

**BREATHWORK TRAINING ACCREDITATION:
THE AUSTRALIAN AND THE IRISH EXPERIENCES
BY
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Keywords : Rebirthing, Accreditation, Key words: Rebirthing, breathwork, accreditation, andragogy, credibility, support, moderaton, standardisation, assessment, attitude, national systems.

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WHO WE ARE?

Alakh Analda

Alakh is the founder and director of Zentium International, Rebirthing Mastery Breathwork, and is a Yoga Swami and Rebirther trainer. She lived in India for nine years after being initiated into the holy Yogic order of sannyasa as a Swami. On returning to Australia in 1986, she trained as a rebirther and her private practice has been based in Sydney, with trainings in the Chakras, Yoga and Rebirthing delivered in all parts of Australia and in Russia. In 1992 she instigated the Professional Rebirther Training. These are the training courses now accredited by the National Government as vocational trainings. Her passion is the evolution of human consciousness through the Chakras and relating the ancient yogic wisdom to third millennium personal development.

Catherine Dowling

A former teacher, Catherine trained as a rebirther in 1993, as a group facilitator in 1995 and later as a trainer. She runs a private rebirthing practice in Dublin as well as facilitating personal development and stress management courses for various organisations. Her interest is in adult education and she works part time in the development of adult education structures and programmes in areas of economic disadvantage. She is the co-chairperson of the Federation of Irish Complementary Therapy Associations and the author of *Rebirthing and Breathwork: A Powerful Technique for Personal Transformation*, Piatkus, UK, 2000.

INTRODUCTION

Over the forty or so years since the discovery of Rebirthing by Leonard Orr, the practice of Rebirthing has, for many practitioners, changed and developed in very distinctive ways. For others it has remained more or less the same. The philosophies, theoretical concepts and methodologies have, in some countries, been transformed almost beyond recognition and in others have remained more or less faithful to the early tenets. Training courses for professional rebirthers are equally varied both in length and content. In Ireland, for example, courses range from a seven day residential to 510 hours over two years, both courses certifying trainees to practice professionally with clients. At one time Switzerland was host to a four year training, there are highly successful three year training courses in Holland and Denmark, and in Australia training times vary from one hundred to nine hundred hours.

In recent years, with the growth of the International Breathwork Foundation, the training of professional breathworkers is coming under review. And with it comes the whole question of accreditation. At the Global Inspiration Conference in Italy in 2000, Jim Morningstar of the United States mooted the possibility of developing an international accreditation system for breathwork training and that debate will continue at the conference this year in Wisconsin. Accreditation can come from many sources – existing colleges, registration bodies, the educational establishment offering the training, etc. – with varied levels of recognition and credibility.

However, to the best of our knowledge, ours are the first breathwork training courses to have secured state recognised accreditation. In Alakh's case, accreditation is from the jurisdiction in which the course is offered. In Catherine's, accreditation has come from the neighbouring jurisdiction of Northern Ireland. Our experiences are varied in terms of costs involved, benefits and drawbacks. As part of our contribution to the development of the work of accrediting breathwork training courses, we have decided to document our respective experiences in this article. We have designed the article as a series of questions to which we both give answers.

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Alakh:

Being given credit for undergoing some training or process. There are a number of organisations and individuals who give accreditation. Some are National and some International and some within the Educational Framework of the country. Rebirther Trainers, including myself have been giving Certificates and Diplomas for many years to state someone has been trained to the standard set by the Trainer or Trainers. Leonard Orr set a very experiential process in his initial training to recognise a point at which someone was a Rebirther.

However other forms of accreditation are given by Professional Bodies or groups. For example, the Australian Association for Professional Rebirthers, accredits Rebirthers from all ranges of individual training who exceed a bottom line standard. This standard was set in 1997 based on replies to a questionnaire sent to a broad range of Trainers and practicing Rebirthers.

Another example is the project of Jim Morningstar who has been working through the

International Breathwork Foundation to develop an alliance for standards for “accrediting” Rebirthers internationally. Then there is accreditation within the National Government Training and Education system of a country or state, set down here as the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF). As valid as all the above forms of accreditation are, none of this training is recognized as Certificates or Diplomas by the Education and Training systems of the National Government of Australia.

I undertook to have training accredited by the National Government of Australia within the area any professional or tradesperson is trained or educated. Any country that recognizes AQF Certificates and Diplomas will recognize these trainings. When I refer to accreditation from now on I am speaking of the National Government accredited and recognized training. This is education in Schools, Colleges and Universities that covers Vocational Training and Higher Education. From what I understand, Nationally recognised accreditation and AQF, was set in place by the opening of the education system to allow Organisations and Institutions other than Universities and other Government Institutes like TAFE to deliver training for a Profession or Trade, a Vocation.

Part of the accreditation system in AQF is to assess previous learning and experience and give credit where there is evidence of the necessary skills and knowledge, so training does not have to be repeated. Certification is then awarded within the AQF. This is called recognition of prior learning (RPL).

