

## File BP EN LARSA II

### LARSA TERRITORIAL LABS: AN OUTLINE OF PRACTICES IN PIEDMONT AND LOMBARDY REGIONS

#### Introduction

As Technical and Vocational upper secondary schools in Lombardy suffer from increasingly high dropout rates, a number of initiatives to get early school leavers back on track was implemented (2004-2005) all involving the use of the LARSA concept. The core of such initiatives implied the use of organizational models for integrating formal schooling and vocational training, through the use of strategies like “*alternanza scuola lavoro*” (working periods sandwiched between school periods), and like “laboratories for REcovery and enhancement of Learning” (**LARSA**)

The following pages contain an executive summary of a number of LARSAs, with an analysis of their strenghts and weaknesses, as well as an analysis of the underlying methodology. The idea is to share what has been accomplished with educators and trainers.

#### Designing the LARSA – Desk analysis

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| - web-based information retrieval   |
| - retrieval of Regional Laws on Education and Vocational Training integration and documentary evidence of their application within local projects (Lombardy and Piedmont) |
| - specialized information retrieval through interviews with Universities and Official Institutions  |

#### Where do LARSA come from?

**Law N.53/2003** envisaged the setting up of territorial LARSA with the idea to offer each and every student the opportunity to benefit from extra-support, extra tuition for the promotion of higher academic achievement but also from structured mentoring and support in moving from one curriculum to a different one, anywhere within State-owned Upper Secondary schools, Region-managed VET , labour market and other training entities.

Legal devices for the implementation of LARSAs as envisaged by Law 53/03 are Agreements between Central Government and Regions and between Regions and Provinces (**it is to be noted that Italy’s Constitution designs the nation’s institutional architecture as multi-layered, with a number of levels all legislatively autonomous: Municipality, Province, Region, State**)

**The general goal of such agreements was to curbe dropout rates and limit early school leaving.**

#### What are LARSA?

Operative organizational tools to be used for:

- ◆ Same-level learning groups of learners in need of refresh/remedial courses or enhanced courses along their curriculum.
- ◆ Single learners or groups of learners moving from one curriculum to a different one.
- ◆ Socially and culturally vulnerable uncertified youth (NEETs) or dropouts

#### Three LARSA experiments

Region and experience	Entities involved and operational tool	Legal device
1. Piedmont	Regional Authority for Education, Piedmont Region, Piedmont’s Provinces; the operational tool is a set of Guidelines for the implementation of LARSAs as of Law 53/03	<b>Joint formal Agreement</b> Proposta di accordo tra l’Ufficio Scolastico Regionale del Piemonte, le Province piemontesi sulle linee guida per la progettazione e la gestione assistita dei passaggi tra i sistemi e i

		percorsi formativi attraverso i laboratori per il recupero e il sostegno degli apprendimenti.
<b>2. Lombardy</b>	<b>Milan Province.</b> Its LARSA were presented as the application of the recommendations included in the Guidelines for Region-controlled VET programs for 2004/2005.	Region's Guidelines for VET services
<b>3. Lombardy</b>	<b>All Provinces in Lombardy.</b> Their LARSA are mainly targeted on reducing dropout rates and improving Vocational training through the network of vocational training centres and vocational upper secondary schools.	Agreements with vocational training centres and vocational upper secondary schools

### **LARSA structure includes 4 options:**

#### Labs designed to help underachievers or low-achievers to develop key competences and skills

This type of lab includes sets of remedial activities targeted to the cognitively vulnerable or dropouts, who need to develop Lisbon Key-competences 1-2-3).

#### Labs designed to further enhance learning in specific knowledge areas (Approfondimenti)

This type of lab includes sets of activities designed to help high-achievers and intellectually endowed learners to further investigate into their favourite knowledge areas, through challenging problem-solving experiences.

#### Labs designed to help "switchers" to move from one learning program to a different one

This type of lab includes activities where career-counseling and vocational guidance are overrepresented in order to provide adequate background prior to induction to a new program. Portfolios are a tool for evaluation of progress and achievement in terms of competencies and skills.

"De-structuring" Labs designed to help mentally, relationally and culturally vulnerable 15-to-18 learners to acquire basic skills and key competencies, also in compliance with the so-called horizontal principles and issues in LLP Leonardo.

### **The key points in designing LARSA as organizational models:**

getting to know every single user full well, scanning for his/her positive potential, in terms of skills, aptitudes, competencies, abilities, knowledge.
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Accuracy in defining learning objectives and suitable "learning situations/settings"
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Customized learning curriculum
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Criterion-based individualized assessment/evaluation of progress in terms of competencies, skills and personal development.
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Focus on the learner's development of a vision for his/her life
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### **Main problem in designing LARSA time -frames**

Preventing juxtaposition and negative interference with standard school-based, non-flexible curricular periods.
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### **Strengths in LARSA**

Tutor-learner relationship comes first (positive atmosphere, confidence, mutual trust)
Overcoming the dicotomy academic vs vocational and appreciating work as motivational drive and self-esteem.
Task-based , problem-solving, hands-on based learning is preponderant in LARSA, as youth tend to appreciate work-driven incentives which give them status and social credibility.
Development of self-awareness and autonomy in decision-making, enhancement in citizenship
Making the most of the relationship with etherogeneous entities: enterprises, private sector, formal institutions, non-profit associations etc
Dissemination of methodologies that prove to be working effectively, also as accompanying measures.

