



The Implementation of Police Higher Education Within the Context of the Professionalisation Reform, and the Perceived Impact on Police Legitimacy

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Abstract

This is an explanatory study that draws on academic literature, policy reviews, and strategic reports to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transition from a predominantly craft-based police training model to one grounded in academic rigour and professional standards. The historical evolution of police higher education in England and Wales from 1990 to 2025 is considered, noting how political, cultural, institutional, and educational shifts have shaped the professional development of police officers through increasingly formal academic routes. The adopted literature review of secondary data identifies key milestones, policy initiatives, and social reforms that have prompted academic partnerships and their subsequent impact on reform rhetoric. The academic literature, policy documentation and institutional reports frame police higher education as a mechanism for enhancing professionalism, accountability, and legitimacy within policing and signify the power dynamics shaping the discourse around police education. The latest of the professionalisation reforms is the Police Education Qualification Framework. This 2016 professionalisation agenda nurtured police-academic partnerships, giving rise to three degree-entry routes for probationary officers. Preliminary findings suggest that this style of recruitment has contributed to organisational structural barriers and a junior workforce, signifying implications for sustainability, staff retention and public legitimacy. These findings provide actionable recommendations for policymakers to reduce the stigma of academia in police culture and address probationer retention by creating genuine police-academic collaborations for long-lasting partnerships.

Keywords: Higher Education, Policing, Professionalisation Reform, Police Education Qualification Framework

1. Introduction

This explanatory study aims to examine the key milestones, policy reforms, and pedagogical developments in police higher education from 1990 to 2025, assessing their impact on the trajectory of police professionalisation and legitimacy. The research draws on academic literature, policy reviews, and strategic reports to provide a comprehensive understanding of

the transition from a predominantly craft-based police training model to one grounded in academic rigour and professional standards. The study further aims to identify what impact, if any, higher education has on the professionalisation of the workforce and police legitimacy. This study contributes to the literature by identifying key police education milestones against a plethora of political and institutional policy initiatives, shaped by social reform.

1.1. Historical Background

The landscape of police education in England and Wales has undergone a significant transformation over the past three decades. From 1990 to 2025, policing education in England and Wales has shifted from a largely experiential training approach to a system underpinned by embedded academic partnerships, structured qualifications, and evidence-based practice. These changes have contributed to greater professional legitimacy and opened new avenues for reflective practice and critical engagement. However, questions remain about access, diversity, and the balance between academic and operational learning.

The dynamic interplay of political influences and societal expectations increasingly shapes police education. This observation can also be extended to mainstream education, where “*educational change is almost always part of bigger changes in society, the economy and the state*” (Ball, 2021). Since the early 1990s, changes in public expectations, governance structures, and social dynamics have necessitated a re-evaluation of how police officers are recruited, trained, and educated. Higher education has emerged as a key component of this evolution, shaping the competencies, ethics, and critical thinking abilities of modern police personnel.

In recent years, several high-profile events in the United Kingdom (UK) and internationally have likely affected public perceptions of policing (Casey, 2023). With the credibility of police education and professionalism of officers regularly in the media spotlight globally, forces must regain public trust and confidence, which is central to the concept of policing by consent in England and Wales (Home Office, 2023). The construct of policing by consent is a social contract between authorities and members of the public to follow the rules. Consequently, legitimacy and conforming to the law are perceived as “*the belief that authorities, institutions and social arrangements are appropriate, proper and just*” (Tyler, 2006). Policing in England and Wales is hugely impacted by whether the public has confidence in the capability and the fairness of procedures through which the police exercise their authority. Whilst there has been some recognition of police reform, one proposal to achieve cultural change has been to establish policing as an academic discipline (Martin, 2024).

The latest of the professionalisation reform agenda is the Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) degree entry route for probationary police officers, which saw the first police recruits enrolling in higher education in 2018 (College of Policing, 2020). Early findings suggest structural barriers, a lack of diversity in recruitment and a junior workforce, which have implications for legitimacy, sustainability and staff retention.

2. Methodology

This explanatory study adopted a literature review of secondary data to examine the evolution of police education in England and Wales between 1990 and 2025. This period was selected for comparison as 1990 corresponds to a prolonged phase of predominantly experiential police training, while 2025 represents almost a decade since the formal introduction of the academic police professionalisation agenda (National Police Chiefs’ Council, 2016). The literature examines the implementation of police higher education within the broader agenda of professionalisation reform, and its perceived impact on police legitimacy.