The booklet “Australian Recognition Framework Arrangements”, published by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) says - “ The Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) comprises guidelines which define each qualification together with principles and protocols covering articulation, issuance of a qualification and transitional arrangements” In Australia, there is now legislation that states that if a Certificate or Diploma is issued that is not within the AQF, there is to be a disclaimer on the Certification and on any advertising for the Course. Similarly, a Trainer who is not accredited within the AQF is to state that he or she is not qualified to teach this course. Accreditation, in the words of ANTA – “Accreditation – the process of formal recognition, based on National Accreditation principles, by the State Recognition Authority or its delegate that the contents and standards of a course or customized qualification are appropriate to the qualification outcome identified: the course/customised qualification and methods of delivery fulfill the purpose for which it was developed: and the content including curriculum and assessment are based on national competency standards where these exist.” A “Competency standard [is] – the specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standards of performance required in the workplace, expressed as a competency standard” Education departments of the Australian States and the Territories came together to form the AQF in order to recognise training or parts of training that was completed in one State so that students did not have to repeat all training or some parts of training if they continued to study in another State.

Catherine

For many people, with often damaging experiences of mainstream schooling, accreditation is associated with authority, policing, exams, being forced to conform to

what the authorities (parent, teacher, school, government..) deem appropriate to learn. These are very negative associations which are, all too often, very well founded.

Breathwork, on the other hand, has always been free flowing, free spirited with an absence of external regulations and control. The minimal nature of its structure and the absence of all but the most basic 'rules' is part of its effectiveness as well as its appeal. It would seem therefore, that accreditation and breathwork are mutually exclusive if not mortal enemies.

But this is not the way it has to be. The majority of people in western society have probably grown up in a system known as pedagogy, where learning is authoritarian, top down with the expert teacher filling the empty vessel that is the student. Since the 1960's however, the concept of education has been changing slowly but surely. Governments now speak of "lifelong learning" and at a recent conference in Dublin, Ireland, a representative from the OECD think tank in Paris spoke, not only of personal growth, but of the spiritual aspects of education. Some countries are more advanced than others in this respect, but it does seem to be the trend of the future. And lifelong learning is increasingly based, not on pedagogy but on andragogy⁵. In this system, which underpins adult education, learning is a partnership of equals, the learner is seen as having within themselves everything they need to learn, education is a process of drawing out, not putting in and exams, if they are used, are a learning experience. The methodology of adult education is experiential, learning by doing. The movement has, in part, been inspired by experiences in South America and Africa where pioneering educators and communities saw education as a means of both personal and community empowerment. These key concepts – drawing out, empowerment, lifelong process, experiential, partnership of equals... – would also seem to be key concepts in breathwork. In our experience, with andragogy, breathwork has met its educational equal, a compatible companion in the development of breathwork training.

But all education takes place in a wider society. While, on a very personal level, education and training may be invaluable to the individual learner/trainee, why should we leave it at that? There is a way to give that education currency within the social and economic systems of the wider world. That way is through accreditation. Modern systems of accreditation developed through the growth of adult education, can be an invaluable support to learning, including learning in the field of breathwork. Accreditation has its drawbacks and limitations which we will discuss later, but far from being authoritarian and coercive, accreditation in our experience, has been a very supportive enhancement of the whole training process.

Accreditation, at its best, is a system of support for quality. It promotes clarity, supports healthy boundaries, enhances delivery and in so far as is possible, it ensures that the trainees can do what the certificate they receive at the end of the course says they can do. It is only as good as its system of quality control but if that is sound, then accreditation brings a new level of credibility. An additional plus is that if the course is plugged into a recognised, national system of accreditation, the qualification has currency in the wider educational system. Trainees can use it to access other courses of study and work in wider fields of employment. Quality training courses with standards that can be assured are fundamental to the development, expansion and recognition of breathwork as a profession in the world in which it takes place. A good

system of accreditation can be an invaluable support to the development of transparent, reliable and recognised training standards.

WHAT WAS THE SYSTEM OF ACCREDITATION LIKE?

Alakh:

In Australia, the system that is National Government accredited and recognised within the Training and Education system for Natural Therapies is called Competency based training. Competencies are set and methods of how they will be assessed. This is what gets “accredited”. The course is stated as a series of learning outcomes. The student or participant is told in advance what skills and knowledge will be provided by the Training and the Trainers. The participant is then assessed as “competent” or “not yet competent” in terms of the set outcomes at different parts of the course.

The emphasis is on the Trainer to work with the participant until the participant is competent in each area, or until both agree there will never be competence in that area. There is no system of pass/fail. The training is mostly self paced, allowing for different capacities to learn or attend. There are two systems - one for Vocational training in a trade or in my case, Natural Therapy, and the other belonging to the world of academia called Higher Education, associated with Universities and similar Institutions. I gravitated to the Vocational training as I have had no experience in the academic world and Natural Therapies are mostly delivered as Vocational training not University study. Besides, it seems the only way people become Rebirthers is from experience, mainly from being Reborned, and Vocational training is practically based. The Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels overlap for both systems.

Vocational Education Higher Education (mainly Universities)

Doctoral degree
Masters degree
Graduate Diploma
Graduate Certificate
Bachelor degree
Advanced Diploma
Diploma
Certificate IV
Certificate III
Certificate II
Certificate I

I added significantly to my six year old curriculum and practical training and matched that onto the AQF template to create a Pre-Professional Training, a Certificate III in Health, Professional Rebirther/Breathworker Practitioner and a Diploma of Health, Rebirther/Breathworker Trainer, with the submission being accredited in October 1998. This submission is now under self appointed review and I am adding some extras and will resubmit based on my experiences since 1998. One of the requirements of the system is the inclusion of regular feedback and evaluation from participants and I need to show I am responding to the feedback I receive. This

includes all aspects of the training including the curriculum and Trainer/s performance.