**Methodology : flexible over time and multiple-phase based. Not rigidly sequential .**

**it implies:**

Customized phases of tuition and/or counseling designed on the basis of the learner’needs and practical constraints.
- customized learning programs, with objectives, methods and modes suitable to each user
- the setting up of multiple forms of cooperation with the various entities included in the local network
- flexibility and choice: anytime during the year the learner may exit the LARSA and go back to ordinary school, upon successful completion of tasks and achievement of original objectives.
- active, learning-by-doing processes; cognitive apprenticeship, integrated situational learning
- performance-based evaluation
- non-directive teaching, multi-media, multi-channels access to learning materials. Blended learning
- the possibility to move upward or sideways (vertical and horizontal) in changing/moving from one curriculum to another.
- formal agreement and administrative/political cooperation devices between institutional entities at all levels (State-region; Region-to-Region; Region-to-Province; Province-to-Province; Municipality –to Province etc )

**DOCUMENTS 1**

<b>FORMAL AGREEMENT between Piedmont Regional Authority for Education and Piedmont’s Provinces for the joint production of Guidelines for planning and management of transfer programs from education system to VET, through LARSA. (in application of Law 53/03)</b>
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**GUIDELINES**

<p>Education through formal schooling (istruzione) is compulsory up to the age of 15, education through either training or informal learning, or vocational learning is compulsory up to 18. Every person is entitled to his/her right/duty to educate him/herself for a period of at least 12 years, or until he/she earns a certification (ISCED 3).</p> <p>It is therefore necessary to design a flexible way for users to make their choices when approaching Upper Secondary level (ISCED 3), while at the same time not discriminating between systems in terms of their intrinsic educational value.</p> <p>The decision to migrate from one system to another (or from one curriculum to another) comes directly from the student or from his/her family. Whatever the reason, such decision implies re-negotiating one’s priorities and getting extra help in decision making. Moreover, every change is to be accompanied by a certification or some form of computation of academic credits which have been already earned.</p> <p>It is most important for the student and his/her family to be supported and given assistance by the school, by the training agency and possibly by the career-counselor of the job centre.</p> <p>Deciding to move from one school to another or through different curricula is not simply a matter of bureaucratic procedures and administrative form filling. The schools and training agencies involved in the process must make the tranfer successful and satisfying for the user. The accompanying function</p>
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must therefore be carried out jointly by the sender school and the recipient training agency. The school should not merely issue certifications and school reports, it should contact the recipient agency and co-design the transfer process of the student, offering support and counseling. In other words, no student, no family should be left alone.

In this connection, it is most important to have a special ad hoc team operating in the school (teacher/educators), and including staff from the school and staff from the recipient training agency.

**Tasks of the mixed team:**

- Analyze the student's declarative knowledge, abilities, competencies, skills already acquired at school and compare them with the requirements of the new curriculum of the recipient agency.
- define what is missing and list the student's skills, abilities and competencies needed to catch up with the new curriculum for the required level.
- co-design and implement a remedial and development of learning lab (LARSA), defining the teachers needed, times and places needed.
- implementation of the tuition/course including testing, evaluation and certification of the new competencies acquired.
- admission to the new curriculum.
- negotiation of a fresh educational agreement with the student and his/her family.

**Definition of LARSA Labs**

= **Laws (State-generated, and Regional .....OMISSIS.....)**

= **Mission and Goals**

- enable students/users (aged 14-18) to transfer from a curriculum to a different one by ensuring appropriate multi-faceted support in the process of acquisition of knowledge and skills required for admission to the recipient curriculum.

- enable the above mentioned students to successfully engage in the newly chosen curriculum.

= **Beneficiaries**

learners registered in a Vocational training centre or in a school, who wish to make a different choice.

= **Admission to services**

Admission is upon the school's request or request on the part of certified training agencies, in mutual agreement.

= **Timing – timeframe**

The LARSA lab activities enabling successful transfer to the newly chosen curriculum are to be completed in time for the start of the new learning program. The timing and types of the activities will therefore vary according to the student's needs and requirements. A LARSA may be used as a period of extra-tuition and support while the student is catching up in order to meet the requirements of his/her newly-chosen curriculum (or learning plan) and at the same time he/she is actually engaged in the new learning environment.

In case of early school leavers or dropouts, the agency (whatever the type) in charge of the implementation of the accompanying measures will operate in cooperation with job centres in order to help dropouts get back on track.

### = **Preliminary activities**

- Analyze the student's reasons behind his/her choice to move away from school.
- help him/her in his/her process of decision making (through adequate career-guidance), in cooperation with local job centres.
- Identify the new curriculum choice requested by the student (and his/her family if the student is underage) and the reason for designing a customized LARSA lab.
- the school contacts the recipient training agency /institution so as to:
  - a) define credit/debit recognition and certification (through balance of personal resources, qualifications earned, assessment of knowledge, skills and competencies), with reference to the "nuclei essenziali dei piani di studio" (core curriculum) as of (art. 7, comma 1, letter a) L. 53/2003.
  - b) co-design and implement a customized program (LARSA) for the acquisition of the requirements (knowledge, skills and competencies) needed to access and follow the new curriculum

### = **Definition of a Project**

Co-designing means:

- ensuring the recovery and further development of skills, abilities, competencies and knowledge required to follow the chosen curriculum.
- defining learning goals, activities, times, teaching methods and places.
- defining and listing human and instrumental resources, as well as the methods and strategies for the accompanying measures, assessment and evaluation.
- making the remedial program flexible enough as to meet unexpected needs.

The larger the difference between the original curriculum and the new one, the more complex the remedial program designed in the LARSA.

### = **Implementation methodology**

Individual tutoring (one-to-one) or small group tutoring to be carried out preferably in the recipient agency/school (as of the Regional Directive)

## DOCUMENTS 2

### Local Labs for provision of vocational training and education". Province of Milan , Luglio 2004

#### Summary :

In July 2004 the Province of Milan produced a document authored by M.Loizzi, where LARSA (local labs for provision of vocational training and education), named "Laboratori Territoriali per i Servizi Formativi", were presented as the application of the Regional Political Guidelines and directives concerning vocational training programs for 2004/2005.

State-generated Law 53/03 includes "transfer" from one curriculum to another or "migration" from one education system (State-owned) to a training system (Region or Province-owned) on a different institutional level, or again "assisted migration" to the labour market as the main strategy towards accomplishment of compulsory schooling and education for everyone up to the age of 18.

The LABS include options to remedial work as well as to development of competencies and learning and operate thanks to a network of entities cooperating together and formally bound by an Agreement.

The options devoted to remedial work and refresh courses as well as to the empowering of competencies contribute to the migration of users from one curriculum to a different one of the same level/grade. However such Labs can also help students move from one system to a different one and to a higher level/grade.

