PECULIARITIES OF MANAGING CURRICULUM FOR
NON-FORMAL LEARNING AND EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Vladimir GUȚU

Moldova State University

This article tries to solve a problem which is current and opportune for the development of educational sector, in general, and also for the creation of conditions for adult learning and education. The emphasis is done on substantiating a managerial and pedagogical concept for designing and implementing the non-formal curriculum. The needs, theoretical approaches and methodology for designing the basic curriculum and curricula for training profiles and different types of activities specific to these profiles are described in detail. At the same time, the structure and description of the constituent components of non-formal curriculum are proposed. It also conceptualized a model for monitoring the non-formal curriculum in various forms of operation.

Keywords: non-formal education, adult education, basic curriculum, curriculum for profiles, curriculum for training activities, curriculum design, curriculum implementation, curriculum monitoring, curriculum management.

PARTICULARITĂȚILE MANAGEMENTULUI CURRICULUMULUI
PENTRU ÎNVĂȚAREA ȘI EDUCAȚIA NONFORMALĂ A ADULȚILOR

În articol se întreprinde o încercare de a rezolva o problemă actuală și oportună pentru dezvoltarea sectorului educațional, în genere, dar și pentru crearea unor condiții de învățare și educație a adulților. Accentul este pus pe fundamentarea unui concept managerial și pedagogic de proiectare și implementare a curriculumului nonformal. Pe larg sunt descrise nevoile, demersurile teoretice și metodologie de proiectare a curriculumului de bază și a curricula pe profiluri de formare și diferite tipuri de activități specifice acestor profiluri. Totodată, se propune structura și descrierea componentelor constituente ale curriculumului nonfomal. Este conceptualizat și un model de monitorizare a curriculumului nonformal în diferite forme de funcționare.

Cuvinte-cheie: educație nonformală, educația adulților, curriculum de bază, curriculum pe profiluri, curriculum pe activități de formare, proiectarea curriculumului, implementarea curriculumului, monitorizarea curriculumului, managementul curriculumului.

Introduction

The management of curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults has as object of action the pedagogical/ methodological and the organizational aspect. For non-formal education, the curriculum, on the one hand, is an expression of general curriculum theory, and, on the other hand, an expression of the substance and experiences of non-formal adult education.

From the perspective of pedagogy, we focus on the conceptualization and design of the curriculum for non-formal adult learning and education, and from the organizational perspective - on the implementation and monitoring of that curriculum.

Prerequisites for designing curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults*

The need to design a curriculum for non-formal adult learning and education is determined by several factors: lack of a curriculum concept for non-formal adult learning and education; lack of more qualitative curricular pieces/ products for non-formal adult learning and education (in areas that provide for certain curricular products); ensurance of the continuity between the formal and non-formal curriculum; ensurance of the functionality of domains and profiles of non-formal adult education; regulation and management of the process of non-formal adult education, including ensurance of the quality of results obtained.

---

* In this article, the lifelong vocational training of adults is seen as an integral part of formal and non-formal education, focusing on the trend of rapprochement and interconnection of the two forms of education.

Curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults: conceptual framework

The concept of *Curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults* focuses on the following theoretical provisions:

✓ *The curriculum as action* is a set of learning and education experiences, offered by institutions, organizations, NGOs, etc., which provide educational services in various forms. From this definition no educational act, regardless of form, content, didactic/educational strategies, finalities cannot take place without being based on a formal, non-formal or hidden curriculum.

✓ *The curriculum as system* is approached as a concept, as a content, as a process, as a product and as an outcome. This approach to the curriculum is also the foundation of *the Curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults*. In this regard, the design of the curriculum for non-formal adult learning based on that approach will reflect the specifics and particularities of adult learning and education, primarily with regard to the concept of curriculum, curriculum typology, design and operation models.

Table 1

Some peculiarities of *Curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults* in relation to the form and modalities of manifestation

No	Forms and Directions for Non-Formal Education of Adults	Type and Aspects Specific for Educational Curriculum
1.	Medium and long-term continuous vocational training courses (is carried out in specialized institutions and on the basis of accredited programs)	• The curriculum has an official character and includes all the specific components of a formal educational curriculum. • Involves a set of curricular products: *education plan; study program, methodological guides,* etc.
2.	Short-term continuous vocational training: *webinars, seminars, trainings, consultations,* etc.	• The curriculum is non-formal in nature and usually includes contentual and procedural aspects. • It usually involves an activity plan (a program, the respective forms and modalities of activity). • Scenarios for carrying out the activities.
3.	Circle within a field and/or profile of vocational training and/or of general culture training	• Circle's activity plan. • Program for carrying out activities. • Methodological guides. • Scenarios for carrying out the activities.
4.	Interest clubs, professional associations, NGOs, etc.	• Activity plans. • Individual activity plans. • Scenarios for carrying out the activities.
5.	On-the-job training	• Activity plans. • Scenarios for carrying out the activities.
6.	Sports sections	• Activity plans. • Individual activity plans.
7.	Other areas of training	• Curriculum products determined by context.