The Nationally accredited courses all need to be provided by a Registered Training Organisation – “Any Training Organisation registered in accordance with the Australian Recognition Framework providing vocational education, training and/or assessment services. Included TAFE colleges/institutes, private commercial providers, community providers, schools, higher education institutions, enterprises and firms, industry bodies and any other organisation which meets the requirements for registration.” “Registration [is] – the process of formal approval and recognition by a State Recognition Authority to provide recognised products/services in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Recognition Framework.” I have remained a Training Organisation in partnership with a Registered Training Organisation who keeps all the necessary registration requirements in place, as my intention is to train Rebirthers and Trainers rather than educate myself even further in the details of the requirements. As the official language I have quoted shows, the whole process requires a certain mind set and although I could and may go through the process of becoming an RTO, it has not been a priority to now. An RTO is audited at any time and is subject to keeping all the facets of registration in place at all times. A number of RTO’s can be licensed to deliver a Training, or have done the work to have Training accredited. I am the copyright holder of the accredited three stages of Rebirther and Trainer Training and notify the appropriate departments that I have a license agreement with a single or number of RTOs to provide different or all stages of training.

Earlier in the decade, in Natural Therapy Colleges or Institutes, staff completed the work on submissions, therefore those Colleges or Institutes, usually also RTOs, own their own copyright of courses. Some ten years down the track, Colleges are now more likely to buy the copyright from other owners for courses rather than write their own. With a move to have some modalities like acupuncture be provided in Universities by Higher Education, the costs of the development of a curriculum to Bachelor degree is priced at one million Australian dollars.

Catherine

In Ireland, as is probably the case in most other countries, universities are extremely slow to take on training in new subjects such as breathwork and the process of gaining accreditation through universities is so long that I didn’t even try. Instead I examined the national systems outside of the ivory tower of the third level colleges. There are two systems of national government accreditation in Ireland. The most appropriate one is through the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA). The system is more or less suitable to breathwork training because it offers course/curriculum developers the opportunity to write many of their own modules. However, it was inaccessible to the Rebirther training course because the NCVA will only work with schools and community learning centres funded by the state Department of Education. As yet no institution has taken on the running of rebirther training so ours was privately run and therefore couldn’t access the NCVA system.

The alternative was to look to the United Kingdom, the nearest province of which is Northern Ireland. The UK also has two main systems of national accreditation –

BTEC and the Open College Network (OCN). I chose the Open College Network for its low costs, accessibility, and lack of bureaucracy. One of the limits of the OCN is that its highest standard is Level 3 or the equivalent of A levels in the UK's mainstream system. This is university entry level and I would have liked higher. Another very major drawback was that the graduates of the accredited Rebirther training are now eligible for entry to a variety of prestigious colleges and universities in the UK but not in the Republic of Ireland where they live and work. The equivalency within the Republic of Ireland is roughly as follows:

Open College Network Mainstream (Republic of Ireland)

Doctorate

Masters

Post Graduate Diploma

Undergraduate Degree

Diploma

Level 3 Certificate

Level 2 Leaving Certificate (second level school system)

Level 1 Junior Certificate

Foundation

There are 4 parts to getting accreditation through the Open College Network. With variations, these are similar to the stages inherent in accessing all of the UK and Irish systems.

Stage 1: Applying for membership of the network:

This is a way of ensuring that the team of people, centre or institution that proposes to run a training accredited through the system is capable of delivering the training. Information on structure, finances, tutor qualifications, equitable and consistent methods of assessment, ethos, etc. must be produced. (For us verification of our ability to deliver the course was merged with the submission of the accreditation document discussed below, but for other divisions of the OCN in the UK applying for membership is a separate process preceding accreditation submissions.)

Stage 2: Writing the modules:

This can be quite complicated for people not used to working in this way. However, support is given through a Network development officer. The modules are based on learning outcomes (the same as 'competencies' in the Australian system), assessment criteria and modes of evidence: what the learner will be able to do when they complete the module; how you will know they can do it; and what evidence will be produced to show that they can do it. These are brought together in an accreditation submission document which moves the process to the next stage.

Stage 3: Going to panel:

This is a system of peer accreditation. The Network forms a panel of people with some interest/experience in the subject or related disciplines and the applicant can also appoint their own people to the panel. The accreditation submission document is examined by the panel who can ask questions of the applicant, make suggestions for agreed changes, etc. When changes are incorporated into the document, it is passed and the course is accredited.

Stage 4: Moderation:

The course is up and running according to the accreditation document. But the network has to stand over the certificates it will issue at the end so it needs to ensure that what is outlined in the document in terms of content and delivery is being adhered to. A moderator is appointed, usually someone who volunteers from the panel and who visits the course on a number of occasions throughout its life. The moderator's role is as a support to the course staff should they run into any difficulties with the delivery and as an external examiner for a selected sample of students' work.

WHAT WERE THE COSTS IN DOLLARS/POUNDS AND IN TIME?