#### The aim of the project

The need to systematically define the range of educational and vocational services is one of the elements Law 53/03 uses to guide the programming of the entities institutionally in charge of the management of VET and formal schooling.

Each student is entitled to curriculum and school choice, according to Law 53/03 and he/she can choose to complete his/her compulsory education either in the Sistema dei Licei, or in Technical Upper secondary schools or in VET, apprenticeship, job training. Moreover, she/he is also entitled to migrate between curricula and between systems, choose to go to work and then come back to school. The option to migrate between curricula and systems is a constitutionally protected right. This being a right, it is to be actively supported and sustained with adequate accompanying measures. Active support to students to migrate/transfer from one system to another is implemented by specialized staff trained to "put themselves in the student's place" and to help them become aware of their own decision making processes. This is even more important when choices already made appear to be unsatisfying and students need a fresh start.

Migration from one system to another can be managed directly at school where the choice to move to a different curriculum is the result of a deep-thought decision made by the student and his/her family.

Migration due to systematic academic underachievement or other kinds of problems, which may lead to flunking a grade, or which may pose a threat or risk, needs special care.

Law 53/03 entails the setting up of a specific range of territorial services which act as a third external party, examining all the possible options around and mediating between school and user.

The Laboratori Territoriali per i Servizi Formativi (territorial VET and education service providers) especially devoted to the management of the migration of students from one system to a different one do not require a new delivery unit with extra-staff. Rather they do need to organize and pool the network of services offering all the education and training options available around, on the basis of the user's needs.

The *Laboratorio Territoriale per i Servizi Formativi* is therefore a networked multiple service provider customizing solutions in terms of technical, methodological and psychological assistance to people needing to change their lives as students moving from one system to a different one.

The *Laboratorio Territoriale per i Servizi Formativi* can be best comprehended as a NETWORK OF

SERVICES, namely:

1. retrieving information and data on the educational/training/vocational options present within the territorial network (schools, job centres, regional VET centres, provincial VET centres etc)
2. planning and designing customized learning paths in cooperation with the network's members
- 3) management of institutional relations between entities involved, so as to allow a shared framework for the recognition, certification and computation of learning credits.

The opportunity of generating a network depends on the sharing of a framework of rules and regulations fully accepted by every single partner in the network. What matters in terms of efficiency and efficacy is the voluntary commitment every single node of the network makes to the cause, regardless of the prerogatives institutionally assigned to each partner by law. It is therefore suggested that a formal agreement be jointly signed, where roles, profiles and responsibilities are clearly defined and agreed upon.

As the LARSA lab function is to support and ease the user's transfer across different systems, each of which has a specific territorial and dimensional profile, the framework of shared rules must reflect the existing relations rather than juxtapose to them.

## **ANNEX I**

### **Draft of PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT for the implementation of a territorial LAB aimed to enhance learning/curriculum options in terms of quality.**

#### RECITALS

Considered that:

a) the Province of Milan, through the development of an autonomous project, has decided to set up a LARSA (territorial lab) as a strategic tool to implement a steady network between education and training entities/subjects within the province premises;

b) the above mentioned project envisages that said LARSA is aimed to enhance and coordinate the learning options/curricula defined by all Upper secondary schools located within the Province of..... and within the job Centre of .....

c) the LARSA's goal is to promote, coordinate and support the operation of a network of schools and training agencies, namely:

- guidance and re-planning of users's careers
- transfer across systems
- User's enhancement of competencies, skills and acquisition of vocational certifications in conjunction with attendance to (ISCED 3) upper secondary curricula

between

.....  
and

.....

IT IS HEREBY AGREED THAT

## 1. TERRITORIAL LAB (LARSA)

The territorial lab (LARSA) operates on the basis of a network, implying constant cooperation and synergy among different subjects sharing the mission of promoting and preserving the right/duty to compulsory education and training.

The schools and agencies concurring to the establishment of a LARSA agree on the following goals

- a) promote, coordinate and support the establishment of a territorial LAB named..... consistent with the features of the project as described by Milan Province.
- b) share and pool the resources devoted to course design, and existing within each partner, using them for the implementation of the Lab.
- c) open the participation in the implementation of the lab to all the schools and training agencies both private and state-owned, in order to concur to the objectives defined above.

## 2 ORGANIZATION

- a) every school and training agency sharing the common mission described above, associates to the lab “.....” by signing this agreement.
- b) The Lab “.....” Is managed by a steering committee whose members come from each of the participant institutions. The Committee:
  - operates the network ,
  - coordinates proposals, takes and makes suggestions, coordinates initiatives
- c) the committee, unanimously, elects a chairman/secretary who is in charge of fixing schedules and meetings according to shared criteria.
- d) the committee defines its own organizing rules
- e) projects and initiatives agreed upon are documented in the meetings’ minutes, as well as the division of roles, profiles, and tasks assigned to every single participant in the initiatives. Assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems are also decided within the committee.

ANNEX TWO = A MODEL FOR A LOCALLY DISTRIBUTED LABORATORY FOR INTEGRATED SERVICES

INPUT	ACTIONS	OUTPUT
<p><b><u>Beneficiaries (targets):</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VET-users (both on track and dropout)</li> <li>- State-owned Secondary Vocational schools</li> <li>- Regional Vocational learning Centres</li> </ul> <p><b><u>- requiring:</u></b></p> <p>to move/transfer from one system to another accompanying measures helping users to complete tranfer successfully</p>	<p>Subjects, Entities, Institutions originatine the network which Shapes the local/territorial lab (learning campus). Choosing territorial boundaries and planning roles and tasks</p> <p><b>Laboratory Management</b> of the between users and institutions when users apply to move from one system to another and when users at risk of early school leaving need support to get back on track.</p> <p><b>Planning</b> specific learning opportunities by integrating HR and technical support available within the network, so as to help learners’ achieve academic success and get prospective dropouts back on a learning track.</p> <p><b>Research and support</b> for the management of credit computation, recognition and validation on the basis of a shared framework across Provincial and Regional Vocational Sytems.</p> <p><b>Sharing and dissemination</b> of information to the public and to all the education and vocational training providers locally active.</p>	<p><b><u>outcomes</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on opportunities on offer within the network</li> </ul> <p>Planning and implementation of: transfer from one system to another, using ad hoc profiled staff.</p> <p>integrated activities supporting educational initiatives.</p> <p>credit validation,and recognition.</p> <p>Monitoring and technical support to network members</p>