Curriculum design approaches for non-formal learning and education of adults

The design of any curricular framework, including the non-formal one, involves the following steps: diagnosing/ evaluation of the current state of formal, non-formal or hidden curriculum for adult education; conceptualization of the future curriculum for adult education: *establishing the concept, model, principles, methodology itself*, that must be substantiated; designing the curriculum for adult education in relation to the established concept.

The specificity of curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults is determined by the particularities and specifics of this form of education. It should be noted that out of the three basic criteria that are characteristic of general forms of education (intentional/official, structured, certified), non-formal education, as a rule, meets the first two criteria – intentional and structured. In this sense, as mentioned above, non-formal learning and education, including adult education, cannot be organized outside of an educational curriculum, understood as a *concept, content, process, purpose* and *product* in various forms of functioning (formal, non-formal or hidden).
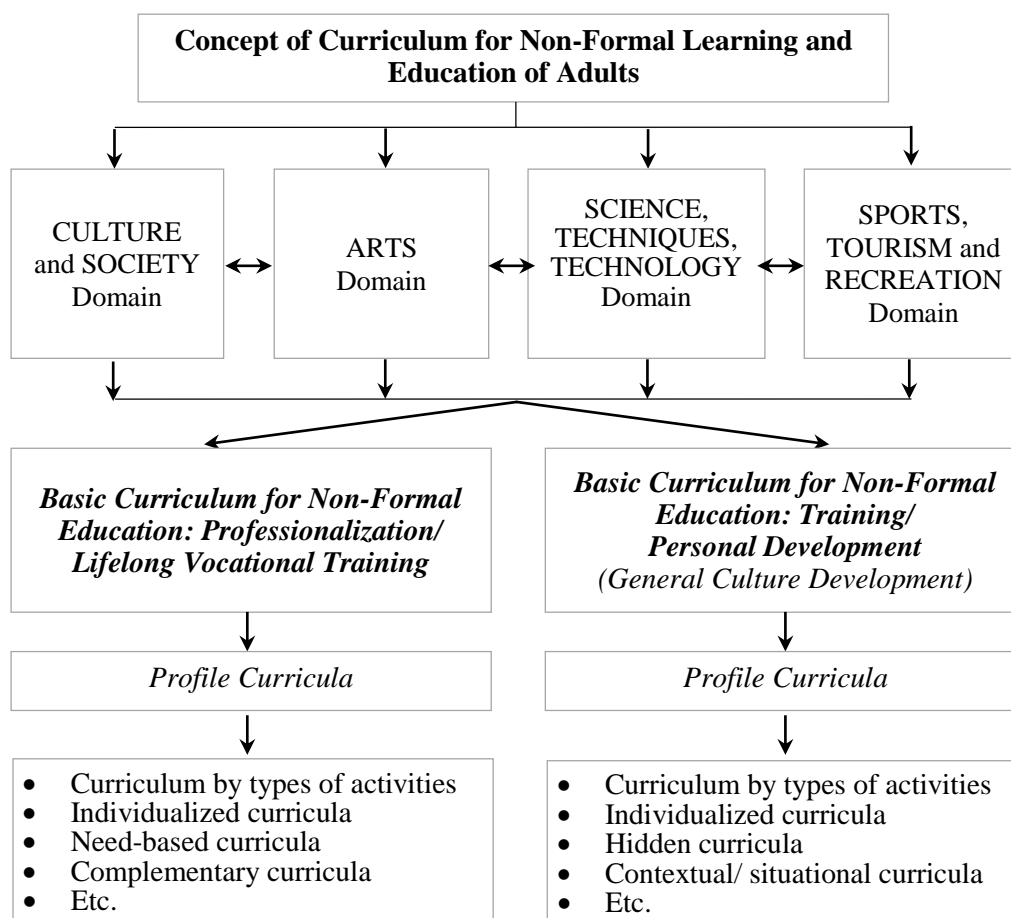
Fig.1. Concept of *Curriculum for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults*.