Three primary electronic databases were searched for titles between 1990 and 2025: Google Scholar, the UK government search database, and the College of Policing website. Papers were limited by language (English), country (England and Wales), and time (between 1990 and 2025). Search terms ‘police education’, ‘police higher education’, ‘professionalisation reform’, and ‘legitimacy’ retrieved a plethora of **peer-reviewed academic literature** addressing police education, training, and governance. Searching ‘police reform’ identified policy, parliamentary papers and legislative publications through the UK government website. These search parameters underpinned the literature review and informed the preliminary examination of the subject matter. Publications were considered if they met the inclusion criteria (see Table 1), which accounted for some ‘**grey**’ literature from professional associations and think tanks.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Publications dated between 1990 and 2025	Sources unrelated to policing or education in England and Wales
Literature on institutional, political, or educational reform	Publications outside the temporal scope
Literature on police education, training, or professional development in England and Wales	Literature lacking substantive reference to police reform or professionalisation was rejected
English-language sources focused on England and Wales	

This study relies solely on secondary data, limiting ethical risks. Academic integrity was maintained through accurate attribution and reflexive engagement with the researcher’s interpretive stance. Due to the absence of primary data and the breadth of available literature in this field, it is acknowledged that the scope of the paper is limited to English-language sources focused on England and Wales, which may exclude relevant international perspectives. Nonetheless, this historical review traces institutional, political, and educational developments, with particular attention to how reforms have shaped recruitment, training, and professional development pathways. The literature explores how higher education is framed as a mechanism for enhancing professionalism, accountability, and legitimacy within policing, while also identifying potential tensions between reform rhetoric and the implications on society.

2.1. The State of Police Education in 1990

The professionalisation of policing has been a longstanding policy objective in England and Wales, driven by demands for greater legitimacy, transparency, and effectiveness. Higher education has played an increasingly central role in shaping the skills, knowledge, and ethical frameworks of modern police officers. Before the 1990s, most police officers entered their respective force without formal academic qualifications beyond secondary education. This was against a backdrop of the country descending into industrial and economic crisis under the Conservative ‘Thatcherism’ era (HM Government, n.d.-a).

Policy for procedural change was first introduced in 1984, with the implementation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) and set the stage for the gradual integration of academic components into police training programmes (Home Office, 2013). This code of practice signified a shift toward procedural accountability, demanding greater legal knowledge and ethical sensitivity from police officers (Home Office, 2013). PACE established the governance surrounding police powers, balanced with the rights of the public and remains the essence of modern-day policing.

The 1990s police training model in England and Wales was overwhelmingly vocational, rooted in craft-based instruction and delivered almost entirely within the policing institution itself. Recruits typically attended force training schools or regional centres, where the curriculum emphasised discipline, procedural accuracy, and operational skills (Loveday, 2005). Training was highly regimented, reflecting the hierarchical nature of police organisations. Instruction was provided by serving officers rather than academics, and knowledge transfer occurred through rote learning, simulation exercises, and intensive drills. The implicit assumption was that policing was best learned experientially ‘on the beat’, and classroom-based knowledge beyond basic law and procedure was of limited value.

As shown in Figure 1, the 1996 Police Act was introduced in the final year of the Conservative administration before their electoral defeat in 1997 (HM Government, n.d.-b). It was designed to address rising public anxieties concerning crime and police accountability. By consolidating previously fragmented statutory provisions, the Act sought to restructure the policing framework in England and Wales, principally by defining police jurisdiction and imposing a duty on police authorities to ensure the delivery of policing across all designated areas. The Act has exerted a sustained influence on the governance of police services in England and Wales, with its statutory framework remaining discernible in subsequent waves of legislative reform.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, nationally defined performance indicators came to dominate policing policy in England and Wales. Building on the aforementioned Conservative Government legislation, the Police Reform Act enacted by the Labour administration in 2002 empowered central authorities to intervene in police performance by establishing policing objectives across all forces (Loveday, 2005). Subsequent evaluations have indicated that this performance management regime and associated public service targets frequently distorted operational priorities, diverting attention from long-term preventative strategies and less easily measurable outcomes such as fostering community trust (Loveday, 2006a).

