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

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A report submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Education
Murdoch University
2012
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.

__________________________
Signature
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people whose assistance has significantly contributed to the completion of this thesis most notably my two supervisors, Dr Lindy Norris and Dr Dorit Maor. Their encouragement and timely feedback over a number of years has made this thesis journey more enjoyable and has ended with a much stronger document than would otherwise be the case. Thanks to you both.

Secondly, Ann Jones, my mother, for transcribing and proofreading efforts throughout the entire duration of this journey and my sister, Julie Jones for transcribing in the early stages. As my typing skills have never been very fast, their assistance has allowed me time to actually write rather than transcribe.

Thirdly, Dr Sally Knowles and her Jarrahdale writing retreats which unfortunately no longer run as she has a new job but were always incredibly productive and allowed us to meet other doctoral students and get feedback and suggestions from them.

Dr Cecily Scutt at Murdoch University for The Writing Space now and all the other writing workshops she has run over the years. Those Monday mornings have enabled me to hang in there through the blocked periods and feel like I was getting somewhere (albeit slowly at times).

Heather, Caroline and the others from our own writing groups on Tuesday afternoons and Friday mornings. Thanks for ‘metaphorically cracking the whip’ to help keep this thesis on track.

Penny Coutas and Rebecca Saunders fellow doctoral students and roommates for a long period for their patience and friendship, for their camaraderie and for listening when I needed to vent.

And finally Sas Jacobs for putting it all together.
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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<td>CMS</td>
<td>Content Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-learning</td>
<td>All forms of electronically supported learning and teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOTE</td>
<td>Facilitating Languages Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTE</td>
<td>Languages Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEECDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NALSAS</td>
<td>National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NALSSP</td>
<td>National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
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PREFACE: JUST SIT RIGHT BACK…¹

To the tune of “Gilligan’s Island”²

*Just sit right back and you’ll hear a tale,*
*A tale of an online course*
*That started in Western Australia*
*And serves as my data source:*

*The first facilitator was a mighty nerd,*
*The second a LOTE³ guru,*
*Many teachers enrolled in*
*A six month tour.*
*A six month tour…*

**How the study came into being**

At the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century there was significant activity associated with language teaching and learning in the Australian context. This was the time of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Taskforce funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA)⁴. The role of NALSAS was to promote the study of Asian languages and cultures Australia-wide, in particular Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian and Korean which were identified as the “languages of most benefit to Australia’s economic future” (NALSAS, 1998, p. 1)⁵. One of the NALSAS foci was the issue of language teacher quality and supply and, in particular, the lack of appropriate and effective professional development for both in-service and pre-service teachers. In order to address this issue, the Taskforce called for tenders to develop an online

¹ The first line from the theme song to the television series Gilligan’s Island: “Just sit right back and you’ll hear a tale…”
² These lyrics composed by Tracey Jones. The complete version can be found in Appendix 1. Original Gilligan’s Island lyrics and music can be found at http://classic-tv.com/ListenToThemes/GilligansIsland.html
³ Languages Other Than English
⁴ The Department is now known as the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).
professional development package for Australian language teachers. The Taskforce’s project brief was the creation of an online programme which could provide pre-service and in-service professional development for teachers of a second language.

While the NALSAS focus was on ‘Asian’ languages, it was felt that the online professional development programme developed through this Project would also be applicable to other languages. Being a national project, the programme needed to provide support and knowledge in a number of areas such as methodology and technology, allow for both teacher professional development and accreditation pathways, and take into account each state and territory’s individual curriculum requirements. After extensive discussion and negotiation between state and territory representatives, the programme developers, and the Taskforce, an online professional development prototype was created for trial.

The term FLOTE or Facilitating the learning of Languages Other Than English was selected as the name of this programme and the web address therefore became http://www.flote.edu.au. According to the MediaWiki Manual (2009, p. 1), “[s]hort URLs which hide complex programming code from the page address is good for webpage visitors.” Since instructional design research also indicates the importance of both easy-to-identify and easy-to-remember programme names and acronyms, it was felt that the name ‘FLOTE’ would ‘work’.

The FLOTE programme is central to this research as it provided an environment where teachers could interact with the modules and each other, and be monitored as part of the data collection process throughout the two years of the study. FLOTE itself consists of a variety of online modules on particular second language learning

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6 http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Manual:Short_URL
pedagogical and technological themes. These can be done as individual modules or as an entire programme. My participation in the FLOTE programme has been multifaceted. My roles have ranged from consulting on the initial Project Team, to uploading the entire module content into the Content Management System (CMS), to writing three of the original modules (1A: Information Technology as a resource for learning and teaching – the Internet, 1B: Information Technology as a resource for learning and teaching – Beyond the Internet, and module 9: The learning and teaching of scripts in languages) and co-facilitating both groups of teacher participants.

FLOTE is the central focus of this doctoral dissertation. Since commencing my doctoral research, I have collected and analysed data in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme as an element of my own reflective practice as well as for this research. My experience in all these different aspects of the programme gives me a broad perspective from which to examine online learning.

Part of the original tender agreement with the Commonwealth was to trial the complete FLOTE programme before releasing it for general use. This was done as the ‘maiden voyage’ with 21 teachers. A second group of 40 teachers was enrolled in the revised professional development programme the following year. It was intended that these two teacher groups would provide the bulk of the data for the research that is the focus of this dissertation. My initial dissertation proposal was to investigate the extent to which teachers interacted with the FLOTE online modules. In particular, I wanted

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7 Modules 1A and 1B have since been replaced and renamed to reflect changes in the area of communication technologies and how these can be used to good effect in a LOTE learning environment. The modules are now called 1A. Information Communication Technologies as a resource for learning and teaching, and 1B. More on Information Communication Technologies as a resource for learning and teaching.
to see the potential impact of these modules on the teachers’ subsequent second
language classroom learning and teaching practices.

**Why the focus of the study changed**

At the end of my data collection period, with two years of monitoring the FLOTE
programme and two groups of participants, it was clear that the data I had collected
would not provide me with sufficient information specific to the topic as it was
originally conceived. The original investigation into FLOTE’s possible impact on
teachers’ classroom practice meant I had tried to set up focus groups of six teachers
each year of the study and follow them into the classroom. It was intended that the
practice of these teachers be examined in depth to provide a deeper and more
comprehensive look at pedagogical change and the extent to which it was attributable
to FLOTE. Of the six teachers I recruited to examine in depth through pre- and post-
observations and interviews, only one completed the programme in the first year and
she enrolled in a full time Masters degree so was therefore unable to be included in
the post-programme data collection relevant to this study. Of the second year focus
group, not one teacher of the six involved in pre-observation and interviews
completed FLOTE. What did become clear though throughout these two years, and
especially at the end of my data collection period, was that many teachers were
struggling, not just with completing the online professional development programme
but in some cases getting started. I soon began to wonder why this was happening
particularly since the course was one for which teachers had volunteered rather than
one they were required to do, and in fact their fees, and some teacher relief, were
provided to enable them to be involved in and be supported in completing the course.
I had read that prolonged fieldwork often “disrupts and troubles the self” (Atkinson,
Coffey, & Delamont, 2003, p. 55) and this really sums up my initial frustration with
myself, with the data collection processes, and also with my participants. I realised that I would be unable to complete the research as I had planned and that I needed to change my focus. I began to realise that the data I had thought so lacking because it didn't adequately address my initial proposal was actually incredibly rich but in a different area - that of issues around completion or non-completion of this online professional development programme. This then formed the springboard for the current investigation into the reasons behind teachers’ ability or inability to interact with and complete FLOTE. This notion was then transposed into the title of this dissertation: “FLOTE-ing and Sinking: Teacher participation in online professional development”.

I had planned to approach my original research topic from an ethnographic perspective. However, the events over the two years of data collection and research convinced me that a closer and more personal involvement would be necessary (in fact would be unavoidable) in order to provide a detailed picture of both the online programme and the issues associated with uptake and completion. As such, I have elected to look at the original participants and other key parties through a hermeneutic phenomenological lens to examine in depth engagement with FLOTE over the 2 years of the programme.

Wilson and Hutchinson (as cited in Laverty 2003, p. 7) describe hermeneutic phenomenology as moving towards "illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding.” In addition, Laverty (2003) and other authors (Geelan & Taylor, 1991; Hunter & Schmidt, 2004) emphasise the importance of the role of the experiences of the researcher as an integral part of the research and interpretation in this methodology. This approach thus allows me to
present a far richer view of all the participants, including myself, as well as incorporating some of the unique occurrences specific to this study. In addition, Polkinghorne (1989) in Laverty (2003, p. 18) adds that data can come from many sources including the researcher’s own reflections. So much valuable experience and so many insights would be lost if I tried to be ‘objective’ and distance myself from the study. It is certainly an interesting and challenging role being a creator, facilitator, data collector and now analyst of such a project. While it was at times difficult to mentally separate these roles, endeavouring to do so did lead to significant breakthroughs in the way I tackled this dissertation and prepared for my subsequent online facilitation roles.
How the different voices are projected in this study

In qualitative studies the challenge of separating oneself from one’s research participants is often significant (Connell, Lynch, & Waring, 2001; Lloyd-Jones, 2003). Trying to separate one’s own roles is also mentally challenging. This is particularly true in studies such as this. In order to facilitate this division, I use visual cues to distinguish between the three main groups or ‘voices’ involved in the study. The three voices presented are; (i) the participants, (ii) the academic researcher (myself) and (iii) myself as a participant. To distinguish between these voices, each is portrayed through different formatting:

(i) This text is indented and represents the voices of the other participants throughout this dissertation. Quotations are expressed as originally written without alteration or correction.

(ii) This text is standard text and represents my ‘academic voice’ throughout this dissertation.

(iii) This text is indented in a different font and represents my ‘participant voice’ throughout this dissertation. This is usually excerpts from my journal or “Facilitator’s Log”. The background used is an image of a page from Captain Cook’s 1770 ship’s log (http://www.captcookne.co.uk/exhibits/C3113-05).

It is hoped that this ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ fashion of portraying the academic and the participant will allow me to better separate my roles and allow me, the researcher, to more accurately examine my own involvement with, and reflections on, the programme itself and on the other participants.
Study Participants and Confidentiality

Confidentiality has been a key issue of this research both with the teacher participants and the educational jurisdiction involved. Where names are used to identify individuals, pseudonyms are used for all participants other than me. These names were generated from a website of baby names and definitions. Every effort was made to select names that were, as far as possible, representative of each participant’s personality. While this will be meaningless for many readers of this research, it did make it easier to remember many of the pseudonyms both when writing this dissertation and when presenting on this topic. Two examples (without the original name included) follow:

- Bernadette – pious
- Libby - dedicated

\footnote{8 Taken from http://www.baby-names-meanings.com/}
Nautical terms and the Gilligan’s Island connection within the study

The original term FLOTE came from the name of my supervisor’s boat. Since she is passionate about sailing, and since the programme was being designed to support and aid teachers, we decided to use a lifebuoy on the main FLOTE home page as the symbol for the programme (See Figure 1). We then continued the use of the nautical analogy throughout FLOTE (eg. “Navigate your way to helping students learn another language”). Links to various subsections (Forum, Chat, Help etc), are accessed through a rope (See Figure 2) and nautical terminology is present in many areas of the programme. Given this situation, it was a simple process to continue this theme into my dissertation. Chapter headings and subheadings also took on this focus.

The Gilligan’s Island connection came in the second year of the study when I rewrote the theme song as a joke. Gilligan’s Island was an American television series that ran from 1964-67. The premise of the show was that 5 passengers (Mr and Mrs Howell, Ginger, Maryann and the professor) and a captain (The Skipper) and his first mate (Gilligan) were stranded on a desert isle. These castaways had to try and adapt to life
on the island\(^9\). The parallels between these diverse personalities ‘stranded’ on the island, and the participants in this new FLOTE environment could not be ignored. My investigations showed that the seven character archetypes from *Gilligan’s Island* could be applied to FLOTE’s participants. In Chapter 5, the *Gilligan’s Island* archetypal matrix is used to frame the presentation of the data. It is hoped that this unusual method of categorisation provides a useful and interesting approach through which to highlight issues arising from this research.

**The structure of the study**

Here in the Preface, the background context for the study, and the information required for the reading of subsequent chapters, is presented. In the next chapter (Chapter 1 ‘Destination, Passengers and Crew’), the participants, and the background to the FLOTE programme, are presented in detail. Chapter Two is entitled ‘Here be Dragons’. This chapter reviews the literature pertinent to the study and identifies areas that are contentious and that require investigation. In Chapter Three ‘In the Dockyard’, the methodology underpinning this research is examined. Chapter Four ‘SS FLOTE’ reviews FLOTE as curriculum and as a technical artefact. Chapters Five and Six ‘Gilligan’s Island Archetypes’ and ‘The Lighthouse’ present and discuss the findings of this study, and in the final chapter ‘At Journey’s End’ the study is brought together.

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1. THE DESTINATION, PASSENGERS & CREW

1.1. Introduction

This dissertation examines the engagement of two groups of teachers with an online professional development programme called FLOTE\textsuperscript{10}. FLOTE was developed for language teachers in Australian schools. The central focus of this research was the uptake and completion of the programme by the teachers enrolled both in the first and second years of its development. The study uses a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective to present the teachers and other key figures, (in particular myself in my role as an academic and also participant researcher), through their own discourse. At the beginning of the study, the online medium was a comparatively new one, particularly in the area of in-service teacher professional development. The participants’ attitudes to, and interaction with, online learning provided me with multiple issues to explore. Firstly, it has allowed me to examine the Internet as a viable alternative to face-to-face teacher professional development. Secondly, it has provided opportunities to discover how the participants ‘felt’ about, and coped with the online medium, and thirdly it went some way towards ‘filling in the blank areas’ on the online professional development map – about understanding what works in this area. Participants in this study had extremely low completion rates of the FLOTE programme in both years, and this research presents the reasons for this, as well as identifying continuing issues in the area of online teacher professional development.

\textsuperscript{10} Facilitating the learning of Languages Other Than English
1.2. The Destination

The participants in this study fell into one of two categories - teacher participants (the passengers), and people associated with the administration and running of the programme (the crew). Twenty one Australian teachers from the first year of the program and forty from the second, formed the teacher cohort, while the two programme facilitators (including myself) and a curriculum officer from the educational jurisdiction that funded the teacher participants made up the administrative team.

While the FLOTE programme was developed using the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy funding, the content was similar to that of a LOTE\textsuperscript{11} methodology course that had previously been run face-to-face for teachers retraining to become language teachers. It was hoped that, with FLOTE being in an online environment, teachers in future could participate in this online methodology programme with more flexibility of access in terms of time and place. This would also address the issues raised by some authors (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007; SREB, 2004; Tomei, 2007) concerning the constraints and costs associated with face-to-face professional development. However, as will be seen from this study, many teachers experienced difficulties with this learning environment.

The focus of this dissertation is to look in depth at the level of engagement of the teacher participants with the FLOTE online programme and identify and explore issues that arose for all of the parties involved in its evolution and facilitation.

One of the requirements of the original NALSAS tender was that FLOTE would be trialled before being released for general use. One educational jurisdiction asked for

\textsuperscript{11} Language Other Than English
some teachers to trial the initial FLOTE programme in the first year for a period of three months during which it was felt that the teachers should be able to complete the online programme. As it turned out, this was an overly optimistic estimate and the duration was increased to six months, both for the ‘maiden voyage’ where the initial participants were given extra time, and for those who enrolled in the programme in the second year. Both groups were enrolled in the entire FLOTE online programme of 12 modules. Teachers who actively engaged with the programme provided significant data through their ejournals, emails and participation in the weekly ‘Chat’ session. Those who did not participate, or who fell by the wayside partway through the programme, also provided useful data as well as presenting some interesting challenges and situations for the ‘crew’ as the study unfolded.

1.2.1. Research Questions

The revised research questions for this study ask: What factors impacted on teachers’ ability to engage with the FLOTE online professional development programme? And also, how can their experiences inform the development of future online professional development programmes?

In particular:

- What aspects of the programme itself may have encouraged / supported the teachers?
- What aspects of the programme itself may have hindered the teachers?
- What personal aspects associated with the teachers may have facilitated their participation?
- What personal aspects associated with the teachers may have hindered their participation?
• What technological features may have supported the teachers?

• What technological issues may have hindered the teachers?

1.2.2. **Significance of the Study**

While the original intention of this research was to examine the impact of FLOTE on teacher beliefs, pedagogical content knowledge and on classroom practice, the change of focus to investigate barriers to the programme’s uptake and completion does not in any way diminish the study’s significance. In fact, while the hermeneutic phenomenological nature of the research precludes the conclusions from being transferred ad hoc into other situations, the data from this study offer a very rich and personalised account that allows us to gain a much deeper level of understanding about all of the participants involved in this study and their motivations as well as their difficulties. The data show areas where the FLOTE programme needed to be responsive. The FLOTE experience also generates information which has applications more broadly for online professional development programmes - not just this one programme, and not just language programmes, but professional development programmes more broadly.

In particular it is hoped that this research will:

• significantly enhance our understanding of aspects influencing teacher engagement with, and completion of, online professional development programmes,

• provide insights into the aspects of online learning the teachers found most and least useful, and
• provide suggestions for areas deserving particular attention when developing online professional development programmes.

This research has allowed me to gain a much broader understanding of the online environment when used for professional development and of both the potential and pitfalls that are integral parts of such an environment. From a personal perspective, the emotions and experiences have been diverse and have had a significant personal impact. The following extract from the journal I maintained over the course of the study is reflective of this.

MY JOURNAL

The experience of doing this study has so far been a combination of excitement, anticipation, fear, and fascination. Excitement about the new things I am constantly learning, anticipation about other learning opportunities as well as the potential of the research itself, fear of failure, of course, and a morbid fascination with watching some of our participants - a bit like the fascination you get when you turn over a log and see something poisonous...
1.3. Passenger and Crew List

The ‘passengers’, who are the key participants in this research, consist of two groups of teachers, (one from the first year of the study and the other from the second year), who had enrolled in the FLOTE online programme. As well as the two FLOTE groups (the passengers), there were also two FLOTE facilitators and the representative of the educational jurisdiction involved in the professional development (the crew).

In this section of this dissertation, background details of each of these groups will be provided, both through qualitative and quantitative data. This will present a portrait of the characteristics of teachers who were involved in the FLOTE programme and those who assisted with the programme. Data used in this section were gathered from the pre-course TNA (Technology Needs Assessment\(^\text{12}\)), interviews, and general email correspondence.

1.3.1. The ‘maiden voyage’ passenger list

In order to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants in this study, pseudonyms, representative of their personality, were chosen by examining lists of names and meanings from a website\(^\text{13}\). In the case of participants who withdrew from the programme near the beginning, it was impossible to gauge their personality so ‘na’ (not applicable) has been used in these instances. The ‘maiden voyage’ saw 21 participants enrol. Their gender, the pseudonym used and the language they each taught, is listed below:

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\(^{12}\) Was originally available at http://www.chadwick-k12.com/ssetna/ See Appendix 2 for screen snapshots

\(^{13}\) Names taken from http://www.baby-names-meanings.com/ which has now moved to http://babynamesworld.parentsconnect.com/
The participants on this maiden voyage were a mixture of male/female, rural/metropolitan and secondary/primary teachers. Most teachers had Indonesian as their target language for teaching (TL) in the FLOTE programme, although there were also some Italian speakers, two French speakers and one teacher with language skills in both Indonesian and Japanese. Some of the teachers were already teaching a LOTE while others were not. Of this initial group of 21, 4 teachers pulled out either prior to
the commencement of the programme or in the early stages because of other commitments\textsuperscript{14}.

An overview of the participants is given in the graphs below. The first two graphs show school type and location:

**Figures 3: School type and location**

```
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures3.png}
\end{center}
```

Significantly larger numbers of women were in the first year as shown below:

**Figure 4: Gender of participants**

```
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=1\textwidth]{figure4.png}
\end{center}
```

\textsuperscript{14} In previous years, when similar content was delivered to a similar cohort of teachers but through a face-to-face programme, there was usually only a drop out rate of one or two even though the programmes were usually conducted in school holiday periods. (Data sampled from the relevant jurisdiction)
Participants’ who were teaching second languages and the languages they taught are detailed below:

Two main issues were identified from the teachers’ background information and the Technology Needs Assessments (Appendix 2) that was completed before FLOTE began in each year. The first of these was the diversity in participant teaching methodology knowledge. This meant that FLOTE needed to incorporate content suitable for beginners in this area as well as for those with significant knowledge. The second issue related to the technology knowledge base which also ranged from total beginners to those comfortable with the technology, and who used it daily in the classroom. These two issues meant that FLOTE needed to cater for participants with a range of ability in computer use, with consideration of access to technology, and also with respect to flexibility of content in all the modules.

1.3.2. Participants’ knowledge base

An analysis of the Technology Needs Assessment survey indicated an overall low level of technological know-how. This finding corresponds to other studies of online professional development at the time (Bennett, Priest, & Macpherson, 1999; Brown,
The results also indicated little knowledge of curriculum in the area of second/foreign languages.

The short vignettes below, (compiled using qualitative data from the study), complement the statistical data with respect to providing a picture of the diversity in terms of the knowledge base of the trial participants:

**Libby (Dedicated)**
Female, in early 30s, in first year of teaching Indonesian (although had a number of years as a generalist primary teacher), in a metropolitan primary school. Reasonable language skills but only limited experience in-country. This teacher when advised to ‘bookmark the FLOTE site’ was anxious to know if the bookmark would arrive by post.

**Chuck (Impulsive)**
Male, not yet teaching a language, but very experienced teacher (Head of Department) of Society and Environment in a secondary school. Limited language skills but considered himself to be quite ‘savvy’ with respect to IT. He did not realise however, that there were multiple pages within most sections of FLOTE and he thought he had finished after just a couple of weeks.

**Melanie (Patient)**
Female, in late 40s, not teaching languages but very experienced as a generalist primary trained teacher. Found Modules 1A and 1B to be ‘a very hard slog’ but then was able to move quickly and effectively through other modules.

**Martha (Resigned)**
Female, in early 40s, teaching Indonesian in a rural location. Reasonable language skills and several years experience living in a Malay speaking community. Very keen to do the course but not able to settle to doing it online.

**Gay (Cheerful)**
Female, early 20s, first year out and teaching Italian in a rural school. Admitted limited knowledge of both curriculum and IT but emitted immense enthusiasm and dedication to the task.

The trial cohort was considered able to provide a good coverage of all dimensions critical to gauging the appropriateness and flexibility of the FLOTE programme. That is, the trial cohort had Asian and European languages represented, and had teacher profiles reflecting a range in terms of gender, age, experience, responsibility, phase of
schooling, and also location. The cohort was also comprised of teachers already teaching a second language, as well as others yet to engage in that experience.

In my journal (below) I reflect on some members of the first group of participants, as I try to get them involved in my research as well as in FLOTE.

1.3.3. The second year passenger list

The second teacher participant group had three times as many females as males. Almost all the schools in the latter year were metropolitan, with only 4 outside that area. Just over half the schools were primary and the predominant language taught for this year was Italian, with Indonesian a close second and a relatively small number of Japanese teachers. Just over half the teachers were currently teaching a LOTE. Two
teachers withdrew from this group of 40 before it began because of other commitments. The list of gender, pseudonyms and languages for this year, is included below. As before, participants who withdrew from the programme are represented with ‘na.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>LOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Alfonsina</td>
<td>Eager</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Comela</td>
<td>Unusual</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>Pure</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Pure</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Dara</td>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>Busy</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Delai</td>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Edna</td>
<td>Capricious</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Freda</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Griselda</td>
<td>Battle maid</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gwen</td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Haldana</td>
<td>Dedicated</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Idena</td>
<td>Steady worker</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Joletta</td>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lousella</td>
<td>Talkative</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Marilyn</td>
<td>Bitter</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nadine</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Riva</td>
<td>Dreamer</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Roberta</td>
<td>Brilliant</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Rowena</td>
<td>Good mind</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Tacita</td>
<td>Silent</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thalida</td>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Trista</td>
<td>Sorrowful</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Worthy</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Varette</td>
<td>Changeable</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Name</td>
<td>Second Word</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Xylna</td>
<td>Reserved</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Abel</td>
<td>breath of vapour</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Barron</td>
<td>Fighter</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bradley</td>
<td>Prospers</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Emile</td>
<td>industrious</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
<td>peaceable</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Konrad</td>
<td>bold speaker</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Marlow</td>
<td>home lover</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Rodney</td>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Rudyard</td>
<td>Tenacious</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Varian</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An overview of the participants is given in the graphs below. The first two graphs show the type of school and whether it was local or remote. A significant number of teachers were metro and primary school teachers.

