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Gramsci, Embryonic Organic Intellectuals, and Scottish Teacher Learning Representatives: Alternatives to Neoliberal Approaches to Professional Development in the K-12 Sector

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Abstract

In Scotland, we are witnessing a major initiative in the field of professional development for teachers led by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) that is having a positive impact on teachers, the education system and children they serve, whilst at the same time challenging the neo-liberal approach to education. The initiative is union learning representatives (ULRs) and this article will show how teacher LRs in Scotland are having a significant impact on their colleagues and the professional development agenda within the Scottish education system. This article will be a case study analysing the activities and initiatives of the EIS LRs analysed through the lens of Stevenson's (2008) theoretical model based on the writings of Gramsci (1971) that establishes ULRs as potential 'organic intellectuals' capable of challenging the hegemonic orthodoxy of current education policy.

Introduction

In the United Kingdom, particularly in Scotland, there is evidence that an initiative introduced by the Labour government offers an opportunity to challenge the logic of neo-liberalism in public education with major benefits for the Scottish education system and the children it serves by ensuring the continuing professional development (CPD) that teachers participate in benefits them on a professional and personal level and impacts on their classroom practice for the benefit first and foremost for their pupils. In so doing it challenges neo-liberal priorities in schooling, in particular the prioritising of the development of human capital above all other educational objectives.

The initiative is that of union learning representatives (ULRs), who came into being in the United Kingdom (UK) in the late 1990s (whose creation and development have been well documented elsewhere, notably by Clough (2010) and Moore and Ross (2010)) and received statutory recognition and rights through the *Employment Act 2002* (Parliament, 2002). It is arguable whether at the time the New Labour administration that was

espousing *Education, Education, Education* and the *Learning Society* (Blair, 1996; Department for Education and Employment, 1998) expected the ULRs to develop in the way they have with the impact they have had on both the public and private sectors. However, the emergence of ULRs represents a significant step forward for the union movement at a time when many conditions for union organisation are unfavourable, as noted by Rees (2007: 238). There are now 23,000 trained and accredited ULRs (Unionlearn, 2009). ULRs are unpaid volunteer lay representatives who give advice and guidance to colleagues on all aspects of their lifelong learning, training and professional development needs and a small number of them are having a significant impact within the Scottish K-12 sector.

The ULRs in question are the learning representatives (LRs) of Scotland's largest teaching union, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS). The EIS established its cadre of teacher LRs in 2001 (Alexandrou, 2007) and since then it has grown from strength to strength (Alexandrou, 2009). The LRs provide advice and guidance to their colleagues in relation to professional development needs and there is now evidence that they have been accepted as a key stakeholder in the education system by strategic and operational stakeholders such as the Scottish Government (formerly known as the Scottish Executive), General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCs), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), local authorities and principals.

The significant aspect of this acceptance has been the stakeholders seeking the views and drawing on the experiences of these LRs to determine policy; develop meaningful professional development opportunities for teachers and deliver joint professional development events (Alexandrou, 2009).

This article will analyse the impact of the EIS LRs, their growing influence on teacher professional development within the Scottish education system and how they are beginning to develop an alternative approach the neo-liberal agenda in this area. This will be done by examining the longitudinal research of Alexandrou (2007, 2009) that has tracked the development and activities of the EIS teacher LRs since 2004 and through Stevenson's (2008) theoretical model based on the writings of Gramsci (1971) that establishes ULRs as potential 'organic intellectuals' capable of challenging the hegemonic orthodoxy of current education policy.

Particularly, as Stevenson (2008) has begun to problematise and theorise about the role of ULRs during this neo-liberal period of governance that is impacting on education systems and teachers throughout the world and as he pertinently points out:

[the] role of organic intellectual outlined by Gramsci points to the possibility of how the role of union learning representative might be conceived. This is not to argue that union learning representatives should be spear-heading the ideological war against neo-liberalism. This is neither realistic nor practical. However, it is to argue that union learning representatives have a vital role to play in creating a space in which the dominant, all-pervading discourses of

current education policy might be critiqued and challenged (Stevenson, 2008: 463).

Research Approach

The research undertaken by Alexandrou (2007, 2009) is underpinned by the Democratic Evaluation approach to educational research, where the voice of the participant is primary (House, 1993; Kushner and Norris, 2007 and Stake, 2005). To ensure greater validity a mixed methods approach was adopted as Ivankova et al. (2008:3) state:

It requires understanding of multiple contexts, establishing a trustworthy relationship between researcher and participants, and addressing concerns of diverse participant groups.

In all cases and in keeping with the British Educational Research Association's revised ethical guidelines (BERA, 2004) informed consent was sought and gained with all the participants and where requested by certain respondents (and promised by the researcher), identities have been concealed to ensure anonymity.

