


Reforestation and Indigenousizing knowledge

Reflorestando e Indigenalizando o conhecimento

Reforestación e indígenaización del conocimiento

Interview: Eliane Boroponepa Monzilar

Interviewer: Dra. Andréia Rosalina Silva¹
University of São Paulo

	<p>PhD in Anthropology, University of Brasília (UnB), Basic Education teacher. Originating from the Umutina Indigenous land - Mato Grosso. Professional Master's in Sustainability with Traditional Peoples and Territories (Mespt) from UnB, Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from the State University of Mato Grosso (UNEMAT) and specialization in Indigenous School Education. "At the University, I am not only Eliane. I represent a people, and that is a great responsibility, not only for being Indigenous, but for being a woman!"</p> <p>E-mail: monzilar.eliane@unemat.br; Lattes: http://lattes.cnpq.br/7225836802873247; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7432-7511.</p>
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Abstract: Eliane Boroponepa Monzilar, is the first indigenous woman with a PhD in Anthropology from UnB. In the academic environment, Eliane realized the possibility of intensifying her activism in defense of her people and the representation of her place of speech. In her thesis, the indigenous woman brought together her experiences, from the schooling process to her career as a teacher and academic presented the challenges and advances of indigenous education in maintaining the Umutina culture. "The work also brings the knowledge and memories of elders and leaders, but mainly of indigenous teachers, who today have become protagonists of this entire process of revitalization and appreciation of our culture". Eliane is a teacher at a school in her community and, in July 2019, she became a doctor at UnB. Throughout her career, she knows the importance of education based on the knowledge of traditional peoples as an instrument to strengthen their culture, which was weakened after the first contacts with non-indigenous people in the 20th century.

Keywords: Indigenous Education; Intercultural Education; Umutina people; Traditional Peoples; Public Policies.

¹Postdoctorate. IPUSP, São Paulo, SP, Brazil. E-mail: andreiarosalina12@gmail.com; Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1164513999097820>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1708-8961>.

Resumo: Eliane Boroponepa Monzilar, é primeira mulher indígena doutora em Antropologia pela UnB. No ambiente acadêmico, Eliane percebeu a possibilidade de intensificar a militância em defesa de seu povo e a representatividade de seu lugar de fala. Em sua tese, a indígena agregou suas experiências, desde o processo de escolarização até a trajetória como professora e acadêmica, e apresentou os desafios e avanços da educação indígena na manutenção da cultura Umutina. “O trabalho também traz os saberes e memórias dos anciãos e lideranças, mas principalmente dos indígenas professores, que hoje se tornaram protagonistas de todo esse processo de revitalização e valorização de nossa cultura”. Eliane é professora em uma escola de sua comunidade e, em julho de 2019, tornou-se doutora pela UnB. Por sua trajetória, sabe da importância da educação pautada nos saberes dos povos tradicionais como instrumento para fortalecer sua cultura, fragilizada após os primeiros contatos com não indígenas, no século XX. (UnBNotícias, Serena Veloso, 30/07/2019)

Palavras-chave: Educação Indígena; Educação Intercultural; Povo Umutina; Povos Tradicionais; Políticas Públicas.

Resumen: Eliane Boroponepa Monzilar, es la primera mujer indígena doctorada en Antropología por la UnB. En el ámbito académico, Eliane vio la posibilidad de intensificar su activismo en defensa de su pueblo y la representación de su lugar de palabra. En su tesis, la mujer indígena reunió sus experiencias, desde el proceso de escolarización hasta su carrera como docente y académica, y presentó los desafíos y avances de la educación indígena en el mantenimiento de la cultura Umutina. “La obra trae también los conocimientos y memorias de mayores y líderes, pero principalmente de maestros indígenas, quienes hoy se han convertido en protagonistas de todo este proceso de revitalización y valorización de nuestra cultura”. Eliane es docente en una escuela de su comunidad y, en julio de 2019, se convirtió en médica de la UnB. A través de su trayectoria conoce la importancia de la educación basada en los conocimientos de los pueblos tradicionales como instrumento para fortalecer su cultura, la cual se vio debilitada tras los primeros contactos con pueblos no indígenas en el siglo XX.

Palabras clave: Educación Indígena; Educación Intercultural; Pueblo umutina; Pueblos Tradicionales; Políticas Públicas.

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Interview

1. Tell us a little about your personal and professional journey, and your political participation within the indigenous social movement in relation to Indigenous School Education issues.