Figure 6: School type and location - second year

Figure 7: Gender of participants - second year

Around three quarters of the participants in the second year were female.
Participants’ second languages are detailed in Figure 8. Of those teachers who were teaching a second language, most were Italian teachers, closely followed by Indonesian.

![Figure 8: Languages of participants - second year](image)

### 1.3.4. Participants’ knowledge base

As with the group from the first year, the Technology Needs Assessment surveys (see Appendix 2) showed a low level of both technological and curriculum knowledge, although the spread of perceived knowledge (the group members’ opinions about their own ability) in this group was broader.

The short vignettes below compliment the statistical data with respect to providing a picture of the diversity in the knowledge base of the participants:

**Konrad (Bold Speaker)**
Male in his 30s. Currently teaching Indonesian at a metro high school. Has been a teacher for some years and is very IT literate. Is very excited about the potential for technology in the classroom for both teachers and students.

**Gwen (Intellectual)**
Female in her 40s. Currently teaching Indonesian at a metro primary school. Been teaching for over 25 years and, while she is comfortable with some aspects of technology, still feels she needs to know a lot more.

**Rodney (Follower)**
Male in his 40s. Currently teaching Italian for the first time at a metro high school but has been teaching for around 5 years altogether. Describes himself as ‘comfortable’ with computers.
Maria (Stony)
Female teacher of Indonesian at a rural primary school. Was waiting for the CD to arrive before she began the programme even after being assured that the modules were online.

Roberta (Brilliant)
Female teacher of Japanese at a metropolitan primary school. Had low perceptions of her own abilities online but thrived in the online environment.

This second year group was the first to enrol in the completed programme as the original participants were still ‘trialling’ the modules. It was important to watch this group in order to ensure that the completed modules were as comprehensive and meaningful as possible, and to monitor which aspects of the online professional development programme may need further alterations.

1.4. The passengers compared

As the second teacher participant group had significantly more members than the first trial cohort as well as less variety, a simple comparison of the raw data does not provide an accurate view of the differences between the groups. However, when the data are examined as a percentage for each year, (see Table 1), it is clear that the first and second year groups are quite different except in the area of gender.

Cohort diversity as a factor to be considered within the study is apparent.
### Table 1: The Passengers Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR 1</th>
<th>YEAR 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Teaching</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District High</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Teaching</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching TL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1.5. The crew of SS FLOTE

##### 1.5.1. Tracey Jones (me)

As a participant researcher and academic in this study, it is important to detail my own background and experiences in the fields of education and technology, in order to better demonstrate the ways in which these have impacted on my selection of this dissertation topic and the chosen methodology. My teaching background is primarily in LOTE, although I also have experience teaching English to adults and children in
Japan, as well as in teaching in other subject areas such as English and Social Studies. The two foreign languages I speak and have taught are Japanese and French, and I taught exclusively in government schools.

From teaching I moved into tour guiding and desktop publishing in Japanese, generating a number of publications for Japanese language teachers and students in Australia. This was my first foray into technology, which was to be central to my work, study and life for the next 10 years. This included website design and creation, corporate computer software training and a Masters in Training and Development (Adult Education). In addition, I often presented workshops and lectures at a number of Universities, both in the areas of LOTE & Information Communication Technology (ICT), and in LOTE methodology and was Curriculum Writer for Japanese for The Learning Federation LOTE2 Project. I have also taught Languages curriculum studies in a university context.

It was this combination of skills, honed over many years, which has allowed me to have a deeper understanding of the teacher participants in this research.

MY JOURNAL
My own involvement with the programme has been on so many different levels, that sometimes I forget which hat I am wearing on which day. I know that I am so close to it, that it will be impossible to be objective and I am sure that one of the hardest parts of this dissertation for me will be writing the FLOTE chapter, simply because I know it inside and out. Being a part of the original design group, having written three of the modules, facilitated both groups of participants, as well as doing my doctorate on this topic, it sometimes feels as though my whole life has been FLOTE for the last few years."
One of the most difficult aspects of completing this dissertation for me has been trying to separate the researcher from the participant. This has been exacerbated by my very close involvement with so many aspects of the FLOTE programme.

The role of participant researcher has been at times a difficult one because of my long-time and varied involvement with FLOTE and the associated participants. Many of my journal entries, reflections and other writing have been overly emotive in reaction to the events over the period when the two participant groups were enrolled and it has been a slow process to find a way of separating my own two voices, that of the ‘researcher’ and the ‘participant’ within this dissertation15.

1.5.2. Co-facilitator of the FLOTE Programme (Hadithi)16

As well as myself, there was an additional facilitator of the FLOTE online programme. With numerous years experience in the areas of LOTE teaching at schools and at university, Hadithi’s participation, both in the development of the modules and the facilitation of the programme through the weekly Chat sessions and through ejournal feedback, provided the teacher participants and myself with an invaluable resource. In addition, she was able to provide me with a second opinion about some of the issues that arose with the FLOTE programme throughout both years.

1.5.3. The Education Jurisdiction Representative (Halima)17

As one of the requirements of the NALSAS tender that led to the development of FLOTE, the entire online programme had to be firstly trialled with a group of teachers

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15 See Preface for details of this
16 Pseudonym from http://babynamesworld.parentsconnect.com/ definition: legend/fable
and then it could be made available for general professional development. The participants enrolled in the first year formed this trial group. These teachers were funded by an Australian education jurisdiction that provided 5 days teacher relief\(^{18}\) per person over the six month period of the programme to assist teachers to complete it.

The same jurisdiction funded the subsequent group of 40 teachers to participate in the same programme. The second year funding included the course fees for each person, as well as 1 relief day for the pre-programme face-to-face day and 5 days relief for the 6 month course that could be taken at any point during that time. Teachers in both years signed a contract confirming their intent to complete the programme on time and to a satisfactory level.

Halima, as the representative of the educational jurisdiction who sponsored both groups, was extremely approachable throughout the period of the programme in both years, and was always very interested in both feedback about teachers involved, and feedback from the teachers involved.

Halima became more directly involved in the second year when a number of teachers, who had signed the contract, were in danger of contractual violation because they either had not yet logged onto FLOTE, or would be unable to complete the programme in the allocated time. As the relief funding had been provided in advance (unlike the first year), this was a significant concern and the jurisdiction was required to deal directly with teachers and schools in order to attempt to resolve this issue.

\(^{18}\) When teachers are absent from their class, a relief teacher is provided. The ‘relief’ mentioned here was a daily figure to cover the cost of getting a relief teacher.
1.6. Conclusion

This chapter describes the background and knowledge base of both groups of ‘passengers’ enrolled in the FLOTE online professional development programme as well as providing details about the ‘crew members’. These are the key participants in this research. Information here provides a context within which to place the FLOTE experience and the research questions. It also sets the scene for future chapters. The diversity of the two teacher cohorts is made evident, as is the relatively low technology knowledge base of ‘passengers’ in both years. How these factors impact and unfold within the context of the two year study will be explored in this dissertation.
2. HERE BE DRAGONS

2.1. Introduction

In medieval and other times, cartographers sometimes wrote “Here Be Dragons” on maps and charts to indicate unexplored or dangerous territory. Of course, they wrote it in Latin; *Hic sunt dracones* or used an illustration, but either way, it was clear that this was a warning about the potential pitfalls and fears of the unknown. In the same way, this chapter is intended to set the scene of the background to this dissertation, through providing a picture of what is known, and also to identify the ‘potential dragons’ associated with this research.

While much was later learned from the creating and facilitating of FLOTE and from the data collection, ongoing review of the literature has allowed me to fine tune the framing of my research as well as enabling me to put my own findings into a broader context. An initial review of the main topics, detailed on the next page, was carried out over the first years of the study. However, in more recent years, I have been surprised how many new publications there were available in this area, particularly within the theme of online learning. This increase of interest is encouraging, although reports of successful, totally online programmes remained difficult to find. Mixed or blended programmes (eg, partly face-to-face, partly online) were more common and appeared most successful.

This chapter is a selective review of the three main areas related to my study.

The parameters of the LOTE Policy section of this literature review, are concerned purely with Australian policy. It begins from the *Hobart Declaration* in 1989 and continues to the *National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools*

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Strategy and The Melbourne Declaration in 2008. This date range was selected as it represents the most significant time period for languages education in Australia. In addition, it includes the period when NALSAS was most active and, since it was due to the efforts of the Taskforce that FLOTE was created, it is important to examine these policies’ impact on languages generally, as well as on FLOTE.

The second part of this chapter is concerned with the impact of the Internet on teaching. Unlike the LOTE Policy section, this part examines research in online learning broadly as well as some of the Australian online learning packages and research. Since online learning is in itself a relatively young area - around three decades old - literature in this area is also recent, limiting itself naturally to this time period.

The final section of this chapter provides a historical view of teacher professional development, from face-to-face to entirely online models. According to Craft (2000, p. 1), prior to the mid 1990s, professional development was usually done as a teacher’s choice to improve skills or as a way of improving teachers’ career choices. As such, the main emphasis of this section is the 1990s and the 2000s. It discusses these generally and then briefly examines the Australian situation with respect to specific LOTE professional development.

In each of these three sections, literature was located through the Google Scholar search engine, university library journal databases and Proquest Pro journal database. I was particularly interested in those journals involved with teacher professional development.

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20 Facilitating the learning of Languages Other Than English

21 Available at: [http://scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com) Google scholar search engine locates references, articles, books and other research-related publications
education or distance education, which tended to have the data most relevant to my study.

2.2. Current Features on the Learning Map

As the central focus of this research examines LOTE teachers’ participation in the FLOTE online professional development programme, it is important to explore the literature associated with key concepts and notions that underpin the study. These are: The teaching of languages other than English (The LOTE Lagoon), online learning (Technology Gap), and professional development (PD Field). Each of these concepts, in Australia, is underpinned by local, state or national government decisions and reports (Forest of Policy) (See Figure 1).

These features are ‘explored’ both to provide background and context, and also to identify what is believed / known, and what is not, so that this investigation can add to our knowledge - slay some of the dragons.
2.2.1. The LOTE²² Lagoon

The first of the features relevant to this study is that of LOTE, or Languages Other Than English, teaching. Due to the vast distances involved and the decentralised government that Australia has had, the states and territories in Australia, until quite recently, had a very fragmented approach to education generally, with each developing its own policies and curriculum.

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²²‘LOTE’ or Languages Other Than English has been a common acronym in language education since the early 80s. It came from an Australian national report: The Senate Report: A National Policy on Languages, 1984 [note: this is mentioned in (DEEWR, 2007)]. (It has been replaced by ‘languages’ to reduce the ‘languages other than English’ vs ‘English’ divide).
In the area of LOTE, this problem of decentralisation was exacerbated by the traditional ‘British colonial’ emphasis on European languages and Latin. This gradually became replaced by Asian languages, as state and federal governments touted LOTE as an important part of internationalisation and trade. Languages such as Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin) and Indonesian became popular, although their uptake was initially hampered by a lack of qualified teachers (NBEET, 1996a). Demographic factors also had an enormous impact on which languages were taught where, as Australia’s multicultural communities expanded through migration (NBEET, 1996a).

In 1994, the NLLIA$^{23}$ published a series of nine books profiling key languages in Australia. These volumes covered Arabic, Modern Standard Chinese, French, German, Modern Greek, Indonesian / Malay, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. These languages were selected as being of importance domestically and internationally (Marriott, Neustupny, & Spence-Brown, 1994).

Australia’s more recent educational policy history is marked by a number of milestones relevant to languages education, and this research in particular; The Hobart Declaration (1989), The Adelaide Declaration (1999), The Melbourne Declaration (2008), the establishment of the NALSAS (National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools) Strategy (1994), the National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools: National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005 - 2008 (2005) and the development of the National Asian Languages and Studies Program (NALSSP) (2009). The main features of these six national policy documents are discussed below, as well as their significance in establishing a context for this research. This new emphasis on national collaboration and policies stemmed from a realisation of the need for increased

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$^{23}$ The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia. The NLLIA later became Language Australia and is now disbanded.
cohesion among states and territories, partly due to increased globalisation but also
due to social change. With regard to languages and language teaching, there would be
a recognition that “language is fundamental to all public and private life, and as such
the principles which underlie the decisions made about languages should command a
national consensus” (Lo Bianco, 1987, p. 3). And, As Naisbitt says (1984, p. 76),
 “[t]he globalization of our economies will be accompanied by a renaissance in
language and cultural assertiveness”.

Despite this apparent increase in the perceived importance of second languages in
Australia, the reality in schools is far different. Australia continues to have
significantly less LOTE learning in schools when compared with other OECD24
countries. Research conducted by the University of Melbourne and the APPA25
showed that, between 1996-1998, 30% of Australian primary schools increased their
LOTE emphasis, while over half stayed the same or decreased. In other OECD
countries, LOTE learning is more continuous, begins earlier and has more contact
hours per week (DEST, 2002a) but interestingly, reports in the US, UK and Europe
have shown that the level of LOTE learned at school is considered mediocre and have
been pushing “for improved language education for the last two decades” (DEST,
2002a, p. ix).

2.2.1.1. 1989 - The Hobart declaration

The AEC26, a group consisting of State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of
Education, supported the idea of national collaboration and met to try to establish this.
The Hobart Declaration of April 1989, was the first attempt at a national level to set
up “ten Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia”

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24 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
25 Australian Primary Principals’ Association
26 The Australian Education Council which became MCEETYA and is now MCEECDYA
These goals endeavoured to set out, in everyday language, the common expectations for education in Australia in order to facilitate common directions and future planning for curriculum and assessment, as well as providing a framework for cooperation and to “meet the challenges of our time” (MCEETYA, 1989, p. 2). In addition to the goals, the Declaration also specified some national standards to be generated from areas of common concern. These were:

- An Annual National Report on Schooling
- National Collaboration in Curriculum Development
- Establishment of Curriculum Corporation of Australia
- Developing an Appropriate Handwriting Style for Australian Schools
- The Goal of a Common Age of Entry for Australian Schools
- Improving the Quality of Teaching (MCEETYA, 1989, pp. 2-3)

The areas of most relevance to this dissertation are those of the formation of the Curriculum Corporation, which has been responsible for the generation of many national publications and resources in the LOTE area, and the acknowledgement of a need to promote and plan for quality teaching. Most importantly, LOTE, which until then had been an ‘option’ and of little perceived importance, became recognised as one of the 8 Key Learning Areas that all students were required to study, rather than something more usually studied by the academically elite.

This view [of LOTE as an option] changed significantly in the 1990s when most states and territories introduced languages programs in primary schools as part of their commitment to the National Goals. Since then, a great deal of development has occurred in terms of numbers of programs, numbers of languages learners and the number of languages taught.
It is clear that the 90’s were a significant turning point for language education in Australia and the monolingualism that had previously been accepted. Also in the 90’s, increased multiculturalism and economic rationalism prompted interest in languages, particularly Asian languages (DEST, 2002b).

With regards to LOTE-specific goals in the Hobart declaration, the following are relevant:

6. g To develop in students a knowledge of languages other than English

8.0 To provide learners with an understanding of and respect for our cultural heritage, including the particular background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups and other cultures (MCEETYA, 1989, p. 3).

It was also realised that the changing needs of Australian schooling would require the national goals to be reviewed from time to time, although this was not done until the Adelaide Declaration in 1999 and then again with the Melbourne Declaration in 2008.

2.2.1.2. 1994 - NALSAS

Following on from the Hobart Declaration, numerous other national educational projects, both LOTE-specific and generalist, were undertaken. These included the development of Department of Employment, Education and Training’s Australia’s Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (1991), and Curriculum Corporation’s Nationals Statement on LOTE (1994b) and LOTE Profile (1994a).

In 1994 NALSAS, the National Asian Languages in Australian Schools Strategy, was created to promote the study of Asian languages and culture Australia-wide and in all
school systems (DEST, 2002a). This occurred in response to a report prepared under the auspices of the Keating Federal Labour Government, by the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG). The report was entitled *Asian Languages and Australia’s Economic Future.* The report pinpointed Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian and Korean as the “languages of most benefit to Australia’s economic future” (NALSAS, 1998, p. 1). The NALSAS strategy was intended to improve Australia’s ability to “interact internationally, in particular with Asian economies” (DEST, 2002b, p. 2).

The NALSAS Strategy focussed on 5 key areas:

- Teacher training (pre-service)
- Teacher professional development (in-service)
- Programme delivery
- Curriculum resources
- International and cooperative partners

(NALSAS, 1994, p. 4)

NALSAS’ intent was the promotion of studies of Asia across the curriculum, as well as the study of Asian languages across Australia, because of our “geographic and strategic position in the world [which] makes it obligatory that our people develop some knowledge and understanding of Asia and its languages” (NALSAS, 2000, p. 1).

27 Also known as the Rudd Report
The initial funding of over $30 million a year for the first four years of NALSAS, came from the State and Territory Governments who provided half the funding while the Commonwealth provided the other half. The funding was intended to provide resources to achieve the strategy’s objectives (DEST, 2002a, 2002b), but it was not intended to be ongoing, and it was anticipated “that it [language] would be self-sustaining in schools by the end of 2002” (DEEWR, 2007, p. 16).

The initial phase (Phase 1) of NALSAS, saw significant resource production through this funding to facilitate the achievement of NALSAS objectives. Resources developed were multimedia, online and print. Also, student participation in Asian languages increased by more than 50% from 1994 to 1997. In addition, during this same period, 2500 teachers received training in Asian languages (Erebus, 2002). Very significant progress was made towards the achievement of NALSAS goals during Phase 1.

The increase in students studying an Asian language in schools, as well as the increase in the number of teachers who had developed some Asian language competence, necessitated the inclusion of curriculum and languages methodology training for teachers as a significant element within the NALSAS suite of initiatives designed to support curriculum delivery and improve teacher quality and supply. The development of FLOTE was situated within this context.

Although NALSAS, (according to its Strategic Plan), had originally been intended to run until 2006, funding was discontinued in 2001 by the Howard Federal Liberal Government. The termination of the strategy occurred despite the evaluation of the strategy declaring that NALSAS had gone a significant way towards attaining its goals, but was not as yet self-sustaining (Henderson, 2007). Brendan Nelson (the Education Minister at the time) stated that it was time to hand the Strategy to the
states and territories (Henderson, 2007). This loss of funding meant it was difficult for the Asian languages programmes to be sustained and it was also difficult to achieve the 2006 goal for the 50% uptake of The NALSAS languages (DEST, 2002a).

2.2.1.3. 1999 - The Adelaide Declaration

The Adelaide Declaration replaced the Hobart Declaration in April 1999. In the Adelaide Declaration, the ten National Goals for Schooling were reduced to three major goals with subsections. These focussed on student skills and outcomes to reflect an emphasis on student-centred learning and social justice. This Declaration recognised the importance of technology, and its potential impact on Australia’s place in the global community.

The National Goals were retitled to reflect the notion of a new forward looking, thinking and global community. They were expressed as Australia’s Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century.

These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

(MCEETYA, 1999b, p. 2)

There is no question that technology is playing an ever more central role in education. However, it is important to ensure that both teachers and learners are adequately prepared for the technology in a way that promotes learning. Lo Bianco (1987, p. 1) comments on the rapidity of technology evolution and the way it impacts on “social participation, relationships, cultural groupings, the structures of knowledge and, consequently power.” Both MCEETYA and Lo Bianco mention the ‘social’ aspects of
technology, a trend which in recent years has seen IT - Information Technologies become ICT - Information Communication Technologies.

In addition to the focus on ICTs, the importance of high quality teaching was reiterated in the Adelaide Declaration as a necessary part of the national goals and also Australia’s place in the global world (MCEETYA, 1999).

Also importantly, the Adelaide Declaration re-affirmed LOTE as a Key Learning Area.

2.2.1.4. 2005 - The National Statement for Languages Education

Since Australia is a federation, national policy involves all governments. “Language policies, therefore, are not neutral statements, but, rather, espouse particular values and goals” (Lo Bianco, 1987, p. 4). With the cessation of the NALSAS Strategy, the Howard Federal government launched a policy initiative, that at least kept LOTE ‘on the map’. The National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools and the National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008 were developed by MCEETYA. The policy was released in mid 2005 and was divided into two parts. Part One describes a revised purpose and nature of language education in Australia, national developments and also areas of need. Part Two describes a National Plan articulated through six strands:

Strand one: Teaching and Learning
Strand two: Teacher Supply and Retention
Strand three: Professional Learning
Strand four: Program Development
Strand five: Quality Assurance
Strand six: Advocacy and Promotion of Languages Learning

(MCEETYA, 2005, p.11)
Whilst the *Statement* and *Plan* suggest a continuing importance for LOTE (now described as Languages) resourcing for this policy initiative was limited and there was little appetite within the *Plan* for projects associated with maximising the use of the online environment for teacher professional development.

According to Lo Bianco (2005, p. 4), the *National Statement* did little to commit governments to any action. The result was that over the lifetime of the *Statement* and *Plan* there was a gradual diluting of funding and support for languages across all of Australia’s educational jurisdictions.

### 2.2.1.5. 2008 - The Melbourne Declaration

Released in December 2008, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA) differs significantly from its predecessors, the Hobart and Adelaide Declarations. It has a “broader frame” that acknowledges “major changes in the world that are placing new demands on Australian education” (p.4). These are identified as:

- Global integration and international mobility
- The influence of India, China and other Asian nations
- Globalisation and technological change

(MCEETYA, 2008, p.4)

Whilst languages (especially Asian languages) is identified as a learning area within the Declaration the statement is made that “the learning areas are not of equal importance at all year levels” (p.14). There is also a very significant focus in the document on English and mathematics within curriculum.
With respect to how this document aligns with, or develops the aims of the FLOTE programme that is the central focus of this study, there is an obvious focus on the growing importance of technology for teachers and students, there is reference to the need to support quality teaching (p.11), but there is less strength with respect to languages (LOTE) and to teachers having the capacity to teach them.

2.2.1.6. 2009 - The Birth of NALSSP

NALSSP, the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, commenced on January 1st 2009, after being announced in 2008 by then Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd. This program was developed by DEEWR in order to support the increasing uptake of Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korea languages and studies of Asia in all schools around Australia (NALSSP, 2009).

The principal objective of NALSSP is articulated as,

… to significantly increase the number of Australian students becoming proficient at learning the languages and understanding the cultures of Asian neighbours - China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea. It also aims to increase the number of qualified Asian language teachers and develop a specialist curriculum for advanced language students. (NALSSP, 2009, p. 1)

A renewed government focus on languages and the call once again for an increase in the number of qualified teachers of Asian languages has impacted FLOTE. All of these years after its original conception within Australian educational policy, FLOTE is renewed. Generalist languages methodology and curriculum is now supplemented with FLOTE modules specifically designed for the training of teachers of Japanese and Indonesian.

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28 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
This LOTE Lagoon section of this literature review has described some of the significant policy and language initiatives that have impacted languages teaching and learning in Australia over a period in excess of 20 years. The review of these initiatives has been undertaken to contextualise this research within languages education in Australia generally as well as specifically providing background information on the NALSAS Strategy which funded the initial development of FLOTE. The policy review shows changing fortunes and priorities with respect to languages education. It also, however, demonstrates that there continues to be a need for teachers to engage with languages curriculum, with technology and online learning, and with addressing professional development needs in the languages area. The next section of this review deals with the literature associated with technology, particularly the use of the Internet for online or e-learning, as this is an area with particular relevance for FLOTE.

2.2.2. Technology Gap

In this section, I will be examining the literature associated with the use of the Internet as a learning tool, particularly for teacher training and professional development. There is not a significant body of literature associated with research aimed specifically at languages or languages methodology and teacher training and, as a result, much of the following discussion relates to research into online professional development of a more general nature.