<p>TERRITORIAL/LOCAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICE PROVIDER/LAB – explicit functions /1</p>	
<p><b>1. Defining if and to what extent transfer from one system to another is required. Defining the requirements needed for the transfer to be organized.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessing consistency of users requirement and lab objectives</li> <li>• assessing the network members’ response to the users needs della</li> <li>• defining and action plan</li> <li>• defining a timed work plan and outcome monitoring methods</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.providing services</b></p>	
<p><i>To single users</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• counselling</li> <li>• career guidance</li> <li>• scorecard</li> <li>• education</li> <li>• competency assessment</li> </ul>	<p><i>To education and training providers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information</li> <li>• integrated planning</li> <li>• technical support</li> </ul>

### 3. Monitoring and checking networked activities and activities within the network

- Feedback to network members
- definition of an action plan targeted to upgrading and improving services

## LOCAL LAB FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICE PROVISION

Induction - admission			
Presentation of services and opportunities available in the local lab			
<i>Users</i>	<i>Services</i>	<i>Quality points</i>	<i>Rules and roles of the admission process</i>
<p>Users of the state-owned secondary education system or regional VET system , subject to compulsory schooling (up to 16) or to compulsory education (up to 18)</p> <p>Users' families</p> <p>State-owned schools, regional VET providers</p>	<p>Information point</p> <p>Personalized interviews and need assessment</p>	<p>The beneficiaries of the services are families and local institutions.</p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- show the mission, organization and potential of the territorial lab.</li> </ul> <p><b>Services are implemented through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- information point</li> <li>- interviews one-to-one</li> </ul> <p><b>quality standards are guaranteed by:</b></p> <p>a tutor is in charge of informing on and planning,, with the user, a range of learning choices in line with the user's needs.</p> <p>One an educational plan has been accepted, the tutor becomes a mentor in charge of accompanying the user through the services available within the lab.</p>	<p>A personal file is created for each single user. The file is managed by the tutor and accessible to the user at any time upon request.</p> <p>The state-owned school the user comes from is duly notified about the new application/registration.</p>

Identifying the needs and requirements linked to the transfer between systems			
<i>Users</i>	<i>Services</i>	<i>Quality points</i>	<i>Rules for the networked management of integrated services</i>
<p>Users of the state-owned secondary education system or regional VET system , subject to compulsory schooling (up to 16) or to compulsory education (up to 18)</p> <p>Users' families</p>	<p>Information point</p> <p>Personalized interviews and need assessment of Users of the state-owned secondary education system or regional VET system , subject to compulsory schooling (up to 16) or to compulsory education (up to 18)</p>	<p>Beneficiaries are users/learners and parents (in case of minors) .</p> <p>High quality support to the design of a project aimed to personal development and competency enhancement in compliance with law-enforced duty to education and/or training up to the age of 18.</p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assessment of needs (transfer from one system to another).</li> <li>- help and support users to understand his/her social and personal situation, in relation with his/her learning needs.</li> <li>- Show, describe and explain goals missions and organization of territorial lab.</li> <li>- Design a LARSA: a learning plan which will be implemented within the career guidance process.</li> <li>- Provide users with tools and strategies to make successful choices.</li> </ul> <p><b>Provision of services includes:</b></p>	<p>The state-owned school the user comes from is duly notified about the new application/registration.</p>

		<p>- analysis of user's call, and information retrieval on user's school background.</p> <p>- individual structured interviews to start a sound relationship, thus favour a process of better self-awareness and decision – making</p> <p>- recording and file incoming and outgoing data after the admission interview (using a special grid)</p> <p><b>quality standards are guaranteed by:</b></p> <p><b>Tutor:</b> Is in charge of the user and acts as an accompanying mentor throughout the learning path. The tutor is in charge of some administrative tasks such as: filing the user's documentation and collects all documents related to the user, to be produced after the induction phase is over.</p> <p><b>Minimum Duration :</b> in case of users coming from a state-owned secondary school member of the network, the school is informed about the application of its student. Duration of interview varies but does not exceed 60 minutes (50to60 minutes being suitable)</p> <p><b>Professional requirements and qualifications for staff:</b> MA in psychology, Ed. sciences, developmental psychology, sociology, Media and Communication. At least 2 year-experience in career guidance.</p> <p><b>Setting :</b> a quiet, large room favouring collaboration between user and interviewer. Interviews are pre-scheduled by appointments. Times and dates are set by the interviewer, so as to engage the user in a structured setting.</p> <p>Features of the interview: - information retrieval and background data acquisition. Think-aloud process is also included so as to prepare the user to better self-awareness.</p> <p>- build a positive relational-emotional relationship between user and interviewer, to set the basis for a medium-term cooperation and sustained decision-making.</p>	
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**Lucio Reghellin**

**CUSTOMIZATION OF EXPERIMENTAL THREE-YEAR CURRICULA IN IFP (VET education) – An example from CNOS-FAP Federation in 2004. ( Syntesis)**

**Abstract:**

Based on 2004's Federation CNOS-FAP 's "Linee guida per la realizzazione di percorsi organici nel sistema dell'istruzione e della formazione professionale" (guidelines for the implementation of curricula in VET), the Centro Studi Scuola Cattolica mentions LARSAs as a tool easing transfer across curricular systems (passerelle=gangways) within three-year curricula. During year one and three (age 15-17), LARSAs are strategic for managing transfer from training agencies to school and finally to the job market and back again. A definition for LARSA is given on the basis of the specific objective and function: operate remedial/refresh courses (within structured syllabi), passage from one curriculum to a different one (outside structured syllabi), focused career-counseling courses (as accompanying measure towards the labour market)

**Types of customization:**

**2.1. structural customization**

is refers to the architecture of the course/curriculum and to school choice as set by State Law.

