

## **Regulation, a path to Liberation ?**

In my opinion; professional registration, regulation, accreditation and recognition of (our) Shiatsu (schools, courses, qualifications and practitioners) in the UK can only be a good thing. I'm amazed it's taken so long (maybe around 20 years) for Shiatsu in the UK to get to this. But at long last UK Shiatsu might be moving towards professional national recognition.

The UK has a formal structure for vocational qualifications, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), this system is regulated by the Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA) for the Department of Education and Skills. For a therapy qualification to be listed on the NQF it must first obtain a National Occupational Standard (NOS) approved by Skills For Health.

As far as I can ascertain City & Guilds, ITEC and some other similar health related (or massage) therapy Diplomas have been registered, recognised, accredited and regulated through this system for some time - which means they are also nationally recognised academic qualifications (Diplomas), and for those of us who like to move about the planet, they also have a much greater chance of being recognised overseas as well (even given the differences in international academic education systems). If you check the above out, Level 4 is usually taken as Diploma equivalent.

Shiatsu in the UK, and its qualifications, as it turns out, don't (currently) comply with any of this registration, recognition, accreditation, regulation. Sure we get issued what's called a Diploma, (even if it does strangely say at the bottom of the certificate 'that it remains the property of the school'), but in the outside world (reality) the Shiatsu Diploma's worth little beyond the (UK and maybe EU) Shiatsu bubble. Where the Shiatsu Degree that's now available fits within this, I don't know yet.

Oh for sure, I, probably above all, know academia isn't what Shiatsu is about, but that doesn't mean our studious commitment and development shouldn't still be rewarded with such status.

Believe me when I say there's going to be quite a few surprised people discover that I've written about regulation being a good thing – I've been whole heartedly, in every way; against conformity for most of my life – 'rules is for fools' I think the saying goes. One size does not fit all.

Shiatsu in the UK can seem to actually be very closed, or immature, or insecure – almost afraid of itself and its feelings. I found generally in UK Shiatsu (study) there was very little place (or recognition and development) for ones natural gifts or previous experience – maybe I just went to the wrong school though. I was always amazed how only their known (Shiatsu) language, jargon, structures and personal interpretation were clung to so much, when professing to be 'open' minded or in Hara. Bit of a contradiction perhaps.

Hopefully this 'coming of age' through national professional regulation will allow UK Shiatsu to metaphorically 'step outside its locked room and go play with the other kids' so to speak, get its hands and knees dirty, see how the others sing and dance and continue the recognised development of our art beyond the present strangle hold, to develop Shiatsu's identity and accessibility rather than lose it.

For growth we might look towards the founders and main influencers of the UK Shiatsu Society and Schools to see basically they just want to 'protect their baby' which isn't a bad thing, but their business interests, and what they were (and to some extent still are) saying that Shiatsu can (or can't) be, has gotten in the way now. Time for a new choice in the way we're regulated?

There's people who've not been through the (current or perhaps indeed any) Shiatsu Diploma (or MRSS or T processes) (and who fail to recognise and develop the innate student skills before them)

yet these same people still get to say what procedures others should go through to get MRSS T, the external status they were given by honorary default?

However, MRSS T is something else that's not worth a great deal outside the Shiatsu bubble from some perspectives. For an example, if one wants to teach a Shiatsu course through Adult and Community Learning these days a City & Guilds teaching certificate is needed – unless of course one has the right contacts. Again, in my experience this standardised requirement of training to Teach Adults is a good thing, because even some teachers with higher education teacher training qualifications still can't facilitate learning. How many MRSS, T or trainers or assessors are actually (nationally recognised) qualified teachers? Not so many I'm guessing.

Turning this around; how is having a nationally recognised teaching certificate (and experience teaching similar subjects to Shiatsu) recognised by the Shiatsu fraternity when wanting to become a T? Not so much from my experience. The Zen Shiatsu School/Society teachers are all at least a minimum of Cert.Ed.Fe. – so I'm led to believe.