Whitlock (2001) reports that online learning has been in effect for over 30 years since the Open University enrolled its first students. According to Harasim (as cited in Wallace 2003, p. 241), the first entirely online course was offered in 1981. Online learning has become more than just a ‘flash in the pan’. There is still, however, a need to be cautious with respect to being online:
Our challenge for the future is to keep pace with technology without being overwhelmed, to maintain our research to ensure effective delivery of technology-based information and never to forget that the computer is simply a tool for the information age.

(Sims & Melville, 1999, p. 9)

Conole and Oliver (2007) note, however, that since the end of the 1990s, educational use of the Internet has actually fallen behind other areas such as business. This assertion is supported by Littlejohn and Pegler (2007, p.1) who state that,

> [t]he integration of our physical world with the digital domain is becoming ubiquitous. Every day thousands of new digital communities are created across the world and online social spaces are gaining rapid popularity…yet the educational world does not appear to have corresponding startling claims.

However, since I first began this research, the type of online learning available has not only changed significantly from simple uploading of existing course content, to more interactive, flexible, and accessible sites, but also the quantity of totally online and blended courses has surged (Lui, Magjuka, Bonk, & Lee, 2007).

Research and practice are now moving well beyond simple transference of face-to-face material onto the Internet, to online classes that have a more social aspect, a factor that many agree is essential for effective online learning (J. Lee, Carter-Wells, Glaeser, Ivers, & Street, 2006; Marra, 2006; Richardson & Swan, 2003). Indeed, one of the purposes of FLOTE was to fulfil this requirement and acknowledge and address the importance of social and collegial interactions in the online environment.

### 2.2.2.1. Online Learning

Online learning has become the catch-cry of the new millennium and educational institutions are scrambling to begin transferring courses to this medium in order to

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29 Blended courses have a face-to-face component as well as an online one
make learning more flexible, accessible and interactive. Many universities and other teaching institutions, however, simply transfer existing course notes to the Internet and consider this sufficient. Allen (cited in Ryan 2001, p.75), talks about text being “shovelled” online by many educators who do not see, and perhaps are themselves unaware of, the tremendous potential of this medium. Heath (2001, p.2) sums this up succinctly saying, “pedagogy, not technology is the key,” a comment echoed by Hargreaves (1994). In fact, “many early e-learning [online] innovations have failed precisely because they did not take account of pedagogical and organisational issues, concentrating too much on the technical aspects” (Conole & Oliver, 2007, p.81).

Maor and Taylor (1995) suggest that it is not the technology, but the interactions between the teachers and students that makes the change to effective online learning successful.

2.2.2.2. Instructional Design for Online Learning

Since the Internet, and particularly the World Wide Web, first became available for common use in the early to mid 1990s, web pages have evolved from grey backgrounds and black text to multimedia experiences. Initial forays with e-learning suffered (and still suffer in many cases) from text heavy, poorly navigable, non-interactive design that whilst maintaining an educational focus in terms of content, did little to actively engage learners.

Gradually e-learning sites embarked on trying to improve the use of the technology while not losing the educational focus. A closer look at many online learning sites, however, shows that technology can often be used simply for its ‘wow’ factor rather than to improve accessibility of content and learning (Bennett, Priest, & Macpherson, 1999; Siragusa, 2000). Instructional design has tended to be the domain of IT
professionals and not teaching professionals. This prompted McKenzie (1999) to make the following point with respect to the use of online learning in educational contexts:

Until classroom teachers are shown how new technologies can improve the way students learn … they are unlikely to sit up, take notice and make significant use of these new tools. (p.2)

Arguments against using technology for technology’s sake are repeated in the literature together with advice to choose carefully when considering elements to be included in the instructional design of online / e-learning programmes (Armstrong and Yvetter-Vascot, 1994; Harasim, Hiltz, Teles & Turoff, 1994; Cuban, 2001).

2.2.2.3. Online Learning and Creating Learning Communities

Now that the initial excitement and obsession with the potential of the Internet for online learning has died down, and a more realistic appreciation of its benefits and limitations in the field of e-learning is beginning to evolve, attention within the literature is more focused on the notion of the development of online learning communities. Lynch (2004) identifies the attributes of successful online learning and membership of a learning community in the following statement:

[w]hat really impressed students and teachers was the capability to interact electronically, search through databases, and work together to solve problems. So, interactivity remained of utmost importance. However, it was no longer the student-to-computer interaction that was prized. Instead, it was the person-to-person interaction with the computer serving only as an intermediary. (p.4)

The perceived importance of interaction within a sense of community through the online medium is also emphasised by Schneiderman (2002, p. 2) who claims, “[t]he old computing was about what computers could do; the new computing is about what users [italics added] can do.” According to Williams (1997) and Ryan (2001) this
sense of community is vital and something that cannot be achieved with older
technologies that do not provide the same sense of proximity or interactivity as the
Internet.

An online learning community also promises its members great flexibility. Burgess,
Currie, & Maor (2004) state that:

[t]his means that the dissemination or knowledge is shifted from being
fixed to a certain time and place, to being accessible at any time and at
any place…Thus, new technologies for teaching and learning imply
educational approaches that are different from conventional practice, in
terms of how students are expected to engage with the learning
material and how the knowledge is disseminated. (p.166)

It is this notion of membership within such a community that now deserves
consideration.

2.2.2.4. Being Online: Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants

The work of Mark Prensky is now well known. Prensky (2001) assigns the terms
‘digital native’ and ‘digital immigrant’ to users of digital technologies or ICTs.
Prensky uses the former term to refer to a person who was born during or after the
general introduction of digital technology and who, through interacting with that
technology from an early age, has enhanced understandings of ICTs. He applies the
latter term to an individual who was born before the existence of digital technology
and who has adopted it, to some extent, later in life. According to Prensky (2001) the
difference for technology skills and comfort levels, as experienced by digital natives
and digital immigrants is similar to that of the learning of a second language for
children versus the same experience for adults.
Online learning involves both digital immigrants and digital natives and the ‘status’ of the person(s) involved impacts significantly on all dimensions of the online experience (Franklin, 2007). Brown (1999), in commenting on teachers teaching online, identifies the obvious issue of the age demographic in the teaching force and highlights that most teachers have not been trained using the technology medium and that therefore there is a lack of familiarity with how to teach effectively using the online environment.

Wallace (2003) describes the roles of teachers teaching online as:

> Teachers in online courses…facilitate or moderate discussions, they respond to individual students and to the class as a whole, and they manage the flow of content through assignments and responses. Their presence and immediacy seem to impact student satisfaction and learning. (p.271)

While this research deals with teachers who, in this study are in fact the learners, the considerations mentioned above are pertinent. There certainly were issues around participants not being trained using the technology medium. There were also issues around expectations for immediacy with respect to information, support and feedback. Speed and flow in terms of student and teacher interactions, and the impact of these considerations on the overall online experience for students and teachers have continued to be a focus in the literature (Kippen, 2003; Franklin, 2007; Hoven, 2007). More recent discussions, however, have also identified lack of vitality and spontaneity (Laffey, Lin, & Lin, 2006, p. 3) and isolation and disconnection (Lui, Magjuka, Bonk & Lee, 2007) as significant ongoing issues in online learning.

In this section I have explored key ideas and developments within the history of online learning. Issues associated with technology, and with teaching and learning
online have been discussed with particular attention paid to design, to accessibility, flexibility and interactivity. All of these considerations impacted the development and use of FLOTE.

2.2.3. The Professional Development Field

The final section of this chapter deals with professional development. It examines common models utilised in this area and identifies from the literature strengths and weaknesses associated with the models. The models explored are those that are perceived to be directly relevant to FLOTE. Some attention is also paid to LOTE professional development specifically in the Australian context.

Hargreaves (1994, p. 10) poses an apt question when he asks, “How do teachers change - at this moment or any other? What makes teachers change in the face of change and what makes them dig in their heels and resist?” The goal of professional development is to facilitate or promote change, but just how does this happen? This section presents an outline of common professional development models and discusses conceptions of learning and teaching associated with them.

Professional development enables teachers to remain up-to-date with their subject speciality as well as with new and effective ways of teaching and assessing students. It also offers the opportunity for teachers to engage in collaborative planning, and to discuss their teaching and subject area with other teachers, as well as with specialists.

(Pratt, Lai, & Munro, 2001, p. 21)

Pratt, Lai, and Munro, (2001), declare that professional development for teachers will be more effective if there is a whole school approach and if teachers are given choice rather than having it implemented in a top-down fashion. Hargreaves (1994, p. 11) agrees stating “[t]he involvement of teachers in educational change is vital to its
success, especially if the change is complex and is to affect many settings over long periods of time.”

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996, p. 1) talk about teachers’ struggle for better conditions generally but also for “improved standards of training.” Other researchers agree (DuFour & Berkey, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; Kervin, 2003) and enlarge on their descriptions of ‘good’ training which they describe as being more than teachers learning superficial content or new techniques, and rather should involve teacher choice to ensure relevance in their school and classroom context.

As professional development FLOTE was offered to individual teachers but with system support and specific expectations. FLOTE was also intended to be a great deal more than the presentation of superficial content. There was an assumption that participants in the programme would view languages curriculum thoroughly and deeply through a process of critical engagement and reflective practice.

### 2.2.3.1. Professional Development Models

According to the NSW Department of Education, (2004, p.4) “[p]rofessional learning refers to all training and development opportunities, formal and informal, individual and shared, that provide opportunities for professional discourse, interaction, practice, reflection and analysis. Professional learning can occur face-to-face, online, or through other modes of delivery.” While there are many models of professional development, three models chosen for their applicability to this study, will be discussed in more depth here. These are:

- Face to face
- Online
• Blended

2.2.3.1.1. **Face-to-Face Model**

Face-to-face professional development involves human contact, provides opportunities for group collaboration, and is run in school hours, after school or during the holidays (Lowery, 1998). Advantages of this model include immediate feedback and resolution of problems or questions (McInerney & McInerney, 2002; Victorian TAFE Association, 2001), as well as the ability to see, hear, ‘touch’ and discuss the item being studied and gain further understanding through the interpretation and projection of body language and facial expressions (Morrow, 2007; Richardson, 2001; Richardson & Swan, 2003).

Significant disadvantages can, however, be associated with distance and cost, particularly in the Australian context where teachers can be located at schools in remote or rural areas (Lowery, 1998; Maor & Volet, 2007; Morrow, 2007; Richardson & Swan, 2003). Another disadvantage of face-to-face professional development is that there is no guarantee that learning will actually take place unless there is a formalised process for the evaluation of participants with respect to course content and the intended outcomes of the professional development programme. A further significant issue with face-to-face professional learning is that it can often be done in a tokenistic or superficial way where knowledge is ‘pushed’ onto the teacher (Guilfoyle, Placier, Hamilton, & Pinnegar, 2002). Called the transmission model the approach is very traditional and one whereby information is somehow transmitted from the ‘expert’ to the learner (Miller, 2000). Face-to-face, transmission professional development is also often dependant for its success on the quality of the presenter - the person who is doing the ‘transmitting’ (Mitchell, 2005). This type of professional
development is traditionally supported with print materials that participants may or may not choose to engage with (Lowery, 1998).

In more recent times many teachers and teacher educators have rejected this vision of reducing teaching and learning to the transmission of content. There has subsequently been a paradigm shift within professional development, (including face-to-face professional development), to change the approach from the transmission of knowledge to providing opportunities for experiential learning (Lee, 2001, p. 3). Even so, face-to-face professional learning continues to be a popular model within education (EQUIP, 2008; Osborn, 2004).

In its conceptualisation FLOTE was never intended to be face-to-face professional development. On the contrary, it was designed specifically to negate the documented disadvantages associated with face-to-face and transmission professional development. The extent to which it succeeded in doing this will be explored in this study.

2.2.3.1.2. **Fully Online Model**

In a fully online professional development model teachers are given access to a variety of media through which they ‘conduct’ their learning. The intention is that within this multi-media environment, teachers will be able to match their learning style (learning and thinking tools), and their personal situations, to the intended learning goals of the online professional development programme (Rogers, 2001, p. 6).

A number of issues with totally online professional development have, however, been identified within the literature. The one most commonly reported is that of time (De Gagne & Walters, 2010; Lai, 2001; Mitchell, 2005). This includes the time necessary
for teachers, (many of whom are ‘digital immigrants’)\textsuperscript{30}, to develop a comfort level with new technology, as well as the time necessary for them to actually engage with and complete a programme.

Another issue identified is that of the perceived relevance of online professional development. It is reported, (Lai, 2001; McRae, Ainsworth, Groves, Rowland, & Zbar, 2001), that fully online programmes can sometimes be too general or ICT focussed so that the relevance for an individual, with respect to their learning and then to their teaching, is not always clear.

A third significant issue is that of learning in isolation (Candy, 2004; Felix, 2003; Morrow, 2007). DuFour and Berkley (1995, p.2) claim that teacher isolation is such an inherent part of traditional school practice that merely encouraging teachers to collaborate online is not enough, and that the experience of professional development online can very often be an isolating and unsuccessful one with significant drop out rates being reported (Flood, 2002; Macdonald, 2006; Martinez, 2003; Morrow, 2007; Ryan, 2001; Shepherd, 2003). Researchers within this area are now detailing the importance of developing a sense of community within the online learning environment in order to create more successful programmes (Lai, 2001; Morrow, 2007; Nykvist, 2005). It is acknowledged, however, that although technology can serve as a provider of communities, the simple act of provision does not guarantee that communities form (Schwatz & Ligorio, 2004).

FLOTE was initially designed to be a fully online programme for the professional development of LOTE teachers. Mechanisms were built into the programme to provide support and to facilitate interaction, reflection and problem solving as well as provide the necessary skills and strategies required to manage all aspects of languages.

curriculum. The programme was extensive and challenging, particularly because of its online nature which was, for many participants, quite confronting.

2.2.3.1.3. **Blended Model**

According to MacDonald, (2006, p. 3) “[b]lended learning seems to have arisen from a general sense of disillusionment with the stand-alone adoption of early media.” Akkerman, Lam and Admiral, (2004, p. 263), in their study of US teacher professional development describe respondents as preferring their learning to be blended learning - a combination of face-to-face and online learning, aimed at both skills and knowledge. Blended learning is projected in the literature (Lajbcyier & Spratt, 2007; Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007; Lynch, 2004; Macdonald, 2006) as a solution to the problems associated with the professional development models that have been previously discussed. In particular, it has been argued that blended programmes provide more balance and that they therefore can be more supportive of participants who are at risk of not completing (Macdonald, 2006). Macdonald also contends, however, that this may not be enough, that whilst contemporary professional development programmes tend to be much more inviting and effective both visually and in terms of content, they require a high level of self-direction and self-motivation (p.167).

Given that participants in FLOTE were experienced teachers, volunteers for the programme, and also fully funded and supported by their employing educational jurisdiction motivation and self-direction were not initially considered as significant issues within the study. It was assumed that the initial cohorts participating in FLOTE would have these particular qualities.
2.2.3.2. **Professional Development for LOTE Teachers in Australia**

The advent of FLOTE provided professional development opportunities for LOTE teachers who have often been reported as marginalised both within their teaching contexts and also with respect to having access to ongoing professional learning programmes (DEEWR, 2007; ACSSO, 2007). LOTE teachers have been, and continue to be, personally isolated within their schools as well as often having their learning area ‘squeezed’ or marginalised with respect to conceptions and enactment of curriculum (Harbon, 2002). Frequently LOTE teachers are unaware of what is available for them because of their marginalisation and isolation. And frequently, even when aware of professional development opportunities, they are denied access because of factors associated with school budgets and availability of relief teachers. These constraints have been particularly problematic for LOTE teachers in primary school contexts (DEEWR, 2007). The development of FLOTE was an opportunity for these issues to be addressed to at least some extent.

2.3. **Locating the dragon’s cave on the Learning Map**

This chapter has identified and discussed known features on the ‘learning map’ in order to provide the background and context underlying this research. These known features encompass policy, technology, and professional development as they relate to LOTE. The literature across these areas identifies a range of issues and factors associated with the attributes and activities of language teachers - here be the dragons that emerge for this study.

Policy documents at national level highlight the need for an increased quality workforce in the LOTE / Languages area (NALSAS, the National Plan, NALSSP).
The NALSAS strategy itself generated a significant demand for qualified language teachers to be available quickly in order to meet NALSAS targets. Teacher supply and teacher quality are therefore identified as ‘dangerous territory’. They provided the imperative for FLOTE and thus this study needs to examine how FLOTE was able to address this area. To what extent was FLOTE able to satisfy the demand for quality and quantity as attributes of the LOTE teaching workforce?

A second area of ‘dangerous territory’ relates to teacher engagement with, and use of, technology. The review in this chapter of key aspects of learning online identify a number of ‘treacherous areas’ when it comes to teachers and technology and professional practice and professional learning. These are critical considerations for FLOTE and will be the subject of scrutiny in the following chapters.

A third critical area relates to teachers’ perceptions of, and practices associated with, professional development. The literature reviewed here suggests that there are a number of considerations that impact this study - the model used, elements of interactivity within the model, sense of community associated with the model, assumptions associated with autonomous learning and users of the model. All of these areas constitute territory to be further explored on the ‘learning map’.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature around key areas associated with the context of this study and with the design and development of FLOTE. An exploration of these areas has enabled the identification of the ‘dragons’ cave’. Issues and attributes around LOTE teachers and LOTE teacher professional development have been recognised as significant within the parameters of the study. The ‘dragons’ cave’ has been located. After a discussion of the methodological approach for the study
(Chapter 3) and a detailed account of what constitutes FLOTE (Chapter 4), I will return to explore the data in order to determine what lies within the ‘dragons’ cave’.
3. IN THE DOCKYARD

3.1. Introduction

Dockyards, as places of nautical construction, serve as an apt metaphor for this chapter. The design and construction of this study, just like the building of a ship, involved consideration of approach, method and materials. This chapter explores and explains the methodology of this dissertation including its history. It describes the methodology particular to this research, including the theoretical framework on which it is based and the process by which the research was undertaken. It includes a discussion of these theoretical positions and the rational for their selection. It also describes the problems encountered along the way that led to changes in methodological approach, to data collection and to analysis.

In the Preface of this dissertation, I described how the focus of the study changed at the end of the data collection period, when insufficient data to support or decry the original research questions were obtained. At that time, the case study examined the potential impact of online professional development on classroom learning and teaching. The intention was to focus on the new ‘culture’ of online learning through an ethnographic lens, comparing it with the existing classroom ‘culture’, and investigating teachers from both years of the study who were encountering the FLOTE online environment for the first time.

As it became apparent that some teachers were having extreme difficulty engaging with the online environment, it also became clear that an equally important issue around programme engagement had been identified. My dissertation then became an investigation into the extent to which various factors impacted on teachers’ ability, or
inability, to engage with the FLOTE online professional development programme and how the programme could be adapted to become more effective. In particular:

- What aspects of the programme itself may have encouraged / supported the teachers?
- What aspects of the programme itself may have hindered the teachers?
- What personal aspects associated with the teachers may have facilitated their participation?
- What personal aspects associated with the teachers may have hindered their participation?
- What technological features may have supported the teachers?
- What technological issues may have hindered the teachers?

In order to answer all these research questions, a combination of approaches has been used. A mixed method approach to data collection was used combining quantitative and qualitative methods at various stages in the study. Punch (1998) and Patton (2002) comment that studies that include both quantitative and qualitative analysis have the potential to provide a more balanced view of the research situation. Quantitative methods can provide synthesised results in specific areas, while qualitative methods can provide more depth. Burns (1997, p.11) agrees stating, “no one methodology can answer all questions and provide insights on all issues”.

Primarily this research focussed on using qualitative data to provide a rich picture of the online learning experience for the FLOTE participants and other relevant parties, while the quantitative data provide a complementary view of the participants which
does, to some extent, assist with establishing the trustworthiness of the findings. This chapter details the process undertaken to investigate the extent to which teacher participants were able to successfully or unsuccessfully complete the online FLOTE programme. It is divided into 4 main sections; Research Approaches, Theoretical Perspective, Methodology and Methods.

Research Approaches provides a general overview of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The Theoretical Perspective gives a brief history of phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology and explains why this is significant within the study. Methodology provides an overview of case study research while Methods describes the methods of data collection and analysis. Each section also shows the relevance for its selection and applicability to the study.

3.2. Research Approaches

This section details the mixed method approach that underpins this study. It provides a discussion of past and current research and thinking that underpins both quantitative and qualitative research and the more current trend of mixed method approaches. The significance of each for this study is also described.

3.2.1. The Quantitative, Qualitative distinction: in general

Historically, quantitative research predates qualitative research. The former has also had a significant apparent advantage over the latter, in that traditionally it was considered more objective, logical and ‘scientific.’ In reality, quantitative research suffers from many of the same problems as qualitative research, in that it is only as good as the designer of the research and the investigator. The selection of quantitative or qualitative as a research methodology should be determined by the research questions. “[T]he significant issue is not whether one method is overall superior to
another but, rather, whether the method a researcher employs can yield convincing answers to the questions that the investigation is intended to settle” (Murray, 2003, p.7).

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p.17), the last 30 years has shown an increasing trend towards mixed methods studies. They ascribe this to changes in methodological tools, technology and more exchanges between disciplines. Punch (1998, p.243) agrees with their promotion of mixed methods saying “we cannot find out everything we might want to know using only one approach, and we can often increase the scope, depth and power of research by combining the two approaches”.

This research was conducted using a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative methods, with the focus primarily being on using qualitative data to provide a rich picture of the FLOTE participants themselves, the online learning experience for these participants and also their potential reasons for completion or non-completion of the programme.

3.2.2. Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is traditionally considered “more ‘factual’, ‘objective’ and ‘reliable’, therefore, generalizable, however, it can be unreliable or inappropriate in certain instances where it provides too narrow a view of the subject in question (Hara, 1995, p.1). Patton, (2002, p.14) describes quantitative research methods as “those that require the use of standardised measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fitted into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned”.

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3.2.2.1. Quantitative data in this research

At the beginning of their enrolment, FLOTE participants from both years of the study completed an online Technology Needs Assessment (TNA) (See Appendix 2). The TNA survey gathered data about the teachers’ backgrounds, teaching experience, use of ICT and feelings about ICT. It did not include data specific to language ability or prior methodology training and experience. Some of this information, however, was provided through the educational jurisdiction through their participant list which contained information on their current schools, language of interest, location and so on.

More extensive data became available as the degree to which teachers actively participated in the programme became clear. For example, the number of Forum postings per person or per year could be easily compared, as could Chat sessions and the number of modules accessed combined with other data. This also allowed me to compare the extent to which teachers of different experience or age interacted with the programme.

The TNA provided a broad comparison between the skill and experience levels of teachers from each year, as well as providing potential reasons for particular teachers encountering difficulties with the online learning environment.

In addition to the TNA, further quantitative data were also collected through the online tracking facility included in the Content Management System (CMS) (See Appendix 3). This facility logged the date and time that participants logged into FLOTE, the modules and pages they looked at and how long they spent on each page. While it is impossible to know whether a teacher was actually working that entire time or whether the computer was at a page but unattended, this process can be used
as an approximate record of an individual’s interaction with the online programme. In instances where teachers had very little or no interaction with the site, it is impossible to know for what reason from the quantitative data collected. Nonetheless, these data can provide potential answers when used in conjunction with qualitative data that are more descriptive. Hence the selection of a mixed approach.

3.2.3. **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative Research is increasingly becoming recognised as an important tool for researchers in many fields for its vivid descriptiveness and its ability to get beyond the facts and figures. It has been described as “a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world” (Bryman & Burgess, 1994, p.2) and as “sexy” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). Qualitative research now has more acceptance for its potential to provide a unique insight into areas where otherwise it would be difficult to gain a picture of a research situation (Bryman, 1992). Qualitative research is more likely to go beyond the initial concepts and promote new findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994), an advantage which can be vital in research such as this, to ensure that as detailed a picture as possible of the participants’ lived experiences, can be obtained.

3.2.3.1. **Qualitative data in this research**

A qualitative inquiry method can provide a unique insight into the actual individual experiences of the participants in the online LOTE Methodology modules. For the purpose of this research, the intent was to develop a picture of teacher as an online learner, as they interacted with the online modules. Because the data required needed to be comprehensive for each participant, quantitative methods were inadequate and would have provided enough data for only ‘a cursory glance’. What was needed was
something that showed the rich texture of each participant’s thinking and beliefs. Qualitative methods can provide that depth (Patton, 1990). Qualitative data were collected through participant ejournals, telephone conversations, email correspondence, Chat logs and Forum postings, as well as my own facilitator log and reflections.