1990 - 1997	Conservative party administration
1996	Police Act legislation
1997 - 2010	Labour party administration
2001	Home Office White Paper: <i>Policing a New Century—A Blueprint for Reform</i>
2002	HMICFRS <i>Training Matters</i> thematic inspection
2002	Police Reform Act legislation
2004	Home Office White Paper: <i>Building Communities, Beating Crime</i>
2005	Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) launched
2010 - 2024	Conservative party administration
2010	Government commissioned <i>Review of Police Leadership and Training</i>
2012	College of Policing established
2016	National Police Chief Council <i>Policing Vision 2025</i> published
2018	Police Education Qualifications Framework launched
2019	Police Uplift Programme
2022	Police Foundation's <i>Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales</i>
2023	Continued use of IPLDP prohibited under new Police Regulations

Figure 1. Timeline of UK political administration and associated police education reform

The landscape of 1990s policing shifted with a notable preference for community engagement, multi-agency collaboration, and crime prevention, which required a more complex skill set.

Officers were increasingly expected to demonstrate interpersonal and problem-solving skills, which spurred the development of education models aligned with these new roles (Maguire & John, 2006). During this period, pilot collaborations between universities and police forces also began to emerge, reflecting an increasing awareness of the value of critical thinking, research literacy, and community engagement in police work. Whilst these early collaborations recognised the benefits of combining practical experience with academic rigour, it would take a further three decades for more structured pathways into the profession.

2.2. Early Calls for (Political) Reform

The early 2000s indicated clear aspirations to professionalise police training through policy initiatives and political reforms. According to Figure 1, white papers such as *Policing a New Century – A Blueprint for Reform*, published by the Home Office under the Tony Blair Labour Government (Home Office, 2001), sought to improve the quality and consistency of police training. Labour argued the essence of police reform lay in the creation of a ‘modernised police force’, emphasising the enhancement of professional standards and the reduction of bureaucracy as key measures to strengthen public confidence (Home Office, 2001).

Between 2000 and 2010, police education in England and Wales began a significant transition from traditional training models toward a more academic and standardised approach. In 2002, the Home Office released *Training Matters*, a thematic inspection conducted by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) evaluating the state of police training and professional development in England and Wales (Home Office, 2002). The report critically assessed the content, delivery, and organisation of both initial and continuing training for officers, highlighting significant inconsistencies across the two-year Probationer Constable Training Programme (PTP) undertaken by all new police recruits.

During this period, probationary officers did not receive any formal qualification upon completing their PTP. The 2002 *Training Matters* thematic inspection made several key recommendations, including the standardisation of police training to ensure consistency across police forces (Home Office, 2002). The report encouraged police to partner with Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to embed academic content alongside operational skills. The judgements of this report continue to resonate in modern policing, as there is no other profession within the criminal justice system that would allow practitioners to work with such limited training or without formal, recognised qualifications. The report argued that police training must be **“comparable with other professions” to meet the evolving demands of modern society** (Home Office, 2002, p.43). The report underscored the importance of combining operational competence with academic knowledge, laying the groundwork for subsequent reforms such as the establishment of the College of Policing and the development of the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF).

2.3. The Impact of the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP)

A subsequent phase of police reform under the Blair Labour Government was captured in the *Building Communities, Beating Crime* paper (Home Office, 2004, see Figure 1), which prioritised accountability, responsiveness, and partnership working as underpinning objectives to achieving a dynamic, modern workforce. These reforms implied a need for officers to possess skills in problem-solving, community engagement, and cross-agency collaboration, thus necessitating a broader educational base. As part of the UK Government Workforce Modernisation Programme, a new probationary training programme branded the IPLDP was rolled out nationally between 2005 and 2006 (Home Office, 2004). The IPLDP marked a significant shift in police training, replacing the traditional residential model with a two-year, workplace-based learning approach. It also reflected a commitment to improving inclusivity

and work–life balance by offering a more ‘family-friendly’ structure, designed to reduce barriers to female recruitment through non-residential training and part-time flexibility (Home Office, 2004).

The IPLDP integrated operational competence with key skills such as communication, ethics, and evidence-based decision-making, signalling a pedagogical shift from didactic instruction to a more learner-centred approach. Furthermore, plans were established to introduce a single national qualification for officers upon completion of their probationary period. Whilst clearly an improved alignment with the national occupational standards, the implementation of the IPLDP remained an ad hoc arrangement, with variation in training and accreditation from force to force. Despite national inconsistencies, this period of police education established the foundations for subsequent police officer personal development.