We know Shiatsu's special, and that we strive to have high standards and competent skills, so why not just let Shiatsu be on a par with everything else, instead of being isolated. (Then there's much better chance to develop the standards of the (national) system, when one is within that system.) After all, our courses are already ratified to a uniform standard content, which on comparison of number of hours study alone, surpasses several of the other nationally registered, recognised, accredited and regulated (massage) Diplomas. Perhaps national registration, recognition, accreditation and regulation is about level of qualification and training though, not content.

I'd say the recent changes to the duration requirements for an MRSS applicant are testament that the Shiatsu schools may not have been doing such a good job. In that; it now takes maybe 4 ½ years for committed Shiatsu students to study to a level which should easily be covered in 3 years whilst also developing as confident competent practitioners, who then shouldn't need to do anything extra in order to be recognised professionals. Having said this, I personally feel taking (and passing) old MRSS (2 months after I graduated in 2002) was my single most rewarding UK Shiatsu training moment (not achievement), perhaps because it was on a different level to Shiatsu school though.

Does make me wonder which Shiatsu school principal / teacher (or colleague of), had the brilliant idea to suggest the MRSS be a further 18 months of mandatory post grad study / experience, before being eligible for the MRSS process (once again with no place in this for students with natural ability, gifts, skills or previous experience). The new MRSS could well be a good way to guarantee further Shiatsu school business income, but probably not so good for public Shiatsu recruitment as a whole. The Society membership and MRSS process should be made crystal clear and be included in the course advertising to prospective Shiatsu students by the schools, before a student enrolls.

No wonder the number of Shiatsu students is portrayed to be in decline, who'd want to have to study for maybe 4 ½ years for a non professionally recognised Diploma and then still have to go through yet another process just to be recognised 'in the bubble' as a practitioner? Never mind the expense of all this, or that it's then worth little in the outside world.

If it really takes up to 4 ½ years of mandatory study / experience to teach committed students the skills of Shiatsu (and to be confident in ones ability with Shiatsu skills), then something is going terribly wrong – in my opinion. Oh of course I know learning is an ongoing thing, just like driving; the real learning starts after passing the test – once ones own style has been discovered and promoted. Of course I also know studying Shiatsu is also about ones own personal (or spiritual) development – with no certification of this on the (professional) Diploma.

How is it that for 20 years or so the Shiatsu fraternity didn't figure out: it's too late to try and regulate people / practitioners (competence, skills, confidence, ethics, etc, in the alleged interests of the public), after Shiatsuists have already been trained, qualified and graduated?

A severe case of cart before horse I'd say.

Why not just train and develop the required basic Shiatsu values and qualities as integral skills in the first place?

Another incident of the UK Shiatsu principals putting their interests before the good of the Shiatsu public perhaps? Curriculum achievement being perceived as more important than skills perhaps.

Whilst it's credible that Shiatsu got started at all in the UK and survived, I'd say now, its education, teachers and teaching (Shiatsu schools) should definitely be regulated first and foremost – the very things we've not been doing in Shiatsu – the Shiatsu Society clearly states that's not what it's here for.

Interestingly though, throughout Shiatsu school study we're constantly reminded to be a Shiatsu Society member (for at least 2 years) in order to become eligible for the process to be recognised as a practitioner, and thus be responsible; morally, ethically and professionally. So, why aren't the schools that say this nationally registered, recognised, accredited and regulated themselves?

Should Shiatsu teaching assistants have at least graduated and preferably be 'in practise' themselves as qualified practitioners, or even better; be MRSS, and should the teaching assistants be paid for their active classroom contribution? It is interesting that one can attend perhaps the most expensive Shiatsu school in the UK and yet the teaching assistants aren't paid and some haven't even graduated. Be nice if all the Shiatsu teachers were actually 'in practise' regularly themselves too.

Embrace the challenge of change / regulation – it can only be good for the national education, values, quality and integrity of Shiatsu, as it makes its way from the bubble in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Then when the foundation is good, the rest of the structure is stable, with clear / transparent intent – personally, collectively and professionally.