There was a particular focus on ejournals as research has shown the value of journals and diaries generally (Chitpin, 2006; McDonough, 1994; Viete, 1999). The questions and tasks in each FLOTE module were intended to be responded to and completed in a self-reflective manner. Thus, not only could I see the participant’s understanding of each concept or activity, but I could also gather data through participant feedback and reflections on their own learning and the issues they encountered within modules. These ejournals often included comments about participant teacher’s prior experiences in teaching other subjects or their target language, in comparison with module content. Thus, the length of some journals became an issue putting additional pressure on both participants and facilitators. Detailed, reflective ejournals were, however, evidence of teachers’ engagement with the online programme.

The intent therefore, was to use this combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide the clearest possible representation of the participants’ own words and actions, to try and answer the research questions.

3.3. Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical perspectives often used in research include ethnography, phenomenology, heuristics, and ethnomethodology. Each of these is used “for different purposes, asking very different questions, and interpreting the results from different
frameworks” (Patton, 1990, p.87). The researcher’s awareness of these theoretical perspectives and the appropriate situations in which to use them is one of the issues which needs to be addressed when considering qualitative research as a methodology. Literature in the area suggests that some writers believe that a clear theoretical perspective is necessary, not just to establish within which boundaries the research will fall, but also so that the research can be used to make more general assumptions about itself and other research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Conversely, Patton (1990, pp.89-90) claims that:

[w]hile students writing dissertations and academic scholars will necessarily be concerned about theoretical frameworks and theory generation, there is a very practical side to qualitative methods that simply involves asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings in order to solve problems, improve programs, or develop policies.

Patton (1990, p.38) also claims that many researchers tend to choose theoretical perspectives from habit and from their own ideological leanings, and encourages them to explore unfamiliar “paradigms” in order to become more flexible and adaptable in their approach. Clearly there continues to be debate about the role and selection of theoretical perspectives in research. In spite of the continuing debate, this study draws on phenomenology as a theoretical perspective.

### 3.3.1. Phenomenology

Phenomenology originated from the work of Husserl, Heidegger and others during the early 20th century. Husserl was a German mathematician who is considered to be the father of phenomenology. He was frustrated with traditional psychological research which he believed could not be effective in human research because it “deals with living subjects who are not simply reacting automatically to external stimuli, but rather, are responding to their own perception of what these stimuli mean” (Laverty,
2003, p.4). Instead of traditional research, Husserl proposed ‘phenomenology’, a theoretical perspective which “attempts to forage through the layers of lived experience and cultural knowledge in order to rediscover experience and knowledge before knowledge and beliefs are used to make a new sense out of experience (Davis, 1995, p.4).

Husserl’s notion of phenomenology also involved ‘bracketing’, or setting aside the researcher’s biases, opinions and preconceptions about the “outer world” (Laverty, 2003, p.6), in order to better see the phenomena.

3.3.1.1. **Phenomenology in this research**

In the case of this research, the phenomenon under investigation is the FLOTE programme and using a phenomenological approach helps the researcher to gain an understanding of the lived ‘FLOTE experience’ through the eyes of the participants.

The alteration of the study’s focus to examining reasons for participant success, (or otherwise), with respect to their online learning necessitated an increased focus on the participants as individuals. Phenomenology is “powerful for understanding subjective experience, [and] gaining insights into people’s motivations and actions” (Lester, 1999, p.1). Davis (1995, p.5) agrees, stating:

> [i]f the researcher wants to know about discourse communities, then ethnography would be appropriate. However, if the researcher wants to know about the personal aspects of taking up residence in a new discourse community [in this case the developing community of FLOTE], only phenomenology allows access to that information.

As I began to examine phenomenology, however, it soon became apparent that certain aspects of this approach would be difficult to apply to my study. In particular the ‘bracketing’, or setting aside of the researcher’s biases and assumptions (Laverty,
would be difficult given my close proximity to the study as a facilitator, developer, writer and researcher. In addition, the difficulties that both the teachers and the facilitators in the second year faced made any attempt to ignore my own experiences inappropriate and potentially detrimental for the results of my study.

3.3.2. **Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed by Heidegger, one of Husserl’s students. Heidegger believed that it was impossible to bracket oneself out of research and even “went so far as to claim that nothing can be encountered without reference to a person’s background understanding” (Laverty, 2003, p.8). He also developed the hermeneutic circle, an interpretive process by which you can move “from the parts of experience to the whole of experience and back and forth again to increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of texts (Annells, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1983)” (Laverty, 2003, p. 9). The positioning of the researcher is an essential difference between phenomenology in its original form and hermeneutic phenomenology.

3.3.2.1. **Hermeneutic Phenomenology in this research**

As mentioned previously, my many roles in this study as well as the significant personal events that have unfolded during the period over which the study has been undertaken preclude my bracketing myself out. However, hermeneutic phenomenology, with its inclusion of the researcher as participant and acknowledgement of the necessity of factoring in prior knowledge and preconceptions into the study itself, is an ideal theoretical perspective for this research study. This therefore allows me to examine “how individuals interpret their world within their
given context” (De Gagne & Walters, 2010, p.358) and without having to grapple to achieve some form of personal detachment.

### 3.4. Methodology

#### 3.4.1. Case study

“Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagan, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991)” (Tellis, 1997, p.1). Put simply, a case study is an in-depth study that examines one or multiple cases in order to better understand it / them or to generalise to a larger, similar case(s) (Gerring, 2007). Case studies require multiple sources of evidence and they should examine contemporary phenomenon in real-life contexts (Yin, 2003). Case studies provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data and analysing information and reporting results.

There are different types of case studies and different authors describe them in different ways (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

#### 3.4.1.1. Case study in this research

The case study in this research is what Yin (2003) describes as a descriptive case study. That is, it describes the phenomenon of engagement with FLOTE in the real-life context in which it occurred. In this dissertation, the use of this type of case study has provided a methodology flexible enough to enable detailed description, as well as identify key participants and events over both years. It has also allowed for an in-depth examination of certain aspects of the phenomenon from which to draw conclusions in order to respond to the research questions underpinning this study. This type of case has allowed for “detail, richness, completeness, wholeness”, (Gerring, 2007, p.49), in terms of being able to reflect and report the phenomenon of FLOTE.
In effect, two case studies were conducted during the investigation, one in the first year and one in the second. The intention was to allow for a more complete examination of FLOTE as a collaborative, online discourse community highlighting the way in which the participants interacted with the different aspects of FLOTE, and with each other. Yin (2003, p.53) states that:

> Even if you can only do a “two-case” case study, your chances of doing a good case study will be better than using a single-case design. Single-case designs are vulnerable if only because you have “put all your eggs in one basket.” More important, the analytic benefits for having two (or more) cases may be substantial.

Examining two cohorts of participants, in two successive years, has enabled that deeper analytic investigation with respect to conducting this case study.

With respect to reporting the study, Baxter and Jack (2008) assert that there is no one correct way. They emphasise, however, that the goal is to describe the study in such a way as to enable the reader to feel as if they have participated in the process. It is therefore important that the researcher describes the context in which the phenomenon is occurring as well as the phenomenon itself. This dissertation certainly seeks to enable a detailed appreciation of the case study that is FLOTE.

### 3.4.2. Researcher beliefs and context

There are a number of issues which need to be considered when doing social research. The first is the impact that the researcher has both on the research and on the selection of data-collection and theoretical tools. The very presence of an observer, interviewer or data-collector is likely to impact both on the participants and on the research situation causing them to react in perhaps unforeseen ways and making the findings less likely to be generalisable to other situations (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Hammersley & Aitkinson, 1993). As well as the impact of the researcher’s sheer presence, the
research cannot help but be most strongly influenced by the researcher’s motivating ideologies, experiences with gender, religion, class and other issues (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Riddell, 1989; Tripp, 1988). These are usually the guiding force behind both the selection of theoretical framework and the way in which this is applied within the research context.

Patton (1990, p.55) uses the term “neutrality” when referring to the credible researcher’s stance within this context, however, he also clarifies that this is not “easily attainable”, but that there are techniques the researcher can use to combat bias and error (1990, p.56). As well as researcher neutrality, Patton (1990) also emphasises the importance of the skill, training and sensitivity of the researcher in order to ensure or promote the validity of the research because, in qualitative research, the “researcher is the instrument.” (p.14)

As a researcher I endeavour to be aware of my own values. I needed to be conscious of my own subjectivity and how it both impacted and interfaced with the research. I particularly needed to be able to separate myself from the different roles I had through the online course, which I had assisted in creating, while I was interacting with, and then observing, participants. It would have been easy to interpret participant reactions positively rather than negatively simply because of my feelings of ‘ownership’ of the course. As Hara (1995, p.1) says, “qualitative research in education recognizes that the researcher's subjectivity deeply affects the research”.

Since my research has a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective with an essentially qualitative approach, it is to be expected that I cannot be totally neutral. I can trust, however, that my awareness of my experiences allows me to mediate my subjectivity.
3.4.3. **Participants’ values and beliefs**

The other issue I would like to consider is the implication of the context of the research situation with both the physical situation and the values and beliefs of the participants in terms of having an impact on the theoretical perspective (i.e. hermeneutic phenomenology). In addition, this also impacts on the method (i.e. case study, observation) that the researcher uses. While many writers agree that this impact exists (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Patton, 1990), Patton (1990) suggests actively encouraging participants to be part of the decision-making process so that they can better understand in what they are participating, so that their opinions feel validated. As a consequence participants will be more responsive to the results. In fact, Patton (1990) sums the problem up nicely by asserting that:

…human beings can and must be understood in a manner different from other objects of study because humans have purposes and emotions; they make plans, construct cultures, and hold values that affect behaviour. Their feelings and behaviours are influenced by consciousness, deliberation, and the capacity to think about the future. (pp.56-57)

Taking into account these many factors, the criticality of the relationship between the participants and the researcher becomes obvious, as does the fact that this relationship is influenced to some extent by the theoretical framework and methods chosen (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) for any given study.

Within the context of this study, in my multifaceted roles, I had to engage with participants, most of whom had little or no experience with online learning and many of whom were also uncomfortable with this form of learning. As a facilitator, I had to be conscious of their prior experiences, technological skill levels and online learning comfort zone. I also needed to be aware of other circumstances or changes in their
environment that impacted on their participation. I had to ‘nurture’ the participant / facilitator relationship.

As a researcher, I had additional responsibilities. I had to be able to critique this relationship and identify the different dimensions within it, and how these impacted on individual participants within the study. I had to be able to do this in order to identify, understand and describe the different factors under investigation.

3.5. Methods

3.5.1. Data Collection

Data collection took place for six months at a time for each of the two years of the study.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator log</td>
<td>Online Technology Needs Assessment (TNA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone calls</td>
<td>Content Management System monitoring (CMS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ejournals</td>
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<td>Chat logs</td>
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<td>Forum postings</td>
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<td>Correspondence</td>
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Initial information about each teacher was provided by the educational jurisdiction that supported the participants. This included information about the teachers’ current circumstances, and their target languages. Other data collected prior to starting were drawn from the TNA (or Technology Needs Assessment) that participants were required to undertake. Since this was a comprehensive online method of data collection, it provided background data about the teaching level and history of the
teacher, and the perceived ICT level of competence of the teacher with regard to specific programmes such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint and more complex tools such as web design packages and HTML. In addition, it asked teachers about their current perceptions about ICT use in the classroom. It did not, however, include questions about their second language ability and teaching history. This was due to the online TNA being an open-source piece of software. Participants’ responses were automatically emailed to me and converted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Further data to develop participant profiles were obtained through ejournals and in an “introduce yourself” section in the Forum once the programme started.

Once the programme had begun, data were collected through weekly Monday online Chat sessions, online Forum posts and the ejournals that participants were required to submit on completion of each of the FLOTE modules. In addition, as the programme progressed, email contact, and phone calls provided additional data about engagement with the programme. I kept a log of this data as well as my reflections on participant engagement as well as events and incidents that took place during the programme. The final phase of data collection for each cohort was the development of an access log for each participant derived from the FLOTE Content Management System that recorded the online usage patterns of each participant.

3.5.2. Data Analysis

“Data analysis focuses on discovering regularities or patterns within the case study data” (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998, p.284). In this study, thematic analysis was used to identify key themes in the data. Thematic analysis is a form of analysis where themes “emerge from the data” (Tere, 2006, p.1) and where the process is iterative,

31 HyperText Markup Language – used to write web pages
recurring until no new issues arise (Giles, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2009). Van Manen (1990) in Giles (2008, p.66) suggests that,

«[m]aking something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure - grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of “seeing” meaning”. (p. 79)

In this study, initial themes were gathered by examining the qualitative data and looking for common elements, which were then re-examined until it was felt that a satisfactory picture of the participants’ lived experiences had been obtained.

3.5.2.1. **Trustworthiness**

Rather than speaking about ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’, hermeneutic researchers use the term ‘trustworthiness” or ‘authenticity’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.158). These terms arose from the 1985 work of Lincoln and Guba. They are now widely used by qualitative researchers to demonstrate the integrity of research undertaken with a qualitative orientation (Creswell, 1998; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Smith, Smith, & O'Brien, n.d.; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, pp.91-93) describe a range of different approaches that can be used for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research results. In my research, a number of these approaches were used. These and are outlined below:

- **Prolonged engagement**: In the case of this study, data were collected from two groups of teacher participants over a period of six months in successive years.

- **Persistent observation**: Observation in this study was intensive and ongoing for a period of six months for each of the two groups and provided an in depth picture of the participants in the study.
• Use of triangulation techniques: Triangulation was conducted through the use of multiple modes of data collection and detailed analysis.

• Peer debriefing: The co-facilitator of FLOTE served as a debriefing aid both during the data collection phase and also the analysis process.

• Thick description: This was achieved as a result of the multiple types of data collected and then used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the engagement of each of the participants in the study.

• Reflexive journal: I maintained an electronic journal (ejournal), throughout the two years of the study in which data were collected. This ejournal contained my own reflections on the processes being undertaken throughout the study, as well as the information being generated through the study to answer the research questions. Participants, who engaged with FLOTE, also produced ejournals and their reflections were an important element of the study.

Collectively, the use of these approaches communicates the authenticity of the study and enables a sense of trustworthiness with respect to the overall results of the study.

3.6. Conclusion

Patton (1990, p.65) describes qualitative inquiry as a rich tapestry “woven together from many different threads of differing texture, colour, length and purpose”. It is this tapestry that we are aiming to create as researchers. However, we need to remember that we too are only one of the threads that make the picture whole and that to create the best picture we can, we need to bring together methods, theoretical frameworks and participant ideologies.
In this chapter I have given an outline of the theoretical underpinnings of this research project and detailed the design. I have identified the tools that were used to both collect and analyse the data, and explained why they were selected. I have endeavoured to pinpoint some of the issues arising from the readings on theoretical research and to detail their impact for me as a researcher. I have described the study as one using a mixed methods approach to ‘capture’ the phenomenon that was FLOTE for two groups of participants who were involved in this case study. The lived experiences of these participants have been recorded through the use of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach and are reported in this dissertation.

The next chapter, Chapter 4 - SS FLOTE - continues to set the scene by outlining the way in which the programme was constructed and laid out.
4. SS\textsuperscript{32} FLOTE

4.1. Introduction

That's what a ship is, you know. It's not just a keel and a hull and a deck and sails, that's what a ship needs. But what a ship is... what the Black Pearl really is... is freedom. - Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow\textsuperscript{33}

In the same way Jack Sparrow sees a ship as something more than the sum of its parts, it was always hoped that the online learning provided through FLOTE, would be more about the ‘learning’ than about the ‘online’, and that it would provide flexibility and ‘freedom’ for the learning of the participants in this study. As such, a great deal of planning went into trying to create something accessible to participants of enormously varied technology skill levels, while concentrating on relevant, real and current content pertinent for the learning and teaching of languages other than English.

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the programme in which the teacher participants of this research were enrolled. The overview is intended to provide a visual as well as a descriptive outline of the programme’s appearance and its content, as well as a history of its evolution. It is divided into two main sections; FLOTE Blueprints, and Ship’s Manifest which include both a discussion of, and a history of, technical specifications and curriculum design issues.

\textsuperscript{32} SS is a nautical term that means steam ship (http://www.acronyminder.com/Steam-Ship-(nautical-vessel-designation%-3B-also-see-MS-for-motor-ship)-(SS).html). In Gilligan’s Island, the ship that strands the passengers on the island is the SS Minnow (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S_%27_S_Minion), so it was felt that using SS FLOTE would tie this together nicely.

\textsuperscript{33} From Memorable Quotes from Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0325980/quotes)
4.2. FLOTE blueprints

Before any ship can set sail, (or any professional development programme can be launched), it is vital to put a great deal of thought and energy into the designing of a vessel that is the appropriate size and type for its purpose. A large ship in shallow waters, or a small boat in the ocean, invites disaster. This section of the chapter presents an exploration of the creation and adaptation of the FLOTE blueprints.

4.2.1. Technical design

The two principal areas needing to be addressed in terms of FLOTE’s technical design were firstly site layout and features, and secondly the structure and functions of the Content Management System (CMS). Accessibility, usability and appeal were critical considerations given the varied backgrounds of the target group.

National Consultative Groups and a Steering Committee provided feedback through teleconferences, and a Forum regarding site layout and content throughout the FLOTE development process and this enabled any issues or suggestions to be quickly addressed.

4.2.1.1. Site Layout and Features

4.2.1.1. Site Design

As with other forms of educational and professional development programmes, online programmes need to be easy to use (Henke, 1997, p.3). “Creating an effective online learning environment for students requires thoughtful and appropriate design of the content materials and target audience” (Siragusa, 2000, p.2) and site design can significantly impact on the site’s functionality. The most critical instructional design considerations raised during the development of the FLOTE programme are detailed
below. Each of these is discussed in terms of their origin and their developmental history.

Site Navigability

According to Oliver (1996, p 3), simplicity is the key when designing for the web. He mentions the dangers of people becoming disorientated, and therefore, frustrated with the online environment. In order to avoid this frustration, FLOTE needed to be easy to use and consistent in its layout and appearance. It needed to incorporate text links as well as graphic links to allow for slower connection speeds and older computers.

To achieve these ends, inside the modules, navigability was assisted by links to the main FLOTE features across the top of the screen. In addition, links to the subtopics within an individual module were placed in the left margin of the site.

Figure 10: Inside a FLOTE Module
At the bottom of each module, a Quick Jump drop down menu allowed instantaneous movement between pages within a subsection, while ‘Next’ and ‘Previous’ pages could be accessed through clicking on the animated arrows. These arrows moved their legs and blinked when the cursor was over them, adding an aspect of surprise and fun.

Figure 11: Bottom left navigation

Figure 12: Bottom right navigation

**Readability**

Oliver (1996, p.3) claims that text structure and readability are “Critical aspects in WWW content presentation.” Text colours and background colours selected for the FLOTE online environment, had to have good contrast and be viewable and printable across a number of different computer platforms (Mac, Windows etc) and web browsers (Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, Safari, Firefox etc). In addition, different versions of system and browser software presented challenges, particularly Windows XP.

**Memorability**

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34 WWW: World Wide Web
Certain techniques were used to endeavour to make the FLOTE experience both easier to remember and more appealing through humour.

A short URL:35 (www.flote.edu.au) meant that participants found it easy to remember the address when returning to the site.

A nautical theme was selected using the homophones ‘FLOTE’ and ‘float’. This incorporated a lifebuoy on the home page as well as ropes and nautical expressions throughout the public section of the site. This nautical theme set FLOTE apart from other sites, making it ‘memorable’.

![Figure 13: FLOTE home page](image)

**Colour suitability**

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35 URL: website address.
As well as requiring a colour scheme that did not interfere with text legibility and printing, FLOTE also needed a ‘feel’ that would encourage users to participate and not be too sterile-looking. Orange and purple were chosen with dark colours for the home page and lighter shades for the module content.

**Content Manageability**

Graphics were inserted into the various modules and these needed to be meaningful and appropriate, and avoid interference with the download speed of the page. Text was divided into different pages and separated by graphics, tables and other devices, to make it more manageable to read. “Many people report that reading materials on the screen is uncomfortable and will read as little as possible, particularly if the material is difficult to read” (Siragusa, 2000, p.2).

Icons for ‘Things to Watch’, ‘Focus Questions’ and ‘Teacher Tips’ provided easy-to-see common elements inside each module.

![Figure 14: Iconic Aids](image)

**Link authenticity**

Links to external sites needed to be current (and monitored to ensure they remained accessible). They also needed to be quality sites. Links to the NALSAS and DEEWR websites also needed to be included.

**Interactivity**
Aloia, Riegle and Schoon (1996, p.3) advocate both synchronous and asynchronous communication mechanisms in web development to provide for the diversity of student needs as they engage online. In FLOTE, these communication modes were provided through a Chat room and a Forum facility, as well as email and ejournal interaction between the participants and the programme facilitators.

**Security**

The Content Management System allowed participants to be allocated to particular groups, levels, and module numbers, which they could access through a username / password login.

The site was established as a secure site that could only be accessed through approved login registered on the FLOTE content management system. A demonstration module was developed to be accessible to the ‘public’ so that potential programme participants could have a sense of what the programme entailed and looked like.
Forum

A Forum is an online bulletin board, which allows participants to post questions and comments on various topics. These topics, otherwise known as ‘strands’, can be set up by a facilitator or the participants. Questions and comments posted to the Forum can be responded to and commented on by other participants or the facilitator. Forums can be public, (accessible by anyone) or restricted (requiring participants to login). The FLOTE Forum (see Figure 16) is restricted and consists of some general topics and information about the FLOTE programme, as well as a number of topics for each module. A ‘Photo Album’ topic allowed participants to introduce themselves and put a photograph up if they wished. This was established to help diminish the sense of isolation that often occurs with online learning. Winfield et al\textsuperscript{36} in Siagasa (2000) believe that if a sense of community can be developed through online learning programmes this can help to combat failure.

The FLOTE Forum has provided participants with the opportunity to learn from each other in terms of the possibilities presented through FLOTE’s design features, as well as exchanging suggestions and information about language teaching generally. Participants were able to comment on module content as well as share ideas and resources as can be seen from the forum posting reproduced below.

**Shareware-Hangkid 2.1**

This game is a variation of the traditional hangman game which can be played in a number of languages, Italian, French and Japanese, just to name a few. The player is given initial cues in order to attempt spelling the corresponding word.

It takes approximately 20 mins to download. The file size is 4.99MB and it can be downloaded onto any Windows platform. Once the game is downloaded you are required to set up the vocab bank in your target language to suit your use. This function of the game is the most beneficial feature as it allows you to establish your own pictures and words to accommodate your intended purpose for any theme or subject.

Other features include: a bank of 200 pictures to support any vocab you require. You can also create new language...
Chat

“Through the use of chat rooms and email, ongoing, individual and group discussions can occur.” (Aloia, Riegle & Schoon, 1996, p. 3). Providing opportunities for ongoing discussion was considered an essential addition to the features available on FLOTE. Chat room facilities were built into the online programme through the use of Java™ Chat Solutions.

However, a number of technological issues arose with the Chat, not least of which was the initial challenge to ensure all the teacher participants and the facilitators used computers that were Java enabled. In addition, the educational jurisdiction had a firewall in place that interfered with the Chat software. This meant that most participants had to use an Internet account which was not supplied by the educational jurisdiction. In the second year, the firewall issue was finally resolved but only after a great deal of deliberation and discussion with the educational jurisdiction sponsoring the programme participants. The firewall issue was a significant problem for some time and, as will be seen later, impacted on participant perceptions of, and engagement with the programme.