Eliane Umutina: So, I live in the Umutina territory, and currently, I am living in the Boropo Village. I belong to the Balatiponé-Umutina people. I am also a teacher. I was a teacher at the Jula Pará Indigenous State School, which is within the Umutina Village. There are 15 villages within the indigenous territory in my territory. Today, I am a teacher seconded from the State Secretariat to the State University of Mato Grosso. I

have always lived in the village, but my schooling and subsequently university education were all in public schools in the city. I never studied in an indigenous school. I completed my elementary and high school education in public school. I am from the last class of 1997, when it was the professionalizing high school. I completed teacher training. And then I spent a long time without accessing, without studying, without having access to university. And in 2001, a higher education course was offered, which was the indigenous third-level education for indigenous peoples. This was a demand from the Indigenous Movement, a struggle of the leaders and the movement here in the State of Mato Grosso. And then my access to university was in 2001, together with an innovative and pioneering project at the municipal and state level, and even nationally and internationally, which was the Indigenous Higher Education project. Two hundred Indigenous teachers were selected, including 180 teachers from the state of Mato Grosso, among other regions of the national territory. So, this was the first class. I graduated in the area of Social Sciences, because the project covered training in three areas – Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Sciences of... well, Languages, Art, and Literature. So, I graduated in 2006, completing my studies in Social Sciences as part of this Indigenous teacher training program, which was a demand from the Indigenous Movement so that Indigenous people could have higher education and be able to return as teachers to their respective units.

And then, subsequently, I did a Professional Master's in Sustainable Development at the University of Brasília. It was also a very rich experience because I was one of the first to complete the master's degree from the Balatiponé-Umutina People. I started the Master's in 2012-2013, in one of the first experiences of academic master's degrees for Indigenous people and specialists in Indigenous affairs. And I was part of this group as well. And then I finished my master's degree and addressed in my research the Indigenous territory, the experiences, sustainability, working on this issue of sustainability within the territory. So, that was my research. And then later came the doctorate in 2015, which I entered. I did both the master's and the doctorate at the University of Brasília - UnB. And in my doctorate as well, I was one of the first people. I did it in Anthropology. I was one of the first to enter through Affirmative Action. Foi a primeira vez que o Departamento de Antropologia abriu esse processo. E eu também fui uma das primeiras a acessar o doutorado pelas Ações Afirmativas, que foi um período riquíssimo. It was the first time the Anthropology Department had opened this process. And I was also one of the first to access the doctoral program through Affirmative Action, which was a very

rich period. In my master's program, my advisor was Professor Mônica Nogueira, and in my doctoral program, it was Professor Antonádia Borges.

Regarding my participation within the scope of the Indigenous Social Movement in relation to issues of Indigenous School Education, I have always been someone who, since my training in undergraduate studies as an Indigenous teacher, began to work in my community, both with women's organizations at the local, state, and even national levels. I participated in, and was part of, a state organization, the Taknã Organization, in the organization of women, of Indigenous tutors, and in the movement in general, participating in meetings and events that debate the issue of Education, especially the issue of Indigenous School Education. So I have always been in this movement.

2. Do you believe there have been changes in the treatment directed towards Indigenous School Education? Could you point out what its milestones would be?

Eliane Umutina: Well, yes, with a lot of struggles. Over time, arising from the struggles of the Indigenous Movement, the leaders, the people who are for the Indigenous cause, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The elders. It has been a struggle that has achieved a very significant advance in legislation, especially with the 1988 Constitution. Afterwards, other laws came that greatly contributed to strengthening the movement and giving it visibility. So, we have had a great advance, yes, but I see that we have much more to fight for and advance in the matter of Education, given that it is a right that is in the legislation. And for us to consolidate this right in its entirety, we need to fight. We need to have this dialogue and mobilization, this articulation with the governments so that they can put into practice and in its entirety, what is stated in the laws. So, I see that there has been progress over the years, but it needs to advance more and more.

3. How do you analyze the way non-Indigenous schools approach Indigenous themes? And what would need to be revised or changed?

Eliane Umutina: Compared to 10 or 20 years ago, the context today is completely different. Today, we have Law 11.945/2008, legislation that speaks, guides, and proposes work on this issue of themes, so that Indigenous issues are respected. I see that over the decades, there has been increasing progress, because until then, Indigenous issues were not discussed in the classroom, and today they are. Today, the context of the discussion is on the agenda in schools, public spaces, and universities. And this has given visibility to this theme. I say this because I had an experience when I was a teacher. I was a manager at a school for 3 years, and we had

a project that was an intercultural exchange. And what is this exchange? It is to bring non-Indigenous people and show them who their “target audience” is. Whether it’s non-Indigenous students, whether from public or private schools, to go to the village and learn about the reality, and do this immersion. And have this knowledge of the culture of Indigenous peoples. So, from the moment this law comes into effect, it allows this public not only to be learning, going in situ to learn about the reality of Indigenous peoples, but also to be having this discussion within the school space, both on the Indigenous issue and also the quilombola issue. So I see that there has been more progress in these discussions.