The data for the research were collected using a number of approaches. Firstly, background information was examined in the form of published policy documents and academic literature. Secondly, EIS national officials and other Scottish education stakeholders were interviewed personally or wrote a personal record. This was in order to ensure greater context, practice-based views and observations and their relationship with the EIS LRs. Thirdly, teachers and head teachers were either interviewed personally or answered a short questionnaire survey. Fourthly, the first and second cohorts of Multi-Establishment (ME) (local authority based) LRs (43 in total) and first main cohort of School-Based LRs (23 in total) that had been trained, accredited and were operational were asked to participate in the ongoing research by completing questionnaires; writing a personal record of their experiences to date and participating in consultation forums and question and answer sessions at their regular LR meetings. Fifthly, I attended and observed a number of CPD events organised by LRs and their Local Authority CPD Quality Improvement Officer (LA CPD QIO) counterparts.

The aim of this approach is not only to ensure the validity of the research process but also to triangulate the data. As Creamer (2008: 3) points out:

Triangulation is associated with using multiple sources of data to confirm findings', thus ensuring the findings, concluding thoughts and observations stand up to scrutiny.

Kushner (2000) describes this approach as interrogating the data with data. As Alexandrou (2007, 2009) highlights there was a significant response to both studies from the LRs and a variety of stakeholders. This indicates the LRs and the other participants are committed to the concepts of LRs and teacher CPD and had faith in the research process, which in turn helped to validate the data and findings.

Teacher LRs as Organic Intellectuals

Antonio Gramsci developed the concept of organic intellectuals during his period of incarceration by Mussolini's regime in his seminal *Prison Notebooks* (1971). He stated that it:

can be observed that the "organic" intellectuals which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part "specialisations" of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence (Gramsci, 1971: 6).

He went on to state that it;

should be possible both to measure the "organic quality" of the various intellectual strata and their degree of connection with a fundamental social group, and to establish a gradation of their functions and of the superstructures from the bottom to the top (from the structural base upwards (Gramsci, 1971: 12).

Tickle (2001) developed some of these ideas in relation to the teaching profession having been influenced by Becker's (1996) work on the role of what she termed *public intellectual*. This was based on Gramsci's premise that all in society can be regarded as intellectuals but Tickle distinguished between professional and organic intellectuals. Tickle (2001: 161) argues:

Professional intellectuals, such as teachers and priests, are seen as those handling stable, transmissible and 'at times even stagnant' knowledge. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, are seen as constantly interacting with society, struggling to change minds, engaged in evolution of knowledge, raising issues in the public domain and defending decent standards of social well-being, freedoms and justice. This is a distinction between 'those who simply represent the information that they were trained to pass along and those who are innovative, daring and public in their re-presentation of their own personal interaction with the world'...

the questions seem simple. What kind of minds should be cultivated and what kind of teachers should we have in order to ensure thoughtful, democratically active, creative professionals who have the will and capability to be innovative and daring in pursuit of their own as well as their pupils' optimal educational experiences? And what kind of teacher education should be provided to that end? As a committed professional educator I find Gramsci's categorisation of teachers as professional rather than organic intellectuals distasteful, as well as somewhat problematical...Certainly, some of us may be working subserviently within the institutions of schooling and teacher education systems, handling second-hand knowledge constructs, unthinking beyond the bounds of prescribed curricula, or we may be doing that some of the time. But the other side of that distinction represented by Huberman's committed types can be found in other categories of

teachers which suggest that our numbers also include people who are thoughtful and proactive in their work and their own development.

In part, this article will seek to discuss how far the EIS LRs have travelled along the continuum of intellectualism as highlighted above. It will examine how this group of LRs are showing signs of moving beyond being regarded as professional intellectuals to being what can be termed as embryonic organic intellectuals, based on creating the spaces to critique and challenge the current neo-liberal dominated discourses on education and CPD policies as highlighted (above) by Stevenson (2008: 463).

This will depend partly on how far the EIS LRs have moved from being compliant teachers and representatives to taking on a political role that challenges the orthodoxy. Two key questions to be addressed are firstly, what type of organic intellectual activity are the LRs engaged in with regard to professional development of their colleagues? Secondly, are the actions and activities of the LRs challenging and changing the teacher CPD policy trajectory?