The curriculum for non-formal adult learning and education is largely contextual/ situational, with the dominance of variable components in terms of *content, purposes, processes*. At the same time, within some profiles and domains of training there may be invariable components – for example, *conceptual benchmarks, competence system, forms of learning*, etc.

The concept of curriculum for non-formal adult learning and education is consistent with the provisions of *the National Curriculum Reference Framework* [1], *Reference Framework of Out-of-school Education and Learning in the Republic of Moldova* [2] and can be presented schematically (*see* Fig.1).

Within this concept, *the Basic Curriculum: Competence System for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults* is an educational policy document designed in an inter- and trans-disciplinary manner.

The designing of *the Basic Curriculum: A Competence System for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults* focuses on the following guidelines:

- correlation with the current dynamics and needs generated by the changes at the level of society and, particularly, at the level of labor market;
- correlation with the needs, interests, skills, opportunities of adults from the perspective of lifelong professionalization and personal development;
- correlation with the specifics and training valencies of the domains, professional and personal training profiles;
- correlation with the key competences (Brussels, 2018) and the competences in formal education, in order to ensure the continuity and development of the personality of those who learn professionally and personally;
- correlation with those traditions and experiences of the autonomous non-formal education system that are relevant in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

The Basic Curriculum: Competence System for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults will include the following components: *preliminaries; key/transversal competences; general competences for the domains of professionalization and personal development; competences specific to the profiles and types of professionalization and personal development activities; competence taxonomy.*

The timeliness of elaborating *the Basic Curriculum: Competence System for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults,* which would establish clear guidelines on educational purposes, is determined by several factors:

- the need to create a mechanism that would regulate and ensure the coherence of non-formal adult learning and education in the areas and profiles of lifelong vocational training and personal development;
- the need to create a diversified teleological framework for non-formal adult learning and education;
- the need to link the system of goals for non-formal adult education to key competences for lifelong learning (Brussels, 2018);
- the need to ensure cohesion between different categories of competences, but also those of sustainable development.

Therefore, *the Basic Curriculum: Competence System for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults* aims to ensure that non-formal adult learning and education are linked to the competences-based learning paradigm - a new framework for educational outcomes.

Competence in *the Basic Curriculum* is seen as an integrated system of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, acquired, trained and developed through learning, the mobilization of which allows the identification and solving of different problems in various contexts and situations [3, p.19].

This definition is coherent with the basic characteristics of competence formulated by J.Henry and V.Cormier [4]:

- *it is complex* – integrates knowledge, strategies, skills, attitudes in a complex process of manifestations; mobilizes cyclically and repeatedly, in increasingly complex contexts, a process that requires all its components simultaneously, so competence develops gradually;
- *it is relative* – although it is an outcome of education, competence never obtains a final formula, developing continuously throughout life;
- *it is potential* – unlike a performance, which can be measured or ascertained and refers to the past or present, competence can be designed and evaluated, the possibility of its mobilization generating different performances in the future, in different contexts of learning and independent education;
- *it is exercised in a certain situation* – it develops gradually by changing the educational situations;
- *it is transferable* - it is applied in new situations (changing the means or improving the procedures);
- *it is acknowledged and associated with needs and intentions* – it includes the idea of outcome and can be managed by the one who possesses it, thus advancing in metacognition (socratic self-knowledge itself) [5, p.5-6].

The dominant component of *the Basic Curriculum: Competence System for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults* is *the key competences for lifelong learning*.

Key competences are those competences that all citizens need for personal fulfillment and development, employment, social inclusion, a sustainable lifestyle, a successful life in peaceful societies, a life management that takes into account health and active citizenship issues. They are developed in the perspective of lifelong learning, from early childhood to adulthood, through formal, non-formal and informal learning in all contexts, including family, school, workplace, neighborhood and other communities.

All key competences are considered equally important; each of them contributes to a successful life in society. Competences can be applied in different contexts and in different combinations. They overlap and intertwine; essential aspects in one domain can support competences in another area. Skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, analytical skills, creativity skills and intercultural skills are an integral part of key competences (Council of Europe Recommendations on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, Brussels, 22 May 2018) [6, p.9-10].

The competencies specific to the domains and profiles of training/professional development and personal development (general culture training) are deduced from the key competences (Brussels, 2018) from the specifics of activities within the respective areas and profiles, as well as from the professionalization and personal development needs within these profiles.

