



## 5.2. COLLABORATIVE PILOT INITIATIVES FOR DIGITAL TEACHER TRAINING

### VOCATIONAL AND APPLIED LEARNING ASSOCIATION (VALA) & LEND A HAND INDIA (LAHI)

#### DEVELOPING A DIGITAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR TEACHERS IN APPLIED LEARNING

##### Context

The Vocational and Applied Learning Association (VALA) is the peak professional body in Australia representing vocational and applied learning educators. VALA supports thousands of applied learning teachers and leaders across secondary and vocational education through professional development, events, advocacy and peer-to-peer networks. It has significant experience in building educator capability, sharing practice-based resources, and fostering innovation and networks in applied learning.

Lend A Hand India (LAHI) is a major Indian non-profit working at the intersection of school education and vocational skill development. LAHI currently partners with state governments and schools to embed applied and vocational learning across thousands of schools in India – reaching an estimated 20,000+ schools. They are engaged in implementing government partnerships affecting 2 million students nationwide.

LAHI's programs include initiatives such as Project Catalyst which is the project management unit (PMU) model working closely with state governments and supporting them to implement vocational education in schools, as part of school curriculum. Another flagship initiative facilitates high school students' internships with local employers to gain employability skills and world of work exposure. LAHI's Project Saad focuses on enhancing employability, interpersonal and transferable skills through structured learning experiences and teacher support.

Both VALA and LAHI recognise the role of technology in enabling transformative continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and improving applied learning outcomes at scale.

##### Common Ground

#### 1. Digital models of teacher training

VALA and LAHI are united in exploring digital and blended models for teacher professional development that:

- » Support ongoing, distributed learning for educators across geographically dispersed schools.
- » Build scalable online communities of practice that go beyond one-off workshops to sustain engagement.
- » Leverage technology to share resources, examples of practice, and contextualised professional development modules.

VALA currently runs online CPD programs for teachers on applied learning pedagogy, community-based project design, assessment and more. Based on core principles of applied learning, the workshops are designed to support teachers to build projects connected to their students' local community contexts, personal interests and aspirations. These CPD experiences have the potential to be adapted to Indian schools and their context-specific applied learning goals.

LAHI is currently designing online training modules for teachers, developing recorded digital CPD content for self-paced learning and a Coding curriculum for teacher professional development in digital skills.

#### 2. Extensive school networks

Both VALA and LAHI are connected to a strong and diverse network of partner schools that provides a strategic advantage for piloting, iterating and scaling digital teacher PD models. VALA's established network in Australia brings deep insights into educator support models and best practices, while LAHI's extensive reach across thousands of Indian schools offers a unique opportunity to co-develop digital PD that can be adapted across a variety of contexts.

## Partnership Approach

### Initial alignment activities

1. Joint workshops to share each organisation's current work in teacher professional development and digital learning strategies.
2. Comparative mapping of current digital CPD models and platforms used in Australia and India.

### Collaborative Co-Design

1. Joint needs analysis: Co-design metrics for identifying gaps in current teacher CPD and school implementation capacities in the Indian context, through extensive consultations with local schools and teachers.
2. Draft a digital CPD strategy: VALA contributes evidence-based CPD frameworks, models, templates and assessment rubrics; LAHI contextualises these for Indian school settings and secures buy-in from Indian state government education departments.
3. Build a digital community of practice (CoP) hub: A shared online platform that connects educators across networks, facilitates asynchronous learning and showcases teacher-generated resources.

### Pilot Implementation

1. Launch short, blended online courses for Indian teachers on the CoP hub focused on:
  - » Applied learning pedagogy and curriculum design
  - » Authentic assessment tasks and principles
  - » Development of transferable skills through work-based learning
2. Create a shared repository of CPD activities, case studies and multimedia resources – drawing on VALA's examples from Australian schools and LAHI's implementation insights from Indian schools.

### Sustained outreach and lesson-sharing

1. VALA and LAHI leverage their existing connection with the National Skills Network (NSN) to promote the digital teacher CPD courses to the wider Indian school ecosystem.
2. Co-develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to track the uptake of the digital courses and enable continuous reflection and improvement.

### Intended Outcomes

- Strengthened teacher capability in applied learning, grounded in global best practice and adapted to local school realities.
- Digital CPD pathways that make high-quality professional learning accessible across diverse and resource-varied school settings.
- A reference library of contextualised applied learning units and CPD modules for use in both countries.
- A sustainable Australia-India CPD ecosystem with ongoing exchange, shared resources and expanded digital collaboration.