Starting with the approach advanced by Stevenson (2008) I would want to argue that the EIS LRs role has to evolve in three stages as follows:

1. Develop a significant policy role once trained, accredited and appointed in terms of offering effective, directed and focussed professional development guidance to colleagues based on conventional, traditional and officially created, approved and accredited CPD activities. At this stage the EIS LRs can be considered as compliant professional intellectuals;
2. Develop a significant representative role that sees the LRs embedded within local and national union structures and CPD related working groups and committees in local and national government structures that allows them to develop from both a representative and political perspective. They become less of a compliant intellectual and more of a continually evolving political activist that begins to take on some form of collective negotiating role in terms of CPD. At this stage the EIS LRs can be regarded as active professional intellectuals that are seeking to evolve organically.
3. Develop a fully-fledged organic role that sees the LRs constructively challenge the official orthodox views, policies and strategies relating to teacher CPD through the organisation of activities and ideas using both traditional and innovative methods of engagement with traditional stakeholders and teacher colleagues. At this stage they might be considered as developed organic intellectuals.

In turn, this should allow them to challenge the current neo-liberal education and professional development agenda. However, cognizance must be taken of Stevenson's (2008: 456) following question:

as union learning representatives, to what extent is it possible for teachers in these roles to work against the grain of current policy, and to open up spaces where the common sense of current policy discourses is challenged?

Particularly as the next section highlights, the neo-liberal agenda is proving to be detrimental to the teaching profession and teacher unions.

Neo-Liberal Education Policy and Teacher CPD

Compton and Weiner (2008: 3-6) are emphatic that in terms of the neo-liberal education agenda:

Teachers in every part of the world are in the forefront of the struggle to ensure that children receive an education...[and]...Teachers are in a war being fought over the future of education.

In terms of neo-liberalism and its impact on education, Robertson (2008: 11-12) argues that the shift to a neo-liberalist approach to education can be summarised as follows;

This tectonic shift, like continental drift...has transformed how we talk about education, teachers and learners, unions, parents' associations, and professional associations. In short, it has altered the conditions for knowledge production and the circumstances under which we might demand a socially just education system, along with the spaces and sites for claims making around education.

Significantly, from a teacher professional development and teacher LR perspective, she goes on to argue:

that neo-liberalism has transformed, albeit in both predictable and unpredictable ways, how we think and what we do as teachers and learners, and is therefore important we make these things evident to ourselves (Robertson, 2008: 12).

Tickle (2001: 162) takes this further by suggesting:

*it is necessary to reappraise the values and practices underlying teacher education programmes and teachers' work in their detail in order to transform the experiences of teachers. For we should not presume that teachers come 'ready made', stable, unchangeable, as one type or the other...[and]...
...When we get to the heart of the educational enterprise it is indeed (or at least it can/should be) the work of the organic intellectual [in this case the EIS LRs], interacting with society, struggling to change one's mind as well as others', engaged in the pursuit of wisdom, raising issues.*

Stevenson (2008: 456) points out that in this era of neo-liberalist educational policies:

Union learning representatives have developed at a time when issues of teacher education and professional development have emerged high on the policy

agenda...In such circumstances, union learning representatives may have an important role to play in ensuring their colleagues can access the professional development that is the rhetoric of the new professionalism.

As outlined above, through the studies of Alexandrou (2007, 2009) which chart the development and evolution of the EIS LR initiative this article will seek to identify how the EIS LRs are developing and evolving towards becoming organic intellectuals of the type described by Gramsci (1971), and developed by Tickle (2001) and Stevenson (2008) in relation to teachers.

The article will seek to address the following challenges laid down by Stevenson (2008: 463-465) in relation to the EIS LRs and their activities:

union learning representatives should also be encouraged to promote new forms of professional development – driven by distinctive union values and promoting union objectives...

If unions are to successfully resist the forward march of neo-liberal reform that is restructuring public education, then it is vital that they engage in an ideological battle with dominant discourses...Union learning representatives have the potential to play an important role in the process of ideological renewal and engagement in which dominant ideas are challenged and contested. They are uniquely placed to connect struggles on the ground with wider debates about the future trajectory of policy. Their potential should not be underestimated.

This case study will attempt to show how the EIS LRs are engaging with the ideological battle that Stevenson describes; fulfilling their potential and attempting to influence teacher professional development policy in Scotland.

The EIS LRs Developing as Embryonic Organic Intellectuals

The Theoretical Context

As mentioned above, this article seeks to show that teacher LRs can develop as organic intellectuals in educational and political systems driven by a neo-liberal strategy. On reading Stevenson's (2008) emergent theory of teacher LRs as organic intellectuals that could challenge neo-liberal education policies adversely affecting the teaching profession and in turn their pupils, it became obvious to me that I had been documenting such an evolution in Scotland with the EIS LRs. However, I had not theorised or intellectualised this from an organic intellectual perspective but rather I had been analysing it from a policy making and policy trajectory perspective based on the theories and models of Bowe et al. (1992) and Ball (1993).