Figure 18: Chat Login Screen
4.2.1.2. Content Management System (CMS)

The Content Management System, or CMS, is an administrator functionality, which allows content and images to be added and manipulated within the FLOTE pages, as well as allowing pages to be added, deleted and reordered. In addition, the CMS allows the administrators of the site to monitor with precision, the engagement of FLOTE users through tracking the date, FLOTE pages and duration of each participant’s login. This data can be downloaded for specific individuals and date ranges, into an Excel spreadsheet where it can be manipulated or graphical representations generated. The CMS that has been developed therefore provides enormous advantages in terms of the long-term administration and operation of the FLOTE site.
4.2.1.2.1. **Ease of Use**

While inserting and formatting content in the CMS does require basic HTML skills, this has been kept to a minimum so that non-technical people are able to manage and update the site. This ensures regular site renewal and improvement because it is not a chore to amend or make changes.
4.2.1.2.2. **Flexibility**

The ease with which the CMS can be used also supports flexibility in terms of module access. It is a simple process to grant access to specific modules at one of three levels; undergraduate, postgraduate and other. Undergraduate and postgraduate access provides task boxes within each module, which are aimed at the appropriate level.

The ‘other’ access level turns off all task boxes so that facilitators can generate their own context-specific tasks. This feature ensures that FLOTE can accommodate a wide range of users, including pre-service teachers, right through to experienced practitioners engaged in post-graduate study.
As Gayeski (1998, p.4) rightly points out, “[d]esign [of web-based learning] is an iterative process, not a linear one; projects are never ‘done’. In today’s environment, content changes too quickly to allow for long, drawn-out development schedules. Updates are a reality, not a problem.”

One of the primary concerns when developing FLOTE therefore, was the need to be able to easily adapt it and add to it. This facility allows for a continuous fine-tuning process with respect to FLOTE. Fine-tuning was ongoing throughout the development stage of FLOTE and continues as a normal part of its operation.
4.2.2. **Curriculum design**

One of the common complaints mentioned by many researchers in the area of online learning is that, “on-line teaching tools provide more “sizzle” than “steak” and are not serious pedagogical instruments” (Navarro, 2000, p. 289).

It is difficult to separate technical and curriculum design, as each impacts on the other. Where many online programmes fall down is through over-emphasising the technology or alternatively, through simply transferring print materials to the web. What is needed is a balance between technical design and curriculum design. In the case of the FLOTE online programme, curriculum design considerations determined technical specifications associated with FLOTE and vice versa. In addition to these considerations, however, there were other processes associated with curriculum design which are explored here.

4.2.2.1. **Content**

4.2.2.1.1. **Determining the Content**

The selection of the themes of the various FLOTE modules and the course content for these was shaped in accord with the contractual requirements of the NALSAS tender. Research and discussion to generate an initial group of module topics was conducted with the Steering Committee and Consultative Group members. The input of these group members was considered critical to the determination of curriculum content for the programme, particularly due to the wide variety of language curriculum models in use around Australia.

Data about recommended programme content were obtained through a survey and through telephone interviews with NALSAS Steering Committee and Consultative
Group members. Further clarification and discussion were done through subsequent teleconferences and through an online Forum or bulletin board where group members could post ideas and feedback. This process was significant in shaping the nature of the programme and in determining its contents.

As a result of the analysis of information from this process, a modular structure was developed for FLOTE. Tentative module titles were devised and a notional idea of course content as the equivalent of either 2 or 4 day face to face modules was developed. 37

Flexibility was a central consideration in designing the course. The modules were therefore planned to be able to accommodate the needs of pre-service teachers, post-graduate students, and the needs of in-service professional development programmes.

It was also determined that programme development would be shaped around the notion of there being essential and also elective modules, to facilitate flexibility and choice within the project’s curriculum design template.

Twelve modules were originally proposed but these were changed to accommodate feedback from the Steering Committee who requested the following modifications and inclusions:

- Greater emphasis on literacy
- Boys’ education issues to be more explicitly addressed
- Planning and assessment to be more explicitly linked.

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37 This was later abandoned when it became obvious that the demands of modules differed dramatically. The position adopted by the Project Team became one of modules being as long as they needed to be.
In order to enable technologically unskilled teachers to participate fully in the online programme, a decision was made to re-order the modules so that all participants would initially complete the two Information Communication Technology modules.

An extensive programme of curriculum development and module writing was then commenced involving members of the Project Team, together with a number of expert practitioners who contributed through writing, interview and the provision of advice.

4.2.2.1.2. Presenting the Content

At the end of the FLOTE development phase there were sixteen online modules available. These modules encompassed a wide range of areas and issues associated with the effective learning and teaching of second or foreign languages. The module titles are below:

- **MODULE 1A** Information Technology as a Resource for Learning and Teaching - The Internet
- **MODULE 1B** Information Technology as a Resource for Learning and Teaching - ICT Beyond the Internet
- **MODULE 2A** Factors Impacting on Language Teaching and Learning - SLA and SLT
- **MODULE 2B** Factors Impacting on Language Teaching and Learning - Successful Language Programmes
- **MODULE 3A** Professional Practicum - Self-Access Language Learning
- **MODULE 3B** Professional Practicum - Action Learning
- **MODULE 4A** Modes and Metas - The Five Language Modes
- **MODULE 4B** Modes and Metas - The Metas
- **MODULE 5A** Dimensions of Curriculum Design - Planning and Programming
- **MODULE 5B** Dimensions of Curriculum Design - Assessment
- **MODULE 6** Music in the Language Classroom
- **MODULE 7** Games in the Language Classroom
- **MODULE 8** Resources: Tried and True
- **MODULE 9** Teaching Scripted Languages
- **MODULE 10** Teaching LOTE via Distance
- **MODULE 11** Self-Directed Language Learning
The 12 modules undertaken by participants in both years of the study were: 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8. Each module contained a number of tasks that needed to be completed either by posting items to the FLOTE Forum, participating in discussions in the Chat sessions, reflecting in an ejournal or developing strategies, tasks, resources and the like. The content of the modules was enhanced through links to relevant Internet sites, and through the inclusion of relevant readings, excerpts from teacher interviews, and sample resources. Readings and resources were included on a CD that was distributed to all participants.

4.2.2.1.3. Refining the Content

Online professional development programmes, as with other forms of online learning, require regular updates to both structure and content so that they continue to be relevant to the learning context in which they are used. Revisions and refinements to FLOTE’s content have been, and continue to be, ongoing.

In the initial development of FLOTE, changes were made in response to:

- Reflection and review by Project Team members
- Advice from expert teachers involved in content development
- Comment and critique from Consultative Group members
- Feedback from the trial participants.

These changes included:

- The correction of typographical errors. These were communicated through ejournals, emails and Chat sessions.
• The relocation or substitution of missing or changed Internet sites in response to feedback through ejournal entries such as the one below.

Note for Hadithi - The links to
www ntoec nt edu au/library/lessons/select/evalsce.html and http://www howard k12 md us/mhms/homeec/globalfoodswebquest s.html
is not attached. (Update: I checked Global foods ↑ again, and it is back.)

• The reworking of certain paragraphs and sections where there were issues with respect to clarity of content and requirements. Where needed, changes were made as speedily as possible and the person who brought it to our attention was contacted.

… apologies again for the confusion with this module! It looks like you got to experiment with and use many new things and I certainly hope you found them valuable. Well done.

• The inclusion of additional material to enrich the existing content. In certain instances, Consultative Group members, expert practitioners or teacher participants provided extra information, websites and language-specific or jurisdiction-specific material.

In addition to corrections and clarification, content refinement has resulted in the following:

• The development of a multi-level task facility within the content management system in order to accommodate different learner cohorts and different delivery configurations.
• The inclusion of a module on self-directed learning in order to provide future cohorts of participants with initial and additional support in effective online learning.

4.2.2.1.4. **Multi-Levelling**

One of the great advantages of the FLOTE CMS and its online environment is that a system of 3 levels was built into it. This facility allows an individual participant to be designated as ‘undergraduate’, ‘postgraduate’ or ‘other’. Therefore, by using the same content but with different tasks, FLOTE can be relevant to a wider audience and used for differing purposes, from accredited undergraduate or postgraduate study to pre-service and in-service professional learning.

The gradations in terms of task complexity and demand can be distinguished through examination of the task boxes taken from Module 2 and inserted below:

**Module 2a: Undergraduate level task**

Using the references provided, (and additional sources if you so choose), articulate what is meant by the terms / concepts bolded in the above description of Krashen’s five hypotheses. Why can these ideas be considered important with respect to understanding the development of theories of second language acquisition and their relationship to second language teaching?

**Module 2a: Postgraduate Level Task**

The work of Stephen Krashen serves as a particular landmark in terms of our understanding of second language acquisition and second language teaching. Take the opportunity at this point in this module to begin a critique of his work, and the work of significant scholars/linguists who came both before, and after him. Use the readings on your CD Rom, and the references included as part of this unit, as a starting point, and present your critique in the form of a literature review.

Participants in this study, however, all worked at undergraduate level. This decision was made because, although they were all qualified teachers, none had experience of languages curriculum and methodology studies.
### 4.2.2.1.5. Support

Given that many FLOTE participants had little or no technological experience either with computers generally and online learning specifically, a variety of aids were generated to provide assistance both in static and an active fashion. The static aids endeavoured to deal with frequently asked questions or known issues that may arise, while the active responded to new or unusual situations as they arose. These are described in the following paragraphs.

**Help**

An online help facility was built into FLOTE in order to be a first port of call for participants who are unsure how to undertake modules or use certain aspects of the site. By clicking on the ‘help’ rope, users are able to access help for site navigation and for using the various functions available within FLOTE.
Figure 22: FLOTE Help

The screen snapshot in Figure 22 shows the question-answer format used to address possible help issues.

Chat

The Chat facility, both in the first year with the trial cohort and in the second year, served many functions for those teachers who were able to login. In both years, help with technology issues (related and unrelated to FLOTE), with FLOTE content and assessment issues, and with general LOTE teaching questions and problems, was provided to participants via Chat sessions.
Forum

The FLOTE forum was designed so as to include a general question section for each module, as well as sample items for programme participants to look at and add to. Questions were sometimes posted and responded to by other participants and sometimes responded to by the facilitator(s). The advantage of this permanent record able be accessed by newcomers, as well as facilitators, is that it can become a storehouse of knowledge and resources. This is highlighted through the comments of one participant:

> In a way the Forum is like a collective portfolio, which has the potential to show the collective process and individual process of our learning journey. And can act as a source of assessment in itself as the forum could in a sense be a type of norm referencing, each student against the other.

Email and Telephone

Participants were provided with email addresses and mobile and university contact phone numbers for both FLOTE facilitators at the commencement of the programme. Generally contact was via email although a number of the more dependant participants chose to phone regularly.

CD

Participants enrolled in the entire FLOTE programme were also provided with a CD. Many of the online modules had required readings chosen to support participants in terms of their theoretical understanding of the learning and teaching of languages. It was decided that it was impractical and inefficient to require participants to read these long, dense documents on screen. The CD provided participants with the option of printing out readings if they chose to do so.
4.3. Ship’s manifest

4.3.1. Constructing the modules

As has been previously mentioned a team of writers including members of the Project Team, together with a number of expert practitioners (who were then teaching Indonesian, Italian and Japanese) were responsible for module conceptualisation, writing and critique. The writers’ practical knowledge of, and experience in, both primary and secondary language teaching was advantageous in terms of ensuring that modules are relevant and useful with respect to the different phases of development in which learners engage with second or foreign languages.

Module development was also shaped by current understandings and information about second language acquisition and second language teaching. Recent research findings and contemporary theoretical positions were used to inform module development. There was also a concerted effort to both draw on, and link directly to, other reports, research projects, and undertakings of NALSAS so as to capture the interrelatedness of the different studies, and to maximise the benefits to be gained from the development of a comprehensive picture of LOTE education in the Australian context.

Modules were therefore grounded in both theory and practice, in order to provide FLOTE users with an appropriate balance in terms of their learning, together with potential application within a learning / teaching context.

4.3.1.1. Module Form

4.3.1.1.1. Design Features within Modules
When a participant logs on to the FLOTE programme, a list of modules to which they have been given access will appear. Once a module has been selected from the drop down list, the introductory screen for that module will appear.

![Module 1A Introduction](image)

**Figure 23: Front Screen Module 1A**

Each module is contextualised through its Introduction, and the basic subsections of the module can be both seen and accessed from the left-hand column. All modules have the Introduction, the Assessment Information, and the References subsections. The beginning of each module generally, not only sets the scene, but also poses focus questions or tasks that require the participant to consider their own knowledge and experience of that module theme, before moving on to engage with the module content. Intended module outcomes are also included. This format was developed to enable FLOTE users to consciously build on their own experiential knowledge as well as know ‘where they were headed’ having some sense of what was to be the “received knowledge” (Wallace, 1991) of the module.
The use of ejournals is very much a part of this reflective / experiential approach. Ejournals were to be submitted for each of the modules in the FLOTE programme. These were to contain the participants’ responses to designated tasks within the modules, and to focus questions articulated through the module. They were also to contain reflections on the learning process and on individual participant interactions with the programme. These ejournals were an on-going but informal record of engagement, learning and reflection that were perceived as a principal tool for the development of new knowledge and practices. The two extracts below demonstrate these points.

**Applied Linguistics**

Applied linguists apply the theories and tools of formal linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics in a wide variety of socially useful ways.

Information generated from research, and the information presented in this module, must be examined against information and experience derived from the classroom.

Sounds like a tough unit!!!!!

**BYO Language Baggage**

In your journal record your experiences with respect to language teaching and learning. What have these experiences been like? What do you consider to have been the critical factors shaping these experiences? And, to what extent does your vision of language teaching correlate with your experiences of language learning?

Going back to high school I enjoyed learning French most. It seemed useful, practical and was fun. I did not enjoy the test side as I felt inadequate and not confident. I also had to learn some Italian. I don’t remember any these days. I remember Italian as being lots of grammar and rules - No cultural aspects at all. I never saw myself in any shape or form as a language teacher. This would have been the last thing I thought I could or would ever want to achieve.

So with that poor attitude how did I end up in this role. Following the birth of my youngest, unexpected child I wanted a way to lighten my work load and become permanent again. Not the best of reasons for becoming a language teacher! I am now permanent but as for an easier road… I do more PD, preparation and study than ever before and I quite enjoy it…Must be the huge challenge!

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**Ejournal sample 1 (from ejournal module 2a)**
This module has definitely provided me with the knowledge and skills in reflecting on my own planning and programming. At times it is so easy to get caught up in the nitty gritty of lessons that we often neglect the elements that make an impact on the achieved outcomes. Like education itself, it is important to self-reflect on plans and programs so improvements can be made.... This module in particular has outlined and broken down each component in a way that emphasises the interconnectedness that arises when considering the elements that impact on a sustainable and successful program.

Ejournal sample 2 (from ejournal module 5a)

In addition, ejournals were to provide a rich data source for this particular research study.

4.3.1.1.2. Design Features Across Modules

FLOTE modules needed to support a number of different languages, primary and secondary teaching and variations in requirements across states and territories. In addition, prior knowledge and skills of participants was an issue, as were their learning styles. As such, a wide variety of information, links and extension readings and activities needed to be included, which made FLOTE much more comprehensive, and much larger, than anticipated.

There is also diversity in terms of the task requirements within the various modules. This range includes short answers to focus questions, reflective tasks, curriculum critiques, development of practical tasks for classroom use, and critical review of scholarly articles. These different orientations in approach enhance FLOTE’s capacity to engage, as well as increase its capacity to satisfy the professional and educational needs of disparate groups of people.

4.3.1.2. Module Size

Initial ‘guesstimates’ as to the length of time that would be required to complete FLOTE were woefully underestimated. The FLOTE trial group of teachers in the first
year were allocated 3 months to complete the 12 modules. It soon became clear however, that the modules were so comprehensive, that even very active participants would be unable to complete it in that time. Rather than reduce the size of the modules, the time allocated for the total programme was increased to 6 months. In reality, most participants took between 40 and 60 hours to complete the programme, and the amount of time required for specific modules varied significantly depending on the person’s prior knowledge in that area.

4.3.1.3. The FLOTE Programme

The development of FLOTE resulted in a comprehensive, multidimensional program able to address the needs of different groups and individuals working in the area of languages education. The FLOTE programme is represented in the diagram below:

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the transformation from design to development has been described, and the different features of the FLOTE programme have been identified and
explored. The provision of information with respect to contextualising this study is now complete. In the next chapter the data from the study will be the subject of discussion. This will be presented using the Gilligan’s Island Archetypes.
5. GILLIGAN’S ISLAND ARCHETYPES

5.1. Introduction

The Seven Deadly Sins is a conceptual system to classify vices. This system of sins has been used since early Christian times to educate and instruct religious followers with respect to human frailties or shortcomings. The early fourteenth century saw the Seven Deadly Sins begin to develop popularity as a theme among European artists of the time. Over the centuries the sins have permeated many areas of Catholic culture. They have also become a source of inspiration within the creative arts and the media. The Sins are now an accepted part of everyday vernacular, and have been used in the development, analysis, and critiquing of everything from CS Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* to the movie *Bedazzled*, and also to *Gilligan’s Island*.

The following extract demonstrates one commentator’s endeavour to identify the link between *Gilligan’s Island* and the sins:

In fact, what seemed to be a perfectly disarming, if somewhat frustrating, situation comedy was a representation of a Satyr-like netherworld in which the characters represent the Seven Deadly Sins, forced in the days after Armageddon (in the form of the Flood) to live in unceasing torment with each other. The viewers witness the characters’ eternal damnation through Gilligan (a name derived from the Scottish “gillie”, a hunting or fishing guide). Also symbolizing the sin of Sloth, Gilligan has fallen among the other sinners through his own inability to escape. In the show, it is almost always Gilligan who unwittingly sabotages the castaways’ attempts at rescue.”


Whilst this is an intriguing perception it is not universally accepted. In fact, in his book *Here on Gilligan’s Isle*. (1993), Russell Johnston, (who played the Professor in the television series), specifically refutes any connection between the Seven Deadly Sins and the show. Rather, he claims that he found out years later that the producer, Sherwood Schwartz, intentionally organised the diverse group of exaggerated crazies, that were the castaways on Gilligan’s Island, to mirror the American melting pot - all
cooking under the pressure of being completely isolated from civilization - ‘a social microcosm’ (Johnston, 1993).

Despite Johnson’s refutation, the idea of connecting the Seven Deadly Sins and the *Gilligan’s Island* characters to my data analysis has proved too forceful. There was congruence with the FLOTE experience. The social microcosm notion is also relevant. Collectively these ideas form a framework that allows me to organise, present, and analyse my data. The social microcosm is the FLOTE community on its maiden and subsequent voyage. The Seven Deadly Sins and the Gilligan’s Island characters ‘morph’ to form an archetypal matrix able to be used to frame the presentation of the data. This matrix is used to present what happened as participants attempted to keep afloat within their online microcosm as they engaged with their online learning experience.

Sin 1  Gilligan - gluttony
Sin 2  The Skipper - anger
Sin 3  Mr Howell - greed
Sin 4  Mrs Howell - sloth
Sin 5  Maryanne - envy
Sin 6  Ginger - lust
Sin 7  The Professor - pride

The archetype data used in this study details *instances* within the FLOTE experience, not *individuals* associated with it in the examples.

Tripp’s (1993, p.8) idea of critical instances is a good match for this process. For him, critical instances are those created by “the way we look at a situation: a critical instance is an interpretation of the significance of an event.” In other words, it is the designating of events as critical in the data that enables significance to be assigned
and themes to emerge. It also allows the reader into what this experience was like by sharing the ‘lived experiences’ through the archetypes.

Throughout their period of engagement with FLOTE, individuals often displayed a number of different archetypal perspectives in their interactions with FLOTE. This was evidenced through chat logs, forum postings, emails, phone calls, and ejournals. Critical instances can also be identified and then categorised using the archetypes from entries in my own journal.

Using this idea of critical instances, data and the Gilligan’s Island archetypes, it is possible to organise and categorise the data and thus make sense of how participants interacted with FLOTE and experienced learning in this online environment.

### 5.2. Gilligan’s Island Archetypal Matrix

#### 5.2.1. Gilligan - Gluttony

The first of the archetypal matrix categories is that of Gilligan or Gluttony. Participant interactions in this category for the purpose of this study are those where participants felt swamped, were ‘gluttons for punishment.’ This stemmed from a number of factors that are grouped here under work issues and personal issues. Work issues included overcoming procrastination and the isolation of teaching, and personal issues included family commitments and other life problems. Due to the duration of the study, most participants’ interactions with FLOTE fell into the gluttony category at one time or another as participants struggled to complete a module every two weeks.

##### 5.2.1.1. Personal Issues

The personal issues that impacted on the FLOTE participants were similar in both years of the programme. The inability of the teachers to juggle teaching and their
other roles was significant as was the impact of day-to-day life events throughout their period of engagement with FLOTE.

5.2.1.1.1. Multitasking

Some participants were unable to divide their attention between teaching, other life roles, or other life events, and FLOTE. Some, like Freda (quoted below), were aware of their own limitations but not really sure how to succeed with online learning in spite of this. Freda did take a couple of relief days, provided by the supporting jurisdiction, but still only completed half the modules and she had only attended 3 chat sessions by the end of the programme.

CHAT LOG: Apr 14
Tracey: had a look at the modules yet?
Freda: briefly but am waiting for the holidays to get into it. Unfortunately, I am one of those people who can only concentrate on one thing at once!

Some people like Amelia were sidetracked into other areas unrelated to the programme, particularly with the Internet module where it was easy to be distracted by interesting links. Although she only took part in one of the chat sessions she did manage to complete all of the modules. In her journal she raises concerns about completing the modules on time.

EJOURNAL: Amelia
I found both sites to be informative and credible and I seemed to spend an incredible amount of time exploring them. This task is taking me a long time because I get side-tracked easily. I wonder how I will ever complete the other modules in time.

5.2.1.1.2. Other Life Issues Interfered

Over the period of both FLOTE data collection periods, some participants had numerous life events that interfered with their ability to interact with FLOTE. While
some continued successfully to complete modules despite their own and others’ illness and even family death, others like Lousella, in the chat log below, found time for the Chat sessions, attending 11 altogether, but did not complete any of the actual work (ejournals).

**CHAT LOG: Apr 14**

lousella: Hadithi I haven't had time to get into Flote yet as I spent last week in Perth and came home on Saturday after the first funeral. I lost 3 relatives in 30 hours. Pretty hard on my parents. I also had some business to do while I was there.

Edna found health an issue but although she came onto a couple of chats, we did not receive a health certificate and she did not complete any modules having logged on around 10 hours according to the CMS.

**CHAT LOG: Aug 18**

hadithi: if you had contacted us earlier we may have been able to help
edna: I realize that, guess I had hoped that things would have picked up sooner but they didn't. I panicked.

Valerie, right at the beginning of the programme, posted a description of herself on the forum that in a few words really opened our eyes about her potential to complete the programme. She did not come to any chats and only completed one FLOTE module.

**FORUM POSTING: Valerie**

PostPosted: Mon Apr 07,

try and pick me - i am the ragged mother in desperate need of a nanny or another holiday in italy. Smile

5.2.1.1.3. *Family Commitments*

Juggling family commitments as well as FLOTE emerged as a significant issue as is evidenced in the comments below. Participants found it difficult to plan for regular FLOTE studies within the context of family. For many, this was a sense of work is
work, family is family and there was no place for FLOTE. Family member
commitments included visits, the birth of a new baby in one case, and new and ending
relationships. Driving the children around or looking after people who were ill
detracted from the time possible to work on FLOTE. Lousella and Idena in this chat
log discuss Lousella’s distractions from visiting family members to new work and a
new relationship. It should not be surprising that she had little time for FLOTE.

CHAT LOG: May 12
lousella: I've also got my parents down staying at the moment and
a new man in my life that is looking very nice.

Trista struggled almost from the start as her father was ill and in the UK so she simply
couldn’t create an elearning space. He eventually passed away and she went to visit
her relations. She attended 2 chats and completed 4 modules.

CHAT LOG: May 26
trista: very slowly at the moment. Went away for 1wk of the hols
then since I've come home my dad is seriously ill in Scotland and
have to choose carefully when I use the net.

While Amelia completed all the modules, she clearly describes her initial distaste for
online learning as well as her problems juggling home with two young children and
FLOTE. In fact, she only attended one chat over the six months because of this. Her
changed perception of her own learning comes through clearly as does her initial
comment about her lack of self-direction.

EJOURNAL: Amelia
Absolutely, but then all things in perspective - I find that getting
the time to do the modules very hard with two very young children
who are still dependant on me. (self directed module)

In my own journal in the second year, I reflected on the frustration of only one person
out of seven who had problems, contacting us in an appropriate time frame to discuss
difficulties and issues. This ‘participant inertia’ made it difficult for us to help them.
There seemed to be significantly fewer issues impacting on the participants in the first year as I had no record of contact from them about health and other significant family issues.

