**Case Study 4: Adapting solutions**



You have been asked to be a coach some primary school teachers to support them in improving their classroom practice. The school has recently invested in using a coaching programme that the school has purchased. As a coach, you will be regularly observing lessons for your assigned teachers and working with them on specific aspects of their practice.

You have completed your training and have met with each of the teachers individually. The aim of this first meeting is to identify an aspect of practice which each teacher will focus on during the first term of the programme.

Archie is a recently qualified teacher. There are many aspects of his practice which he would like to work on. These include lesson planning, behaviour management and formative assessment. In the training you attended, you were told that you should focus on one specific aspect of a teacher’s practice at a time. You agree with Archie that the coaching will support him with developing techniques for checking understanding within the lesson.

Belinda is an experienced teacher. She has been asked to introduce basic computer programming into the curriculum this year, a subject she has not taught before. She tells you that her main difficulty is having to learn programming skills ahead of teaching the pupils each lesson.

Caitlin has taught for over 20 years and, by her own admission, has some ‘bad habits’ which she finds it difficult to change. She recognises that she relies on asking a small number of pupils questions in her lessons as they are the ones who always put their hands up. She has tried various questioning strategies which she has learnt about in training session over the years, but none have really stuck.

David is the final teacher you are working with. The meeting was quite difficult as David wanted to talk about personal problems which are affecting his work. David was quite resistant to identifying an aspect of his practice to work on as he has, in his words, ‘too much going on’.

The coaching programme is central to the school’s strategy to support teacher development. You want to implement the programme in the way it is meant to be implemented, but you also want to make sure the support you provide is useful to the individuals you are working with. Being a coach is perhaps more challenging than you anticipated.

**Questions**

Consider the tensions created in ensuring whole school strategies address how individual teachers experience the wicked problem of teacher development. These questions may help structure your thinking:

1. Why is teacher development a wicked problem?
2. Why do teachers ‘experience’ this problem in different ways?
3. To what extent can a whole school programme be expected to ‘work’ for every teacher in a school?
4. Why is it important for those delivering programmes, initiatives and solutions to be allowed to adapt to local circumstances and individual or team needs?
5. What are the risks of allowing adaptations?