4. Regarding the training of indigenous teachers, what challenges are presented? Do you see any progress?

Eliane Umutina: It’s the same today. I come from a specific and differentiated training, because I have always worked in Basic Education, and today, I am currently a professor and co-advisor of an Intercultural Degree program in teacher training. I see that one of the biggest challenges is how to approach this in other spaces, because no matter how much discussion you have, how much you promote and debate, and get people to interact with another culture through dialogue, discussion, and field visits to these peoples, there is still resistance that society has towards these segments, towards indigenous peoples. I see that this is a challenge. We could say that it is an “ash” of the Eurocentric way of thinking. So I see that this is a great challenge. And in the current context, especially in this globalization where power and this issue of individualism is very, very much growing. And also, I see that this is also one of the challenges, which I, as a teacher, feel, whether in the training of indigenous teachers or non-indigenous teachers. I’ve had the experience, so this is a great challenge.

5. Do you perceive any progress on this?

Eliane Umutina: Generally speaking, equally, as an example in my space, which is a university space where 20 years ago this was impossible. So, my presence, not only in the university but also the presence of women and men from Indigenous and Quilombola communities, has advanced further because we are breaking paradigms by being in certain spaces that were impossible to imagine 20 years ago. But not today. Today we are in these spaces dialoguing, conversing, even though we seek this dialogue to be peaceful. But we know that it isn’t always. We have diversity, and this dialogue can be symmetrical and even more asymmetrical. So, I understand that there has been great progress, but it is still not enough. I see that these are

works we are fostering. It is a plant that is flowering little by little, very slowly. So, this progress is clear, but it needs to advance much more.

6. In your opinion, are the resources/funding for Indigenous School Education sufficient for the development of didactic material, pedagogical resources, and school infrastructure?

Eliane Umutina: This is also another major challenge. We need investment, especially in the matter of didactic materials and infrastructure. Similarly, I am having this experience of going to several Indigenous communities, and I had the opportunity to get to know some Quilombola communities here in my region. And you still see that fragility, those gaps, that precariousness in the structure. The issue of logistics, of transportation. And in some communities, even the issue of teacher training itself. The issue of material is something we have been discussing a lot with the state government, for policies that promote and strengthen these professions. So, I see that there is still a very large gap in relation to training and structures, especially for communities that are further from the capital. And especially in those places where the journey has to be by boat, this precariousness still exists. In these communities that are very far away and difficult to access.

7. In your opinion, what is the importance of Ethno-educational Territories as instruments of indigenous management?

Eliane Umutina: And even today we were discussing this, because, well, it's a policy and if this policy were really promoted and resumed, we would have a policy that would benefit the educational processes of the people. I see it as a very good policy for indigenous peoples because it encompasses things in a general way, not just within the boundaries of one territory. But rather in an integration, absorbing the plurality of the surrounding territories. It is very broad. So, I see the importance of it being a public policy so that it can improve the quality of education. I see this as very positive, this resumption that the MEC [Ministry of Education], that the Education team, and the State have been doing in these dialogues. And in a general way, that this is being resumed. Just today a teacher was discussing this issue of ethno-educational territories because it is a policy that is at the national level. And that this would really strengthen and help in the discussions. But I do see it as something very positive.

8. Considering your experience as an educator, what recommendations and/or suggestions could be listed for practicing intercultural education in Brazil today?

Eliane Umutina: Thus, I believe that one of the recommendations... I think that for both parties, regarding the Indigenous Movement, self-organization, and articulation with the peoples, we have been doing this by engaging in dialogue with government officials at the municipal, state, and federal levels. And that they can truly create public policies that address the issue of specificity so that intercultural education can be well executed and practiced effectively. I believe it's this construction of public policies. The issue of valorization. And this at the national level. And regarding the universities, it's about strengthening them, bringing this access to the original peoples, the Quilombola communities. Access to Higher Education. It's not just about access, the entrance; there's the permanence of these individuals within the university space. Because we have to consider permanence in all aspects. The social, cultural, logistical, and financial aspects. Therefore, it's about seeking policies that guarantee this permanence, addressing all these issues. Building together, because only in this way will it be shown that it's not just scientific knowledge, that there are new ways of doing and constructing new knowledge.

9. Are the experiences you have had as a teacher in the community and at the university very different?

Elaine Umutina: I speak from the perspective of facing many complex challenges, because in my community we have internal policies that we know and follow. We have an organization and engage with external institutions, governments, and NGO, but the university is a different context altogether. I believe it presents a more complex panorama, and a more fraught political landscape. However, by accessing and being present at the university, we break the paradigm of this absolute Eurocentric science by bringing in the Indigenous perspective. *Bringing in...reforesting and indigenizing thought*, so to speak. Therefore, from the moment and through the experiences I have had as a professor and coordinator of a public institution, I have been breaking the paradigms that suggest an Indigenous person is not capable of demonstrating their potential. Of demonstrating not only their potential, but of showing that this knowledge is also a science. And this science needs to be discussed, strengthened, and, above all, respected. So, my experience has provided these advancements,

as well as resistance and challenges. But being in this place is also a way to make the university consider other forms of policies that address the demands of Indigenous peoples.

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