Thus this article is my first attempt at theorising the activities of the EIS LRs from this unique perspective and what has struck me as I have revisited the two studies I will base my work on (Alexandrou, 2007; 2009) as well as reporting ongoing developments is that

there has at times been a marked development of the EIS teacher LRs as at least embryonic organic intellectuals.

Becoming a LR Activist

So where does one start to analyse and theorise about the EIS LRs as organic intellectuals? In both studies the LRs were asked why they had chosen to become LRs and it was notable amongst the first cohort of ME LRs and first cohort of School-Based LRs that whilst all of them had in the main been long-standing members of the EIS, a significant number of them had not held any type of union position before. Asked why, after many years of union membership, they had decided to become involved in the EIS by volunteering as a LR, a significant number stated it was for ‘non-political’ reasons such as their own professional and personal development and to improve the professional development of their colleagues. A much smaller number of respondents indicated it was because they wanted to get actively involved in the EIS.

However, once an individual does become involved, the role does take on a political dimension that can challenge the neo-liberal agenda in education, particularly in terms of professional development as the following comments from participants show:

I had always held the view that the courses for teachers should be of a high academic standard and should be applicable to the classroom-teaching situation. As my years in teaching rose the lack of a continuum of learning became apparent and courses became repetitious and I stopped attending. I thought by becoming a Learning Representative I would have an input to in-service courses...and am now convinced that steps should be taken to make it as easy as possible for all teachers to study at postgraduate level.

...To influence the school management views on teachers.

...To consolidate knowledge of the rationale behind CPD and ensure colleagues are achieving entitlement.

Thus the territory of CPD engagement from a political perspective for a number of EIS LRs has been marked out but volunteering and being trained and accredited as a EIS LR is only the beginning of the journey for these individuals. Despite many of them volunteering for ‘non-political’ reasons their role and how they interact with other stakeholders has put them into both a micro and macro political arena. Interestingly, as will be detailed below, it is at the micro and operational level that the EIS LRs have found the struggle to establish and develop themselves to be the most difficult and hazardous.

Acceptance by the Education Stakeholders and the Politics of Scottish Education

In these neo-liberal times it might be expected that the major strategic stakeholders in Scotland, notably the Scottish Government, HMIE, GTCS, LTS, National CPD Advisory Group and Directors of Education at local authority level to be the key adversaries of the EIS LRs, particularly in the light of what can be regarded as their support of policies and strategies that place education at the vanguard of creating a workforce that can help Scotland compete in the global marketplace. Key examples being: *21st Century*

Agreement (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2001) that significantly put emphasis on the CPD of teachers and introduced Chartered Teacher status for experienced teachers to aspire to; *Life Through Learning: Learning Through Life* (Scottish Executive, 2003) and *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2007). As McGregor (2009: 345) states:

Global capitalism has placed education at the forefront of national competitiveness and governments have responded with education policies primarily designed to serve the needs of the market.

However, these strategic stakeholders have proved to be key supporters of the LRs. Some may argue that they are adhering to the old adage of keeping your friends close but your enemies even closer. However, the evidence does not support this as the following selection of comments from representatives of these key stakeholder groups show. Mathew MacIver, who was the Chief Executive of the GTCS when this longitudinal study began stated:

I have always seen the advent of Learning Representatives as an indication by the EIS that it has returned to its educational roots. The EIS has helped to shape educational policy in Scotland since its formation in 1847. Towards the end of the 20th Century it did tend to concentrate all its efforts on pay and conditions of service. Whilst doing that it did drift away from placing itself in the centre of informing educational policy...

It appeared to me that Learning Representatives indicate that the EIS is well aware that a new world of CPD is emerging and that the EIS must be at the centre of it...They [the LRs] will know the needs of classroom teachers better than anyone. It is in that critical area then that Learning Representatives are crucial. They will have credibility in the classroom that others will not.

Bernard McLeary, the Chief Executive of the LTS continues in this positive vein by stating *...We fully support them; we support them in principle and want to offer them practical support to develop their role.* Whilst, Douglas Cairns (HMIE Assistant Chief Inspector) is of the opinion the LRs have the potential to refresh the notion that the EIS is a professional association genuinely interested in the professional development of teachers.

Understandably, there may be scepticism cast at the above comments as the UK has had a neo-liberal approach to governance since the beginning of the attacks on welfarism in the mid-1970s. However, Scotland has a limited form of devolved government and a separate education system. Allied to a strong nationalist element to government due to the Scottish National Party being the ruling party within the Scottish Parliament; a strong commitment to educating the populace which dates back to 1707 (Anderson, 2003: 219) and as McPherson and Raab (1988: 29) highlight, the government of education has been based on partnership.