*1) early (year one) Career Counseling*

During the first year of the curriculum each student is tutored and accompanied through the induction phase. The curriculum profile may be altered to meet the needs of the student. Core subjects and guidance are prevalent in year one. In some of our training centres, students choose the area they want to concentrate on at the end of a foundation period, where they get acquainted with a variety of vocational sectors. They choose on the basis of what is most suitable to them.

In year two more importance is given to the acquisition of declarative knowledge, abilities, skills and competencies. Year two includes a hand-on training period aside curriculum development.

Year three brings the curriculum to completion and is targeted on enhancing personal and vocational awareness.

*2) management of credits and transfer from vocational training, to school and to the labour market (and back)*

during the entire curriculum, but especially in year one and year three, students may earn credits if they do well in their LARSA experience. Such credits are recognized and computed in case of a new transfer to a different curriculum ("passerelle" gangways)

*3) school-job experience (periods on the job sandwiched between periods back at school)*

At the age of 15, students may choose the school-job experience. It allows to complete a coherent curriculum where enterprise work is blended with formal schooling. Underlying this strategy is the assumption that people learn best and effectively develop competencies when confronted with significant learning situations, such as in an authentic work environment and when they get social credit. (planning, designing, tutoring) both work and school add up to the individual's ability to build his/her own personal experience.

**2.2. organizational customization**

this type of customization has to do with the way in which the LARSA activities and schedules are "squeezed in" between the overall yearly compulsory school schedule.

Let's imagine here a three-year curriculum, totaling up to 1050 tuition hours per year, divided as follows:

- *common course (participants: the whole class)* 900 hours per year approx.
- *customized tuition* within the LARSAs (compulsory attendane, sillabi to be defined and negotiated with the tutors) 150 hours per year.

Tuition may address:

a) *the entire class* (tuition: one –to-many) engaged homogeneously in a set of standard activities.

b) *equal-level of performance groups* (homogeneous groups), where students work in groups/teams defined on the basis of similar objectives and tasks (ex: enhancement groups; or remedial activities)

c) *task-based group working around* a project or topic of common interest. (ex: foreign language development group, digital literacy group and so on)

the LARSA operate in a quite limited time-frame and flexibly enough as to meet specific needs. They are therefore highly customized.

In terms of structure and content;

- one type of LARSA operates within structured curricula and is aimed to enhance learning skills and develop remedial work in topics and subjects institutionally included in the core school curriculum. (typically : numeracy, language skills, reading),

- another type of LARSA operates outside structured curricula and is aimed to ease transfer from a system to a different one, keeping track of the student's debit/credit balance. The tool used is the student's "*Portfolio delle Competenze*" (skills/competencies portfolio)

- the third type of LARSA aims to design focused actions on guidance and career counseling, on enhancing vocational skills and easing transition to work.

### **2.3. methodological customization**

it refers to a specific methodology used throughout the LARSA, which is always user-oriented and user-centred. It is most important to put the learner first, so as to transform the potential of the individual into real skills and competencies, and help him/her fulfil his/her personal development project, looking ahead.

Such learning experiences can be developed through learning units, both mono and multi-disciplinary, negotiated and shared with the educators' team.

Behind customization there is the idea that the learner comes first, as well as his/her relationship with the vocational community, the learning environment, the partnership. The question is not to drive the learner to accept and digest standard curricula, rather to build together a learning experience suitable and meaningful to the learner him/herself, as a competent individual.

Considering the full responsibility of the educators' team in terms of pedagogy/andragogy and evaluation, it is most important :

- to design a draft for a customized learning program (*Piano formativo personalizzato*);
- to manage the learning Units, included the career guidance phase
- to build a portfolio of individual competencies.

The prep documents are work in progress, which need interpreting and reflecting upon, on the basis of the personalities and cognitive buildup of every student, with reference to his/her background and contextual richness. Due to its flexibility, the customized learning program can be fully appreciated in its final form (a collection of Learning units) only in an ex-post assessment.

#### *1) draft of the customized learning program*

the national headquarter of CNOS-FAP, jointly with CIOFS/FP, is preparing a set of guides for a variety of professional/vocational communities engaged to propose and design drafts of customized learning plan. It is basically a form with a series of activities to carry out during the academic year (learning units). These activities are product-oriented, so as to boost the individual's motivation to complete them, drawing from his/her resources, skills, competences etc.

For each activity learning objectives, duration, staff required and prerequisites are clearly defined.

### 2) learning units

are flexible tools aimed to favour the individual's personal growth and integrate his/her vocational competencies. A Learning unit (task-based strategy in a problem-solving setting) implies the creation of a product/outcome which is meaningful to his/her creator. (it may be the production of a document or the implementation of a process). While solving a problem, the individual will not only draw from his/her declarative, procedural and strategic background but will also integrate his/her resources with the resources coming from tutorship, thus developing real competencies.

Every Unit of Learning is defined and described on a work sheet, which includes: task, product/outcome, specific learning objectives, beneficiaries, time needed, sequencing, HR and instrumental resources required for its completion.

### 3) Portfolio

Portfolios are collections of student work representing a selection of products that represent specific student performance. A portfolio may be a folder containing a student's best pieces and the student's evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the pieces. It may also contain one or more works-in-progress that illustrate the creation of a product, such as an essay, evolving through various stages of conception, drafting, and revision.

Portfolios are useful as a support to instructional approaches that emphasize the student's role in constructing knowledge and the teacher's role in promoting this process. Portfolios capitalize on students' natural tendency to save work and become an effective way to get them to take a second look and think about how they could improve future work. Portfolios are valued as an assessment tool because, as representations of classroom-based performance, they can be fully integrated into the curriculum. It is important to encourage students to make their own criteria for selection of the best pieces to include in the portfolio, so as to develop metacognitive (evaluating) skills.

**SUPPORT TO LEARNING EXPERIENCES AIMED TO ENHANCE LEARNING AND PROVIDE REFRESH/REMEDIAL WORK - A PROJECT (Provincia di Milano.)**

**Abstract**

These past few years the Region-owned Vocational training system has actively contributed to the spreading of career guidance to youth and young adults registered with their many centres for vocational training. It offered career guidance to other entities (schools, universities, job centres and the like) with the aim to give adequate support and help to people moving from school to the labour market or from the vocational system to the job market.