This category of competences is materialized and gradually presented in the process of designing and carrying out professionalization and personal development activities.

If *the Basic Curriculum: Competence System for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults* includes only the domains, profiles, key competences and competences specific to the domains and profiles, then *the Curriculum by profiles and types of professional and/or personal development activities* may also include the components: administration, concept, content, process and result.

In this sense, the requirements of curriculum design require the implementation of pedagogical actions located in an explicit hierarchical order:

- clear substantiation of the profile curriculum conception with the type of activities (*focus on the learner, focus on competences, focus on context, focus on needs*);
- clear definition of competences in terms of outcomes, engaged in selecting and ordering the contents according to the formative potential, fully exploitable in the context of psychological age, but also in relation to the interest, skills, valoric orientations of adults;
- division of the subject matter into large modules/content units, applicable in the sense of differentiated, individualized, contextual, situational education;
- suggestion of optional methodological solutions in different situations of non-formal education within the respective profiles.

The articulation of these approaches confers the curriculum on profiles and types of legitimated pedagogical activities, proven by qualities reflected at the level of the following principles of curriculum design:

1. Positive training relevance (through choosing the contextual, essential contents, now and in the future in the perspective of satisfying the opportunities and interests of the trainees).
2. Adaptable sequencing at the level of the relationship between the specifics of the profile/type of activity and the particularities of non-formal education within different fields and profiles.
3. Internal consistency (through the appropriate correlation of all curricular elements, but also the inter- and multidisciplinary correlation).
4. Pedagogical openness to different variants and contexts of adult non-formal learning and education.

Table 2

Components of Curriculum for Non-Formal Learning and Education of Adults
by Profiles and Types of Activities

No	Component	Description of Component
1.	*Conceptual*	• Definition and description of the Curriculum's particularities. • Focus on psychocentric and sociocentric approach. • Focus on the needs of learners, centering on the learner. • Focus on competences. • Focus on contexts/situations.
2.	*Contentual*	• Content units/themes specific to the profile and type of activity for adults. • Linear, concentric or situational organization of contents.
3.	*Procedural*	• Forms of carrying out learning and education activities. • Teaching strategies and methods, including assessment.
4.	*Teleological*	• Profile specific competences. • Competences specific to the type of activity. • Competences – preacquisition (competence units).
5.	*Administrative*	• Number of hours. • Number of themes. • Distribution in time.

Given a wide variety of contexts, forms of learning and education, outcomes, time reserved for one activity or another, it is difficult to develop a single system of curricular products that would ensure and manage the process of adult learning and education in various forms and, above all, through non-formal education.

In this sense, we can talk about a curriculum as a concept and as a process, as well as as a macrooutcome, but the curriculum as a product will be determined by each context and the type of adult's education. Lifelong vocational training (professionalization, qualification, retraining, etc.), as a rule, is organized on the basis of formal curricular documents, officially approved by the competent structures, on the other hand, lifelong vocational training (at the working place, the participation in short seminars, interest internships, etc.) are organized based on contextual, situational, non-formal curricula.

Suggestions for designing some components of the curriculum on profiles and types of activities of non-formal adult education (if the profile or type of activity provides for the development of a curricular product – study program).

Preliminaries component: this component will focus on the presentation of general information on the following: the status and functions of the document; the general concept and pecularities of the document; beneficiaries of the document and modalities of application; other information.

Administration of Activities focuses on the managerial aspect of the curricular organization: *the profile, the topicality, the number of hours* for the respective activity.

Competence System component: the curriculum will include *the competences specific to the profile* and *the competences specific to the types of activity*, formulated in relation to those specific to the profile, but also in relation to one or another taxonomy of competences.

In accordance with the pecularities of training/gradual development and in stages of the trainees' competences, it is opportune to introduce in the curriculum the subcomponent of *Competence Units*/*Pre-Acquisition* as "building material" for the competences specific to the profile and type of activity. The design of competence units is done in correlation with the content units/modules and in relation to one or another competence taxonomy.

In the curriculum on types of activities, there can be introduced the ***Learning/Education Units*** component, which can be presented in the table form (*see* Table 3).

Table 3

Structure of Learning Unit in Curricular Framework

No	Competence Units/ Pre-Acquisitions	Content Units	Activities
1.	• Identification • Explanation • Definition • Argumentation • Elaboration • Interpretation	*Example:* Topic "Efficient Communication in Organizational Framework"	*Example:* Training

Content Units component: the curriculum component on types of *Content Units* activities indicates the concrete way, the means by help of which the curricular goals can be achieved through organizing learning/education activities.

