

**EDU WORLD 2022**  
**Edu World International Conference Education Facing Contemporary World Issues**

**CURRICULAR APPROACH TO CONTENTS OF ADULTS’  
LEARNING AND EDUCATION**

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**Abstract**

This article addresses the issue of design, organization and implementation of adults’ learning and education contents from a curricular perspective in formal and non-formal education. It bases a concept and the structure of contents for adults’ learning and education related to the fields, profiles and types of formal and non-formal activities, in which adults are included. It identifies a set of principles and procedures specific to the organization of contents in the diversification of forms, technologies and purposes of adults’ training and education. Emphasis is placed on the organization and structuring of contents in relation to the form of educational process’ organization (formal-non-formal education), the type of learning and education (professionalization, lifelong vocational training, qualification, retraining, personal development, etc.); projected/expected outcomes, largely determined by the educational needs of adults. At the same time, the results of a study on the perception of different types of learning and education content of different categories of adults are described. The results of study provide useful information on the selection of learning content in relation to the needs of adults.

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*Keywords:* Adults’ education, educational curriculum, formal education, learning content, non-formal education

## 1. Introduction

Adults' learning and education is a global process that integrates all dimensions of personality and all social factors.

Adults' learning and education is an organized process, aimed at developing those skills that are necessary to meet personal needs and that create contexts for real freedom to think and act independently.

The dimensions of study are related to the following: the conceptual framework of adults' learning contents from a curricular perspective; structuring the contents on different fields; the system of outcomes for adults' learning; the learning needs of adults and their perception of different categories of contents. The contents in this study are viewed in a broad sense: education plans and curricula by fields, profiles, specialties.

## 2. Problem Statement

The existence of a contradiction in the theory and practice of adults' learning and education between the proposed learning offers and the needs of adults and their options has given rise to the following problem: how to select and reorganize contents for adults' learning and education according to their needs and labor market requirements.

The study focuses on a fundamental theoretical framework of well-known researchers: (Blândul, 2015; Cristea, 2010; Dandara et al., 2018; Dandara, 2020; Guțu & Vicol, 2014; Guțu, 2020; Guțu et al., 2018, Guțu et al., 2021, Guțu et al., 2022; Hinzen, 2018; Jinga & Istrate, 1998; Văideanu, 1998), but also on the experience of adults' learning and education in the Republic of Moldova and other states.

## 3. Research Questions

What significance is given to adults' learning content from a curricular perspective? How can the content of adults' learning be designed for a variety of needs and opportunities? How do the peculiarities of perceiving the contents by adults influence their selection in different contexts?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

Identifying adults' learning needs in the context of reconceptualising curricular content.

Objectives of the study:

- i. substantiation of a curricular concept regarding the adults' learning and education contents;
- ii. establishment of the design principles and staggering the contents in the curriculum for adults' learning and education;
- iii. classification of contents on areas of human activity in conceptual plane;
- iv. establishment of the perception of different categories of adults with reference to different types of contents in relation to individual learning needs.

In order to achieve the purpose and achieve the objectives of study, we assume the following hypothesis: we suppose that the curricular approach to adults' learning contents will provide new

opportunities for establishing the educational needs of adults, and identifying adults' learning needs will generate the selection of some contents appropriate to these needs.

## 5. Research Methods

The specificity and logic of study generated the application of the following research methods: analysis of theoretical approaches to adults' learning content, theoretical modelling, adults' questioning, interview..

## 6. Findings

In the specialty literature there are several approaches and definitions of the notion of "educational content". Usually, the contents of learning are traditionally expressed in knowledge or informative-cognitive values.

In Văideanu's (1998) vision, "learning contents" represent "a body of knowledge, know-hows (skills), values and attitudes, which are materialized in educational programs and are differentiated according to goals and objectives established by society through the educational institution".

The definition of "contents" given by Jinga and Istrate (1998) is also interesting. "The notion of "content" designates the "substance" on which and through which we act through didactic strategies to achieve a high level of performance in achieving the formulated objectives. This "substance" includes various information and tools involved in knowledge, such as personality dimensions, trained and formed through learning: intellectual abilities, skills, models, conceptions, attitudes".

At the current stage, the "learning content" is approached from the perspective of curriculum as its component, but also as a tool to achieve the expected outcomes (Cristea, 2010; Dandara et al., 2018; Guțu, 2020).