Additionally, both the EIS and the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) since their inception in 1847 and 1897 respectively have played a major part in putting the education of the populace and the teaching profession at the core of their respective mission and key activities (Belford, 1946, STUC, 2010) from both a partnership perspective and when required as a counter-balance to government actions and policies that run counter to the historical commitment of Scotland to education.

Johnston and Mackenzie (2003: 86-87) show that since devolution, there has been a radical change in the political structures that govern Scottish education that seem to encourage more discourse between stakeholders and more accountability of politicians. It can be argued that this greater openness from the politicians has allowed stakeholders such as the EIS to be bold with such initiatives as its LRs but has to be tempered by the fact that tensions exist within stakeholders who will naturally have their separate agendas.

As Kirk (2000: 16) points out *...education of teachers is an area of public policy that is not short of stakeholders and how ...are the claims of these various stakeholders to be reconciled?* He points out that:

new forms of continuing professional development for teachers are creating opportunities for the intensification of collaborative activities and for the emergence of working that fully justify the term partnership (Kirk, 2000: 34).

This implies there is both a CPD and political role for the EIS LRs to play and their development as organic intellectuals takes on greater meaning, particularly when Humes (2003: 83) argues there is no one single policy community within Scottish education and:

*it might be more meaningful to refer to a number of overlapping policy **communities**, rather than one single coherent entity. Thus it might make sense to speak of a range of policy communities each with a particular focus...There will be points of convergence between these, but for many purposes they will remain separate.*

Thus one can see that there is scope for the EIS LRs to evolve into a policy community of organic intellectuals that strives to maintain Scotland's historic commitment to educating and developing its populace and its teaching profession, through constructive critical engagement with the key strategic and operational stakeholders that will at times critique, oppose and offer alternatives to official CPD policy.

This takes on greater meaning and substance when Paterson (2005: 1) in his discussion on the dilemmas of education and democracy takes the discourse of the politics of Scottish education to a new level by arguing that with the decline of the authority and influence of such social bastions as the church, traditional community organisations and politicians:

it may be that the teacher is now, in many communities, the only person who can carry the weight of ethical and even political leadership.

If this is to become the case, then their professional development is inextricably linked to this proposition and the role of the EIS LRs as evolving organic intellectuals may well play a key role.

Winch (1996: 147) as cited by Tooley (1998) states...*The neo-liberal agenda has to be argued against and replaced with a democratic agenda of accountability.* To a degree the above supportive statements of the strategic stakeholders and the discussion of and placement in the politics of Scottish education point to the EIS LRs as evolving organic intellectuals playing a role in challenging and holding school management accountable for decisions in relation to professional development. As Hill (2001: 135-136) states ...*teachers are not widely perceived to be state functionaries and may for this reason be attributed with extensive critical power,* which I believe and will argue the key stakeholders were alluding to and it is imperative the EIS LRs develop and evolve as organic intellectuals.

However, developing as organic intellectuals is not without its obstacles and in both studies of the EIS LRs, Alexandrou (2007, 2009) found that whilst the EIS LRs in many cases had a positive relationship with their institutions, senior management and colleagues, there were significant underlying problems at the operational level that were contradicting the support given to them by the strategic stakeholders. It was found that head teachers in general did not know what a LR was and if they had heard of them did not understand the role of the LRs. They were unaware of the statutory rights accorded them, particularly in relation to time-off, facilities and funded cover as the following comments from two exasperated LRs succinctly sum up the situation in the early years of the EIS LRs initiative:

Current HT accepts role, but sometimes expects me to over contribute to her role as CPD Coordinator which I am not!

My HT doesn't understand my role and has been physically unable to provide time-off...My HT does however accept that CPD is vital and pushes people towards the institution based LR for training and towards the newly established team within the authority – who are again very nice but don't know what to do with us.

The final comment highlighted a key obstacle to the LRs embedding and developing in their role and thus developing as organic intellectuals. Their relationship with their LA CPD QIO counterparts proved in the beginning to be a major obstacle.

A number of LRs that participated in the first study (Alexandrou, 2007) indicated their relationship with their local authority, and in turn with their LA CPD QIO counterparts, was tenuous. One LR highlighted the view that the officers were fearful of losing their jobs due to the introduction of the LRs. The LR had pointed out to her local authority

counterparts that this was not the case and that they both had distinct roles to play within the teacher CPD arena. It was also noted by another LR that they had no divine right to acceptance by other stakeholders and that the LRs needed to work at gaining acceptance and trust of other stakeholders. This attitude is a good example of a LR thinking and acting as an active professional intellectual that understands they have a distinct place and part to play in teacher CPD, which could lead to evolving as an organic intellectual by developing ideas and activities that not only gain them acceptance but also where necessary challenge the orthodox attitudes and thinking on CPD.