5.2.1.2. **Work Issues**

Work issues related to *Gluttony* are those instances where, because participants took on too many other commitments at school (such as camps, sports training and so on), the capacity to engage with FLOTE was impacted. It also includes instances where, because teachers were so busy, with the day-to-day of teaching they kept putting off FLOTE. And finally, there is the issue of isolation caused both by the medium of online learning and that of isolation as individual language teachers in many schools. This, in some instances was a significant issue.

5.2.1.2.1. **Too Many Commitments**

Commitments such as extra teaching or school-related tasks (meetings, sport etc.) made it difficult for some participants to find the time for FLOTE. In the discussion below, Freda details how busy she is, even mentioning she would like to also do tutoring as well. She seems to find it difficult to commit to one thing and manage the time she has but also wants to take on more. She attended 3 chats and completed 6 of the 12 modules.
**CHAT LOG: Apr 28**

Freda: me too! but preparing for school - catching up with friends, entertaining rellies and jaida . . .god knows when i'll get it done!! was thinking of doing tutoring after school too - but may have to can that idea!!

The instances in the next chat log show a typical lack of concern from participants about their non-starting of the modules. They seem to have forgotten that they signed a contract that they would complete the program within the six months. Of these three participants, Dara was at 7 chats and completed 10 modules, Lousella was at 11 chats and completed no modules while Idena attended 6 chats and completed all modules, despite it taking her a few weeks to get started.

**CHAT LOG: May 12**

tracey: so has anyone had any problems with FLOTE??
dara: Apart from not having enough time to sit and do it no, not really
lousella: Have you startyed any modules yet Idena?
idena: not yet lousella but i have high expectations as the term settles to have a go

Emile also had a slow start but finally managed 4 chats and 10 modules despite work being “horribly” busy. Given that FLOTE ran for six months, it was common for participants to have school events interfere as mentioned in the chat log below.

**CHAT LOG: Jun 9**

emile: Before I forget......to late.. No Next week out on camp . Will not be chatting
tracey: ok
tracey: thats fine
tracey: keeping busy at school?
emile: Horribly so, acting SM PE .
tracey: oh dear
Emile thats no good
Barron detailed at the start of the programme that he had little faith in his own ability to complete FLOTE. Although the CMS logged him as being on for around 7 hours, he attended no chats and completed no modules. His initial posting on the Forum seemed to clearly spell out those things in his life that he prioritised.

**FORUM POSTING: barron**
PostPosted: Mon Apr 07,
Ciao tutti, i think that i am not going to find the time for all of this, work, family, kids, life, exercise, recreation, you know how it is. Although, I will try very hard to finish.

As most participants were currently teaching (80-90% in both years), any additional commitments made it difficult for them to allow time for FLOTE. Participants in both years had volunteered for the online programme, but in some cases they underestimated the work involved and tried to take on school and outside school responsibilities and events. They simply lacked the strategies to manage the workload. Ellison attended 9 chats but did not complete any modules. His questions in the chat log below suggest that he was looking for ‘hand-holding’ and uniformity rather than being a self-directed learner.

**CHAT LOG: Jul 24:**
ellison: do you have any recommendations for how long each module should / could take??
tracey: Not really Ellison
tracey: depends how much u know about the topic?
ellison: could be interesting...!!
tracey: If you know lots bout the Internet, module 1 wouldnt be too hard
tracey: If it's all new, it will take a while
tracey: same with the others
ellison: gotcha
One of the other issues was that since the participation rate was so low in the second year, it was decided towards the end of the course, that any participants who had completed half of the modules would be eligible to ask for an extension until the end of the term. Bradley did ask for an extension and managed to complete all modules though it was touch and go for a while. Difficulties for him were exacerbated by his new baby and his regional status and he also did not take any relief days which might have helped him get motivated.

### CHAT LOG: Sep 8

hadithi: yep, as i said - it would be a shame if we were not in a position to be able to let you complete
Bradley: oh well, hadithi, u get that occasionally. life goes on :)

hadithi: indeed - its up to you bradley
Bradley: always has been hadithi

Many students like Idena (below) could not manage their use of time generally, and more specifically their relief days, which were provided to allow five study days with paid teacher relief. Unlike others, however, she did complete the course.

### CHAT LOG: Aug 25

idena: what about the study days thro' the ed dept. can some of them be held over til next term
hadithi: don't think so but you need to check with halima
idena: well they will give me the time to do the list you have just posted. I haven't taken any yet

### 5.2.1.2.2. Isolation

As mentioned previously in this dissertation, LOTE teachers are often known as ‘isolated’ professionals (See Chapter 2). The initial engagement with both groups of participants and the FLOTE programme was very limited because many felt uncomfortable and isolated in the online environment. For some this was because they preferred face-to-face interaction. For others, it was because the online environment was unknown. It was hoped that the weekly chat sessions, and the forum, would allow
participants the opportunity to interact with each other and with the facilitators and thus breakdown professional isolation. Chat sessions quickly became forums for social chit chat that helped break isolation for participants, but even so, learning online was not seen as a way of effectively dealing with issues around being the isolated LOTE teacher as is evidenced from the chat log entry below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAT LOG: Jul 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lousella: How are the others going? I would love another face to face day as I feel quite isolated. I want to try and chat to one of the others but its all long distance (phone suits me much better than comp chat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hadithi: the face to face was just to get you going - now its pretty much up to you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note, however, that although completion rates were low in both years (43% in the first year and only 27% in the second), most participants who did complete the programme were regular chat attendees.

Other elements of FLOTE were designed to breakdown isolation. As mentioned previously, participants in each year of FLOTE took part in one face-to-face day and had five days paid teacher relief that they could use to work on FLOTE. Participants who took advantage of the relief days used them in different ways. Some worked alone while others found working together both useful and a way of reducing the isolation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAT LOG: Jun 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tracey: easier to work with someone isn't it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>konrad: I've used up one already, but it's finding somewhere quiet with a computer and no baby to work in that's the problem!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, not all participants used their teacher relief days, and even for those that did, the sense of isolation appeared to be a continuing challenge.
5.2.2. Gluttony observations

This section on gluttony has shown how the taking on of too many outside commitments, whether family or other work commitments interfered with the ability of participants to complete, or even start FLOTE in both years of the study. Participants were advised that they should allocate at least half an hour each day to FLOTE, however, most failed to do so and allowed other commitments to take precedence. Participants thus had difficulty managing the workload and therefore engaging effectively and efficiently with FLOTE. For many these difficulties were exacerbated because they felt isolated and they found the experience of ‘FLOTEing’ too impersonal.

5.2.3. The Skipper - Anger

The second archetypal matrix category is that of The Skipper who represents Anger. Anger was rare although did stem from frustration with technology, particularly in the second year when problems with the CD occurred for some people, and the Education Department firewall made logging on to the chat impossible for some participants until later in the programme. Frustration also occurred when facilitators failed to respond to emails and phone calls or return journals in what participants considered to be a timely manner. In addition, some participants were angry at their own perceived lack of knowledge, both with respect to the methodology and technology aspects of the programme. These manifestations are explained below.
5.2.3.1. Frustration with Technology

5.2.3.1.1. Forum

In the first year there were problems with the software that was used for the Forum and this meant that some people experienced problems logging in and also in posting attachments.

MY JOURNAL 26/05

After much research and consideration, the problem was found to be the third party software which is used to post attachments. Alternative software was identified that could fix the problem and no further difficulties have been identified at this point. The current [TJ: second year] participants are posting freely to both the task-specific sections and to the general discussion sections within each module (thank goodness!).

5.2.3.1.2. CD and Windows XP

In the second year of the study the CD of additional readings and resources proved to be incompatible with Windows XP. It proved difficult to identify the problem. The result was that both participants and the facilitators experienced extreme frustration.

MY JOURNAL 21/02

it took us a while to identify what the problem was and then once it had been identified we needed to get the CDs sent back and new ones sent out that were compatible with that system.

Deborah was one of the first to identify that there was an issue with the CD. She appeared to think it was her fault rather than a technological glitch. She did not attend any chats but completed 4 modules.
**FORUM POSTING: Deborah**
PostPosted: Wed Apr 09
Hi there everyone,
Is anyone having trouble opening their CD. If you have managed to, please let me know how.
Terima kasih,

---

5.2.3.1.3. **Education Department Firewall**

In the first year of the study the Education Department computers were able to log on to the chat software although sometimes participants needed to update their version of Java as it was a Java based chat facility. In the second year, however, the Education Department firewall made it impossible for people to log on to the chat using their Education accounts. Having not had a problem with this in the first year, it was a shock to suddenly not be able to get people logging in. After the face-to-face day, participants commented on how keen and motivated they felt, but not being able to log into the chat seemed to deter some and made others very angry, especially those who although ‘techno-savvy’ still could not access the chat facility. Some participants managed to log on using home/personal Internet accounts but there was a general sense of resentment and frustration as a result of this technical difficulty.

Halima, the jurisdictional representative from the education department that sponsored the trial of FLOTE, also shared the frustration and anger experienced by participants. Even with her direct intervention, and continued assurances from IT personnel, it took many weeks for the problem to be addressed and the firewall issue to be finally resolved.

**CHAT LOG: May 19**
halima: I have finally been able to get the IT people in central office to look at the firewall problem. There's been progress, they assure me, but I still had to come home today to join in.
5.2.3.1.4. General Computer Issues Leading to Anger

As many participants were new to technology, small issues often became big ones with the chat and CD problems in the second year adding to the pressure experienced by participants.

Dara (below) mentioned her comfort with technology generally but that a new computer was creating issues, while Lousella was up front about her own lack of skills. Although they both attended quite a number of chat sessions, neither completed the programme.

**MY JOURNAL 21/02**

Many teachers admitted, right from the word go, that they had basically no computer knowledge—basically they could turn it on and off and that was about it—which is obviously why we intended them to do 1A and 1B first because they are the modules which are specifically to do with computer skills and the internet.

Idena had difficulties at the start of the programme but despite her initial low opinion of her own technology level, she did attend 6 chats and completed all the modules even after a very slow beginning.

**CHAT LOG: Apr 28**

lousella: Hi Dara i hope you have more luck with finding your way around the computer than I am. Frustrating little devils. I think Tracey is a saint of unlimitless patience

dara: I'm going okay normally with computers but we've just bought a new one and our ADSL connection is also caput!

**CHAT LOG: Sep 15**

idena: I really found it hard to start. I had so many tech probs the first day that I gave up

hadithi_n: intersting though - kids don't seem to give up on computers
idena: yeh well guess I'm one of those who is frightened of a machine that knows more than i do
hadithi_n: you certainly aren't alone in the adult world

Valerie was only able to log onto the chat once as she had young children, and an Education Department laptop and login which refused to work for most of the study. Nonetheless she did complete all of the modules. Her frustration at the technology and herself comes through very clearly in her ejournal below.

**EJOURNAL: Valerie**

Friday evening and unable once again to get on to the flote site. This is making me feel stressed.

I spoke to Halima on Monday 1 September expressing my concern that I have not been able to access the site using notebook for teachers. Other alternatives such as an internet café with a 10-month old and 3 year old would be sending me over the edge. I tried phoning Tracey yesterday as well but could not contact her. This evening I can use a friend's computer but still need this virus sorted so that I can send in the work that I have saved on the desktop. Initially I believed that this course would be perfect to juggle with a family, however, instead of it being unrestrictive it has proven to be most restrictive in terms of access and failure to access.

Another participant who acknowledged her own lack of technological skill right at the beginning of the programme was Griselda. In fact, she did not log onto any chats and completed only one module. This is illustrated by the posting posted in the ‘Introduce yourself’ section of the FLOTE forum.

**FLOTE POSTING: griselda**

griselda does not yet like computers. this course could very well be my undoing. Rolling Eyes

Other participants like Idena who had some, though little technological know how, questioned the validity of a tool where it was easy to either spend hours looking for something or end up on an inappropriate site.
The day I was on the searchindo site it was very slow. Would students become restless? What about if the internet went down as we all know happens with amazing regularity? I clicked on a site supposedly on fan clubs which led me to American singles on-line dating! Not good!!!

Idena was one of the better participants in the second year and although she only attended 6 chats, she managed to complete the programme.

Gladys, one of the younger participants in the second year of FLOTE, was reasonably comfortable with computers but found on-going computer and technical difficulties taxing and frustrating.

5.2.3.2. Facilitator not Responding

We received a number of emails and phone calls from participants who had tried to get hold of us at some time. Since the Internet is a 24/7 medium some participants expected us to be available to them 24/7. They did not appreciate that FLOTE facilitating was only a small part of facilitator workload.

5.2.3.3. Anger at the Department

In each year of the programme participants received generous support, both in terms of relief time and a financial subsidy, from the educational jurisdiction that sponsored the FLOTE trial. In return, the jurisdiction expected programme completion and required participants to enter a contractual agreement acknowledging their obligation.
In spite of this, efforts initiated by the jurisdiction to ensure contractual compliance on the part of participants were met with extreme anger from those who had failed to engage with FLOTE and commit to completing the programme.

In the second year, one such participant logged a formal complaint with the Union. This action lead to significant ‘bad blood’ and overt confrontation between the jurisdiction and a number of ‘participants’. My own anger towards these individuals, who seemed to have no sense of professional or personal responsibility, is evident in this (hastily written and poorly expressed) extract from my journal.

**MY JOURNAL 21/02**

Come on don't you think you should do the right thing you haven't done anything so far and you've been given this money, because the funding money had already been paid in advance to the schools, which is probably something they probably won't do again, at the end of all that many of the teachers got quite rebellious and got quite offended at the thought that DET was contacting them at the school and thought say 'give us our money back because you haven't done anything.'

5.2.4. **Anger Observations**

Data in this section demonstrate that technological issues really did impact significantly on the physical capacity of participants to engage in, and complete the programme. Significantly, these data also show that from an attitudinal perspective, feelings of negativity, frustration and anger were a part of the lived experiences of all associated with the FLOTE programme.
5.2.5. MR Howell - Greed

The third archetypal matrix category is Mr Howell or *Greed*. Whilst it can be argued that the previous discussion with respect to participant contractual arrangements can also be situated within the Greed archetype, the focus here is on participants expecting and demanding too much in terms of facilitator time, support, and attention. ‘Online’ was often ‘translated’ by participants as meaning ‘anytime’ of day or night and the intention that FLOTE allow for flexibility in terms of time for participant engagement was interpreted by participants as facilitators needing to be flexible and accessible 24/7. This definition of flexible learning was not anticipated or promoted.

In addition, teachers who were ‘greedy’ for support demonstrated an inability to self-direct their own learning, a propensity for spoon-feeding, and a dependency on facilitators for all manner of assistance, much of which was associated with issues extraneous to the actual content of the FLOTE modules.

Data pertaining to this archetype come from my journal, from chat logs and from telephone calls. Little is drawn from ejournals as instances associated with ‘greed’ tended to come from participants who failed to complete the set work of the programme.

5.2.5.1. Facilitator Time

A significant number of participants took more than their fair share of the facilitators’ time both in the chat, in email and on the telephone. Phone calls and emails were received regularly late at night and on the weekend, and participants had an expectation that they be responded to promptly. Often these communications were not about FLOTE. They tended to be questions about general computer issues. It was as if the FLOTE facilitators were the local IT help desk. On occasions when FLOTE
content and concepts were the subject of the communications, there was a ‘tell me what to do and I’ll do it’ approach from participants rather than an expression of real engagement with the course materials and content.

‘Greed’ for attention was exemplified by many interactions with Lousella. She rang incessantly, on my mobile and on my university number, and when she couldn’t use the phone she would email. In almost every contact, she pushed for a face-to-face meeting. Her questions were almost entirely about computer issues, - nothing about languages methodology or the content of FLOTE modules.

Although in constant communication and a regular participant in chat sessions, Lousella failed to complete a single module of the FLOTE program. Her ‘presence’
was draining and unproductive leading to the following exchange one evening after
she failed to come online for a chat session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAT LOG: Aug 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tracey: no lousella tonite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2.6. Greed Observations

This section highlights those instances within the FLOTE experience where
participant interactions demonstrated greed in terms of time, support and attention
demanded by participants from the facilitators. These instances also highlight issues
around the concept of flexibility for both participants and facilitators, particularly with
respect to 24/7 access. In addition, instances of greed amplify participant dependence
on facilitators within a programme that was underpinned by the assumption that the
teacher participants would, to a large extent, be able to manage and self-direct their
own learning.

### 5.2.7. Mrs Howell - Sloth

The fourth archetypal matrix category is Mrs Howell or *Sloth*. Such instances within
the FLOTE experience showed a lack of participant understanding with respect to the
demands of an online course. It was not necessarily that participants were lazy or
slothful, but rather that there was little appreciation for what engaging online actually
meant with respect to professional learning. This style of learning was new for all the
participants. Previous experiences of learning and teaching in no way prepared the
participants for the experience of FLOTE. All participants had recently undertaken
face-to-face professional learning programs in their target language. In these
programmes, however, time and tasks were managed for them and there was often
little personal accountability. The shift of responsibility to participants themselves had significant implications for success within the FLOTE programme. FLOTE provided a professional experience that left some participants wondering where to start and some hoping that someone else might complete the programme for them.

5.2.7.1. Previous Professional Development Experiences

The previous professional development experiences of participants were very significant. Not only were they face-to-face, and tightly managed by the ‘presenters’ through a transmission model, it was suggested that these previous experiences had not been particularly rigorous or taxing for those involved. Varian, who eventually only managed to complete three modules of FLOTE had this to say.

M Y J O U R N A L : 2 1 / 0 2

I must admit that I just keep thinking ‘so why did you put your name down for an online course’ so I guess peoples expectations of exactly what the professional development would actually entail was one big problem.

C H AT L O G : M a y 1 2

varian: I know how little work some people did on the Intensive Language Courses so it will be interesting...the Indonesian course that is

tracey: I guess if you get stuck in the beginning, it seems more manageable

varian: well...I hope I cope as organised is not an adjective I'd apply to myself

It appeared that participant professional learning in the language programmes, that preceded the FLOTE methodology programme, did little to support the level of engagement, and self-regulation that learning online through FLOTE demanded. This left me wondering about participant preparation and motivation.
5.2.7.2. Trouble Getting Started

Trouble getting started was certainly one of the big issues for most of the participants in the programme. In the first year, as there was no requirement to ‘turn up’, one quarter of participants failed to ever log on to the FLOTE website. In the second year, an orientation day was introduced in order to go some way to address the problem from the previous year. Significant technology issues around the CD and the firewall, however, compounded the ‘getting started’ problem, and negated the benefits of the orientation day. One third of the participants failed to log on and for others, just getting underway eroded time and undermined commitment.

CHAT LOG: Jul 28
mamie: Just starting I think. I was so ready and keen after our orientation day, then with discs and internet problems the time just slipped away.

Even for those who did access the modules there was the need to manage both the receptive and productive dimensions of the program. Data from the Content Management System (CMS) of FLOTE show that whilst many participants were logged as being online for considerable periods of time, this often did not translate into completed modules and ejournals. Mamie, for example, is logged as having spent 20 hours online but she only completed the ejournal of a single module. Rodney is logged for 15 hours. He failed to complete a single module in spite of expressing a determination to do so.

CHAT LOG: Aug 4
rodney: I have been working on it today as I was away sick from work with the flu. I must admit it has been hard getting started but I will have just keep going. No Hadithi you have not scared me off!
The time required to complete module tasks and ejournals was underestimated by participants.

**CHAT LOG: Apr 28**
freda MMPrv:i know, it took me ages to get motivated and then it took me about 3 days to do one module!!

Getting started and getting to grips with what was required was a significant stumbling block for many participants.

### 5.2.7.3. Can someone do it instead of me?

As the challenging nature of the programme became clearer many participants struggled to get through the content. Bradley (below) jokingly asks Hadithi to do it for him.

**CHAT LOG: May 26**
bradley: u can come round & do it 4 me if u wish. that would solve many problems
hadithi: bother - can't quite manage that - anyway - i've done my bit by putting it together!!!!!!!!!

Whilst articulated with tongue-in-cheek Bradley’s comment encapsulates the experiences of many participants. It was all too hard and required too much work.

### 5.2.7.4. Self-Direction

As mentioned previously, this was an area where participants really struggled.

Managing their time, setting their own work plan and goals for the programme, and generally organising themselves to make completion possible proved very difficult.
Participants were used to being told what to do and when. In the first year, participants’ lack of self-direction was so apparent that it was decided to build a module to support the development of self-directed learning. Participants in the second year had the option of undertaking this module online or engaging with the content through a face-to-face orientation day.

Self-direction in learning then became a focus of discussion in the second year of the programme. For some participants this provided a valuable opportunity for self-critique of their capacity to self-direct.

**CHAT LOG: Sep 15**

hadithi_n: all a bit problematic given that we are supposed to be teaching kids to be self-directed + e-learning is rapidly going to become part of everyone's educational experience

idena: I am a great Indian will have to polish up my chief's headdress

**EJOURNAL Valerie**

I should have looked at this module in the beginning because I have been a very poor self-directed learner and my husband is tired of me complaining about the computer and the structure of the course. It has taken a while for me to feel at ease with this way of learning and here I am with only two modules completed wishing I had been more disciplined with my time...I am going to be burning the midnight oil for the next three weeks.

Such discussions were a reality check for some of the participants who began to acknowledge that this was an area that needed to be actively addressed, both with respect to themselves and also their expectations and practices with students in the classroom.

For others, however, it continued to be all too hard with inertia, withdrawal from the programme, or failure to complete being the consequence.
5.2.8. Sloth Observations

This section presents data that demonstrate the participants’ interactions that fit into the sloth archetype. These interactions highlight that it was the nature of online learning rather than intended slothfulness that worked against participants engaging effectively in the online environment. Data also confirm that inability to self-direct their own learning was a significant factor for participants in both years of the FLOTE programme.

5.2.9. Maryanne - Envy

The fifth archetypal matrix category is Maryanne or Envy. This includes instances where participants envied the prior or current knowledge of others, or the ability of others to begin or complete the programme. Instances encountered related to technological know-how and knowledge that was specific to the content of the FLOTE modules. Instances of envy were rare, however, but some occurred where participants perceived that particular knowledge provided an ‘edge’. These are discussed below.

5.2.9.1. Technological Know-How

From the initial TNA (Technology Needs Assessment) which all participants completed prior to beginning FLOTE, it was evident that most of the teacher participants had a very low technology knowledge base. Whilst for most participants this did not give rise to feelings of envy towards the small number of participants who were comfortable with technology, Lousella was recorded as expressing both admiration and a desire to have additional skills.

CHAT LOG: Apr 14
lousella: Freda you are amazing. How did you do that? I wish knew more about computers.
On a different tack, Amelia comments on her students’ technological knowledge.

**EJOURNAL: Amelia**

Some of the children have known more about the computer than I have. I guess that is just the way it is - sigh

### 5.2.9.2. Course Content Know-How

There were a couple of instances where participants compared themselves against their colleagues expressing envy at either the progress that was being made with module completion, or the knowledge expressed about language teaching.

**CHAT LOG: Apr 28**

lousella: Dara you are putting me to shame. What language do you teach?

dara: Japanese

**CHAT LOG: Jun 16**

varian: I have been wondering how Gwen and Trista are going as we did the language course together.

Hadithi: gwen has been going really well hasn't she trace?

tracey: yes she has - she really gets it

### 5.2.10. Envy Observations

Personal or professional jealousies were not a significant consideration for participants in the program. The occasional instances where envy was expressed had little impact on the capacity of participants to complete the programme. Other factors previously discussed were the culprits in this regard.
5.2.11. Ginger - Lust

The sixth archetypal matrix is Ginger or Lust. Lustful instances are those where participants demonstrated their lust for learning. These emanated from either a love of technology, enjoyment of the content of FLOTE, or satisfaction with the online learning process itself. Ejournal data here is much more significant than in the previous sections - a reflection of lustful instances being expressed by successful participants who completed module and ejournal requirements.

5.2.11.1. Technology

Although, as indicated in previous sections, technology was a problem in both years of the program, there were participants who came to be quite passionate about technology and its potential for their classrooms. Libby, from the second year, went from a total ‘newbie’ to a competent user of a number of IT applications in a couple of months. She also transferred her new knowledge to the classroom.