Establishing the contents - operation achievable in full accordance with the purposes, domain, profiles, types of respective activities, which is, in fact, the first level at which the educational content involves a certain concretization. In the curricular type design the breakdown by types of activities is based on the main components accumulated by the social/professional/individual experience:

- i. scientific knowledge by fields, profiles/types of activities;
- ii. fundamental types of professional-non-professional activity;
- iii. fields that address affectivity (art): music, choreography, painting, etc.;
- iv. fields that address psychomotor skills (sports).

The establishment of contents - made in full accordance with the defined purposes for a clearly established period - is determined by the following:

- i. cutting into types of activities, such as vocational training activities or non-vocational/personal training activities - in their capacity as bodies of knowledge focused on certain basic concepts;
- ii. national and universal culture, context and cultural productions, in general, way of life, religious beliefs, social attitudes, etc.; although these aspects are not part of the type of activity and can differ greatly from one country to another, from one region of the world to another,

from one social group to another, they must be integrated as contents' elements or as themes of study in the curriculum, including in the contextual ones;

- iii. social/vocational/non-professional training structures and institutions that allow the individual to understand and interpret the situations in which he/she is placed and that guide, at the same time, his/her social/professional/individual behaviors;
- iv. Individual, social and professional interests and needs.

According to the specialized literature, most of these determinants can intervene in conjugation. In establishing the contents, it is mainly about the determinants derived from the current sciences, from the professional and individual experiences.

In the context of these determinants, the principles of designing and staggering the educational contents in the curriculum for adults' learning and education in formal and non-formal plan are also established. At the same time, the principles are deduced from the structure of social and professional experiences, as specific to the fields of human activity, but also from the theoretical framework of the educational contents viewed from the curricular perspective (Guțu et al., 2018, Guțu et al., 2020).

In our view, the principles of contents' design and staggering in the structure of the adults' learning curriculum can be formulated as follows (Table 1):

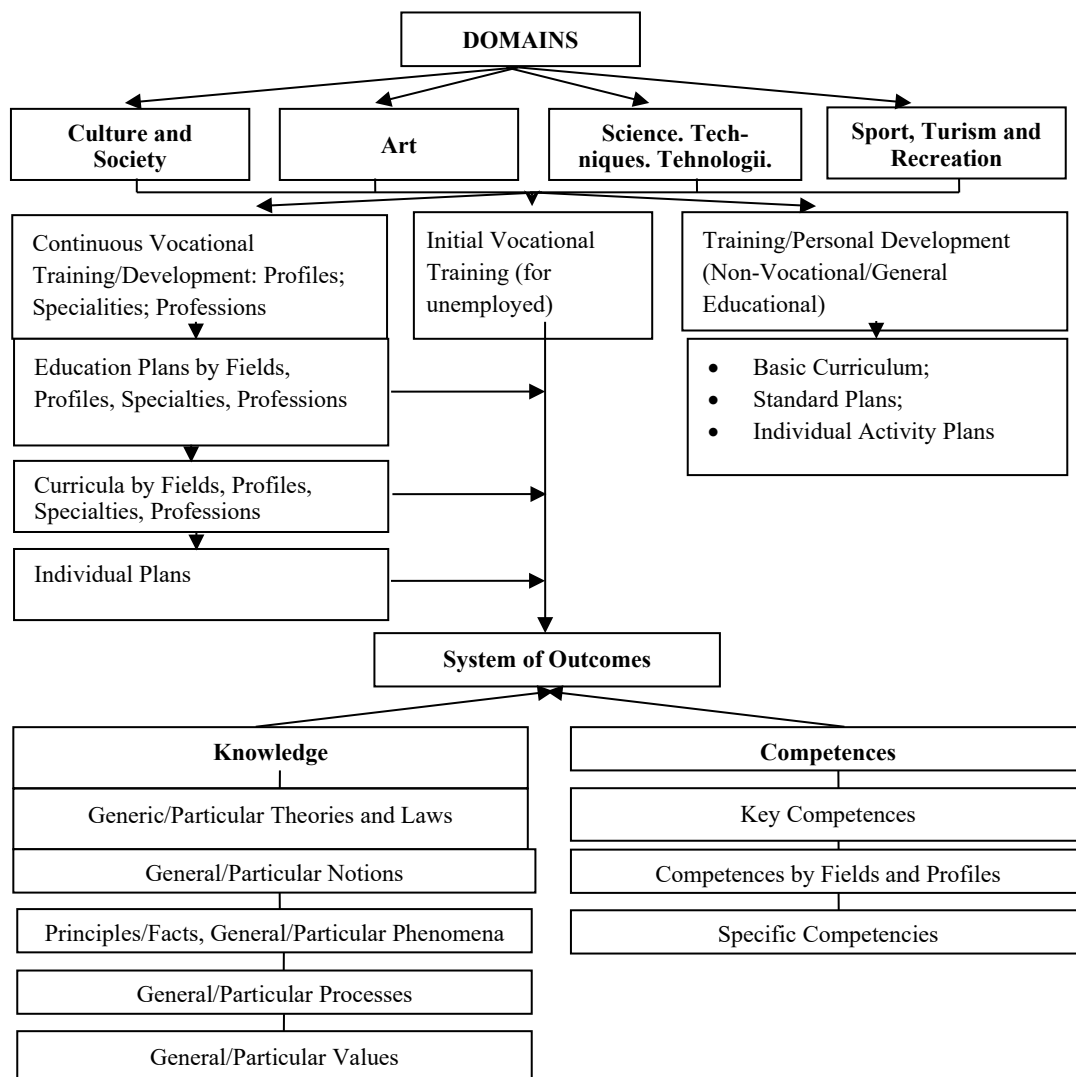
**Table 1.** Principles of Contents' Design and Staggering in Adults' Training and Education Curriculum (Țurcanu, 2021b)

