Try It Again, Sam!

Dropout Prevention and Integrated Tutelage

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<th>Project</th>
<th>2014-1-IT02-KA201-003609</th>
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<td>O1_A4_A5</td>
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<td>Practices for an In Depth Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Fondazione per la Scuola della Compagnia di San Paolo</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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**Title of the good practice**
The name of the project “Try it again, Sam!” is a sort of homage to the 1972 Herbert Ross movie “Play it again, Sam!” with Woody Allen. Probably, when the project started - more than 20 years ago- the reference was more easily understandable to the involved kids.

**Location/coverage**
This project is carried out in Turin, Piedmont (Italy). Leading organizations are:
- Fondazione per la Scuola San Paolo - http://www.fondazionescuola.it/
- Ufficio Pio, Compagnia San Paolo http://www.ufficiopio.it/
- Città di Torino - http://www.comune.torino.it/
- Ministero dell’Istruzione (Education Ministry)  http://www.istruzione.it

**Introduction: brief description of the best practice**
The project "Try it again, Sam!"(hereafter SAM) started in 1993 following a tragic event - a young guy died for drugs. This incident triggered an animated public debate on the risks related to dropping out of school. In this context, the SAM project was launched. SAM is an inter-institutional and integrated project (welfare mix) that has been developing and articulating itself through time in order to address well-known and emerging social and educational needs.

Today SAM is composed of two main programmes. One programme – the so-called *Integrated Tutelage* – is directed to students who dropped out of school (that is, students who left the school after had repeated more than one year of school); while another programme – *Dropout Prevention* – is directed to the students with temporary and reversible educational difficulties in order to prevent the dropping out from school. The second programme – *Dropout Prevention* – must be considered as a further development of the first and original programme of *Integrated Tutelage*. Actors involved in the SAM – teachers, volunteers, headmasters, social workers, psychologists - matured from their experiences the conviction that dropping out is an outcome of a long and insidious process triggered from common learning and relational difficulties. Therefore, providing timely responses to students with ordinary difficulties in social relationships and/or learning activities is an effective way to prevent the emergence of social problems much more difficult to address once they are emerged. 

*Dropout Prevention* is mainly directed to students who attend the first year of the junior high schools (26 schools during 2013-2014 school-year). This programme involves the whole class, even if specific attention is reserved to those students who are signaled as at risk of dropping out. Vulnerable students are identified during the first stage of interventions,that is specifically dedicated to observe students in order to understand their characteristics and needs as well as intra-group relationships. The choice of
involving the whole class in the interventions is based on the idea that any form of stigmatization or isolation create conditions favorable for dropping out of school. On the contrary, the likelihoods of a successful engagement at school are linked to the chance that vulnerable students feel that they belong to the class. Students are engaged in activities for at least 5 hours per week, comprising at least 2 hours in class. Activities can be various, but they have in common the labs/tutorial approach (*learning by doing approach*). They are orientated to:

- to strengthen the study methodology
- to strengthen the learning abilities
- to strengthen the relational abilities
- to develop a sense of self-esteem
- to learn Italian language
- to strengthen the motivation towards the studying
- to strengthen the relationships among students of a same classroom.

*Integrated Tutelage*, in turns, is a programme articulated in three lines of interventions.

1. *Integrated tutelage – first year*; it involves students aged between 14 and 16 years-old who had dropped out of junior high school.

2. *Integrated tutelage – second year*; it involves students aged between 15 and 17 years-old who through *Integrated Tutelage – first year* completed the junior high school but still need support in their transition to job or enrolling to a vocational school.

3. *CPIA* [Centro Provinciale Istruzione degli Adulti, a sort of second chance school]; a programme that involves students – mainly foreigners - aged between 16 and 18 years-old who have not yet completed junior high school.