The introduction of IPLDP, the growth of university collaborations, and leadership-focused reforms demonstrated an emerging recognition of higher education’s role in shaping a modern, accountable, and professional police service. Despite a significant transition from traditional training models toward a more academic and standardised approach, the IPLDP was widely regarded as redundant and antiquated. During 2022, following pressures from the then Conservative Government, the pre-existing IPLDP route was permitted to run alongside the subsequent PEQF entry routes, until it ceased to exist following changes to Police Regulations in April 2023 (College of Police, 2022).

2.4. Formal Professionalisation and Policing Standards (2010–2020)

The decade between 2010 and 2020 marked a critical phase in the institutionalisation of police higher education in England and Wales. This decade saw the establishment of the College of Policing and the consolidation of academic pathways into the profession. The drive toward standardisation, accountability, and professional development accelerated, further embedding higher education as a key element of police training and leadership. These reforms consolidated the role of academic institutions and placed education at the heart of modern policing, setting the stage for the innovations and challenges of the next decade.

At the beginning of the decade, the Conservative Government’s Home Secretary, Theresa May, introduced police target reforms designed to align crime reduction efforts with the enhancement of public confidence and police legitimacy. Jackson and Bradford (2010) examined how public evaluations of police performance extend beyond traditional indicators of effectiveness, such as crime reduction and emergency responsiveness, to include wider aspects of procedural fairness and community engagement. Their analysis highlighted that public trust and confidence are not solely shaped by perceptions of police competence, but also by the belief that officers treat members of the public with dignity, provide opportunities for voice, information transparency, and understand local community needs. The research further observed that whilst the public often possesses limited direct experience or detailed understanding of police work, how successful an officer is in achieving fair treatment, strong communication, and community understanding is imperative to fostering and maintaining police legitimacy (Jackson & Bradford, 2010).

In Neyroud’s *Review of Police Leadership and Training*, he strongly advocated that “*formal professionalisation has potentially significant benefits for policing and the public it serves*” (Home Office, 2010, p.45). In 2010, he called for the introduction of a new professional qualification framework that would actively support managers and frontline officers in keeping their practice current and aligned with the highest standards (Home Office, 2010). He advocated establishing a single professional body for policing as a means to achieve this goal,

arguing that this would eliminate the unnecessary complexity of the present structure, which saw organisations competing to set priorities.

2.4.1 College of Policing

In light of Neyroud's 2010 review recommendations, the College of Policing (CoP) was established in 2012 as the central body for determining police standards across all forces in England and Wales. Its formation represented a significant milestone in the professionalisation agenda and a strategic effort to centralise standards, ethics, leadership development, and education within the profession (College of Policing, 2013).

Twenty-first-century policing requires officers and staff to possess enhanced emotional intelligence through soft skills and strong communication (Martin, 2024). The emerging challenges of policing require police personnel to be proficient in managing high-risk and vulnerabilities. The fundamental breakdown of legitimacy, as outlined in the independent *Baroness Casey Review Final Report* (Casey, 2023), was the latest catalyst for the CoP to professionalise and reform police education (Williams et al, 2019).

The independent *Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales* put forward a series of significant recommendations (Barber, 2022). Among these recommendations, Barber (2022) advocated that the CoP have authority to require forces to participate in national recruitment, education, and professional development initiatives, to address emerging skill gaps. The CoP was tasked with creating a national educational framework that aligned operational practice with academic research, thereby formalising closer relationships between higher education and police training. Embedding evidence-based approaches with all police personnel increased practitioner-academic and police-university research collaborations, raising professional standards through collaborative programmes such as the CoP What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (College of Policing, 2025).

2.4.2 Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF)

The PEQF was initially designed as a concept in 2016 to support the delivery of the Policing Vision 2025 (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2016), with the first recruits commencing the degree pathway in 2018. The Policing Vision 2025, which predates the two subsequent iterations, was a 10-year strategy that identified key priority themes including shaping resource allocation and a more representative workforce. This strategy sought to attract and recruit diverse applicants (College of Policing, 2020), with police officers and staff better aligning in both their skillset and the communities they represent.