Alakh

In 1997, after being a Rebirther in practice for ten years, six years of which I was developing and delivering a Rebirther Training curriculum, I met a consultant for a College, an RTO, that was having Reiki accredited and had already succeeded with one course after years of work. They had been having learning experiences with the process for years. I had been looking into accreditation and I had taken a long time to understand very much at all about the process. These people now seemed to know what it took. So over the next year, I paid out over \$20,000 Australian, then \$15,000 US dollars, in consultant and Government fees to gain accreditation for Pre-Professional, Professional and Trainer Training. That amount does not include any estimate for my time which to October 1998, was six years part time. While some Trainers may inherit a curriculum from other Trainers, or create a curriculum that is the input of a number of professionals, I had originated one from the viewpoint of all the likely experiences an individual can have in a series of Rebirthing Breathwork sessions. The submissions went back and forward to the State departments for over a year before being "stamped", even after the success with the initial (and subsequent) Reiki courses. The six years part time I spent on the process was not to write the contents of the submission, which the consultants did, as I sat with them. That was a matter of a week in time. It was to document all the "likely experiences" of Rebirthing Breathwork and place them into the curriculum from the point of view of what a Rebirther would need to know. Then to provide extensive handouts that cover the experiences in detail. Prior to the recent publications of more detailed books on Rebirthing Breathwork, the textbooks or references for students were not in depth enough to cover the material I was getting accredited. This situation did not exist with other modalities and led me into a much longer time involvement leading to accreditation than for example, someone writing a Homeopathy course where many reference books are available in all degrees of detail. Involvement with different Government training departments sounds similar to Catherine's process in the UK system, but I was not involved. This included the courses being presented to an Industry panel of different Health Care Professionals for "acceptance" that the curriculum and On the Job training would meet industry standards, all of which was covered by fees to the Consultant or Government and did not have me present. I thought that most of the work would be over then, with the accreditation within the AQF. However, to bring the Courses into excellence, I have worked for many hours a

month in the two and a half years since. Most of this work is to fine tune where the participants need to place their attention to become Professional Rebirthers or Trainers, and to cover exactly what they need to know in detail. In spite of this, I am finding that the comprehensive handouts come into play more powerfully once the Professional is in practice. After all, how much detail can be taken in will depend on the individual's experiences in the training and is individually relative.

The difference in the focus in an accredited training is that instead of training people to be self employed as Rebirther Breathworkers or Rebirther Trainers, it is training people as if they are to be employed in Industry as Rebirther Breathworkers when they graduate. So it has been my focus to provide that degree of skill, information and reference, plus practical experience, even though graduates are most likely to be self employed. The time I have now spent involved in the process exceeds eight years part time, including writing an original curriculum, comprehensive handouts, assessment sheets, and training compendiums. I am nearing the completion I think. However it is an ongoing process, where there is constant assessment of the process and re-evaluation. It is a mistake to think accreditation is just writing a curriculum submission that gets the stamp from the Government and that is it! I will be working with all parts of the process at different times until I replace myself or sell the whole curriculum and Training as a business. Updating and staying educated in the whole system is ongoing.

Catherine

Approximately IR£700. This includes a 20% surcharge to cover the cost of the OCN operating in the Republic of Ireland and roughly a 30% loss on the exchange rate between Irish currency and sterling. (There are several divisions of the OCN within the UK so the charges incurred in dealing with the one in Northern Ireland may not be a good guide to costs in England, Scotland or Wales). There were no costs involved in developing the accreditation document because I had experience in this field. In terms of time it took approximately 50 hours for myself and my colleague in the venture, Stephen Gregory to write the programme. This seems to be a much looser, less stringent system than the one in which Alakh operates. Accessing the state system in the Republic of Ireland would not cost much more but would take longer in terms of bureaucracy and would involve piloting the project, evaluating it and redrawing the programme.

WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES OF NATIONAL ACCREDITATION?

Alakh

Having Training within a National Government accredited framework definitely adds value for a potential participant. Although I thought it would be years before it really made a difference whether a training was accredited or not, it is already making a difference here that the Rebirthing Mastery Breathwork trainings accredited in the AQF. It is a valid entry on a CV, for example. For a participant it means, in the future, that whatever other training they do, any part that has already been covered, will not have to be repeated if they have already been assessed competent in those specific learning outcomes. In the current Nationally recognized training that maybe only the Small Business module to date as all the remainder is uniquely Breathwork. However in modalities like Naturopathy, for example, a nurse may not need to repeat Anatomy and Physiology. Government funding for participants is available under certain

conditions and may even cover the costs of the training in some circumstances. Apart from all the above, a great advantage is that the participant-to-be knows exactly what they are getting in their training and when and where. This will be documented and recognised within Industry. The emphasis in competency based training is on the Trainer providing the skills and knowledge in a way that is understood and integrated by the participant. This includes how they are to be assessed and exactly what skill or knowledge the Trainer or Trainings are to provide. Quality assurance is a word used by the RTOs and they are the guardians of this.

However one of the main reasons I have gone ahead with the whole process is that I imagine that the participants who graduate from Nationally accredited training will become part of the referral system in Health. For example, many Medical Practitioners, Acupuncturist, Naturopaths have been Rebirthed, yet they do not necessarily send their clients to Rebirther Breathworkers as professionals. That this will happen is yet to be revealed, however, my intention is to have this happen so all varieties of Health Care Professionals refer their clients to the graduates of accredited training. There are signs that the first few graduates of the Certificate 111 in Health, Professional Rebirther Breathworker Practitioner are creating this in their initial foray into being in business. In one year's time it will be more apparent how many referrals are in place. Another advantage that I did not foresee and is now becoming apparent is that I have had the Training to become a Rebirther Trainer accredited as well. Since this is the only accredited Training for Trainer, it becomes the National standard. (Remember this curriculum has been assessed by "Industry" before accreditation was given). From what I know to date, as dealing with conflicting information from different individuals within Government departments, Consultants and others is part of the process, that will mean Colleges or Trainers who are not Rebirther Trainers (Workplace Trainers of Diploma of Education etc), cannot deliver a Rebirther Training curriculum without being highly experienced Rebirthers at the level of accredited Rebirther Trainer.