Due to the idea that dropping out is an outcome of a long and insidious process, in the most recent years another programme has been added to two interventions briefly described above: the so-called *Social Tutoring* for curricular and extra-curricular activities (thereafter *Social Tutoring*). The Italian term used to label this programme is *Accompagnamento Solidale* that means provision of support in a framework where responsibilities and duties are shared among beneficiary and supporter. This programme aims to support students involved in the SAM in their educational needs out of school timetable in order to promote their social inclusion in those social context where they live. To this end, 48 different associations actively participate to *Social Tutoring*. Associations help student in doing homework, provide them leisure opportunities (e.g. theatre, music, writing) within a targeted educational framework. Moreover, associations support families and foster their engagement by organizing gatherings to discuss parental topics, and networking meetings. The rationale of this programme is that an investment on young guys is the most effective way to fight persistent social exclusion. Like the *Dropout Prevention*, also the programme *Social Tutoring* has to be considered a complementary extension of the original programme in order to make it more effective.
Both *Primary Prevention* and *Social Tutoring* are directed to a whole class and involve students inside and outside school. The programmes *Integrated tutelage* instead are directed to students who dropped out of junior high school. Their goal is to stimulate students to come back to school and complete junior high school, and to prevent the development of deviant behaviors once they get adults. To this end, students attend a specific school-schedule. This latter is composed of lectures and a vocational labs (every Friday) (respectively, 396 hours plus 80 hours). Other tutorials, labs and courses for the development of self-esteem complete the schedule (i.e. radio, 30h plus 20h; computer, 22.5h; English, 225.5; relational competences, 6h; socio-emotional education, 4h; safe amusement, 3 hours). Moreover, schedule includes psychological counseling (50h), camps, sports, encounters with families for their engagement (36h), support in the transition to high school once a student completes the *Integrated Tutelage* (15h).

The following figure – Figure 1- summarizes the different programmes of the SAM project.

**Fig. 1 - Chart of the PAS and its specific programmes**
Users, Stakeholders and Partners

As written above, SAM is an inter-institutional and integrated project to which public institutions - schools with their governance structures (i.e. school board and class-councils) local offices of ministry of education, local offices of social service - and non-profit organizations and associations operating in Turin – first and foremost Fondazione per la Scuola and Ufficio Pio (both independent and operating bodies of the non-profit foundation Compagnia di San Paolo), ONGs, oratories, associations of neighbor...) participate. All institutions cooperate to the planning and implementation of SAM programmes. Two main levels can be found in SAM's governance structure. One level is that of institutional promoters composed of SAM coordinators from any institution, Fondazione San Paolo, Municipal education division, ONGs. Another level is that of actors – e.g. teachers, educators, volunteers – implementing a specific programme in a given class.

Users are the students, accordingly their parents are considered stakeholders. Programmes are implemented by teachers, educators and volunteers. Psychologists and social workers are involved mainly as counsellor for students and their families as well as to plan and implement specific interventions.

More details concerning how the programmes work could be summarized as follows.

In Primary Prevention and Social Tutoring, headmasters of any school appoint a teacher as referent for the SAM project and, for any class there is a teacher appointed as coordinator for the implementation of the SAM programme. The activities to be implemented, manly educational labs, are discussed and planned by teachers and volunteers as well as presented and discussed with the class council. Labs are carried out mainly by volunteers and operators of non-profit organizations.

The Integrated Tutelage programmes are more structured and standardized with respect to the activities proposed and are carry out by teachers, educators and volunteers. However, complementary labs and courses (i.e. radio, sports...) are defined every year in order to target the needs of students.

Figure 2 displays the number of students who were involved by SAM project during the school-year 2013-14 – number of student by SAM programme.
Approach/Methodology (dim. C,D: analysis task)
Each programme is composed of various stages/modules: observation/planning, implementation, middle-term monitoring and final evaluation.

As a description of SAM makes apparent, participatory approach characterizes programmes in all their modules. Objectives and activities targeting pupils at risk are discussed by the wide set of actors (according to their roles) who participate to the SAM project. All actors directly involved in the programme sign an agreement specifying responsibilities and duties of all actor involved in the programme. That is true both at institutional level - entities promoting PAS - and operative structures - actors implementing it.

Various workshops were organized by the Fondazione per la Scuola della Compagnia di San Paolo – generally two or three every year. Workshops address teachers and coordinators of the Municipal social division and non-profit associations. Topics concern methodology for the cross-curricular planning, the relationship mentors-students and the role of families for a successful engagement at school and so on. Beside learning, through workshops, coordinators of SAM promote the sharing of experiences and the building of shared meaning among stakeholders and partners.

Success Factors (dim E: analysis task)
The most innovative trait of SAM is its rationale that can be summarized as follows. The educational role of the school obviously cannot be reduced to the task of transmitting knowledge. On the contrary, the school must provide students with useful opportunities and instruments to discover their own abilities and develop their capabilities. Accordingly, each student must be evaluated primarily with respect to own improvements (or failures).