The recurring problem for the first cohort of EIS LRs was trying (and failing in many cases) to build up a relationship or rapport with these LA CPD QIOs as these individuals would also help the EIS LRs make inroads in terms of engaging and connecting with their teacher colleagues as the following comment indicates:

I made contact with the head of the advisory service who organises all In-service training courses and was pleased to find out that she was willing to work with me in supporting teachers reach a full CPD programme. The only problem that I still have is that of being allowed direct access to the school CPD coordinators.

Connecting with the Membership

In both studies the LRs identified a significant cause for concern in terms of connecting and dealing with their colleagues. Overall, they indicated they had a positive and rewarding experiences when dealing with their colleagues. However, this was very much on a limited basis and the following comments are indicative of the early attitude of EIS members to this new type of union representative:

Most experiences have been positive. I have visited schools and spoken to groups of teachers. Any queries I couldn't deal with have been answered in due course. The main problem is the fact that members are not using Learning Representative services. I'm not sure if this is down to a lack of awareness amongst colleagues, or down to the fact that, like any other union service, members don't want to use the union until they feel disadvantaged or threatened.

My experiences with colleagues have been mixed in that some are glad to have someone to talk to who is not part of "management" about what if any CPD will be of value to them, while others are reluctant to accept that they have to make a commitment to their own CPD and expect to be offered the correct training they need by the employer or indeed in a few cases seek to avoid the time and effort CPD requires.

I have given advice and guidance when asked and this has been fruitful but not at all regular.

Occasionally but not always able to help due to management still controlling CPD.

The second study sought to find out why there was an ongoing non-connection with the membership by surveying a number of teachers (30 in total) at a CPD event jointly organised by LRs and their LA CPD QIO counterparts. Just over half the participants admitted they did not know who and what a LR is and unsurprisingly only two had utilised the services of the LRs. These responses indicate that a significant core of EIS members is unaware of the existence of the LRs and what these representatives can do for them.

The LRs went on to point out that when CPD was delivered, the content of CPD courses and the type of professional development teachers should pursue were also key obstacles in terms of engaging with the membership, with the belief that participating in CPD was for many teachers a 'tick-box' exercise to meet contractual criteria. One LR made the point that professional development was becoming the schools' and not the teachers' development as part of the overall process of creating and adhering to school development plans. This point was picked up by another LR who was of the view that too many school managers were not genuinely interested in CPD, or the importance of CPD was not made explicit enough to their teaching staff, thus creating apathy. However, it was up to LRs to get into schools and change this negative culture. This latter point could be construed as a tentative start of LRs beginning to think and act as embryonic organic intellectuals in that they have identified an aspect of managerial control of CPD by not encouraging teachers to actively engage in it. By so doing, they have recognised the need to take action to rectify the situation by identifying a requirement to organise ideas and engage colleagues through direct action and intervention.

However, all is not doom and gloom as the second study produced evidence that teachers that did utilise the LRs did have a positive experience as the following comments indicate:

*Very helpful because I am going through Chartered Teacher.
The Learning Representative is knowledgeable, approachable and professional.
With [the LR] here, you can chew the fat with him about which CPD courses to undertake and his advice and guidance is invaluable because we do not have the same breadth of network of other teachers and schools in relation to dealing with CPD. [The LR] is proactive and acts as a catalyst to promote CPD amongst the staff.*

In this school because we are so small he encourages us to maintain a focus that CPD is about maintaining standards for the whole of Scottish education. He makes us look at the bigger picture in education terms. He actually confronts all of us including senior management to think about CPD and related issues.

The final observation shows that through challenging and engaging colleagues and school management in terms of their orthodox attitudes and approach to CPD, EIS LRs have the potential to progress from being an active professional intellectual to one that is an organic intellectual. As Hill (2007: 215) states:

Teacher education (both initial teacher education and professional development courses) should enable teachers to develop knowledge and skills to critically examine the ideological nature of teaching and the nature of teachers' work. Here, teachers, teacher educators and student teachers should develop an understanding of the potential role of teachers in transforming society. It remains possible for teachers to adopt the functions of intellectuals and resist becoming mere managers of day-to-day activities imposed from beyond the school, and to redefine their role within counter-hegemonic practice.

Thus both studies highlighted a number of issues and obstacles the LRs and the EIS had to deal and negotiate on if this new type of union representative was first to survive, secondly become sustainable and thirdly, not do the bidding of some stakeholders who were showing neo-liberal tendencies.