<b>Principles of Contents' Design</b>	<b>Principles of Contents' Staggering</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the principle of achieving, through the educational content, the expected outcomes, specific to adults' learning and education;</li> <li>• the principle of coherence and balance between the various components of educational content: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values;</li> <li>• the principle of scientific content, made essential and relevant to the individual needs of adults in vocational and non-professional plane (of general culture);</li> <li>• the principle of complexity and contextuality of educational content: correlated with the intended outcomes;                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the principle of correlating the projected knowledge and skills with the particularities of the adult teaching-learning-assessment process;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• the principle of knowledge's validity for its usefulness in the general formation of adult's personality and its professional development;                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the principle of transdisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, intradisciplinarity in relation to the conceptual paradigm of adults' learning and education;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• the principle of flexibility (the possibility of grouping and regrouping content units depending on specific contexts and diversified forms of education).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the principle of staging according to the complexity of the content units (subject segmentation);</li> <li>• the principle of delimitation (each of the parties must represent a unit);                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the principle of progressive and contextual/situational difficulty;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• the principle of linking new and old information with the dominance of information generated by the educational needs and opportunities of adults;</li> <li>• the principle of coordination (establishing the link between knowledge, skills and types of activities, on the one hand, and between types of activities and society/labor market, on the other hand);</li> <li>• the principle of accentuation (revealing the most significant part of the contents);</li> <li>• the principle of didactic values (organizing the content according to the finalities, the teaching-learning methods, the didactic means, etc.);</li> <li>• the principle of complexity and variability of adults' learning/training activities.</li> </ul>

The content of adults' learning and education must be adjusted for extremely rapid changes in economic/professional and social life. From this perspective, the relevance of contents within the various fields, profiles and types of activity can be ensured by:

- i. clear and explicit definition of the competences assumed for the adults' learning system, which allows the evaluation of their compatibility with the interests of society, professional and individual outcomes;
- ii. better knowledge of the social/professional environment, of the representative cultural traditions and with recognized training value;
- iii. establishment of contents aimed at the participation of community and personality in the efforts of economic development and in acquiring favourable behaviours for the protection of life and active participation of adults in vocational and/or non-vocational activities (personal training).

Therefore, the approach of adults' learning and education contents from the curricular perspective can be presented in a generalizing plane in Figure 1 (Guțu et al., 2021; Guțu et al., 2022).



**Figure 1.** Content of Adults' Learning and Education in Educational Curriculum's Structure (Țurcanu, 2021a)

### 6.1. The results of study regarding the perception of contents by adults involved in various forms of learning and education

In the context of the approached problem, we carried out a study on the perception and request by adults of certain contents, based on which learning and education are organized (or can be organized).

The express study was carried out on the basis of five groups/lots of respondents: teachers in lifelong vocational training courses; young people trained in a professions; young people without a qualification; unemployed; retirees (who have left their professional activity).

