

The case for getting qualified

– an interview with Patricia Cassares

‘Movers and Shakers’ is a series of interviews with the public service interpreting profession’s leading lights.

In November 2017, Patricia Cassares became the recipient of the ‘NRPSI Award for excellence in the Diploma in Police Interpreting (DPI)’. Presented at the Chartered Institute of Linguists and Institute of Linguists Educational Trust Awards, the NRPSI Award recognises the achievement of the DPI student graduating with the highest exam score. Here Patricia talks about her route into the public service interpreting profession in the UK having started out studying at law school in Brazil, why she chose to study for the DPI and what being a Registered Interpreter means to her.

Q. How long have you been working as an interpreter?

I started working as an interpreter here in the UK as soon as I had the results of my DPI exam, which I passed in February 2017. That said, almost every private sector job I’ve ever held, which includes working as a corporate lawyer for multinational companies and in other positions in the aircraft maintenance and pharma industries, has required me to use my language skills. All of these roles demanded that I perform both as an interpreter and a translator.



Q. What was your route into the profession?

My route into the profession was far from straightforward. I graduated with a law qualification, which qualified me to work as a solicitor, and also with an interpreting and translation qualification in Brazil in 1992. At the time, I chose to follow a career in law. I then went on to pass the Brazilian Bar Association

exam and to qualify as a barrister. Eventually, however, I drifted away from this career path. I met and married my English husband and moved with him to the UK in 2005. At this point, I wasn’t sure which profession to pursue, particularly as the qualifications I had gained in Brazil weren’t recognised in this country. This led me to study for an MA in Applied Linguistics here and to work for the same

[continued on next page](#)



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like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle falling into place because it combined my love of language and linguistic skills with my deep knowledge of a legal system. I enrolled for the course and the rest, as they say, is history.

Q. Where does your fascination with the legal system come from?

To be honest, I wasn't ever really sure that I wanted to pursue a legal career as such. I was very young when I made the decision to go to law school in Brazil. Through my studies, it became evident to me that I didn't want to work as a solicitor or barrister for the rest of my life. That isn't to say that I didn't find the law fascinating. To the contrary, it gave me an understanding not only of the legal system but of society, culture, politics and language as well. It showed me how the law permeates, binds and establishes the workings of a society.

Q. Can you give us any examples of the differences between Brazil's and the UK's legal systems?

The legal systems in Brazil and the UK are completely different. To begin with, the former is Roman/

Germanic in origin while the latter has Anglo-Saxon roots. I could write an entire dissertation about the differences and still only scratch the surface. Their definitions of fairness and justice are different, as are the sources of their laws. How they interpret their laws also differs.

Q. Why did you decide to study for the DPI?

I decided to study for the DPI because I wanted to start a career as a public service interpreter in the UK and thought that one of the best ways to do this would be to obtain a recognised professional qualification. I wasn't interested in going back to university to do another course in interpreting. Undertaking a professional qualification like the DPI seemed the quickest, most effective and direct route into the profession. The idea of working with the police and courts was very attractive to me because of my academic background and my personal interests, but I didn't want to be restricted to working in the legal sector alone. The fact that the DPI qualifies you to work with other public services as well was therefore part of its appeal for me.

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Q. How do you think you have benefited from studying for a professional interpreting qualification?

Studying for a professional interpreting qualification was very humbling in a way. Despite already having some experience of working as an interpreter, I found there was so much to learn about interpreting in a public service setting. I discovered a lot about how the UK's public services work. As a result, I would now feel far more confident and happier about undertaking an interpreting assignment for any one of them. Having studied for the DPI, I know I have the specialist skills, required level of accuracy and specific sector knowledge required to work as a public service interpreter.

Q. What does it mean to you to be a registered professional?

First and foremost, I think that being registered gives me professional credibility. It makes it clear to people that I'm qualified to do my job and committed to best practice. It means that clients can hire me safe in the knowledge that I can perform to a high standard. Also, because my name appears on the online register, I am contacted about work assignments that I would not otherwise get to

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