights, which are inherent to police work and give the profession a social value.

In this respect, police education centers must take into account the following considerations: *a)* the methods and procedures to select the staff involved in the training and follow-up of future police officers must be clearly defined, *b)* it is also important to give them ongoing training to improve their teaching competencies, especially regarding ethics and human rights, and *c)* the training process must be evaluated by making diagnoses and evaluations in order to verify the competencies identified in the curricula. Thus, it will be possible to have a police education system that dispels myths and develops complex thought to improve the professional performance of police officers.

References

Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública (2013). "Fundamentos del Sistema Educativo Policial Integral. *Cuaderno de Estudio,* núm. 5. San Luis Talpa: Author.

Ales, C. (coord.) (2011). *Regulación y control del uso policial de la coerción y la fuerza en Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Seguridad de la Nación.

Arévalo, L. (2001). *El Concepto jurídico y la génesis de los derechos humanos*. Puebla: Universidad Iberoamericana – Golfo Centro.

Arias, P., Rosada, H. & Saín, M. (2012). *Reformas policiales en América Latina. Principios y lineamientos progresistas*. Bogotá: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Basombrio, C. (2004). *Manejo y gestión de la seguridad: de la reforma al inmovilismo*. Lima: Instituto de Defensa Legal.

Bauman, Z. (2007). *Vida de consumo*. Mexico: FCE.

Centro de Derechos Humanos (1997). *Manual para el formador de derechos humanos*. Geneve: High Commisioner for Human Rights.

Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (2009). *Informe sobre seguridad ciudadana y derechos humanos de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos*. San José: Author.

Cruz, M. (2012). "Introducción". In C. Barrachina (coord.). *Los derechos humanos en el marco del nuevo modelo de policía*. Mexico: Centro de Investigación y Estudios de Seguridad-Secretaría de Seguridad Pública Federal.

Domínguez Vial, A. (1998). "El Estado democrático de derecho y el poder de policía". *Pena y Estado, Policía y Sociedad Democrática*, núm. 3. Buenos Aires: Editores del puerto.

Duce, M. & González, F. (1998). "Policía y Estado de derecho: problemas en torno a su función y organización". *Pena y Estado, Policía y Sociedad Democrática*, núm. 3. Buenos Aires: Editores del puerto.

Faroppa, J. (2010). Módulo de contenidos: "Derechos humanos, seguridad ciudadana y funciones policiales". Costa Rica: Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos.

Frade, L. (2009). *Desarrollo de competencias en educación: desde preescolar hasta bachillerato*. Mexico: Editorial Calidad Educativa.

_____ (2012). *Competencias en el aula. Conceptos básicos, planeación y evaluación*. Mexico: Editorial Calidad Educativa.

Frühling, H. & Candina, A. (2004). *Participación ciudadana y reformas a la policía en América del Sur*. Santiago: Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo.

Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (2011). *Derechos humanos, seguridad ciudadana y funciones policiales*. Costa Rica: Author.

Núñez, C. (2001). *La revolución ética*. Mexico: Lumen.

Pimienta, J. (2008). Evaluación de los aprendizajes. Mexico: Pearson Educación.

_____ (2012). *Las competencias en la docencia universitaria. Preguntas frecuentes*. Mexico: Pearson Educación.

Rodríguez, V. (2012). "Transversalidad de grupos en condición de vulnerabilidad con énfasis en enfoque de género y niñez en conflicto con la ley penal". *Manual de contenidos para el docente*. Costa Rica: Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos.

Rodés, J., Antony, S., Mayorca, J.M., Remillard, P., Welander, G. & Knippenbert, A. (1991). *Informe de la Misión de las Naciones Unidas sobre la creación de la Policía Nacional Civil*. United Nations.

Soria Verde, M.A. (2005). "La psicología policial". In M.A. Soria Verde & D. Sáiz Roca. *Psicología criminal*. Madrid: Pearson Educación.

Suárez, M.E. (2009). "Policías, delito e inseguridad. Reflexiones desde el lente del género". In M.E. Suarez (coord.). *Crimen, castigo y género*. Guadalajara: Instituto Municipal de las Mujeres de Guadalajara.

Tobón, S., Pimienta, J. & García Fraile, J. (2010). *Secuencias didácticas: Aprendizaje y evaluación de competencias*. Mexico: Pearson Educación.

_____ (2014). *El currículo por competencias desde la socioformación: ¿Cómo podemos cambiar nuestras prácticas educativas para asegurar la formación integral?* Mexico: Limusa.

Trujillo, H., Moyano, M., León, C., Valenzuela, C.C. & González-Cabrera, J. (2005). *El radicalismo islamista en las sociedades occidentales: prejuicio, identidad social y legitimación del terrorismo*. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Tudela Poblete, P. (2011). "Aportes recientes para un mejor desempeño policial: la instrucción y su impacto sobre las conductas indebidas". *Revista Estudios Policiales,* 8, 63-96.

Urcuyo, C. (2009). *Los desafíos de la seguridad en Centroamérica*. San José: Instituto de Estudios Superiores para el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible.

White, E. (2004). "Seguridad y defensa en la Centroamérica contemporánea". In *Educar para la Seguridad*. San José: Universidad para la Paz.

Zabalza, M.A. (2000) *Diseño y desarrollo curricular*. Madrid: Editorial Narcea.

_____ (2011). *Competencias docentes del profesor universitario. Calidad y desarrollo profesional*. Madrid: Editorial Narcea.