I'm curious why a Shiatsu Society member or director isn't the chair of the new (PFIH) SRG? I was always led to believe that our Shiatsu Society is the lead UK Shiatsu authority, so why, as I'm led to believe now, is a Zen Shiatsu School/Society person the chair of the SRG?

And what now of the GSC and ESF ? And all the time and money invested in these ? Are they still going to serve us in the CAM and PFIH SRG developments ?

So far, from information in the Summer edition of SSN, there seems to be a list of 12 proposed profession specific boards for therapies, where does exercise, health and fitness fit in with this? Yoga is listed, why not Tai Chi, Qigong, Martial Arts, Personal Fitness Training, Rehabilitation Exercise, Pilates, etc, etc. they're all complementary / alternative methods for 'integrated health'.

In my opinion this is something else which needs to be seriously looked at within Shiatsu, after all giving 'exercise' recommendations is fundamental as a Shiatsu student and practitioner. Surely 'exercise' should also be correctly taught within the realms of Shiatsu, (and any other modality) not just what someone sees the (Shiatsu) teacher doing who only saw their (Shiatsu) teacher before them (non specifically and non personally at the start of class). Not everyone pursues their own personal practise, and even if they do it's not the same as receiving professional training in 'exercise' tuition. (And there's currently no place, nor proposal, for 'exercise' to be adequately tutored or examined as part of our Shiatsu studies or MRSS or otherwise – yet we're inclusively and in my opinion irresponsibly insured for giving 'exercise' recommendations as a Shiatsu practitioner, but a fitness instructor – who's trained to know what they're doing has to pay more (for Shiatsu Society Block Insurance)! Welcome to the bizarre world of regulation and insurance business.

Just picking something up from going to a Qigong or Yoga class once is not good enough to be able to give it as a recommendation to someone else who knows even less, neither is not knowing exercise physiology or how to specifically modify 'exercise' according to the individuals needs. If it was all this easy there'd be no need for (either 3 or) 4 ½ years of professional Shiatsu study.

As a specific example, in Shiatsu class as part of a morning exercise section, we were told to do a 'controversial exercise' which has long been 'out lawed' in the world of professional exercise instruction. In fact Jane Fonda – perhaps the original exercise video queen, was sued because it was part of her early videos. Yes that's just how outdated some people seem to be – but they have MRSS T !! So does that make it OK then? Or safe for the public as clients?? Never mind Shiatsu students. And passing an instructed exercise off as related to or taken from Yoga or Qigong, as if that qualifies it or makes it safe, is so not acceptable. And of course, it's not necessarily the 'exercise' itself that's of importance, but rather what it can lead to, but I'd still rather be led knowledgeably.

For some people it's ok to follow a master (or other perceived authority) who says this is how things have to be, but for me I want to know; if that's what they say or what they say they do or did, how is their health, fitness and wellbeing? And I want to be able to see the way they express this understanding in the way they walk (their talk) – as we know through Shiatsu; the bodymind (physically or otherwise) openly displays all personal truths – all we have to do is know how to perceptibly see or interpret or act upon this – as humans.

The bottom line, from just the (largely unregulated) financial perspective of studying Shiatsu, from beginner to recognised practitioner in the bubble (MRSS), it could currently cost anything from at least £4950 to more than £7000. (Budget for; £4500 to £6500 just for 3 years Shiatsu school fees dependent on location in the UK; plus a 'currently undefined amount at the time of writing' for post grad fees to then get to MRSS; plus from approximately £450 Shiatsu Society and Block Insurance fees), then add to that: books, futon, clothing, travel to and from study venues, accommodation if necessary, hire of treatment rooms and travel to and from them, etc, etc. All for something called a professional practitioner training, which as yet isn't nationally registered, recognised, accredited or regulated. To say nothing of the ongoing costs to then maintain such status, currently at the time of writing a bubbling £225 per MRSS per year.

What's the point extending the MRSS process to mandatory post grad 4<sup>th</sup> year, if students as trainee professional practitioners are then stifled from setting up practice? In the present climate they need to get used to all aspects of being in business, including getting used to (legal, ethical and moral implications of) charging fees, which at this point could just be donations towards the cost of providing the many required student Shiatsu treatments, buying books, etc.