Now that Rebirther Trainer Training is accredited, only Rebirthers who have been in private practice for some time and have delivered a specific number of groups of their own can deliver the Vocational Professional Rebirther Training. In contrast, for example, a Trainer may not need to be experienced in Small Business to deliver a Small Business training or computers to deliver a computer training.

Catherine

The process of accreditation transformed the delivery of the course. The advantages were too numerous to list in detail but some of the broader categories in which accreditation supported the training are outlined below:

Clarity of Content and Direction:

Previous training courses that I have been involved with in Ireland including the one I trained on and an earlier two year training that I coordinated, started off with a curriculum which listed items – birth, water rebirthing, parental disapproval and so forth. These were covered but in ways that were not consistent either in result or emphasis. And when the group dynamic went in a particular way, the curriculum was abandoned. The result was inconsistent training for the job and no means of assessing the effectiveness of the course in training people to be professional rebirthers. So, like Alakh, I would say that it gives consistency and the trainees know in advance exactly

what the training will contain. Accreditation compelled the staff team to draw up very clear aims and objectives and to think carefully and in depth about what they were doing, what the desired outcome of each day's training was to be and how to assess the readiness of trainees to do the job they were being trained to do. The system also ensured accountability on the part of all of the staff that they were delivering what they set out to deliver. The end result of this is that the certificate presented at the end of the course means what it says it means and the moderation of the course by the OCN through the person of the moderator is a verification of this for the wider world of clients, other colleges, etc.

Balance of Task and Process:

Breathwork, as with other therapy training courses, is a mix of personal development and skills/knowledge training: a balance between task and process. I found that the OCN accreditation system was flexible enough to allow for going with the flow of group dynamic and trainees' personal needs but balanced this with the task of training rebirthers. The accreditation document was always there as the blueprint to which we had to return. Sometimes the result of this was that we simply took time out from the document but at its best personal development and academic/skills development merged seamlessly.

It has always been my belief that the distinction people make between personal growth and academic/skills based education is arbitrary and artificial. One flows into the other, yin and yang. It takes skill and imagination as well as experience and training on the part of tutors to achieve this level of seamlessness. We did not achieve it all the time or even the majority of the time, but we were learning. And when we did achieve it, it was education at its very best. This would not have happened without the accreditation system so in this way accreditation became a support to tutors in encouraging them to develop their skills and find new ways of doing things that were more effective and successful.

Safety and Boundaries:

When the balance between task and process is not maintained, particularly when it leans heavily in favour of process, it can become part of a bigger group dynamic. This is one in which healthy boundaries are sometimes sacrificed to "going with the flow" and the very human tendencies of trainers towards guruism and trainees towards following a leader can emerge. This can result in a lack of safety for the more vulnerable or less dominant members of the group. The accreditation system promoted clarity and ensured that the boundaries around the curriculum remained flexible but intact. There seemed to be a spin off effect in other areas in that boundaries became clearer on all levels – interpersonal, time, content, expectations, etc. with a resultant higher level of perceived safety, comfort and security for the trainees.

WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Alakh

The immediate disadvantage was that I more than doubled, nearly trebled the length of the training and the fee. Initially, since the training became possibly the longest training in the area, I did not know if the response would validate the work I had done.

It could be a disadvantage that there are only certain sites or venues to be used for accredited trainings.

What became a personal disadvantage in my enjoyment of life was that, after the submission was accredited, I started to restrict my enjoyment of being a Trainer and Rebirther. It took a while for me to realise how much schooling trauma surfaced for me after, not before the successful submission! Since school was the death of my creative spirit at the level I had before five, initially delivering the accredited training was an effort until I cleared the association. It has caused me to clear on a level I did not know was an issue, which is of course an advantage now. Not surprisingly, nearly every person doing the training is also an experiential learner like myself. However I address the issue of learning/schooling trauma on day one. I have many clients and participants who have not studied in a “formal” training since they left school.

Catherine

There were three distinct disadvantages, one of our own making, the second the result of being the first rebirther training course in the country to operate in this way and the third related to the system of accreditation that I chose. The first major disadvantage was that there was too much content: The two people who developed the course and drew up the accreditation document were both the product, to varying degrees, of authoritarian educational or social/family systems. Traces of the tendency to bow to authority remained and were transferred onto the OCN. We didn't fully comprehend the concept of peer accreditation, accreditation as support not coercion, and the fact that the only rule we had was to make the training as effective as it needed to be. As a result we crammed our modules with content to please an authority that didn't exist and didn't need to be pleased. At times it felt like too much was crammed into too little time.

This for me was an important lesson about attitude towards accreditation. It works best when it is seen as a support, not as an imposition or an external voice that must be obeyed and revered. Like the child that introjects his parent's rules and regulations, we ourselves became the authority figure that the accreditation body would not become. Secondly, there was a very high drop out rate. Most courses have an initial dropout rate but ours was very high – over 50%. Some people left the course for the usual reasons people leave courses – they become pregnant and can't manage family and training, they emigrate, etc. But approximately 30% left directly or indirectly because of the accreditation system. This was not the fault of the accreditation system itself but rather that it was the first time the system had been used within a rebirther training in Ireland. People's expectations of the course before it began were determined by their experience of previous courses. And previous courses involved little or no written work, study groups, or any of the other means of assessment. The emphasis on personal process was often at the expense of skills development and knowledge and this established assumptions about the accredited course that were not consistent with reality. Although trainees were told about the nature of the course and the work required before signing on, this did not adequately prepare them for the new style of training. The lessons here was that in future the nature of the course and requirements for students must be made crystal clear before people sign on for training.