In so doing, the school becomes a laboratory for social inclusion where all individuals are considered for their own characteristics. Consistent with its rationale, SAM adopts methods based on labs and tutorials through which every student can experiment his/her-self and discover his/her abilities and thereby develop his/her capabilities (learning by doing approach).

Given its rationale, SAM is strongly targeted: the interventions carried out are not standardized, rather teachers and volunteers plan them taking into account specific the needs of the beneficiaries (class and or student according to the programme. Being targeted is an intentional result of the project, which is reached by means of an observation period and participatory approach. Moreover, a participatory approach is useful to create and spread shared meanings among all actors involved in the project.

SAM is characterized by an active participation of associations and non-profits organizations. By mobilizing resources present in the city, it also promotes social inclusion.

Last but not least, until today SAM has relied on constant investments. Principal founder
is the Ufficio Pio - belonging to the Fondazione per la Scuola della Compagnia di San Paolo - that increased funds over the years in order to maintain and extend the project. Stable funds made the development of the project possible and also gave room to reflective processes.

Impact/Results of the BP (dim A: analysis task)
SAM is composed of different programmes with specific goals. Therefore various measures are used to evaluate its impact. The main measure to evaluate Primary Prevention is the failure rate per class. Data collected in the school-year 2013-14 shows that SAM reduced the failure rate in most of the schools involved in the project. For any school, failure rate of classes involved in SAM is lower than failure rate of classes not involved in the programme. Therefore, programme Primary Prevention is effective. Even though there were 4 schools (26 schools are participating to the project) where the failure rate for the classes involved in the project was larger than for those classes not involved in SAM. Results of programmes Integrated Tutelage are analyzed in the light of diverse measures. One is the number of students who complete Junior High School and so obtain the corresponding certification. Another measure is school-attendance rate during the school-year. Also parental engagement is used for the evaluation of impact. Results from Integrated Tutelage return a positive but mixed situation. Thanks to the programme students that had dropped out of school came back to school and attended lecture quite regularly. However, educators and teachers revealed that in the most recent years the needs of the beneficiaries of the programme have become more and more difficult to address. Another critical point is that some vocational schools where students attend vocational labs often host selected students – those who are more able to be inserted in a structured context as school. This selection practice, however, undermines SAM’s goals according to which all students must have the opportunities to develop capabilities and self-esteem as well as the feeling of being involved/included. Confronted with the challenge of students with increasing difficulties, Compagnia San Paolo is considering hiring educators and thereby increasing staff. Moreover, according to the suggestions received from educators, it is also considering some changes concerning the structure of the vocational laboratories.

The main impact of Social Tutoring is that 620 students were reached by supportive and non-intrusive actions outside of the school. With a minimum investment a wide number of students receive help for doing homework and a wide set of educational opportunities from associations operating in the neighborhood. Another important result of this programme is that associations and schools are starting to collaborate in a more coordinated manner.

Validation (dim A: analysis task)
SAM began in the 1993 and modified and extended itself through the years taking into
account experiences and new emerging needs. Thus, also by virtue of the fact that the Ufficio Pio doubled funds for the SAM project, stakeholders and partners decided to do an extraordinary monitoring, mainly focused on the programme *Primary Prevention*. The monitoring was carried out in 2013 by the Fondazione San Paolo. The main goal was the identification of the programme's strengths and weaknesses in order to develop changes and improvement.

Data collection included two surveys as well as semi and in-depth interviews. The surveys concerned a sample of volunteers (n=32; 44% of volunteers) and coordinators (n=23, 88% of coordinators). While, semi-structured interviews were done with a sample of teachers (n=168, 68% of teachers) and a sample the headmasters participated to the in-depth interviews. Surveys and interviews elicited information about subjective perceptions, attitudes, practices and difficulties experienced in carrying out the programme the SAM. These information were collected in 23 schools (the total of schools involved in SAM is 26).

Data analysis once again returns a mixed situation. According to the results, coordinators consider that teachers involved in the project cooperative in providing adequate information for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the programme. Teachers, in turn, express a positive evaluation of SAM and in general they agree with its rationale. However, data showed that the teaching method promoted by SAM (i.e labs, tutorials and workshops) remained under-utilized in the daily practices of teachers. Moreover, the results of this monitoring made apparent that there are difficulties concerning the integration and cooperation among teachers and volunteers. In many cases, these difficulties were originated by a misperception of the role of volunteers: some teachers considered volunteers as an additional support to control (or keep away from classroom) students with integration and or learning problems. This analysis finds support in some interviews with headmasters. Some headmasters declared that there is a part of teachers who refute the adoption of educational methods consistent with SAM's rationale and rarely participate to the formation events.