Moving the EIS LRs Initiative Forward

As I have highlighted elsewhere (Alexandrou, 2009), the first study provoked debate amongst the stakeholders and action by the EIS and this led to a second study of the EIS LRs to examine how far the LRs initiative had progressed; whether any of the issues and obstacles highlighted in the first study had been addressed and dealt with satisfactorily and if the LRs were showing signs of sustainability. Taking this one step further, without knowing it, the second study would begin to highlight how the EIS LRs were showing signs of evolving from active professional intellectuals to embryonic organic intellectuals. The evidence presented below will outline how this is beginning to occur. Following the initial study, the EIS firstly, initiated an internal debate that led to constitutional change at local and national level that has formally incorporated the LRs within its structures (EIS, 2009). Secondly, the union acknowledged there is a need for further development and training for the LRs and is in the process of undertaking a training needs analysis to identify the specific requirements of the LRs. Thirdly, it was actively encouraging its local associations (known in other unions as branches or chapters) to negotiate learning agreements with local authorities that formally recognise the LRs, give them agreed time-off, facilities and funded cover to carry out their duties and a recognition by individual local authorities (of which there are 32 in Scotland) that CPD plays a key role in informing and improving classroom practice. These initiatives show the LRs are becoming embedded within the EIS and this will give them the platform to evolve as organic intellectuals in terms of being able to influence EIS policy on CPD and develop new skills that will allow them to improve as activists for the benefit of the membership as well as themselves.

Hill (2004: 507) argues that the *...capitalist agenda for education has resulted in controlling the curriculum, teachers and education institutions through common mechanisms*. However, the actions of the EIS as outlined above show that a teaching union can baulk the trend and ensure that teachers do not become as Hursh (2004: 611) argues: *...reduced to technicians and supervisors in the education assembly line – 'objects' rather than 'subjects' of history* and that teachers are not *...increasingly managed* during this neo-liberal period as Codd (2005: 194) highlights.

At this juncture, it is opportune to ask if there is emerging evidence that the EIS LRs are evolving as organic intellectuals? Interestingly, they seem to have overcome their problems with their LA CPD QIO counterparts, with the following examples indicative of the shift in attitude and relationships:

Share platforms, planning, joint working, regular meeting...They have been very cooperative. We meet about twice a term...We're invited to events and contribute to CPD Bulletins – and have so far put in 3 articles. We have jointly set up a CT network and are planning a CT “Fair” for prospective CTs and providers.

Why the positive shift in the relationship between the LRs and the officers? Six LA CPD QIOs were interviewed throughout Scotland and they highlighted the changes from the first study. Firstly, it was clear they had a greater understanding of the role of the LRs and that they were not a threat to them. For example, one of them described the role of the LR they liaised with as follows:

The role of the EIS LR is as a point of contact within the authority and with teachers at all levels who will get advice and guidance on the CPD opportunities available to them that will meet their needs.

Secondly, they stated overall their working relationship with the LRs was positive, they welcomed the support of the LRs and they saw scope for the role of the LR to grow. The final observation is significant as this indicates to stakeholders that the LRs can develop as organic intellectuals. The second study provides evidence that this may well be the case in two distinct ways. Firstly, the LRs have begun to embed themselves in the CPD structures of their local authorities. As one of the LA CPD QIOs explained:

They fit in well, there are only three LRs who have spread themselves about. I meet with the LRs once or twice a term to share current practice about what I do and in turn the LRs share their experiences and they highlight issues which they have identified in schools which is extremely useful.

Secondly, a number of the LRs are being co-opted on to CPD related working groups and committees at both local authority and school level and they described the type of groups and committees they sit on as follows:

LA CPD Management Group, Chartered Teachers' Network, Supply Teachers' Steering Group, CPD Coordinators Group, Cluster CPD Group to help organise CPD events, Whole school CPD working group.

From an active professional and embryonic organic intellectual perspective, the embedding of the LRs in the CPD structures, committees and working groups indicates a cadre of individuals who are able to inform operational stakeholders of the wishes of their members, highlight issues and influence CPD policy at local authority and school level that will bring about the organisation and delivery of meaningful CPD. This may well help many teachers avoid experiencing being wounded learners as expounded by

Wojecki (2007) due to inappropriate and badly planned CPD activities that serve the interests of some stakeholders but not teachers and the pupils they teach. For example one of the LA CPD QIOs highlighted the following example:

[The LR] has brought to my attention the issue of well-being and professional development and she has something to offer here that is relevant. [The LR] is a classroom teacher herself and talks to the teachers. She knows the situation and may well be able to convince other teachers to take up CPD if it is linked to their well-being.