The classic notion of "content" designates "the substance" on which and through which it is acted through educational didactic strategies, in order to reach an efficient level in the achievement of projected outcomes.

The functional definition of the content is more useful for the educational action, which is subordinated and led by "outcomes ". In this sense, the content is understood as the totality of information transformed into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, competences.

In relation to the traditional structure of the content, the current conceptual content of non-formal learning and education for adults includes both significant changes in traditional components, especially knowledge, and the introduction of current components and terms for adults. Thus, the important components of the content are the following: cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal strategies of socio-moral and professional nature.

It is also worth mentioning that, at present, the structure of contents is placed in the context of curriculum theory, being dependent on the type of curriculum in which the contents are integrated and the nature of learning experiences that the curriculum establishes.

Curricular integration of contents is the most important paradigm shift in content selection, typology and organization [7].

In this case, an explanation is required regarding the identification and design of the content units in the structure of curriculum on types of educational activities. First, the content unit must reflect the knowledge structure; secondly, the content units must reflect the specifics of that profile, and thirdly, the content unit must be attractive and current for adults.

Methodological Suggestions component: the recommendations regarding this component are related to the following: the forms of organization and implementation of non-formal learning and education for adults; specific educational strategies for training skills in a concrete profile and in specific types of activities.

The key idea of the proposed methodology for the non-formal curriculum is to promote learner-centered education as an individual knowledge-building activity; the subject is informed, selects, appreciates, analyzes, compares, classifies, transfers, discovers, solves, concludes, etc. In other words, the adult makes constructivist approaches insofar as the trainer ensures that the educational process is not limited to providing information (*what to learn*), but also to supporting/ guiding the subjects to learn (*how to learn*) and to practising thinking, developing the competences of superior, active, logical, analytical, critical thinking, but also the professional and general culture.

Therefore, non-formal learning and education for adults in specific types of activities will focus on the following strategies: expository strategies; illustrative-explanatory teaching strategies; heuristic strategies; algorithmic strategies; cooperative learning strategies; strategies focused on research action; problematized strategies [8].

Another set of curricular products belongs to the personalized ones: individualized educational projects, contextual/ situational scenarios determined by the form of organization, outcomes, group of adults, etc.*

Implementation and monitoring of the curriculum for non-formal learning and educationo of adults

The methodology of implementing and monitoring the curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults focuses on two dimensions: *managerial* and *pedagogical*.

Specific strategies and tools are applied within each dimension:

The managerial dimension involves: creating motivational and organizational conditions regarding the implementation and monitoring of the curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults; organizing the training of human resources regarding the implementation and monitoring of the curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults; organizing the actual implementation and monitoring of the curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults.

The pedagogical dimension involves: continuous training of trainers in order to implement and monitor the non-formal curriculum; elaboration of the system of indicators regarding the efficiency of the implementation of non-formal curriculum and, in particular, of the curricular documents, etc.

The implementation and monitoring of the curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults is determined by a system of conditions:

The first condition is to create the motivational framework for all participants involved in the implementation and monitoring of the non-formal curriculum: professional growth of trainers; participation in seminars and specially organized trainings; increasing the status and the possibility to obtain the position of local/national trainer, etc.

The second condition relates to the organizational aspect of the curriculum implementation process for non-formal learning and education of adults. This aspect covers three levels: national, district/municipal and institutional [9].

It should be noted that the implementation and monitoring of the non-formal curriculum is a multifaceted, complex and difficult process due to the diversity of structures, forms, types of learning and non-formal education of adults.

In this sense, the given process can be directed on three aspects. The first aspect is the implementation and monitoring of the non-formal curriculum in adult learning and education institutions and other structures, which operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova (MER). The second aspect is the implementation and monitoring of the non-formal curriculum in institutions

---

* The approach of the contextual/situational curriculum, personalized and hidden, will be the subject of other articles.

and structures, which operate under the auspices of other ministries or structures (federations, associations, private clubs, NGOs, etc.). The third aspect is related to the individualization and self-management of the implementation process for monitoring the non-formal, situational, hidden curriculum, oriented to an operational activity (to an obvious result).

In this context, the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova has the function of developing and promoting policies in the field of design, implementation and monitoring of non-formal curriculum in all institutions and structures of learning and education for adults, regardless of their status and membership.

The Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova will involve in the process of implementation and monitoring of the non-formal curriculum the respective institutions under its subordination: the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, District/Municipal Education Directorates; Republican Center for Children and Youth from Chisinau; Institute of Educational Sciences from Chisinau; university departments with pedagogical profile.

The implementation of the curriculum involves several types of managerial activities:*[3]
- Planning the implementation of curriculum both at the level of non-formal education institution/ structure (strategic planning) and at the level of departments (methodical commissions, administration, etc.) and of the personnel (operational planning).
- Organizing the activity within the respective structures in order to implement the non-formal curriculum.
- Coordinating the actions of curriculum implementation (establishing the modalities of operative communication between all the factors involved in the implementation of curriculum, conducting analysis and decision-making meetings, etc.).
- Training the personnel of respective unit in the actions of implementing the non-formal curriculum.
- Evaluating the development of actions for the implementation of non-formal curriculum.

Conclusions

For the design, implementation and monitoring of *the Curriculum for learning and education of adults* must be clearly addressed: concepts, models, rules, regulations for the factors involved in these processes. It is necessary to distribute resources, establish the necessary procedures for distributing the necessary funds, involve the necessary personnel/ experts (trained in the design, implementation and monitoring of non-formal curriculum), etc. Different structures and decision-makers must be involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the curriculum: the Ministry of Education and Research, organizations providing non-formal educational services, training and counseling institutions, expert groups. Thus, the management of curriculum requires the management of a multitude of actions, activities, oriented to the achievement of objectives for the development of *the Curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults*.

References:

1. GUȚU, VL., POGOLȘA, L.(coord.), CRUDU, V. (coord.), BUCUN, N., GHICOV, A., ACHIRI, I., GREMALSCHI, A., VELIȘCO, N., GORAȘ, M., GAICIUC, V., LUNGU, C., CEAPA, V., COTOVIȚCAIA, D., MARȚ, V., GHENCIU, N., GÎNU, D., EFTODI, A. *National Curriculum Reference Framework.* Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova, Institute and Education Sciences. Chisinau: Lyceum, 2017. 104 p. ISBN 978-9975-3157-7-7
2. GUȚU, Vl. (scientific coordinator), GRÎU, N. (general coord.), CRUDU, V. (general coord.), MARȚ, V. (op. coord.), BRAGARENCO, N., BURDUH, A., COSUMOV, M., COTOVIȚCAIA, D., FLOREA, V., GUȚU, Vl., ȘEVCIUC, M., ȚURCANU, C. *Reference Framework of Out-of-school Education and Learning in the Republic of Moldova.* Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova, Moldova State University. Chisinau, 2021. 98 p. ISBN 978-9975-152-98-3
3. GUȚU, VL., POGOLȘA, L.(coord.), CRUDU, V. (coord.), BUCUN, N., GHICOV, A., ACHIRI, I., GREMALSCHI, A., VELIȘCO, N., GORAȘ, M., GAICIUC, V., LUNGU, C., CEAPA, V., COTOVIȚCAIA, D., MARȚ, V., GHENCIU, N., GÎNU, D., EFTODI, A. *Op.cit.*
4. HENRY J., CORMIER V. What is a Competence? In: *DISCAS Archives*, 2006.

---

* It should be noted that this article substantiates the first attempt to address the issue of how to implement and monitor the curriculum for non-formal learning and education of adults.

5. GUŢU, Vl. (scientific coord.), GRÎU, N. (general coord.), CRUDU, V. (general coord.), MARŢ, V. (op. coord.), BRAGARENCO, N., BURDUH, A., COSUMOV, M., COTOVIŢCAIA, D., FLOREA, V., GUŢU, Vl., ŞEVCIUC, M., ŢURCANU, C. *Basic Curriculum: Competencies for Out-of-school Education and Learning in the Republic of Moldova.* Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova, Moldova State University, Chisinau: CEP USM, 2020. 30 p. ISBN: 978-9975-152-67-9
6. *Ibidem.*
7. *Ibidem.*
8. *Ibidem.*
9. *Ibidem.*

Author's Data:

Vladimir GUŢU, *Doctor Habilitatus in Pedagogical Sciences, University Professor*, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Sociology and Social Work; Center for Scientific Research "*Educational and Social Policies*", Moldova State University.
E-mail: vladimir.gutu@yahoo.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-5357-4217

Presented on 01.03.2022