



How the yMIND ‘capacity building’ model supports professional development and learning

A yMIND case study by Colin Isham, external evaluator

Continuous professional development (CPD) and taking practice to scale are well researched areas in the field of education. In order to be able to evaluate the capacity building element of yMIND, and also to support partners as they developed training for yMIND, a framework for effective CPD and taking practice to scale was created based on international research¹. The first two elements of the framework: ‘a clear moral purpose’, and ‘a focus on a specific set of problems for a specific set of learners’, are integrated in the conception and design of yMIND. In this case study, some of the practice and design features of the yMIND training model are described to illustrate how five of the other elements formed a part of the project.

The yMIND capacity building model

Combination of specialist input AND coaching

The yMIND model accommodates specialist input and coaching over time. The main face-to-face component for practitioners is the capacity building workshop. This is wrapped around with opportunities for practitioners to observe how trainers lead yMIND activities with their students, opportunities to deliver the practice themselves, and reflect on reports from children and young people through a focus group.

Evaluation built in from the beginning

The key professional learning tool is the trainer’s log. Here practitioners recorded their experiences of engaging children and young people in yMIND activities, difficulties they encountered, in particular as young people were given more responsibility to engage and freedom to discuss issues, and the successes. Through such reflection, practitioners learned the value of persistence, as well as the gradual nature of change, and build the confidence that children and young people will develop the necessary skills over time.

Reflective dialogue

In its way, use of the trainer logs enabled an internal dialogue for practitioners. These could then be brought into live discussion in capacity building workshops, and in debriefing at the end of delivery with pupils. The following quote from practitioners on the yMIND training in

¹ You can find the framework and underlying evidence here: <http://www.youth-mind.eu/images/products/Framework%20for%20effective%20transfer%20of%20practice%20for%20website.pdf>



Germany illustrates the type of reflective thinking that engagement in the training provoked:

I realised that it is important to reflect more on how many different reasons can lay behind a specific belief – often the answer is neither 0 nor 100%, is not white and black, there are many nuances and motives. In order to respond to these we have first to let them come to light.

Some of the questions are a trap, they provoke us, there is no right answer to them. The point is to become aware of our own subjective perception, to reflect on the own position

Coaching as a sustained, collaborative process

Where trainers collaborated with teachers to introduce (model) activities to their pupils, teachers had the opportunity to step back and observe pupils' interactions and responses. In several cases this was an eye-opener for teachers, who began reflecting on how they might do things differently. Where teachers were initially apprehensive about trainers leading the class, they learned to let go of control of the class and become professional learners themselves. Trainers were also encouraged to organise practitioners as pairs for professional learning, and, where possible, for delivery. As well as supporting their professional development, tandem delivery also provided the necessary support to manage classroom discussions, and support young people to develop the skills to handle this well.

Delegation of real power and work from the centre

Whether this element was a feature of the yMIND intervention or not depended to a large extent on the national education culture and policy and the culture of the schools. In Greece, for example, practitioners are given a large amount of freedom to implement approaches to teaching and learning as they see fit. In Bulgaria, teaching professionals felt much more constrained by structures and leadership. Nevertheless, evidence from the classroom and training sessions indicate that yMIND activities are empowering, and engagement with them becomes infectious.

The interest in unconventional methods of working with children excited [the teachers], and they were actively involved in this training day. (Bulgarian trainer)

For more information on POL and the yMIND project, visit our website at: <http://www.youth-mind.eu/>