The second study presented evidence of honest open engagement and trust in relation to the LRs and this was highlighted by a number of the officers. One stated that the LRs could be honest with her, for example if a CPD initiative was being rolled out the LRs could give her their honest opinion on the initiative in terms of how well it was working or not. When doing this they were not breaking any confidences they had with their members by sharing such observations and highlighting issues that needed to be addressed. Whilst another made one of the most telling statements showing how mature the LRs had become and how they can be regarded as having the capacity to evolve into effective organic intellectuals by stating:

The fact that she is very close to the teachers and if issues arise I feel comfortable in discussing them with [the LR] and she is proactive in sorting out problems before they become too difficult. The fact that the EIS has created LRs is great and they are helping teachers with their CPD and lifelong learning. [The LR] has her ear to the ground and is close to teachers and gets back to me with issues we both can work together to resolve.

You want to provide what is best and most relevant in relation to CPD and you can do it with LRs better than the previous structures and this is hugely important. This is a good argument for keeping and developing them.

This positive relationship has been taken a step further by the LRs and the officers working together to organise and deliver joint CPD events, that were at the time of the second study in part funded by the Scottish Government due to some of the recommendations made in the first study. I attended a number of these and they have been an undoubted success on many fronts as stakeholders have banded together to ensure this. The following observation of one of the events by Lyn McClintock the EIS LRs Administrator gives another example of how the LRs are showing signs of potentially developing as organic intellectuals by influencing the CPD of Scottish teachers in a positive manner:

It was held from 4pm so there was no issue of time off for people to attend – it was open to all teachers, not just EIS MEMBERS. The most interesting thing was that after the event finished there was a line of people waiting to speak to the two speakers and [the LR]. The following day 12 people signed up for CT and [the LR] has had more contact and an invitation to attend a meeting of school

members. From the success of this event it was felt it was feasible to try and roll these out across Scotland.

This is currently the case as in 2009, the EIS was awarded a Scottish Union Learning Fund grant that is to be used to organise and deliver joint CPD events, negotiate and sign learning partnership agreements and buy-out some of the time of two of the LRs so they can assist in the first two aspects of the project. The fact two LRs have been seconded for this project shows there is further evidence that they are developing from active professional intellectuals to embryonic organic intellectuals as two of their number have been identified to help deliver this project and takes on them on to a higher level of activism and involvement in the LR initiative. It gives them a political platform from which to challenge the orthodox ideology of CPD and to organise ideas and activities that may influence the CPD agenda for the benefit of their teacher colleagues. This has been further supplemented by the HMIE (based on some of the recommendations of the second study) inviting views from the LRs during its inspections and other activities related to teacher practice and professional development.

However, the most positive evidence that the EIS LRs are evolving into organic intellectuals comes in the form of their activities within two individual local authority areas. In one area, the LR has been given the opportunity to run sessions on CPD for colleagues engaged in studying for the Chartered Teacher qualification. Whilst in another area, the LRs have organised teacher colleagues into cluster groups and are facilitating collaborative learning groups (Hughes, 2010) based around the subjects of philosophy of enquiry and professional learning communities. These are very much teacher driven with the LRs playing a pivotal role in raising the interest and engagement of colleagues. Both of these examples give the LRs in these local authority areas the ability to organise activities and ideas which may well constructively question official CPD policy and thinking.

Concluding Observations

The EIS LRs cadre is a committed and enthusiastic group of teaching union activists dedicated to the cause of teacher professional development and the LRs have demonstrated they are willing to work hard, be innovative and resourceful when advising, guiding and helping colleagues. They work constructively with both operational and strategic stakeholders and as the evidence above indicates there is genuine respect and trust for the LRs from these stakeholders that is helping to dissolve old enmities and replace them with genuine partnership working for the betterment of the Scottish teaching profession and the pupils it serves. In turn, this is creating a group of activists (that now numbers in excess of 100 with a further 25 being trained and accredited during the 2009-2010 academic year) that are showing positive signs of evolving into organic intellectuals that may well meet Stevenson's (2008) call to challenge the orthodox thinking and approaches to the professional development of teachers.

However, there must be a note of caution, the EIS LRs are still experiencing problems in terms of time-off, facilities and funded cover; a lack of understanding as to who and what they are by school management and continuing problems of engaging with a critical mass

of their own colleagues. Allied to the economic downturn due to the failure of neo-liberal economic policies that is affecting Scotland and has led to a reappraisal of teacher education and professional development at national and local level, these factors have and will test the EIS LR as potential and evolving organic intellectuals.

The true test will be how the EIS and its cadre of LR fare; how the stakeholders engage with them during these difficult times and if and when the partnership approach so apparent within the Scottish model fails due to policy differences. The developing crisis of neo-liberalism provides difficult challenges, but also opportunities, for the EIS and its LR.

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