The Extra-ordinary monitoring represented a unique opportunity for developing deep and wide reflexive processes. By virtue of the results from the extra-ordinary monitoring, relevant changes have been elaborated both in procedures for the subscription of the agreement and in the formation of volunteers and teachers. These changes aim at securing that meanings and instruments are effectively understood and shared by all actors.

Moreover, Fondazione San Paolo has decided to invest greater resources for the improvement evaluation and validation processes with respect to methodological rigor. Also to this end, it participates to the current Erasmus+ project.

**Sustainability (dim B: analysis task)**

The social and economic sustainability of SAM is proved by the long history of this
The programme *Integrated Tutelage* was launched in 1994, while the *Primary Prevention* in 2000. An analysis of expenditures – see Figure 3 – shows that the programmes aiming at prevention have limited costs, especially in comparison with expected costs (individual and collective) generally associated to situations of social exclusion.

One element that favors the social and economic sustainability of this project is being carried out by mobilizing those associations that already operate actively in the city. This mobilization, in turn, potentially triggers further returns in terms of cost-efficiency. By virtue of SAM, various entities learn from each other and find more and more effective forms of collaboration and coordination.

### Figure 3 – Programme Expences

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Total expenditure</th>
<th>Contribution from Ufficio Pio</th>
<th>Contribution from City of Turin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Prevention</td>
<td>465</td>
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<td>€168,395,00</td>
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<td>Integrated Tutelage</td>
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<td>Specific Interventions</td>
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<td>Social Tutoring</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>€395,599,00</td>
<td>€299,599,00</td>
<td>€96,000,00</td>
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### Replicability or up-scaling (dim F: analysis task)

At the same time, the mobilization of institutions and organizations already operating in the municipal territories is one factor that makes the replicability of this project in other contexts possible. It is not necessary to create structures or resources *ex-novo*, it will be sufficient to learn organizing and exploiting those existing resources (consisting of information, expertise, practices) that entities already operating in a given specific reality accrue.

Moreover, as shown above, SAM is flexible. Its governance structures are designed to enable interventions targeted to beneficiaries. In fact any prospective activity and intervention is planned by teachers, educators and volunteers using participatory methodology. The fact that SAM does not utilize any sophisticated ITCs also contributes to the replicability of this project.

Being aware of these elements that favor the replicability of SAM, Fondazione San Paolo organized in 2012 a National conference to present and promote SAM’s approach and methods as a practice to fight the early school leavers phenomena in other contexts.
**Constraints (analysis task)**

However, some strengths of SAM - being flexible and the participatory approach – run the risk to become source of constraints. Using participatory approach, the motivation of every teacher and volunteer becomes a crucial factor for the success of any programme. As seen above, there are cases where teachers formally adhere to the programmes but substantially ignore its rationale in their practices. At the same time, the flexibility of SAM makes the spread of shared meanings more complex. Those critical elements have been clearly detected by the Fondazione per la Scuola della Compagnia di San Paolo also by virtue of the reflexive processes triggered from the extra-ordinary monitoring. Trying to confront these constraints, some important strategies have been elaborated. First, while the project maintains its flexibility with respect to the interventions that remain targeted to all beneficiary, procedures for adhering to the project have been structured more formally both at institutional and operative levels. At institutional level, Fondazione di Compagnia di San Paolo (with its institutions, such as Fondazione per la Scuola e Ufficio Pio) and City of Turin renewed the institutional agreement and updated the specification of roles and duties of each partner. The agreement was renewed and updated also at school level. Agreement was renewed and updated also at school level. To make more accountable the programme, Fondazione San Paolo has elaborated some toolkits for the planning of activities and interventions to fulfill by any work-group that implement the programme. In the framework of joint-efforts for the improvement the project, every school must make the decisional processes underlying the selection of classes and teachers involved in the programme as well as the specific interventions planned accountable.

**Conclusion/ Lessons learned**

SAM is a successful project, effective in contrasting the dropping out phenomenon and preventing social exclusion. As described, success factors are diverse: integration between public and non-profit entities, participatory approach, targeted interventions, regularity in the funds provision and, last but not least, reflexive attitude.

**URL of the BP and related Web site**

https://www.fondazioneescola.it/provaci-ancora-sam