The research tools were a questionnaire and an interview with the respondents. The aim was to obtain information on the request for one or more training courses and the level of satisfaction of the needs, options, personal interests through the existing effects of training/development of adults.

It is important to note that in the Republic of Moldova there are no adult education institutions (modeled on popular universities or specialized centres) that would provide services for all categories of adults and in various fields formally and informally on the dimensions of professionalism and general culture training.

**Table 2.** Generalized Results of Express Study Regarding Perception of Educational Content by Adults

No. Crt.	Lots of Respondents	Courses Required for Life-Long Education, %	Courses Required for Retraining, %	Offers of Life-Long Vocational/Non-Vocational Training Provide Your Needs, %	Options for One or Another Domain, %
1.	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specialized courses – 80%</li> <li>general courses – 40%</li> <li>optional courses – 30%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>retraining courses – 30%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides – 60%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational training – 90%;</li> <li>general culture training – 60%</li> </ul>
2.	Young people trained for profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specialized courses – 60%</li> <li>general courses – 50%</li> <li>optional courses – 55%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>retraining courses – 70%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides – 20%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational training:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– technology;</li> <li>– economy;</li> <li>– construction;</li> <li>– services.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.	Young people without qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>qualification courses – 90%</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides – 5%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational training:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– technology;</li> <li>– economy;</li> <li>– construction;</li> <li>– services.</li> </ul> </li> <li>life-long non-vocational training</li> </ul>
4.	Unemployed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>qualification courses – 40%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>retraining courses – 60%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides – 3%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professional fields</li> <li>retraining</li> </ul>
5.	Retired people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>qualification courses – 2%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>retraining courses – 10%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides – 2%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development of general culture                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– art/culture – 15%</li> <li>– social sciences – 20%</li> <li>– sports – 10%</li> <li>– technology/ computer science – 40%</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The analysis of data in Table 2 allows us to find the following: there is a significant difference in the perception of educational contents (their typologies), between teachers, young people trained in a

profession and young people without a qualification and the unemployed. In this sense, teachers mostly consciously choose lifelong education courses in the field of their specialty, but also in some cases choose retraining courses (usually teachers in rural areas).

At the same time, most unqualified young people (90%) want to obtain a qualification, but without clearly orienting themselves in the existing offers on the labor market. Unemployed people opt for retraining courses, mostly related to their specialty, previous or related occupation.

It should be noted that retirees also opt for non-formal courses/activities in various fields, but most indicate that they do not know the existing options and offers in this regard.

However, a large number of retirees do not see the need to participate in activities related to the formation of general culture, to satisfy their previous interests, etc.

## 7. Conclusions

The content for adults' learning and education is approached from the following perspectives: cultural heritage, social, professional and individual experience; types of human activities; the system of contemporary sciences.

In this context, the content of adults' learning and education can be focused on the fields of Culture and Society; Art; Science, Techniques, Technologies and Sports, Tourism and Leisure. Each of these areas outlines a specific content system, reflected in the profiles and types of vocational and non-vocational development activities of adults in formal and/or non-formal planes.

The approach of contents from the curricular perspective ensures, on the one hand, the restriction by deepening the reference sphere of the concept for learning and education of adults to the specific psycho-pedagogical values. On the other hand, the curricular perspective supports the functional extension of the content of adults' learning that aims directly or indirectly to achieve training, qualitative effects on the directions of initial and continuous professional training of adults, but also on the direction of personal development/general culture training.

The content of adults' learning and education in relation to the formal and/ or non-formal curriculum creates premises for the realization of individual/individualized programs that valorize on the effects of education generated by the social and professional environment.

The analysis of data on the perception by adults of different educational content allows us to note what the learning needs of different categories of adults are, and also to establish the forms of training process' organization.

In this sense, if the adult chooses to form the general culture in the field of Art, then the trainer will materialize his/her option and will select appropriate content units and will organize it in a procedural framework oriented to the adult's expectations, involving him/her in active learning.

This curricular perspective gives the content of adults' learning and education a character, equally, stable and dynamic: stable – through the educational values of maximum training efficiency; dynamics – through specifications and concretizations in relation to the fields, profiles, directions of learning and education of adults in relation to their needs, interests, skills, opportunities.

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