Finally, the system of accreditation that I chose, mainly because there was no real alternative, has very limited recognition. Unlike Alakh's training, ours is barely at the level of college or university and not recognised in the Republic of Ireland by colleges or employers. It is a start in the field of breathwork in Ireland, but it is only a start.

WHAT WERE THE EASIEST AND MOST DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF ACCREDITATION?

Alakh

It has been easy to spend time on because I love it and I love the big picture of Rebirthing Breathwork! It inspires me and moves me. I created a long term intention to make thorough training in Rebirthing Breathwork available for the next seven generations and then accreditation showed up within that intention as well as writing about the subject. However, many times I have need to re-evaluate the project and recommit to it or change the intention. It has only served to make me more conscious so I cannot say that is a difficulty.

I have made it difficult at times to balance my resources and what I took on. Also to create and communicate opportunities for other Trainers or Rebirthers. Initially, it was difficult for me to know what I had done as the whole area of accreditation requires one to educate oneself in it as a subject and there is a lot of jargon and terminology that I found alienating. I also needed to undertake training to lead competency based training and it was difficult for me once again with the terms and mind set. It is so different to being with people who are learning to use their breath to become clear.

I did create initial difficulties with other Rebirther Trainers in the way I communicated the project and the successful submission. What is possibly most difficult is there was and still is a lot of misunderstanding about the process.

Catherine

The easiest part was dealing with the accreditation body. I found the Open College Network refreshingly free of bureaucracy, clear in its thinking, flexible and very supportive. Our development officer came to Dublin to meet me on two occasions and she was extremely helpful. I had expected at least some cautious reaction to the proposal to accredited Rebirthing, but there was none. It was treated with the same acceptance as any other subject and the system was flexible enough to accommodate all our needs.

The most difficult part was dealing with the resistance of students who lost no opportunity to complain about having to write notes, questionnaires and essays. The academic requirements were not by any means onerous – one essay and one presentation a year with two page questionnaires at the end of each module – but expectations (see section on dropout rates above) were such that any work of this kind was seen as not part of rebirther training or rebirthing. Another cause of the level of complaining may have been the trainees own attitudes to authority and schooling and this was discussed within the group on several occasions throughout the training. So, similar to Alakh's experience, accreditation brought up memories and reactions to school for the trainees and, on a more subtle level, for the trainers. This is, ultimately, one of the advantages of accrediting training.

HOW DID THE CLIENTS RESPOND?

Alakh

I have only had positive responses so far. The training being self-paced makes it work well. Unlike Catherine's experience, I have not had participants leave because it is an accredited training. Because the training is self paced, it can be picked up again at a later time, which is one of the great benefits to participants. Participating will become part of a life process.

Catherine

The response of the clients (trainees) has been covered in various sections above. They dropped out or they rebelled against the academic aspects of the course. However, it was interesting that the trainee who complained most frequently and loudly throughout the course and at one point accused me of institutionalising Rebirthing, was the one who presented the longest, most detailed written work and who, at the end, said that she wished she were getting a certificate from a university and not just from a body like the OCN. The end of course evaluation revealed a respect for the process and an acknowledgement that the academic work had been a support to both the personal and professional development of the trainees. This was very gratifying because it supported the vision of the course that I had had from the beginning and it also supported my conviction that as long as it is balanced, the academic aspects of education are invaluable in the development of the whole person. Maybe next time the recognition will come earlier and life will be somewhat smoother.

HOW DID COLLEAGUES AND OTHER TRAINERS RESPOND?

Alakh

Since accreditation is also a process that I had to "work at" to understand, most Rebirther Professionals and Trainers responded from misunderstanding or rather lack of understanding. I also created that with my initial communication.

In relation to National Government accreditation, I have had the reverse experience as a Yoga Teacher. Even though I lived in India for nine years in one of the most highly regarded Schools of Yoga and taught Yoga Teacher Training on behalf of the ashram, my "Certification" from India is not within the AQF. To get that here I would have to go through the same process of RPL and paying out some fees and time. It comes down to a decision of yes or no.

I had thought initially, that each Trainer or Professional would take the information that was there about accredited trainings, decide if it was for them, ask questions if they needed it, and then go ahead and work with the process, or not, and keep doing what they had been doing. Anyone could have done what I did, if an experienced Trainer. It was and is a matter of experience, focus, time and money. Yet there were a number of reactions, strong and mild. I had kept Trainers informed by letter of my project. Yet once complete, I was asked "who are you to get Rebirthing accredited!".

The main reaction I think is from a misunderstanding that it is MY course that got accredited. It has taken me sometime to distinguish, to verbalise what I and then the Consultants have done which is to map my training onto the AQF like any

experienced Trainer could. It is as if the AQF is a template and the distinctions can be fitted onto it. In the last two years, out of all other Trainers or Professionals who spoke to me, there are a number who are filling in the gaps in their experience to be able to deliver the accredited courses. So other colleagues and Trainers have all responded differently. There were at first only three who initially seemed to understand what accreditation meant – a Trainer who is psychic, a Rebirther who is an academic, and an experienced Rebirther who spent ages asking me questions so she knew if it was for her or not.

Catherine

Staff on the training were generally positive about the effects of accreditation and although operating within a moderated system was far more alien to them than to me, they approached it with commitment and an open mind. It became a learning experience and a challenge for all of us. I received very little response from colleagues who were not working on the training. A few made supportive and encouraging remarks, others made no comment at all to me.