In 2019, the then Conservative Government launched the Police Uplift Programme, a national recruitment initiative aiming to place 20,000 new police officers across the 43 forces in England and Wales by 2023 (College of Policing, 2021). This initiative coincided with the PEQF implementation timeline, providing additional incentives for police forces to adopt the new entry pathways. Jacques (2022) noted that "*England and Wales have fewer police officers per head of population than any comparable European nation*", arguing that aligning officer numbers with the European average of 357 per 100,000 population would require an additional 70,000 recruits above the 20,000 officers already pledged. In a culture where the public sector is expected to do more with less, a government financial pledge to secure such volumes of additional resources is highly unlikely.

The PEQF aimed to professionalise policing by acknowledging the complexity and diversity of the role (Police Federation, 2019), and aligning police education with other public sector professions, such as nursing, midwifery and teaching. One of the central aims of the CoP was to create a national PEQF framework to standardise police education across England and Wales. The PEQF was seen as an opportunity to advance police officers as qualified

practitioners, where prior police reforms had failed. The PEQF marked a major departure from previous ad hoc arrangements, requiring all recruits to undertake a mandatory qualification at an undergraduate level or above as a condition of their employment. However, Wood (2018) cautioned that the inclusion of academia in police training and the extent to which external institutions are given the responsibility of determining what constitutes ‘police knowledge’ requires sensitivity amidst the aspirational purpose.

The PEQF brought opportunity for three new Level 6 pathways for police recruits: a paid, three-year Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), a two-year Degree-holder Entry Programme (DHEP) diploma, or a pre-join undergraduate degree in professional policing (College of Policing, 2024). These pathways, developed in partnership with universities, emphasised academic study alongside operational deployment (College of Policing, 2020). These routes were designed to ensure that all new officers, regardless of background, entered the profession with a robust academic foundation, complemented by practical, work-based learning. This structure reflected a growing emphasis on professional standards, critical thinking, and reflective practice.

Despite these advances, the reforms of this period were not without criticism. Some officers and commentators argued that the PEQF imposed unnecessary academic burdens on recruits, detracting from practical training and operational preparedness. Variability in programme quality between forces and HEIs was of equal concern. Early recruits on the new Metropolitan Police Service degree-entry programmes were heavily critical of the organisation and management structure of the PEQF (Casey, 2023). One operational police supervisor remarked that the **rotational programme** designed to expose probationary officers to multiple frontline departments had limited supervisory oversight. They believed this rotation model and constant change of supervisor increased the risk that complaints against probation officers or instances of misconduct were not adequately addressed (Casey, 2023), contributing to a decline in public legitimacy.

Sir Michael Barber, author of *The Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales*, commented that the percentage of people who “*thought the police did a good or excellent job*” has fallen steadily in recent years (Barber, 2022, p.2). Policing in England and Wales operates on the principle of policing by consent, and declining public confidence threatens the legitimacy and effectiveness that this model relies upon. Barber (2022) argues that the widely recognised **local policing model**, defined by the deployment of visible and responsive officers, is a **strategically important mechanism to strengthen public confidence** in policing. While the benefits of integrating academic skills into operational practice should not be underestimated, the public perception that officers spend less time ‘on the streets’ to complete their academic studies is likely to be viewed unfavourably by many. The consistent decline of low confidence levels could, in effect, entirely undermine the model of local policing.

3. Findings

This explanatory study has identified key policy initiatives, reform, institutional and educational shifts that have shaped the professional development of police officers. These reforms and the predisposition toward formal academic education have incentivised police-academic partnerships, which have undoubtedly impacted the trajectory of police professionalisation. In the wake of the CoP professionalisation reform, forces are managing an inexperienced workforce in both length of service and experience. A large portion of the workforce recruited under the PEQF model consists of students entering directly from education, as lateral entrants from other professions would generally face a pay reduction. Home Office figures from 2017 to 2019 revealed a 131% increase in police officers under 26

years of age (Williams and Sondhi, 2022). This is comparable to the data collected as part of the *Review of Police Leadership and Training report* of 2010, which concluded that most entrants were aged 22 to 30, with only 1% of student officers aged 18 to 21 (Home Office, 2010).