**EJOURNAL: Libby**

I’ve now got my kids using powerpoint in our language classes to do personal bios. What a great tool!

Other participants, (such as Trista, who only managed to complete four modules), still developed a level of comfort and confidence with the use of technology that was absent prior to beginning the course. For Trista completion of Module 1A (The Internet module) meant she could now locate and download music. She talks about her enjoyment and satisfaction with the outcomes of her engagement with this module.

**EJOURNAL: Trista**

This is fun! Re-discovered some music I had saved from CDs and couldn’t find again. Now have a set of speakers attached to my laptop and am listening to saved and downloaded / saved music while I type.
Gladys, one of the younger participants on the ‘maiden voyage’, and 1 of the 7 participants who completed all modules in that year, describes her comfort with using the Internet in her classroom. Whilst she did not perhaps have the instinctual feel for technology that current digital natives have, her selection of a quote at the end of one of her ejournals shows her appreciation of more than a tokenistic use of technology in her classroom.

**EJOURNAL: Gladys**

Computers play a vital part in the learning environment at school and at home. On many occasions, I have turned to the internet as a ‘rescue’ tool in desperate moments. Came across a great quote "when used properly the internet extends the walls of the classroom"

Data show that different dimensions of technology had an appeal for a range of participants across both years of the program.

**5.2.11.2. Course Content**

A second area where participants became quite enthused was the FLOTE course content. Since FLOTE consisted of modules relating to everything from ICT and second language acquisition through to games, music, and planning and programming, there was extensive and diverse content allowing participants to engage in different ways through different media and tasks. Module content was also constructed in such a way that its applicability to other areas of the curriculum, and other aspects of education, was discernable. Marilyn commented on this aspect.

**CHAT LOG: May 5**

marilyn: Content is fascinating and relevant across many areas in stuff at school
hadithi: i'm glad you think it is transferable!!!!!
With respect to language teaching and the language classroom, participants were encouraged to use their ejournals to reflect on the applicability of FLOTE content specifically to their own language teaching contexts. For Bradley, engagement with the content of Module 4B (The Metas), constituted a critical incident with respect to his teaching.

**EJOURNAL: Bradley**

This has been quite an involved module [4B] and I have come to realize the importance of how students learn… to perhaps investigate [this] and to look at my programs / lessons and possibly make some changes in order for them to succeed at a higher level.

Some participants, like Haldana, found that particular modules resonated with them more than others.

**EJOURNAL: Haldana**

The formats and ideas presented have given me some good models to work from. I love this module - so practical. It reminds me that we are not limited by our imagination just by the realities placed before us.

For participants already teaching their TL there was also acknowledgement of the useful of FLOTE content.

**CHAT LOG: May 5**

hadithi: Roberta you seem to be getting lots out of this stuff is it useful for you?

roberta: Yes, I’m finding it very useful. I wish I knew some of the info when I started teaching Japanese!

Lust as an instance concerning the ‘bells and whistles’ of the FLOTE online programme was also recorded. Alfonsina comments below on the flashing arrows that allow navigation between pages.
It was also obvious that FLOTE content prompted deep personal reflection for participants within the program.

Course content, as reflected through the different modules of FLOTE, resulted in a lust for learning being expressed in different ways and through different aspects of the program.

### 5.2.11.3. Online Learning

A small number of participants were extremely organised and ‘motored’ along with only occasional need for guidance or assistance. Roberta was one such participant. She committed wholeheartedly from the start, managed to find relevant and personally meaningful content in every module, and thoroughly enjoyed the online learning experience.

**CHAT LOG: Jul 28**

roberta: no tracey i am enjoying your course
tracey: and i didnt even have to pay you to say that!!
roberta: i know, if you ever need anyone to advertise it!!

Libby also expressed her satisfaction with the program. She found herself enjoying the online nature of FLOTE as well as its modular approach.
I like the way information is presented in bite size pieces but join together to a meaningful whole. This structure makes learning less overwhelming and less drudgery as the little pieces are all exciting tid bits in themselves.

Libby wrote some of the longest ejournals and showed the most growth both in the areas of methodology and technology. According to the CMS, she spent 86 hours online - more than any other participant from either year. She found the experience to be personal and comfortable. This was not, however, the case for many of the participants as I identify in my own journal.

5.2.12. Lust Observations

A lust for learning was evident in instances from the data. These traverse different aspects of the programme and are expressed positively, particularly, through the medium of ejournals - a rich source of data from those few who engaged successfully and completed the FLOTE program.

5.2.13. The Professor - Pride

The final archetypal matrix category is The Professor or Pride. Instances in this category focus on participants taking pride in their own development, particularly with respect to their increasing skills or knowledge. There is also some evidence of
pride in the development of the ability to self-direct but, given that this has emerged as a significant issue, evidence in this area is limited.

5.2.13.1. Technology

With the low technology knowledge base of the participants in both years, it was wonderful to see the way some participants took to computers and the Internet, usually after completing modules 1A and 1B - the technology modules. Libby, one of our technology ‘newbies’ in the first year became extremely comfortable over the six month FLOTE period, and would often mention a relevant site she had found during the module, or reflect on her own understandings and how she herself had changed.

**EJOURNAL: Libby**

I am still working on 3A and games. I am really getting the hang of this... I realise that there are lots of ways or paths to information on the computer and some paths suit learners better than others.

At the end of the Internet module (1A), Gay, another participant from the first year who had described herself as an occasional user of technology, was delighted at how much more comfortable she was with technology. Her pride is evident in her ejournal.

**EJOURNAL: Gay**

Wow what an experience I have had in exploring all that is possible with the use of the Internet. In order to reflect on the skills that I have now acquired in completing this module I must say it has made me realise just how efficient and informative my role as a facilitator can be.

Olive, another technology ‘newbie’ from the first year, and one of the older participants, also benefited. She talks about her increasing skills both in using the FLOTE site and in applying the skills learnt. In her ejournal for 1A, she reflects with
pride on her ability to use the Internet and, particularly in her new capacity to
download material to her computer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EJOURNAL: Olive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Boy am I improving on the search thing. I am learning when to
discard and when not to linger - both very valuable timesavers. For
this next module I am currently down loading a sample, so I’m
sure you’ll all be pleased Olive finally has the confidence to down
load something! |

5.2.13.2. Languages Pedagogy

Many participants were delighted at their grasp of the content and, especially with
regard to its relevance in their own classroom teaching and learning. Konrad, who had
been slow to start the program, describes the impact of FLOTE on his second
language teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAT LOG: Jun 23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| konrad: The more I look into this course, the more I reflect on
what I have been missing in my teaching by not having specific
Lote teaching, as opposed to learning the basics of the language. I
do actually feel I'm getting something out of it. |

For Amellie it was coming to grips with the theoretical perspectives included in the
Second Language Acquisition (2A) module that filled her with pride. She found the
module so useful that she wanted to retain her ejournal for future reference to inform
her thinking about her teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EJOURNAL: Amellie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| At the beginning of this module many of those terms meant little
or nothing. I am now confident with my understanding as well as
learning a number of other terms. I may have to keep referring
back to my journal, but that it was it is for. An interesting module
that kept me busy and lots of reading but I have a better
knowledge and understanding of SLA and SLT. |

A reflection of pride in their achievements was certainly evident in participant
discussions of second language acquisition and second language teaching.
5.2.13.3. **Self Direction**

The majority of FLOTE participants found their ability to self-direct was seriously lacking, and this has been discussed in previous sections of this chapter. Data pertaining to instances of growing capacity in this area are extremely limited. Roberta comments on being able to work at her own pace.

**CHAT LOG: Jun 23**

roberta: i am finding FLOTE to be such a great way to study
hadithi: glad to hear it. What is it that suits you so well?
roberta: it is the first time i have ever done on-line learning as, i have always done face to face. i like that you can work through at your own pace and the info and the system is user friendly.
tracey: thats great to hear.

In a later chat, Roberta expresses her delight at how well she has managed her time and workload.

**CHAT LOG: Aug 11**

hadithi: so starting to feel as if it is all very manageable roberta?
roberta: yes hadithi
tracey: great!
hadithi: excellent stuff - you have paced yourself well and it has worked!!
roberta: yes, i am glad i have stuck to a time line
tracey: always makes things so much easier
hadithi: yes that is so important - wish others had done the same

Bradley also comments in managing his workload.

**CHAT LOG: Sep 15**

Bradley: I think I can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. Only a few m
ods to go. well, I hope it's a light and not a mirage.
hadithi: i hope its a big brightlight

Other references to participants and pride in self-direction are rare.
5.2.14. **Pride Observations**

This section presents data that demonstrate participants’ interactions of pride in their own work and their developing skills. The enthusiasm and pride that seem to have facilitated participants’ ability to complete the FLOTE programme comes through clearly though these instances were in the minority.

5.3. **Conclusion**

This chapter examines how the social microcosm that was the FLOTE community on its maiden and subsequent voyage ‘lived’ the FLOTE experience. An archetypal matrix using the seven deadly sins, as characterized through the ‘inhabitants’ of the television series, *Gilligan’s Island*, is used to make sense of how participants interacted with FLOTE and experienced learning in the online environment. The use of this archetypal matrix enables data to be organised and presented as instances encountered by participants whilst they were ‘FLOTEing’, attempting to stay ‘aFLOTE’ or ‘sinking’ as they engaged with the FLOTE programme.

‘FLOTEing’ was a juggling act. The data collected, and the instances reported in this chapter, show that participants in both years of the study had to juggle an array of work and ‘beyond work’ issues and commitments. Fitting FLOTE in was difficult. There was also a lot of juggling around technology - juggling personal learning around IT use, as well as having to manage and juggle the technical difficulties, associated with IT use (and in no way the fault of the participants), that occurred at different points during the programme. There was also juggling of programme requirements. The data show that participants had great difficulty managing their own learning. Issues around a realistic appreciation of the overall commitment, and the time required, were apparent. In addition, many participants could not juggle
engaging with the content of the modules online and then reflect that engagement through the compilation and submission of the required ejournals.

However, for those who were able to juggle these things, and who ‘FLOTEed’ and did not ‘sink’, learning to use technology, and learning how to learn in, and be successful in, this different form of professional development - online professional development - proved rewarding.

In the next chapter the instances and themes reported here will be discussed further. The discussion, however, will focus specifically on answering the research questions that underpin this study.
6. THE Lighthouse

6.1. Introduction

Lighthouses are “an aid to navigation.”38 They are used “to mark dangerous coastlines, hazardous shoals and reefs, and safe entries to harbours and can also assist in aerial navigation”39. In the same way as the lighthouse illuminates the sea and landscapes, it is intended that this chapter illuminates the data from this study in order to tie together the research questions and the data itself. In particular, the chapter examines how the FLOTE programme supported / hindered the participants, how the participants supported / hindered themselves, and how technology supported / hindered the participants.

Since this research is hermeneutic in character, care must be made not to generalise any results to a wider context although some discussion of this is done in the concluding chapter, At Journey’s End. In this chapter, however, the discussion will be confined to examining the data against each of the research questions that framed this particular study.

6.2. How the programme supported teachers

Examination of the data indicates that there were a number of factors associated with the structure of the programme that were assistive for participants. These were the contemporary and relevant nature of the modules, together with their accessibility and opportunities for interactivity. The role of the facilitators was also important.

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38 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lighthouse, 1
39 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lighthouse, 1
6.2.1. Contemporary and relevant content

Behind FLOTE lies a CMS (Content Management System)\(^{40}\). This CMS enables updating of content easily as well as the addition of new modules. As reported in the previous chapter the participants who did fully engage with the programme enjoyed the fact that this facility enabled the content of the programme to be relevant, up to date and engaging. This was reported through ejournals, chats, forum postings, and also through personal email and phone communications. Comments in the previous chapter from participants such as Roberta, Marilyn and Libby affirm that module content was an assistive and supporting factor as they undertook the FLOTE programme. Content aspects commented on specifically included the balance between theory and practice and the direct relevance of content to their classroom circumstances, as well as the integration of technology and the potential this provided for innovation in LOTE learning and teaching. As 80% of the participants on the ‘maiden voyage’ were already teaching their LOTE it is of no surprise that the direct relevance of the programme to their work was commented on favourably by some members of this group. In the second year, however, with only 48% of participants already teaching their LOTE, relevance was less obvious.

Freedom within the programme to choose the order in which the modules were undertaken, after completion of the two technology modules, was also commented on.

**FEEDBACK: Roberta**

FLOTE provided an appropriate balance between theoretical stuff and practical stuff, because the different modules had a balance and we could work through the modules in any order.

\(^{40}\) See Appendix 3
In addition, participants had an active role in constructing and editing module content. Aside from reporting broken links and areas where there was a lack of clarity with respect to module content, participants were also able to enrich the programme themselves by contributing information and useful websites they discovered. Co-construction by participants enhanced the capacity of the programme to be contemporary and responsive to participant needs. Synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication embedded in the programme also enabled participants to provide advice and support for each other. For technology ‘newbies’, such as Libby, this was reported as being both assistive and empowering. Again, this seems to have been much more relevant to participants in the first year who were teaching their LOTE than it was for the second year participants.

6.2.2. Accessibility and Interactivity

As described in Chapter 4, FLOTE was designed to support participant accessibility and interactivity. The intent was to offer 24/7 access to a programme that was ‘easy on the eye’, easy to use, and that incorporated a number of features enabling connection and communication with other participants. The professional learning experience was to be different from participants’ previous experiences. For those who successfully completed the programme, having control over access and being able to communicate in a multifaceted way through forum and chat, phone and email, offered an innovative, flexible and yet supportive context for programme engagement and professional learning. For participants such as Libby, Roberta and Haldana, these features contributed to their capacity to be successful. It must be acknowledged, however, that the low completion rates in both years suggests that for the majority of participants, online access and interaction conflicted with previous experiences of learning and were incompatible with participant circumstances and expectations.
6.2.3. Facilitators

The importance of competent and diligent facilitators in online learning contexts became very apparent over the two years of the programme. Unlike in face-to-face professional development, FLOTE facilitators were limited in their ability to use tone, position and body language, and facial expressions to engage and enthuse learners. Instead, facilitators depended heavily on the use of written language. Written support had to be constructed in a friendly, yet focussed way, and careful attention had to be paid when providing explanations for learners who had not grasped an issue or topic. Explanations had to be clear and as unambiguous as possible. Facilitating in this way proved very time intensive.

In both years of the programme, the FLOTE participants had access to two facilitators, one of whom had particular expertise in LOTE and LOTE curriculum, and the other who had LOTE and technology expertise (me). The facilitators both participated in most of the Chat sessions, responded to Forum postings and email and telephone queries, and provided feedback on ejournal submissions. Here, one of our youngest participants from the first year, Gladys, mentions how valuable she found our assistance.

EJOURNAL: Gladys
Hadithi and Tracey….the brains behind ‘FLOTE’…thank you for useful and important tips and information. Working smart is something high on my agenda…you have equipped us with knowledge, resources and tools to take into our respective classrooms.

In addition, the facilitators maintained the site, managed the CMS and adapted the programme in response to feedback from participants in both years. The experience of the two years of the study identified facilitation as an essential element of the
programme in terms of supporting teacher participants but it was both demanding and time consuming.

6.3. How the programme hindered teachers

Data from the study identify four key aspects of the programme that hindered participants’ engagement with FLOTE. These are the delivery model of the programme, participant responsibilities for time and time management within the program, the dependency demonstrated by participants enrolled in the programme, and the expectations of the facilitators of the programme. These aspects are interrelated and enmeshed within the structure of FLOTE as an online professional learning programme.

6.3.1. Online versus face-to-face

The data show that the most important aspect to impact on the teachers’ participation was the programme’s online nature. At the time that data for this study were collected very few online courses were available for teachers. This meant that both groups of participants had no experience with online learning generally or online professional development specifically, and that for many, the experience was not one that they wished to embrace. As revealed in Chapter 5, participants expressed their discomfort with online learning. Valerie, Idena and Martha, for example all talk of missing the personal contact that face-to-face professional learning provides. They express their distaste for having to ‘write’ conversations online, and they question the actual point in engaging in this type of isolated professional learning. They voice a distinct preference for the face-to-face professional learning with which they are familiar.
Perhaps of more significance, however, are the voices that we don't hear through the data. We don't hear from Marilyn, Riva, Barbara, Tacita and Xylina. Nor do we hear from many others. Their voices are not present within the study because, although they signed a contract with the sponsoring jurisdiction, and although, according to the CMS, some did venture online and explore elements of module content, they did not communicate with fellow participants nor complete any tasks associated with the programme. Their silence demonstrates that for the majority of the ‘passengers’ on FLOTE’s maiden and subsequent voyage, the online passage was not the journey they wished to undertake.

6.3.2. Time / Time Management

Time was one of the factors that participants claimed had the biggest impact on their capacity to complete FLOTE. In reality it was the ‘time management’ skills that let the participants down. At the beginning of the programme in each year, participants were advised that, in order to complete the required 12 modules, one module would have to be completed every two weeks. While this seemed manageable at the start, it soon become unmanageable for participants who were not well organise or who allowed other commitments, or life events to overshadow FLOTE. Data from the study indicate that participants in both years found it difficult to stop letting other factors and commitments interfere with their participation in FLOTE. The vast majority of participants were unable to prioritise FLOTE and almost all complained of lack of time. In Chapter 5 Amelia reports being sidetracked online and how this interfered with her managing her FLOTE tasks. Data cited in the same chapter report many participants including Lousella, Bradley and Trista dealing with family commitments that impacted FLOTE time. Others comment on how busy they are.
Emile, describe himself as being “horrifically busy” and Freda outlines all her commitments stating that she is “waiting for the holidays to get into it [FLOTE]”.

The data show that having the freedom to access the FLOTE online professional learning programme at times that were convenient for the participant groups was, in fact, a great inconvenience. ‘Turning up’ for face-to-face professional development at specifically designated times would have better suited the majority of participants in the programme who then would not have had to manage their time across an array of work, study, family and other life commitments and responsibilities.

6.3.3. Dependency

Given that the completion rate in the first year was 7 out of 21, (33.3%), and in the second year was 9 out of 40, (22.5%), allowing participants to manage their own learning completely was an error of judgement on the part of the facilitators and also the sponsoring educational jurisdiction.

Our teacher participants were used to working in very prescriptive ways with straightforward media. Taking responsibility in “jumping around” (Konrad) from web page to journal, to chat, to forum and expressing their learning in a variety of ways that was heavily dependent on reflection, was difficult, different, lonely and evidently quite alienating for the majority of the participants in the programme. In the previous chapter Valerie describes herself as a very poor self-directed learner and expresses her frustration at not feeling at ease with the online nature of the course. Idena also comments on her inability to self-direct, describing herself as “a great Indian” needing to polish up her “chief’s head-dress”. The teacher participants in this programme were dependant learners who anticipated being told exactly what to do and when. Only a handful of FLOTE’s ‘passengers’ demonstrated a capacity to self-direct and manage their own learning in an online professional learning environment.
In response to the unanticipated situation of being confronted with teachers who were not autonomous learners, a module on self-directed learning was added to the FLOTE ‘manifest’ in order to support participants in the second year of the study. The completion rate for that year, however, indicates that this made no difference. There were other factors that have to be considered with respect to retention in the second year. Technology factors will be discussed later in this chapter, and issues associated with facilitation are discussed below.

6.3.4. Facilitators

A significant factor impacting on the engagement of the participants with the FLOTE programme was the size of the second group and therefore, the participant / facilitator ratio. When FLOTE was developed, a forum, a chat facility, focus questions and other features were included to provide participants with the ability to converse with each other and also the facilitators. The system worked reasonably well on the maiden voyage with a small participant group of 21 people. In the second year, however, there were significant difficulties. These were, in part due to technological problems that are elaborated elsewhere, but the fact that this second group was twice the size of the original group became a major factor. It was difficult for the two facilitators, without additional time, to provide the same level of support that was available in the first year. Using chat as an opportunity for participant socialisation, as happened in the first year, was much more difficult, and it was hard to be as responsive to
participant needs given the greater number, and given that, as reported in Chapter 5, there was a perception that facilitators should be available 24/7. It proved particularly difficult to manage those participants who were highly dependent. There was a need for constant ‘chasing up’ and for the provision of a great deal of direction as to how to access and undertake the programme. This took its toll on both the participant group and also the facilitators and impacted the capacity of the programme to be supportive of the participants enrolled in FLOTE.

6.4. How the teachers supported themselves

The data suggest that a significant factor in successful engagement and completion was the participants themselves, and the qualities they brought with them to the programme. Two factors in particular facilitated participants’ engagement and success. These were their preparedness to really build their knowledge base with respect to content and the use of ICTs, and also their capacity to self-direct their own online learning.

6.4.1. Knowledge Base (ICT & Content)

As reported in Chapter 5, a lust for learning was a significant driver for success in the FLOTE programme. Wanting to become more adept at the use of ICTs, and actively seeking to do so, is described by participants such as Freda and Gladys as an important part of their engagement with FLOTE. A desire to build content knowledge about language learning and teaching was also a significant personal motivator for a number of participants. Bradley is quoted in Chapter 5 as coming to realise “the importance of how students learn”. In addition, participants such as Marilyn, Haldana and Roberta express enthusiasm about content knowledge and then make the
necessary links back to their classrooms and their learners. This personal quality of lust for learning was certainly a success factor within the FLOTE programme.

6.4.2. **Self-direction**

Song and Hill (2007) discuss two studies, one by Hartley and Bendixen, (2001), and the other by Shatley (2000). Both of these studies support the idea that students with a high degree of self-direction find online learning easier. Data from this study also suggest that self-direction, in the case of online learning, is a critical factor in successful learning. Very few FLOTE participants were successful. Only 16 of our 61 participants completed the programme. Evidence of participants being truly self-directed was rare. Few participants were properly able to pace themselves and adhere to manageable timelines. In Chapter 5 Roberta reports on her ability to do this and the impact this quality had on her learning. Her success in this area was noteworthy and was commented on in an exchange (quoted below) with the programme facilitators.

**CHAT LOG: Sep 8**

Hadithi: so you are one of those wonderful self-directed people that I wish we had more of

Roberta: i have always been self-directed. if i have something to do, i have to get it done.

Tracey: thats really encouraging too. maybe we can transplant it into the others?? ;)

Hadithi: we need to bottle your blood and share it around!!

Roberta’s blood, however, was not bottled and no transplants took place, and thus few participants were able to support themselves through self-direction.
6.5. **How the teachers hindered themselves**

An examination of the data shows a number of aspects associated with the teachers themselves that hindered their engagement with FLOTE. All relate to participant inability to satisfy the demands of a different form of professional learning - online learning. Collectively these factors had a significant impact on participant retention and success within the FLOTE programme.

6.5.1. **Lack of self-direction**

As commented on previously, allowing the teacher participants to manage their own learning was a massively unsuccessful strategy in both years of the study. Evidence suggests that participants needed to be explicitly and externally managed, and that the facilitators’ assumption that, because they were teachers they could self-direct their learning, was erroneous.

As reported in Chapter 5, issues around getting started and motivation for self-study impacted significantly on engagement and success in the FLOTE programme. In Chapter 5 we hear from Mamie, Rodney and Freda who all comment on the difficulty of getting started with FLOTE. We also hear from Bradley who, tongue in cheek, suggests that the facilitators might like to undertake the programme for him.

There seems to have been a strange disconnect between the role of the participants as teachers teaching students in their classrooms to manage their own learning and teachers as learners themselves taking responsibility for their own professional development.
6.5.2. Lack of Professionalism

The issue of taking responsibility deserves further comment. One of the aspects of ‘anger’ discussed in the exploration of the FLOTE community as a social microcosm in the preceding chapter was that of the professional responsibility of the FLOTE participants. As reported in the preceding chapter, and as experienced through the interactions between the participants, the facilitators and the supporting educational jurisdiction, there was little sense of professional obligation, on the part of many participants, to complete the FLOTE programme. In spite of the generous support, both in terms of relief time and a financial subsidy that was provided by the sponsoring jurisdiction, participants did not feel duty bound to meet contractual requirements. Signing a contract counted for little and efforts undertaken by the sponsoring educational jurisdiction, to ensure compliance with contractual obligations, resulted in a dispute with the Teachers’ Union. The data suggest that the lack of a sense of professional obligation, and a disregard for the discharge of contractual requirements, resulted in teachers hindering themselves with respect to their capacity to successfully complete the FLOTE programme.

