

**FLOTE-ing and Sinking:  
Teacher Participation in Online Professional Development**

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**Declaration**

**I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.**

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Signature

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# ABSTRACT

This study examines the engagement of two groups of teachers, in successive years, with an online professional development program designed to support teachers in facilitating the learning of languages other than English. The study examines the factors that impacted the teachers' ability to engage with the FLOTE online professional development programme. In particular, the study identifies what aspects of the programme encouraged or supported teachers, and what aspects hindered teachers. It also examines the impact of personal factors on the capacity of teachers to be successful in completing the FLOTE online programme.

A mixed methods approach is used in the study. Quantitative data provide demographic information, as well as information about participant teachers' initial level of competence with information communication technologies. The online tracking facility, incorporated into the programme, also recorded teachers' time on task across all programme modules.

Qualitative data are used to report on teacher participants as online learners, and to capture their individual lived experiences as they interacted with the FLOTE programme.

Also significant within the study are the lived experiences of the researcher. She occupies multiple roles – co-creator of elements of the programme, programme facilitator, data collector and analyst. The study projects her multiple voices as she engages with the two participant cohorts and this, in turn, adds to the richness of the investigation.

This research is contextualised within the development of the FLOTE online professional development programme. This programme uses a range of nautical themes to encapsulate key programme elements. So too does this study. It draws on a range of nautical analogies and uses these as a framework to present the study, as well as a mechanism to reflect and represent ideas and themes.

The findings of this study identify a number of factors that supported and hindered participants' engagement with the FLOTE programme. These included ICT competence, experiences and expectations of professional development, as well as personal factors. However, the most critical factor to emerge from the study relates to the capacity for teacher participants to be self-directed and autonomous in their own learning. The study shows that the low level of programme completion reflects the inability of most participants in this study to take responsibility for their own learning.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

CMS	Content Management System
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
E-learning	All forms of electronically supported learning and teaching.
FLOTE	Facilitating Languages Other Than English
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MCEECDYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
NALSAS	National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools
NALSSP	National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program
TNA	Technology Needs Assessment