Few UK Shiatsu students are provided a vocational work placement, or supervised student clinic, so a Shiatsu practise should be encouraged to start early in year 2, with students properly guided in all the aspects of practitioner practicalities. Leaving it to be crammed into one or two weekends at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year is all too late and way too inadequate. We want competent, confident practitioners? – then train them this way.

Sure not everyone wants to start up practise whilst studying, preferring to focus on just the class led learning, (or other aspects of life), but it can be much harder to start up practise once graduated, once having left the regular influence and encouragement of relating to peers, teachers, study, etc. even though there's other support processes available these days.

Essentially at the end of year one most students can do whole person Shiatsu. The rest of the time is just learning different theories which simply help develop levels of perception and skills to effect understanding treatment and diagnosis. People blossom into Shiatsu at different points from the introduction of different skills, teachers or clients, who knows what the key is going to be, not

everything is natural to everyone, some take a lot more nurturing to the business side of Shiatsu for example, whilst some never go there. For some it's the skill of developing 'real time' Shiatsu practitioner practicalities that gives a buzz and focus, do we wish this to be oppressed for 3 years – would students stick at it that long in such a case. I'd guess that Masunaga learnt the theory taken as gospel these days, by practicing on his paying clients and students.

Hopefully you haven't taken the view from everything written up to this point that I'm being negative about Shiatsu. On the contrary it's the exact opposite; I'm very passionate about it. Even if none of what I've said here makes a difference to anything, there's a simplified view of the solution to UK Shiatsu becoming nationally (and hopefully thus internationally) registered, recognised, accredited and regulated: Metamorphosis. Alchemy. Or simply a little transformational Shiatsu for the situation:

Basically at the moment there's a choice; of staying attached to a 20 something year old system that's trying to adapt on it's own to the current climate, or the opportunity to move into and shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can step on board now and have a say in how it all functions, or stay as we are outside it all, or wait till it's all up and running then really 'crunch' ourselves to try and fit in. The way I see it; the majority of Shiatsu schools already use a core curriculum which is regulated or standardised for ratification eligible to MRSS purposes. It's simply a case of matching this to fit the layout of how others will recognise it for national registration, regulation and accreditation.

It could be said that Complementary Therapies are now essentially going through an equivalent of implementing 'Management Services' standards and procedures - so that people/public/other professionals basically know; what the modalities are, have a good idea what they are going to get for their money, and can make clear recommendations and referrals – because we are a quality 'Service'.

Very simplistically this is just like filling out a form – you have the specific detailed information, you have the form: just put the right things in the right space – notice I said space here, not box. So, we already have the specific Shiatsu information, there are already national guidelines to follow, we just set our selves out in the space provided – the great thing at the moment is; we could also get to influence the provided space and understand what others working in the PFIH require of us for the over all system to function.

I look forward to the day Shiatsu is recommended by and available on the NHS and covered by private health insurance in the UK, but understand my expressed Shiatsu regulation and liberation experience and opinions might not necessarily be in keeping with everyone else's, and are sure to raise challenge, I hope the broad points of view at least awaken interest.

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Dear SSN Editor, If any editorial changes are made to this (lengthy) article, I would like to see them for approval before they go to print because I've taken hours to very deliberately write this in order to keep it in context and portray each point, I don't want this changing or losing. Thanks.

If you decide not to publish the article, please make it available to all the members in another way, or at least to the key personnel of the Shiatsu Society and its working parties. Thanks.

*I would like to add a response to correct Greg's assumption that the Chair of the SRG is a member of one of the associations. The Chair is a Lay Chair, and has no association with any complementary therapy. That was a requirement of the PFIH regulation programme. The other offices are by election, and held by different member associations according to the constitutional requirements.*

*Also, the suggested PSB boards reflect the actual membership of the regulation programme at present. These are member professions invited to participate because they were designated in the House of Lords Report (2000) as having some potential for providing some evidence base for therapeutic effect, albeit that at present they were lacking any rigorous evidence base.*

*Elizabeth Davies*