## CASE STUDY: VOCATIONAL AND APPLIED LEARNING ASSOCIATION (VALA) ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEBINAR SERIES

This online CPD, which takes place over three online sessions, was originally designed for teachers of the Victorian Vocational Major and Victorian Pathways Certificate. The model could however be adjusted for applied learning initiatives within different curriculum and assessment frameworks.

There is also strong potential for this CPD series to be adapted to support transnational collaborations and communities of practice.

This online CPD is designed to support teachers to:

- implement applied learning successfully in the classroom.
- come away with new ideas and enthusiasm that can be used to engage their students, school and community.

The webinars demonstrate how teachers can:

- collaborate with students to develop projects aligned to their particular community, context and cohort
- use teaching and learning strategies supported by core theories underpinning applied learning
- integrate across different subjects / areas of study, and
- apply multiple assessment approaches.

The session leaders share examples of successful community projects. They also provide resources and time for participants to collaborate with colleagues.

Pre and post 'homework' is designed to help participants develop an applied learning project using the information from the sessions.

### **Session 1 – Community, Context and Cohort**

- Understand your school's community, context and your student cohort.
- Identify and discuss how your and your students' passions, interests and skills can be used to engage students in community projects.
- Consider socio-cultural characteristics, community, parents/carers, industries and trades in your community, likely employment, historical background of school.

Participants share experiences of developing community projects, reflecting on what worked and didn't work.

### **Session 2 – Learning theories and teaching and learning strategies**

- Explore relevant learning theories including experiential learning, constructivism, adult learning theory and communities of practice.
- Unpack strategies including group work, reflective journaling, work integrated learning and community partnerships.
- Explore how these learning theories and strategies can be incorporated into projects through teaching and learning activities.

### **Session 3 – Integration of the studies and assessments**

- Explore how state-mandated curriculum framework and studies can be integrated into a project, using examples.
- Collaborate and develop ideas for integration across subjects/studies.
- Examine assessment approaches in applied learning linked to the mandated curriculum.
- Discuss examples of assessment that show how key knowledge and skills can be met across study designs.

By the end of the workshop, participants will have:

- developed an integrated applied learning project, including assessment tasks, with relevance to their own setting and student cohort,
- made new professional connections supporting future collaborations and knowledge sharing, and
- gained the tools needed to build an online Community of Practice related to applied learning practice.



## SCENARIO: POTENTIAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN DPS SCHOOLS (INDIA) AND WYNDHAM TECH SCHOOL (AUSTRALIA)

### Co-designing real-world, technology-enabled learning experiences

Two Delhi Public Schools (DPS) in India explore integration of more hands-on, future-skills-oriented learning into their middle and secondary grades. Wyndham Tech School in Australia offers strong expertise in immersive technologies, design challenges, maker spaces, robotics, and industry-integrated problem-solving projects. A collaborative program between the institutions can strengthen applied learning at school level.

### Key needs and challenges

- DPS school leadership and teachers require support in project-based and interdisciplinary design, especially in STEM and emerging technologies
- Students need greater exposure to real-world problem-solving, beyond textbook-driven tasks
- Schools want access to tech-enabled learning experiences (AR/VR, design thinking, prototyping)
- Both Indian and Australian partners need alignment of schedules, curriculum demands, and assessment systems
- Both partners will benefit from a structured way to link student projects to real industry problems

### Proposed partnership approach

The school leaders initiate discussions using the partnership pathway outlined in the Toolkit. Together, they design a structured collaboration:

- 1. Joint identification of focus themes through leadership deliberations:**  
Examples: climate solutions, digital fabrication, smart cities, cyber safety, sustainable energy
- 2. Teacher-to-teacher collaboration sessions:** Wyndham's teachers conduct virtual workshops on design thinking, making, tech integration, and AL assessment. DPS teachers share syllabus constraints and local relevance needs
- 3. Co-design of student projects:** Mixed teams develop 4- to 6-week project aligned with CBSE and Victorian curriculum expectations:
  - » Problem framing
  - » Research tasks
  - » Prototyping
  - » Reflection and presentation
- 4. Pilot virtual maker-space experiences:** Wyndham Tech hosts remote sessions using AR/VR walkthroughs, simulation tools, and prototyping demonstrations adapted for Indian classroom settings
- 5. Student collaboration and showcases:** Students from both countries present solutions, receive feedback from industry mentors, and document learning through rubrics
- 6. Review and scale-up:** Both schools evaluate impact, refine processes, and explore expansion to multiple DPS branches or government schools

### Intended outcomes

- Improved teacher confidence in designing and assessing applied learning projects
- Increased student engagement and real-world exposure through shared projects
- Access to advanced technology and maker-space methodologies
- A sustainable India-Australia school collaboration model that can be replicated by other schools