6.5.3. Commitments and Life Events

Because FLOTE was online somewhere in the virtual ether of the Internet, it was easy for FLOTE to become ‘cloaked’ by other commitments and life events that were part of the lived experiences of teacher participants in both years of the FLOTE programme. Data reporting on the nature of these commitments and events are cited in Chapter 5. Work and family commitments are commented on by numerous participants including Barron, Valerie and Amelia. Personal and family health issues are identified by Edna, Trista and Lousella as impacting on their ability to engage with FLOTE. Work responsibilities receive comment from many participants.
including Emile and Freda. Other events identified specifically included new boyfriends / girlfriends, new babies, moving house, and new jobs. The programme was intended to be a six-month period that allowed freedom and flexibility for participants to manage all their responsibilities and commitments including FLOTE. The data suggest, however, that because no time during this period was specifically ‘cocooned’ for FLOTE it was easily subsumed by other commitment and events in the lives of the participants.

6.6. **Technological features that supported the teachers**

Examination of the data suggests two technological features that supported the teachers as they engaged with FLOTE. These were reported as the user-friendly layout and the modular design of the programme. Given that extensive consultation was undertaken with technology specialists and with national consultative groups to inform the design of FLOTE (see Chapter 4), positive responses were anticipated from participants.

6.6.1. **User-friendly layout**

The layout of an online course can make or break it (Morrow, 2007). In Chapter 5 Alfonsina commented enthusiastically on a number of the layout features of the FLOTE programme. FLOTE’s layout is different from many other online programmes. It was designed to be both visually appealing and also easy to use. The FLOTE site was also constructed around a nautical theme that conveys the sense of FLOTE being a journey where participants are supported as they navigate their way to their destination of new knowledge.
Many participants who engaged with FLOTE enjoyed the nautical layout and found the nautical analogies useful in their learning journey. Libby, for example, referred to the main page of FLOTE:\textsuperscript{41} in the following way.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
\textbf{EJOURNAL: Libby} \\
It’s funny it [FLOTE] has a picture of a lifebuoy because that’s what it was for me. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{figure}

\section*{6.6.2. Modular approach}

Libby also commented on the modular approach adopted as part of the technological specifications for the FLOTE programme. Her lust for learning is reported in Chapter 5 as being supported through the way the modules were constructed and presented. Other participants such as Roberta, Gay and Olive also commented favourably on the modular approach used in the programme.

\section*{6.7. Technological features that hindered the teachers}

Data from the pre-programme TNA (Technology Needs Assessment)\textsuperscript{42} showed that most of the participants who enrolled in the FLOTE programme had little or no experience with information communication technologies (ICTs). This lack of ICT literacy was a significant factor that hindered teachers in their engagement with FLOTE. In addition, a number of technical issues were encountered over the two years of the programme. These too served to hinder teachers as they attempted to negotiate the different dimensions of online learning.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{41} Screen snapshots and details about FLOTE are in Chapter 4: SS FLOTE} \\
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{42} See Appendix 2}
6.7.1. **ICT Literacy**

In both years of the programme participants with very little technological experience became easily frustrated when the technological features associated with the programme, for whatever reasons, did not work. Instances of participant frustration, anger and technophobia are reported in Chapter 5. For example, Griselda states forcefully that she does not like computers. Teachers with low-level ICT literacy skills were being required to not only develop these skills, but to do so through a medium with which they were unfamiliar. The vast majority of participants were unused to ICTs, and all were unused to online professional learning. Lack of ICT literacy therefore hindered the progress of many, and for many others, prevented any engagement with the programme at all.

6.7.2. **Issues with Technology**

Many instances are reported in Chapter 5 of difficulties associated with the use of different technological dimensions of the FLOTE programme. In both years, the Chat software associated with FLOTE caused problems for participants because of the supporting jurisdiction’s firewall. Difficulties were also experienced with posting to the Forum, particularly in respect of large attachment. There were also significant issues associated with compatibility, connection speed and supporting materials such as the accompanying CD Rom. Whilst some participants were able to ‘recover’ from these difficulties, for many these problems, which were not of their making, were simply overwhelming. Issues with technology were serious issues within the programme and served to hinder the engagement and progress of many participants across the two years of this study.
6.8. Conclusion

This chapter reports on those factors that supported and hindered participant engagement with the FLOTE programme. The chapter synthesises data reported through the Gilligan’s Island archetypal matrix and illuminates issues around FLOTE engagement and completion in order to specifically answer the research questions that underpinned this study. It is clear from the data that hindering factors in terms of the structure of the programme, personal attributes of the participants themselves, and technological issues associated with the programme, combined to overwhelm supporting factors. The result was that only 16 participants, across both years of the study, were able to successfully complete the FLOTE programme.

What becomes clear, however, is that whilst the chapter identifies a range of factors that hindered participants, the majority of these can be amalgamated. It was the flexibly structured, online nature of the FLOTE programme that hindered the majority of participants and accounts for the poor completion rates. FLOTE’s passengers were not prepared for the online journey that was to take them through uncharted waters. FLOTE’s passengers wanted the safety, security and direction that they were used to when undertaking face-to-face professional development programmes. They did not want to have to navigate and self-direct their own learning, and they resented being ‘at sea’ and feeling distant from what they were used to. SS FLOTE failed to provide enough lifebuoys for its passengers with dire consequences.

The next chapter of this dissertation, At Journey’s End concludes this study, pulling together the various threads and reflecting on the overall journey.
7. AT JOURNEY’S END

7.1. Introduction

This is the concluding chapter of this research study. As with each of the other chapters, the nautical metaphor presents a unique way to view and interact with the data and discussion associated with this research.

This chapter ties together the thesis journey from the Preface: ‘Just Sit Right Back...’ to this, the final chapter. In particular, it brings together the discussion of the research questions, the literature, and the ‘dangerous territory’ identified in Chapter 2.

From within the dragons’ cave there has emerged, through the course of the dissertation, further detail about the features of the learning map that has been central to this journey. The most significant of these features are named and further described in this final chapter as a way of representing the most salient findings of this research study.

The chapter concludes with reflections on the overall FLOTE journey together with a short discussion of the extent to which the findings of this research resonant more broadly in the area of research into online learning. It is now a considerable number of years since SS FLOTE was launched. Personal circumstances have necessitated that this study be completed over an extended period of time - well beyond FLOTE’s maiden and subsequent voyage. It is interesting to note, however, that many of the issues that impacted the passage of FLOTE’s first two journeys continue to impede those who choose to learn online.

7.2. From within the dragons’ cave

The literature reviewed for this study suggested a number of considerations likely to impact this study as teachers, technology, and different processes of, (and practices
within), professional learning intersected. Interestingly, much of the literature focuses on models for professional development or learning, and on the place of technology. Sims and Melville (1999, p.9) remind us that “the computer is simply a tool for the information age”, and yet it was this tool, or at least attempting to use this tool, that impacted significantly on the capacity of participants to experience success in their engagement with FLOTE.

Advice for the development of successful online courses is abundant in the literature. Success factors for learning online are discussed extensively within this body of literature. There is a great deal of emphasis on designing courses that have a social aspect (J. Lee, Carter-Wells, Glaeser, Ivers, & Street, 2006; Marra, 2006; Richardson & Swan, 2003). The need for interactivity and flexibility is highlighted (Burgess, Currie, & Maor, 2004; Maor & Volet, 2007b; Scneiderman, 2002; Lynch, 2004), and the importance of the concept of an online learning community is emphasised (Williams, 1997, Ryan, 2001). All these ‘success’ elements were included in FLOTE’s ‘blueprints’ and great care and attention was given to trying to make these design elements active and intrinsic within the FLOTE experience. In spite of this, however, the vast majority of participants failed to engage with the programme and the success rate with respect to FLOTE completion was abysmal.

More recent discussion in the literature has drawn attention to significant limitations in online learning. The difficulty of incorporating speed, flow, vitality and spontaneity in online learning is highlighted (Kippen, 2003; Franklin, 2007; Hoven, 2007; Laffey, Lin, & Lin, 2006). So too, isolation and disconnection are identified as significant issues in online learning (Lui, Magjuka, Bonk & Lee, 2007). It is these factors that are reported as limiting success with online learning, and these limitations resonate strongly with the findings of this study.
Ultimately, however, the most significant factor that impacted the ability of the teacher participants within this study to engage with, and be successful in the FLOTE programme, was the teachers themselves. How they positioned themselves with respect to learning in general, and online learning in particular was the key to participants’ FLOTEing or sinking.

7.3. Additional features on the learning map

In examining the positioning process referred to above it is possible now to identify three ‘treacherous areas’ to be included as additional features on the learning map outlined in Chapter 2. These encapsulate the major findings of this study. It is to these features that we will now turn our attention.

7.3.1. Teacher Trench

Trenches can be naturally occurring or dug for defence. This study has revealed that there are certain characteristics of language teachers and their learning area that result in their separation in schools and curriculum. These ‘naturally’ occurring characteristics impacted engagement with FLOTE, particularly in the first year. In addition, there was evidence in the study of teachers ‘digging in’ for defence.

Within the context of curriculum and Australian schools, languages and languages teachers are marginalised and are often isolated with respect to engagement with other teaching professionals (DEEWR, 2007; Norris, 2010). This can result in language teachers being able to ‘do their own thing’ in their classrooms and often without significant scrutiny. Engagement with FLOTE, however, demanded scrutiny. The required e-journals were designed to encompass evidence of engagement with course content and readings, reflections on the content and its pertinence to language
teaching and learning and the teacher’s own personal experiences, together with a variety of tasks that varied from module to module. For many of the teachers who did actually manage to organise themselves to get started with FLOTE, this level of scrutiny was just too daunting.

Another characteristic of the teachers that were the participants in this study was that, whilst often separated from their colleagues in school, these teachers were used to extensive personal interaction with their students, and they were also used to face-to-face personal interactions with fellow language teachers/aspiring language teachers through the language courses that they had all attended prior to the commencement of FLOTE. There is overwhelming evidence from this study that the online interaction opportunities engineered as part of FLOTE, did not have the appeal that face-to-face interactions had for course participants. Meeting online was not how most participants wanted to interact and work with fellow passengers on the FLOTE journey.

A further characteristic of the participant groups, also associated with their prior LOTE professional development courses, was that the teachers were used to working in very prescriptive ways in these programmes. In addition it was suggested by some participants that these prior programmes were relatively undemanding. In contrast, FLOTE was very demanding. For some participants there was just too much work to be done to fulfil FLOTE requirements and it all became too hard.

In the second year there was also the issue of relevance for teachers. Only 44% of participants in this year were teaching their LOTE. Given the demanding and seemingly impersonal nature of the program, there was a lack of both appeal and relevance for many teachers who originally signed up. These factors impacted significantly on the ability of teachers to engage with the FLOTE professional development programme.
Also characteristic of the majority of these teachers was an inability to plan for regular FLOTE time. In their busy teaching lives it was difficult enough for participants to juggle family and other commitments. For most it proved impossible to also include their own self-managed professional learning.

And then there was the ‘digging in’ for defence. Being asked by the sponsoring educational jurisdiction to be accountable, and to meet consensual contractual arrangements was for some participants unacceptable. Teacher professionalism was at issue for a number of participants and impacted FLOTE engagement.

So what this study shows is that there were identifiable teacher characteristics, and characteristics of being in the teaching profession, that impacted the ability of participants to engage with and complete FLOTE. The teacher trench proved much too deep for the majority of participants.

7.3.2. The abyssal plain of online learning

An abyssal plain is an underwater plain on the deep ocean floor that generally lies between the continental shelf and an underwater mountain system. Abyssal plains are amongst the least explored regions on Earth.

For the majority of participants within this study, learning online was a deep, inaccessible, dark place stretching somewhere between themselves and the programme facilitators. This was territory that was remote and that participants chose not to explore. Data from the study (reported in the two previous chapters) leaves us in no doubt that learning online, as a model for professional development, was indeed dangerous territory for those embarking on FLOTE. Most participants in both years of the study could not effectively engage in learning this way. Mechanisms provided for online interaction were perceived as artificial and were not willingly embraced by
the majority of the participants. Attempts to build an online learning community were shunned by most. There was a clear preference expressed for face-to-face interaction with the FLOTE experience being considered isolating and impersonal and FLOTE requirements regarded as almost impenetrable.

In both years of the study, but particularly in the second year, these factors already impacting engagement with FLOTE were magnified as a result of the significant technical difficulties associated with the Chat software, the jurisdictional firewall and issues around the computer compatibility of the supplementary CD. For many participants who were already struggling with becoming ICT ‘savvy’ these difficulties compounded feelings of negativity and reluctance to engage. It was a small proportion indeed who viewed the online experience with excitement and who engaged wholeheartedly in the FLOTE online professional learning programme. Interestingly, of this small percentage of successful participants, not all had an existing ICT knowledge base - some were ‘newbies’. This discounts ICT competence as being the critical determining success factor for the programme. Age, gender, location and experience, also initially thought to perhaps be factors that might impact successful engagement, were proven not to be significant. Successful participants traversed all these different dimensions.

In Chapter 4 Captain Jack Sparrow is quoted as believing his ship to be much more than the sum of its parts. The hope for SS FLOTE was that this professional development experience would be much more about ‘learning’ than it was about being ‘online’. For successful participants this was the case but for most participants it wasn't. Being ‘online’ proved to be the critical negative determinant in this study.
7.3.3. Self-direction swamp

A swamp is a type of wetland - forested but shallow so one can get easily bogged. And so it was with FLOTE’s online learners. They became bogged and were unable to extract themselves and make progress towards completing the FLOTE programme.

Having argued that it was the online nature of FLOTE that was the most significant factor in determining success or otherwise for participants in the programme, the issue of self-direction and its role in online learning, now needs to be addressed. Very few of the participants in this study demonstrated any capacity to take responsibility for their own learning and self-direct their work with FLOTE. Most went nowhere. They were bogged. They were unable to progress on their own. The vast majority of the teachers who were the focus of this study proved to be totally dependant on the support / goading / coercion of the facilitators or the jurisdictional representative (Halima) in order to make any headway into learning through FLOTE.

This was an unexpected finding. Whilst the literature of more recent years (Candy, 2004; Cheng, Stoel, & Anderson, 2004; Song & Hill, 2007) has affirmed the importance of self-direction in successful online learning, at the time of FLOTE’s maiden and subsequent voyage limited studies had been undertaken in the area. In addition, little consideration was given to factoring this element into the original design of FLOTE because, being teachers, it was assumed that the participants would be able to demonstrate the requisite skills to manage and self-direct their own learning. This was an unfortunate and erroneous assumption. ‘Passengers’ on the maiden voyage demonstrated only a very limited capacity to self-direct. In response, an additional FLOTE module was developed in order to help teachers manage their own learning. Evidence from this study indicates, however, that this additional module was also inadequate in terms of equipping and supporting the participant
group to self-direct their learning as they engaged with FLOTE. Martinez (2003) argues that dropout rates for first years in universities and colleges in the US are mostly due to students’ lack of self-direction and self-motivation after coming from ‘hand-holding’ in high school. This study suggests that the ‘hand-holders’ also need ‘hand-holding’. This finding gives food for thought with respect to the construction and enacting of curriculum in Australian schools. Educational rhetoric routinely espouses the development of autonomous and self-directed learners as a goal of schooling. One has to question how this is to be achieved if the teaching professionals themselves do not have these skills.

The evidence from this study shows that to a very large extent, it was the positioning of the teachers themselves that determined their ability to be successful with FLOTE. How they positioned themselves in relation to undertaking the programme was important. FLOTE was but one of many commitments that these teachers had and because of its online nature, it could and did, easily ‘fall off’. How the teacher participants positioned themselves with respect to the new experience of online learning was also of great significance. For most the familiar model of face-to-face professional development was perceived as being preferable. And how the participants positioned themselves with respect to learning was pivotal. The vast majority of these teachers were dependant learners. They were unable to position themselves as successful managers of their own learning. The treacherous teachers trench, abyssal online plain and self-direction swamp played vital roles in determining the ability of the teacher participants to engage with, and be successful in the FLOTE online professional development programme.
7.4. Reflecting on the overall journey

It is time now for final reflections on FLOTE’s maiden and subsequent voyage.

Conole & Oliver (2007, p.81) state that,

…many early e-learning [online] innovations have failed precisely because they did not take account of pedagogical and organisational issues, concentrating too much on the technical aspects.

On its first two voyages SS FLOTE floundered and ran aground. The extent to which this outcome was because of a failure to adequately take account of pedagogical and organisational issues with too great a concentration on the technical aspects of the programme must now be considered.

The FLOTE design team and project consultative groups were acutely aware of issues associated with the emerging area of online pedagogy. Actions undertaken to address these issues have been described in detail in this dissertation in Chapter 4. Site design had at its core the support of learning and teaching. Key principles that were adhered to included easy on the eye, easy to use, easy and flexible in terms of participant access. Programme and module design were informed by contemporary understandings of second language acquisition, second language teaching, constructivist theory in learning and the significance of reflective practice in supporting teacher change and development. It was thought that developing FLOTE with this focus on sound pedagogical principles would be a huge advantage for participant teachers. Within the context of this study, however, this was not the case. Most participants were reluctant to engage deeply and were resistant to the use of e-journals to record and then reflect on their learning. For most this was not what they wanted at all. Most participants wanted highly structured learning, easy, and easy to accomplish tasks, and designated timelines for completion. They did not want the
challenge, and the freedom and flexibility that we thought we ought to provide and that our participants deserved.

With respect to organisation, did we take account of the issues that needed to be accommodated? There were certainly a number of organisation problems, particularly in the second year, and particularly related to the size of the group. Organising and facilitating a large group of online learners proved difficult, taxing and time consuming. The roles and responsibilities were numerous and often onerous and demanding (as can be sensed from the frustration occasionally evident in my journal extracts). Facilitators were required to do the following:

- Maintain the site.
- Update and innovate with respect to module content.
- Manage the different personalities within the participant group, (including the nurturing of reluctant participants, the reigning in of those wishing to dominate, and the tempering of the attention seekers).
- Initiate, direct and monitor online conversations, both synchronous and asynchronous.
- Respond to questions from participants via email, phone, chat and forum.
- Assess and provide feedback on e-journals

What is demonstrated in this study is that to effectively take account of organisational issues and organisational complexity in large online learning programmes is manifestly difficult.

With respect to technology, yes there were issues. As evidenced through the TNA data, many participants had very low levels of technological literacy and this was, no
doubt, a factor in some cases. More significant, however, were the technological ‘glitches’ that marred the running of the programme, particularly in the second year. These have been described in detail within this dissertation and they were responsible for many participants either giving up or becoming immensely frustrated. As significant as they were, however, these technological issues are perhaps better described as ‘teething problems’ rather than being a reflection of an over emphasis on the technical aspects of the programme to the detriment of pedagogical considerations.

So where does this bring us? At journey’s end it has to be acknowledged that those of us who built FLOTE and attempted to navigate her initial voyages, together with the participants, were either altruistic or naïve. There was a strong belief that the ‘passengers’ really would be able to manage their own learning, that they would enjoy this new challenge, be able to ‘take the tiller’, and assume control of their own professional destinies. This was not the case.

7.5. Conclusion

In the years since the data were collected for this study in excess of 600 passengers have made the journey on SS FLOTE. There is less freedom for today’s passengers. FLOTE participants are now given a specific order in which to undertake modules, specific guidelines for completion of all requirements, and specific submission dates for tasks and e-journals (some of which are now completed as voice threads or through video link). In addition, educational jurisdictions who sponsor their teachers to undertake FLOTE are advised not to provide financial support / subsides to FLOTE participants until after programme completion. There is therefore more control exercised over FLOTE participants. More direction is provided and there is less expectation with respect to the capacity of participants to self-direct.
There continues, however, to be a drop out rate. Participants still ‘sink’. Isolation and
disconnection and a heavy workload continue to be part of the lived experience of
FLOTE, and these, together with participant dependency, continue to be issues for
FLOTE and for other online programmes that have proliferated in recent years.
Facilitator workload also continues to be a concern with FLOTE, and this too is an
issue for other online initiatives.

There is now, however, significant data supporting the quality of the journey for those
participants who do not abandon ship. Many who FLOTE now ‘float’. The
experiences of FLOTEing or sinking during those initial voyages have served to
provide insights and ongoing warnings with respect to online learning journeys.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Gilligan’s Island revamped theme song

Appendix 2: Sample Online Technology Needs Assessment (TNA) Survey

Appendix 3: Sample Content Management System (CMS)
Appendix 1: Gilligan’s Island Revamped Theme Song

Just sit right back and you’ll hear a tale,
A tale of an online course
That started in Western Australia,
And serves as my data source.

The first facilitator was a mighty nerd,
The second a LOTE guru,
Many teachers enrolled in
A six month tour
A six month tour...

The participants started getting tough,
In action and in speech.
If not for the courage of the facilitators,
FLOTE would be beached.
FLOTE would be beached.

FLOTE came aground in spite of this
In the second year,
With Hadithi, and Tracey too,
The Italian teachers and their wives,
The Japanese, Indonesians,
Oh how they did rile

So this is the tale of the FLOTIES,
Some lost for a long, long time
We have had to make the best of things,
It's been an uphill climb.

The facilitator and her second too,
Will do their very best,
To make the ones left comfortable,
And bugger all the rest.

No phone calls! No letters! Not even emails!
Not a single communication,
Like being on hold to Telstra, we are full of frustration.
So join us here each week my friends,
You’re sure to get a smile,
From the still stranded FLOTIES,
Here for a very long while.

Original theme song available here:

http://www.geocities.com/rickanddarvagossip/gilliganthemesong.html
Appendix 2: Sample Technology Needs Assessment (TNA) Online Survey

(Slowinski, 2000) http://www.chadwick-k12.com/ssetna

Screen snapshot 1: Top of Home Page and start of survey

Screen snapshot 2: Partway through survey, Views on educational technology

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Site no longer available
Screen snapshot 3: Further through survey, Assessment of own computer skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Have Not Used</th>
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<tr>
<td>Word Processing</td>
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<td>Spreadsheet</td>
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Directions: For each application below, please select the value that most closely represents your ability to use the application.

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<tr>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Have Not Used</th>
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<td>Spreadsheet</td>
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<td>Presentation Software (e.g., power point)</td>
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<td>Web Browser, Search Engine &amp; the WWW</td>
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<td>Hyperstudio, Hypercard, other multimedia authoring program</td>
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Directions: For each application below, please select the value that most closely represents your ability to integrate it into the teaching & learning process.

The SSETNA survey was very comprehensive but perhaps a little long for our purposes.
Appendix 3: Content Management System Samples

Screen snapshot 4: CMS home page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon, 9 Nov 2004 11:29:52 +0000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

You are logged in as - Tracey

Members
- [Groups]
- [Sections]
- [People]
- [Images]
- [Web Categories]
- [URLs]
- [Links]
- [Home]
- [Change Password]
- [Logout]

Welcome to the Content Management System (CMS) of FLOTE. To get started, just click on a menu option to your left.

There are only 4 simple concepts you need to understand to use this CMS effectively:

List: Show a list of (one or all) records for the table you are currently working with.
Add: Add a single new record to the table you are currently working with.
Update: Make changes (i.e., 'edit') to a single existing record of the table you are currently working with.
Delete: Delete a single existing record from the table you are currently working with. Once it's gone, it's gone - there is no "Recycle Bin".

Remember that whenever you 'commit' changes here in the CMS (e.g., such as clicking on a button that says 'Are you sure you want to delete?'), your public web site is instantly updated. This means that it's always essential to check your public web site after you make changes. Are the changes you made in the CMS having the desired effect on your web site?

Some additional explanations of some of the standard features of this CMS appear below.

Home: Returns you back to this start page.
Change Password: Change the password used to access this Content Management System.
Logins: Monitor login attempts (successful and unsuccessful) to this Content Management System.
Logout: When you have finished administering your data, it's recommended that you Logout. You may also wish to close this Internet browser window for complete security.

Screen snapshot 5: Monitoring results filtered for people and modules in Excel

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<th>Duration</th>
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Names hidden for confidentiality
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