It is here briefly presented a "*PERCORSO ORIENTATIVO di accompagnamento nelle TRANSIZIONI FRA ESPERIENZE FORMATIVE.*" (career guidance and customized accompanying measures through and across systems) targeted on prospective dropouts, neets and/or early school leavers.

Aim of the experience

Prepare and support low performing, underachieving or problem students through and across systems/ curricula, until they complete compulsory education.

Applications

1) SELF-ASSESSMENT MODULE (elective for the entire class)

*Objective n°1 : capitalize on the positive aspects of schooling and school experience*

*Objective n°2 : assesment and reflection upon one's personal resources and skills when having to design a personal project (method, outcomes, performances attained, strategies enhancement, remedial work done etc)*

*Objective n°3 : capitalize and optimize personal investment in order to clarify one's objectives and route.*

2) EXPLORATION MODULE (for students undergoing a crisis)

*Objective n°1 : enrich and enlarge your cognitive maps concerning all the options around*

Activities

1a Check for one's stereotypes and induced scripts about schools and formal learning (false myths and wrong ideas etc) to start undermining cognitive errors.

1b ease and promote contact and dialogue with testimonials ( upward and sideways) to get multiple points of view and reduce the limits coming from convergent thinking and stereotypes.

1c go and visit places (schools, job centres, training centres etc) to experience new feelings and see new situations.

3) EXPERIENTIAL MODULE

*Objective n°1 : meet new educational/instructional centres either to make a choice or to assess different working/learning styles, comparing them to the unappreciated school context where feelings of unease caused distrust and demotivation.*

*Activities :*

1a take part in a learning experience in different contexts with the support of a personal tutor.

#### 4) *STRATEGIC MODULE*

is made up of a fixed amount of tuition-time (in hours distributed across some months) used to tutor the transfer of the learner to a new context. Special care is given to the early phase of attendance after admission, so as to make failure unlikely.

Monitoring of the funded projects.

Authors: Study group organized within the “*Laboratorio di progettazione e monitoraggio*”, promoted by the Settore Formazione Professionale (VET sector) of the Province of Milan, and including the following researchers working in 16 approved projects in partnership between Centri di Formazione Professionale (Vocational training centres) and Upper Secondary Schools . Coordinator: Prof. Maria Luisa Pombeni. Collaborators (Flavia Agnesi, Giorgio Arosio, Ambrogio Biglieri, Federico Manfreda , Alessandra Gargiulo).

**Abstract :**

The Project “*Monitoring of curricula not included in compulsory state-based schooling (non-classroom curricula)*” has been a contribution to a system objective concerning monitoring IVT and instructional initiatives<sup>1</sup> provided by the Province of Milan (IVT sector). The basic idea was to see how many province-driven initiatives/courses were implemented and to analyze them in 2004/2005 academic year.

The initiatives fell within the following categories: of compulsory education and training (“Obbligo Formativo” )

- **type 2B** “Percorsi modulari personalizzati e/o in alternanza” (customized modules and/or work-school program) (< 600 ore);
- **type 2D** “Percorsi realizzati in integrazione con la scuola secondaria superiore” (non-classroom learning initiatives implemented in association with state upper secondary schools). These latter included remedial-tuition integrated in the school curriculum (according to Decree 257/00 art. 7a) and extra-tuition to upgrade curriculum (decree DPR 257/00 art. 7b)
- **type 2F** – LARSA labs for recovery and development of competences.

Types 2D and 2F were implemented in association with upper secondary schools, in compliance with Decree 257/00, art. 4 and 7, and Law 53/03, art. 2. The goal was both to promote personal growth (personal empowerment) of teenagers aged 14-18 and to ease mid-career change.

Monitoring was carried out by means of different Province-authored web-based questionnaires addressing both qualitative and quantitative issues (structure of learning initiative, HR used by the Job centre and by the school, degree of integration with school activities, parent-teacher relationships, care for immigrant students, credit validation and certification.)

Study coordinators of provincial initial VT centres completed the questionnaires. All the initial VT Centres welcomed the monitoring. The data below cover almost all of the approved and funded initiatives.

The monitoring phase was followed by a focus group involving teachers, educators and trainers involved in custom training initiatives in favour of non-native students.

**QUESTIONNAIRE DATA:**

**Type 2B initiatives**

Number of initiatives monitored: 13

Users (natives) 229

Non-natives users 131

IVT centres 11

Induction/transfer from school to IVT 67%

Job landing 33%

Number of initiatives targeted to non-natives 2

Number of non-native students 31

Number of students with no ISCED 1 certification ( middle school certification) 101

Duration of initiatives/programs: from 401 to 600 hours 67%

## Main content areas:

- Key competences (basic skills) : Italian language, digital skills, numeracy, history, geography, EFL, science.
- Key competences (soft skills) : personal awareness, decision making, gender equity awareness
- Vocational competences: technology, mechanics, electrical technology, plumbing, chef, bartender, advanced digital skills.

58% completed apprenticeship (hands-on experience/stage)

58% of initiatives was carried out in conjunction with a Centro Territoriale Permanente (CTP) (adult education centre), where preparatory program to ISCED 1 certification acquisition was provided (39% of participants amounting to 1010 learners had not ISCED 1 certification (middle school certification))

### **Type 2D initiatives** (*non-classroom learning initiatives implemented in association with upper secondary schools.*)

81 courses/initiatives were completed, targeting 1484 upper secondary graders, among whom 158 non-natives and 51 disabled, attending different grades, from “seconda superiore” (grade 10) to “quinta superiore” (year 13<sup>th</sup> – over grade 12).

22 IT agencies and 21 schools were involved.

The initiatives envisaged 50% of integration with school-based tuition (DPR

257/00 art. 7a) and 50% of extra-tuition (DPR 257/00 art. 7b).

67% of learners received tuition in the morning (regular school-based schedule); 38% received tuition in the afternoon (after-school schedule).