Like Alakh's course, the accredited training is not my course. It is available to anyone who wants to run it through the Open College Network. However, they do have to get permission to use the modules from the "organisation" we set up to run the training. They also have to prove to the OCN that they have the capacity to run the course. To date, nobody has taken up that option.

WHAT WAS THE EFFECT ON BUSINESS AND WORK?

Alakh

As I previously stated, for some months, I stopped enjoying my work. The effect now is that I have needed to expand what I do enormously as instead of just focusing on training a course of Rebirthers, I now deliver Pre-Professional and Professional Training and have started Trainer Training with people of all degrees of experience (RPL) as well as with graduates of the Certificate III in Health. My business now requires me to work more deeply with fewer people and it includes being a supervisor and much more individual contact, rather than group contact.

In some ways I have become an "educationalist" instead of a Practitioner so my income needs to come from that process as well as being a Trainer. I have quoted those in the Australian Association for Professional Rebirthers and others interested in having a collective training accredited a substantial sum of money to shortcut the process by using my experience. This may or may not come off. My courses are very comprehensive and I have been told for another course to become accredited, it would need to be more comprehensive again or very different. I have covered a lot of the differences in the training so only something as different as Holotropic Breathwork would come into the category of very different.

The steps for a group of Rebirthers/Trainers to create a Collective Training, once the finances are handled look like:

- 1 Forming a legal body who owns the copyright-to-be, with agreements and clear systems on how alignment will take place on each part of the process and each subject.

- 2 Facilitating the group to create the curriculum and have it be more comprehensive than mine.
- 3 Write the submissions (the easiest part).
- 4 Create the back up material, assessment tools, information packs, handouts, and more from the start or by adapting my material (remarkably involved).
- 5 Educate the members of the group in all the details and requirements of the system including language and delivery of competency based training.
- 6 Form an RTO
- 7 Manage the above for one or two years until all persons involved are at ease with the delivery and other requirements and a Manager or Coordinator can take over in a way that the project keeps running.

In the National Government accredited system, Rebirther Trainers who want to deliver the accredited Professional Training or Trainer Training will no longer receive all the income from a course. In either case of 1) a group or 2) myself having a training accredited by the National Government, Trainers will need to belong to or pay for the services of an RTO and the RTO or Trainer will pay a copyright fee to the owner whether a group or myself. In my package for Trainers to deliver the courses, I have set up a small percentage deduction for National advertising as well.

To be fair and open, I am asking for a very reasonable fee to support individual Trainers in having their individual trainings submitted for accreditation based on my experience, using all their own material. However, I cannot guarantee this will translate to accreditation. In contrast, the hefty fee I have quoted the group is more or less guaranteed to pass based on the fact I will adapt, if necessary, my work to have it done, and resubmit it as I do now. Therefore I am asking for adequate remuneration for the time and money I have put into the process to date.

So the nature of my business is definitely affected by the time and energy I have put into the project. At times, when I was working intently on some parts of the project, my clientele for one to one sessions came to a stop or numbers dropped for the training. But my love was not there for my practice at the time – it was on the writing or, documenting. So I have been looking at the long term financial balance in the project, not the immediate, and have needed to create support for this.

Catherine

Being able to describe myself as the coordinator of an accredited training gets more attention than when I coordinated a non-accredited course. In circles where people are inclined to be skeptical about complementary therapies and particularly the lesser known species like Rebirthing, it caused people to take notice rather than dismiss it. Accreditation gave credibility to me as a member of the staff as well as to the students whose certificates now come with transcripts and recognition by the mainstream system of education. Like Alakh I now charge for consultancy for anyone who wishes to develop training. However, if other trainers want to use the existing OCN Rebirther Training, I and my colleague need to give permission but there is no fee accruing. Developing the training did not affect my private client business because it was not such an arduous process that I had to devote as much time to it as did Alakh.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ACCREDITATION?

Alakh

I imagine that, in the future, people who want to be self-employed full-time will spend the time and money on accredited training in Rebirthing Breathwork, with some exceptions. There is the possibility of health fund rebates. Since the course is accredited, I have the pathway for that now, just it is not a priority. The National Government already pays people to study to become Rebirther Breathworkers under certain conditions. The Training is also GST tax exempt as it is for an income earning Vocation.

The National Government may eventually put it into the Medicare system (a huge “go *The* for”). Here there is a form of free health care with University Trained Medical Practitioners being given Provider numbers and then paid for their services by the Government. The present National Government system is a support to those who want to train people thoroughly but it could be deregulated in the future. In this case, the time and effort put into the process will be of value anyway. There are however moves to create National competencies in Health, already final for some modalities, and that may extend to Rebirthing, in which case the courses already accredited will possibly become the National standard. However if any parts of the required competencies for Health care practitioners are not in my curriculum, they will have to be added. It is important to understand that what the National Government is looking for is training for people to be able to work to make their living. So I do not see that as anything but a benefit that is going to continue.