In recent years, as recruitment accelerated under the Police Uplift Programme (College of Policing, 2021), the number and proportion of officers with fewer than five years of service increased. As of March 2024, **53,108 officers – equivalent to 35% of the total police workforce in England and Wales – had fewer than five years of service** (Home Office, 2025). History demonstrates a pattern of police training that has prioritised short recruitment periods to maximise the volume of resources for a minimum budget. A model that focuses on the maximum number of recruits at entry-level wage devalues the importance of trade craft, learnt through years of service to create an experienced workforce. Sadly, the recruitment target has historically been more incentivised than the retention of experience.

Home Office figures for the 2024-2025 financial year reported that the number of police officers resigning represented the **second-highest level of attrition since comparable records commenced in the year ending March 2003** (Home Office, 2025). Although this pattern may be partially explained by recent workforce expansion, which has increased opportunities for turnover, voluntary resignations were disproportionately concentrated among early-career officers. Notably, 72% of officers who resigned had fewer than five years' service (Home Office, 2025). While establishing a causal relationship between the age of probationer officers and the length of service lay beyond the scope of this study, further examination of this relationship is necessary to inform evidence-based policy interventions aimed at improving officer retention.

The PEQF era marked the beginning of closer collaboration between the police and HEIs. However, the cultural change between academia and policing has not been cohesive, and the implementation of the PEQF has, to date, fallen short of achieving its original objectives. Williams et al (2019) forecasted that the PEQF was at risk of not meeting its fullest potential in developing recruits when continually faced with hierarchical organisational constraints of *"what counts as knowledge in the police culture itself"* (see also Martin 2024). Despite efforts to transform policing into a highly educated profession, early indicators suggested that forces lack the organisational culture and infrastructure to support the CoP professionalisation agenda (Ramshaw & Soppitt, 2018). Reflective practice and evidence-based research should be fully integrated into everyday policing practice (Williams et al, 2019); however, some sectors of policing continue to resist academic influence, arguing that practical experience and operational knowledge are more relevant than university credentials.

While it is broadly recognised that higher education brings value to policing (Martin, 2024), there remains a limited understanding and application of the knowledge contribution generated by officers undertaking degree studies (Williams et al., 2019). More research is needed to establish whether a degree-educated police force has any impact on the capability, quality or professionalisation of police officers. Brown (2018) argues that there is no correlation between higher educational attainment and improved policing outcomes. Despite the academisation of police education, police performance metrics and indicators of public confidence have remained largely static (Brown, 2018).

4. Concluding Comments

As is often discussed between police practitioners, there is little 'new' in policing. Strategies are often reframed under a different political or social construct. A high-performance public

service model based on autonomy and trust requires the government to relinquish some control of local services (Loveday, 2006b). Since the 1990s, the Home Office has played an increasingly prominent role in shaping police education policy, and the transparency of the relationship between government and professional bodies is a key determinant of public confidence (Home Office, 2010).

We have not attained the professionalisation higher education model envisaged by Neyroud in 2010, or as defined in the 2016 professionalisation reform (Home Office, 2010; National Police Chiefs' Council, 2016). The CoP has not succeeded in establishing a nationally standardised curriculum. Consequently, systematic oversight and quality assurance of the PEQF are constrained by the absence of national curricular consistency. Beyond the core topics aligned with nationally prescribed learning outcomes, there is limited continuity in curriculum delivery, and the balance between operational and academic content varies between police forces. This lack of standardisation has significant implications for workforce development, restricts staff interchangeability, and contributes to variability in professional competence across policing in England and Wales.

The absence of a standardised higher education system in policing raises important questions regarding the underlying causes: why have the intended outcomes failed to materialise, and which organisational, institutional, or societal factors have contributed to the divergence from the original vision? Gaps remain in this area of research, and addressing these questions is essential to understand the barriers to effective reform, enabling future strategies to professionalise policing and enhance public trust.

The interface between academic frameworks and policing practice remains **complex**, with cultural and epistemological differences posing significant challenges. Conventional pedagogical approaches often fail to align with the experiential and operational demands of police training, where forces prioritise practical skills and applied operational knowledge over theoretical understanding. Nevertheless, it is essential to **strike a balance** between these domains, ensuring that police personnel are equipped not only with hands-on operational competence but also with the critical thinking, analytical skills, and theoretical grounding that academic training can provide. Achieving this integration requires careful curriculum design, adaptive teaching methods, and ongoing dialogue between academic institutions and policing bodies.

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