### **Type 2F initiatives**

*LARSA (Laboratori per il recupero e lo sviluppo degli apprendimenti). (LARSA labs for recovery and development of competences)*

#### **A) Activities**

Total number 102

General-purpose activities: 91

n. of users 1728

n. of non-natives 283

n. of disabled learners 12

Activities targeted to non-natives: 11

n. users 224

Remedial tuition and initiatives: 95

Mid-career change, career guidance activities: 7

Monitoring of integrated initiatives between school-based instruction and IVT 18/57

Initiatives compliant to regular school schedule 45%

Initiatives carried out in the afternoon 54%

IVT centres 22

Schools 50

- 91 initiatives involving 1728 aged 14-18 and attending grades 9 and 10 (biennium of Upper secondary school); among these, 283 are non-natives and 12 disabled.
- 11 initiatives were targeted to 224 non-natives.
- 93% of 102 initiatives were remedial courses (recovery of competences) aimed to help students continue their original curriculum. 7% was mid-career change mentoring. 45% of learners received tuition in the morning (regular school-based schedule); 55% received tuition in the afternoon (after-school schedule).

Type 2F involved 22 IT agencies and 50 schools (of which 7 implemented initiatives targeted to non-natives)

## B) Curriculum and learning group features

86% of IVT centres (33% totally adhered to and 52% partially adhered to) adhered to the guidelines included in the document authored by IVT department of Province of Milan “*Percorsi di accompagnamento nel processo di integrazione dei sistemi*” (accompanying measures in the integration of state-based and region-based training initiatives).

The majority of the staff found that coupling career-guidance and remedial teaching hyped motivation and commitment in difficult students.

The IVT agencies which did not adhere to the Provincial Guidelines (14%) designed their initiatives on the basis of the needs of the partner school. (example: ECDL prep courses or remedial EFL courses)

### Remedial courses in:

- Italian 29 %
- Numeracy 24 %
- Foreign language 19 %
- Technology 24 %
- Other 5 %

### Learning Groups in state-based school and region-based IVT :

- A single class: 22%
- Learning group within a single class 19%
- Mixed group of learners coming from different classes of the same school 50%
- Mixed group of learners coming from different classes of different schools within a single local network 8%
- Mixed group of learners coming from different schools not belonging to the local network 0%

### Non-natives:

- 28% from South America
- 24% from Africa
- 24% from Asia
- 24% from Eastern Europe

## C) Validation and recognition of credits

In case of career-guiding initiatives, 19% of IVT centres provided a “*skills and competences Certificate*” to each registered learner. To issue the certificate, 25% of centres uses the framework designed by the institutional agreement between Central State and Regions; 75% uses specific formats.

32% of instances provides a career counselor in charge of the accompanying measures prior to transfer to the new career. 68% of instances did not use a career counselor because:

- he/she was not deemed useful (7%)
- lack of funding (72%)

- lack of qualified/expert HR (7%)
- other reasons (7%)

#### D) Human resources

Educators 25 %  
 Tutors 29%  
 Educators for learners with special needs (disabled learners) 1 %  
 Co-tutor 5 % (tandem-teacher)  
 Studies Coordinator 28 %  
 Psychologist 6 %  
 Cultural mediators 1%  
 Other 6%

#### E) Relationship with schools

Relationships with schools were regulated by means of written agreements, to be renewed annually (90%). Schools were in charge of the following tasks:

- Planning 21 %
- Implementation 33 %
- Coordination 19 %
- Evaluation/monitoring 27 %

#### school staff involved:

school manager 30 %  
 career counselor 16 %  
 class coordinator 15%  
 classroom tutor 11 %  
 content teacher 31 %

school content teachers in charge of remedial tuition : 45 %  
 school content teachers partly in charge of remedial tuition : 41 %  
 remedial tuition was not delivered by the school content teachers: 14 %

#### F) Parental involvement – school-parents relationship

Parental involvement was obtained in 83% of instances via:

- mail 45 %
- periodic meetings 29%
- individual interviews 26 %

#### G) Initiatives outcomes

Approx two thirds of learners on remedial courses passed the grade. Learners on mid-career change and career planning also succeeded in passing the grade.

**Local LARSA : an organizational model of network for the management of mid-career changes across curricula, remedial initiatives and enhancement of competences in high achievers.**

*CISEM (Antonino Schemoz, Lidia Acerboni, Aurelio Agnusdei, Giuseppe Esposito, Ornella Nobili, Luisella Pizzetti, Claudio Savio – Cisem Researchers Area 1)*

**Abstract:**

This document appeared in the book: “Modelli di governance per lo sviluppo del sistema ISTRUZIONE-FORMAZIONE-LAVORO”(models for the governance of integrated schooling-IVT and work) published by Agenzia per la Formazione e il Lavoro. The book explains the rationale, methodology, organization and management of LARSA as a user-centred etherogeneous learning environment.

The paragraph describing the ideal physical infrastructure of the average LARSA (targeted on some 5000 users as an example) may be of help when designing a LARSA-based etherogeneous local network.

**Functions of a Local LARSA**

A Local LARSA is a strategic multifold and multitask structure with a significant potential to innovate the educational system and make it really learner-centred and respectful of each and everyone’s cognitive styles. A LARSA is not merely a set of learning places or environments, it is the actualization of a paradigm of learning as conceived by the reform (NDT: Moratti’s Reform 2003. Mrs Letizia Moratti held office as Minister of Education and Research in XIV Legislature in Italy)