Catherine

At the moment the Department. of Education in Ireland is introducing changes which will revolutionise adult education in this country. Within the next few years structures and services will be put in place that will make the concept of lifelong learning a reality that is accessible to everyone. One of the changes already underway is the development of national accreditation systems, making accreditation accessible to everyone who wants to run quality, sustainable training courses. One of the possible consequences of this is that Rebirther training courses will be able to plug into a national system where credits will be transferable to other institutions and courses and will count when looking for employment. At the same time the Department. of Health is moving towards the statutory regulation of complementary therapies. This means recognition and employment within the health system while at the same time those not registered under the law will be practicing illegally. But the price of this recognition is the provision of training that is standardized in terms of delivery and content, with reliable and transparent assessment procedures. Both moves will encourage training institutions in all walks of life to access accreditation and will make graduation from an accredited training course more attractive if not imperative for trainees. However, accreditation systems need to be very flexible to accommodate breathwork. It is my feeling that the new systems coming into Ireland will offer that flexibility, but that is not guaranteed. And it is vitally important when choosing an accreditation system to make sure that it meets the needs and enhances the delivery of the course. Otherwise it can become a yolk around the neck of trainers and trainees who will be working towards accreditation for its own sake rather than gaining the knowledge, personal growth and skills they joined to course to acquire.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF BREATHWORK TRAINING?

Alakh

In spite of the time and money I have put into the process, I know that if I wanted to go to a Naturopath, I would ask someone I knew who they recommended. In the same situation, Rebirther Breathworkers and Trainers, accredited or not, will be valuable for their own individual style and presence. So I think it is still a level playing field and we all have our own niche. I made mine accreditation.

Catherine

Short Term: There is no accredited training running in Ireland at the moment and nobody has followed the OCN route although it has been mapped out for them already. Therefore the short term implications are very personal. For me, the accreditation process affirmed my ideas about the way I want to go with training and showed me that two years is not long enough to train people for such a responsible job. It has also shown me just how much groundwork needs to be done to provide quality, sustainable training courses within a structure that is independent of the people who deliver the training. This takes time so for the moment I am not involved in delivering training and don't expect to be in the near future.

Long Term: There may be some serious long term implications arising not out of the running of a two year accredited rebirther training, but out of all the changes taking place in government policy as outline above. If accreditation, with all its benefits, becomes available to all courses that meet basic standards of delivery and sustainability, unaccredited training courses will not be offering trainees the same value for money as those that are accredited. One of the reasons one of our trainees dropped out was because she discovered that a ten day training course being run by a visiting trainer was promising in its publicity to provide the skills required to work as a professional rebirther. Five years from now, I don't think it will be possible to offer such outcomes from such a short training course. However, the choice of a rebirther/breathworker, as Alakh has pointed out, will probably continue to be governed largely by word of mouth and personal recommendation. It is just that in this country, if the government goes ahead with its plans, all of the rebirthers/breathworkers will be licensed to practice and that licensing, many years from now, may require that they have completed an accredited training.

WAS IT WORTH THE EFFORT AND MONEY?

Alakh

Sometimes yes and sometimes no. However I am responsible for creating it as a long term project where the end is not yet visible. So unlike being a Practitioner where I am complete with my client at the end of a session or series, I am nowhere near the final outcome. I have experienced different levels of satisfaction at different times. If I do no more, I am satisfied with what I have done. However, within the system I need to be and I am committed to continuing to provide the training. Most of all, I am imagining I will have a big completion when I finish writing the details I have not yet added to all the handouts, which will also create a series of books.

Catherine

An unequivocal yes!

CONCLUSION

Both our experiences of accreditation have been similar in many ways. The main differences seem to be that the Australian system is bigger, more complex and takes longer to negotiate. The reward for this is in the way industry and the employment sectors in our respective countries regard the vocational accreditation systems and the universities. In Australia, there is not a lot of bias either way on Vocational or University training depending on the subject. For example do we want University trained massage therapists? Whereas in Ireland the vocational system is still the poor relation in the field of education.

For people considering accreditation, it is important to keep in mind that many, many hours must be spent analysing every aspect of the training. This involves answering a lot of questions about what we do, aspects of our work that quite often go unquestioned.

What is the training?

What is it's ethos?

What are its objectives?

What is necessary and what is unrelated and only there because we like doing it?

What is the purpose of every aspect of the training?

Is it relevant to the development of professional breathworkers, and if so, how is it relevant?

What is a rebirther/breathworker?

What do they need to perform their tasks competently and safely?

Every section of the training must be considered, questioned, put together into a coherent whole.

It is a lot of work, but it brings clarity, accountability, satisfaction and ultimately, if the right system has been chosen, it can foster excellence in everyone involved. But it is important to approach accreditation from the right frame of mind. If you are considering it solely because it will offer recognition by people and institutions outside the breathwork sphere, because it might attract more participants than an unaccredited training or similar reasons, you may miss out on the real advantages that accreditation offers. It is a personal and a professional process and a very valuable one. It is a developmental tool that can support trainers in developing the best training courses they can conceive of. But it is important to make sure that accreditation serves the training not the other way around. That is why it requires so much thinking time before anything goes on paper. For both of us the advantages have been worth the work involved.

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Alakh is the founder and director of Zentium International, Rebirthing Mastery Breathwork, and is a Yoga Swami and Rebirther trainer. She lived in India for nine years after being initiated into the holy Yogic order of sannyasa as a Swami. On returning to Australia in 1986, she trained as a rebirther and her private practice has been based in Sydney, with trainings in the Chakras, Yoga and Rebirthing delivered in all parts of Australia and in Russia. In 1992 she instigated the Professional Rebirther Training. These The Healing Breath, Vol. 3, No. 2, May 2001 34 are the training courses now accredited by the National Government as vocational trainings. Her passion is the evolution of human consciousness through the Chakras and relating the ancient yogic wisdom to third millennium personal development.

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