**FUNCTIONS of a local LARSA:**

<p><b>Mid-career changes</b></p>	<p><b>Mid-career changes are made possible:</b></p> <p>from State-managed “Licei” (grammar schools) to Region-based/Province-based IVT and VET curricula. For years, trasfer/migration across curricula was made possible through special short courses called “passerelle”(gangplanks) purposely designed as the result of an agreement between the school and the recipient VT entity. Up to 2003, “passerelle” were not institutionalized within the school and VET system.</p> <p>The LARSA is a radically different evolution of the “passerelle” (gangplanks). It is dignified by its institutionalized status within the system, it grows steadily over time and given powerful potential as a learning environment by pooling up users in need of a consistent change in ther academic or vocational career.</p>
<p><b>Recupero (recovery) (refresh)</b></p>	<p>Helping students “Recover” knowledge or competences was quite common in schools and IVT/VET Centres in the past 10 years. However this help was not usually delivered using a network. More recent experiences saw the implementation of recovery actions/strategies through a series of networked entities. Such experiences have been refining their strategies in order to curb significantly school failures.</p>
<p><b>Enhancement of competences. (skill upgrading)</b></p>	<p>In Italy students with a reputation of being “good” tend to be neglected by their teachers. During parent-teacher meetings the teacher would say “your son/daughter is good, there’s nothing to discuss about him/her”. Neglecting good students on the basis of their ability to be autonomous may be detrimental to their motivation. Talent and super-skills must be adequately nurtured. This is the reason why LARSA should also cater for the needs of high/performers by engaging them in special projects with a view to promote empowerment and personal development.</p>
<p><b>Provision of extra-</b></p>	<p>Beyond core compulsory curricula, Italian schools may set up networks and join</p>

<b>curricular elective projects and activities.</b>	forces and resources to design a number of extra-curricular activities open to all of the students of the network. In this sense, LARSA provide a stimulating learning environment for shared elective activities and initiatives. It also provides a socializing environment where groups of students coming from different core curricula and different types of school gather together to benefit from further opportunities for meaningful learning experiences.
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### Basic structure of a local LARSA

A LARSA is a structure resulting from a network of already existing schools and IVT/VT Centres.

It should also have an organizational structure and a governance body.

#### Space needed :

- a teacher room (50 square metres)
- an archive room /office (50 square metres)
- a series of technologically equipped classrooms
- one or more special laboratories

Spaces and rooms must be contiguous or logically connected. The LARSA rooms must be autonomous from the rest of the school building where they are hosted.

A LARSA is best hosted in technologically advanced schools, where e/learning (web/based learning is customary) (basic tools needed: wi-fi, efficient LAN, LIMs, Media etc, notebooks etc).

Aside from the square metres needed for learning spaces, an addition of 40% should be counted for lavatories and another 10% to obtain the G surface needed for a basic LARSA.

A mean space of 7,90 square metre /student.

This means that each room would never contain as many students as an ordinary school classroom.

#### Potential users: 5000, would need, according to MD 18/12/75:

- classrooms (1.96 square metre per student)
- laboratories (from 1.89 s.m/per student x 1500 students, to 2,96 sm/student x 250 students)

#### Dimensions and basic equipment of a LARSA being used by 100 students at the same time (minimum standard: 5,40 square/metres x student)

It should be equipped with:

- 2 high-tech laboratories (dimensions: 50+25, 75, 75+25, 100, 100+25)
- lavatories

total= 200 square metres.

- two regular classrooms (100 square metres) which may be flexibly used
- one office/archive room (50 sm)

total Gross Surface: 539 square metres.

#### Data needed to plan a LARSA:

- maximum population of prospective users of the LARSA (all at the same time)
- number of rooms which can be shared within the host school
- types of the labs needed
- percentage of users attending traditional classroom lectures and percentage of users who, at the same time, would be engaged in lab-based activities.

## ISSUES :

### Variables and criteria to consider when designing a LARSA. Designing a toolkit for adjusting the core models to the actual environment. An example for the Province of Milan.

<b>Variable 1:</b>  <b>how many LARSA for how many users?</b>	Let's say a single LARSA must cater the needs for 5.000-6.000 students, counting both day and evening classes.
<b>Variable 2</b>  <b>Where should a LARSA be located?</b>	The basi criterion is that : where resources are most abundant, there can be a LARSA:  the variable to be taken into account are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• richness of curricula and programs available and number of potential users and students.</li> <li>• Percentages of students/residents in the Municipality</li> <li>• Rate of commuting trips (and number of commuters to Milan)</li> <li>• Efficiency and availability of public transport</li> <li>• Dropout rates and rates of failures in passing grades</li> <li>• Number of centres where the Sirio program is implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>Variable 3:</b>  <b>which school is suitable to host a LARSA?</b>	<u>Schools can host LARSAs</u> provided they are well equipped in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HR and technology (labs, infrastructures)</li> <li>- number of classrooms and halls</li> <li>- tech-knowhow and e-learning-based instructional designers</li> </ul> (the INDAGO Research group provided us with the data concerning the Province of Milan (2002) (CISEM – Statistical analysis group)  IVT/VT Centres in the Province have also been analyzed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sirio Projects (Sirio is an experimental flexible VT and Technical curriculum involving evening classes. Sirio curricula feature: fewer tuition hours than ordinary courses, personal tutoring, credit recognition from work experience and previous schooling.</li> <li>• the analysis considered only VT/IVT centres offering three-year experimental programs to 15-18 year olders (see agreement between Lombardy and Central Government).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If in the same Municipality a VT/IVT Centres has more than one branch, the centre counted as one (it's the case for the Municipality of Milan)</li> </ul> <p>- if in the same Ambito a IVT/VT centre has more than one branch, the centre counted as multiple. (see Clerici Foundation)</p>
<p><b>ANALISYS OF THE PROVINCE OF MILAN</b></p>	<p>In the Province of Milan, there are 132.959 learners/students enrolled in either state-owned or private upper secondary schools. 374 learners are enrolled in three-year IVT curricula hosted by Region-owned CFP (IVT/VT centres). Such three-year IVT or VT curricula have been institutionalized by an agreement between the Central Ministry of Education and Lombardy. Another 3.415 15-18 users are enrolled in VET centres. The total number of potential users of LARSA is therefore: 136.748</p> <p>Lombardy is divided in 11 “Ambiti” (districts)(according to Decree 112/98).</p> <p>For each Ambito the following data should be investigated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• geoeconomics</li> <li>• types of curricula and courses available</li> <li>• commuters and commuting rates</li> </ul> <p>the following data should also be considered, as in relation to the average in the Province of Milan as a whole, which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7,31% of students fail their grades (average)</li> <li>• 9,49% of first-year students fail their grades. (average).</li> </ul>