

CZU: 374.71:37.016

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7405401>

CONTENT OF LEARNING AND EDUCATION FOR ADULTS FROM CURRICULAR PERSPECTIVE

Carolina ȚURCANU, Vladimir GUȚU

Moldova State University

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 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.

Keywords: *learning content, educational curriculum, formal education, non-formal education, adults' education, activity fields, activity profiles.*

CONȚINUTUL ÎNVĂȚĂRII ȘI EDUCAȚIEI ADULȚILOR DIN PERSPECTIVA CURRICULARĂ

În articol este abordată problema privind proiectarea, organizarea și implementarea conținuturilor învățării și educației adulților din perspectiva curriculară în cadrul învățământului formal și nonformal. Se fundamentează un concept și structura conținuturilor pentru învățarea și educația adulților raportată la domenii, profiluri și tipuri de activități formale și nonformale, în care sunt incluși adulții. Se identifică un ansamblu de principii și proceduri specifice organizării conținuturilor în cadrul diversificării formelor, tehnologiilor și a finalităților de instruire și educație a adulților. Accentul este pus pe modul de organizare și structurare a conținuturilor în raport cu forma de organizare a procesului educațional (învățământul formal-nonformal), tipul de învățare și educație (profesionalizare, formare profesională continuă, calificare, recalificare, dezvoltare personală etc.); finalitățile proiectate/așteptate, în mare parte determinate de nevoile educaționale ale adulților.

Cuvinte-cheie: *conținutul învățării, curriculum educațional, educație formală, educație nonformală, educația adulților, domenii de activitate, profiluri de activitate.*

Introduction

Adults' learning and education is a global process that integrates all dimensions of personality and all social factors [6, p.20].

Adults' learning and education can be organized into four areas: *Culture and Society; Art; Science. Techniques. Technologies; Sports, Tourism and Leisure* and three training directions: (1) lifelong professionalization (lifelong professional training: retraining, professionalization, professional promotion); (2) non-professional development (personal, general education); (3) initial vocational training (for those without initial qualifications).

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.

Adults' learning and education, like any educational act, focuses on the outcomes, content and process - dimensions of the educational curriculum.

Content of Adults' Learning and Education: Conceptual Framework

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

In G.Vaideanu's 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" [7].

The definition of "contents" given by I.Jinga and E.Istrate 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"[4, p.101].

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.

Establishing the contents is an operation achievable in full accordance with the outcomes, field, profiles, types of respective activities, which is, in fact, the first level at which the educational content involves a certain concretization. The division by types of activities is based, in the curricular design, on the main components accumulated by the social/professional/individual experience:

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

Certainly, each domain is dominated by one of these components. The current trend is to design such activities in such a way that each of them integrates, in a certain way, all the spheres mentioned above.

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

- division into types of activities, such as lifelong training activities or non-vocational/personal training activities – in their capacity as knowledge corpora focused on certain basic concepts;
- 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 content elements or as study themes in the curriculum, including in the contextual ones;
- 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;
- individual, social and professional interests and needs.

According to the specialty literature, most of these determinants can occur 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 stacking 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.

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

Table 1

Principles of Content Design and Stacking in Adults' Training and Education Curriculum

Principles of Contents Design	Principles of Contents Grading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the principle of achieving, through the educational content, the expected outcomes, specific to adults' learning and education; • the principle of coherence and balance between the various components of educational content: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values; • the principle of scientific content, essential and relevant to the individual needs of adults in professional and non-professional (general culture); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the principle of stacking according to the complexity of content units (subject's segmentation); • the principle of delimitation (each of the parties must represent a unit); • the principle of progressive and contextual/situational difficulty; • the principle of linking new and old information with the dominance of information generated by the educational needs and opportunities of adults;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the principle of complexity and contextuality of educational content: correlated with the intended outcomes; • the principle of correlating the projected knowledge and skills with the particularities of adults' teaching-learning-assessment process; • the principle of the validity of knowledge for its usefulness in the general formation of the adult's personality and its professional development; • the principle of transdisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, intradisciplinarity in relation to the conceptual paradigm of adults' learning and education; • the principle of flexibility (the possibility of grouping and regrouping content units depending on specific contexts and diversified forms of education). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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); • the principle of accentuation (revealing the most significant part of the contents); • the principle of didactic values (organizing the content according to the outcomes, the teaching-learning methods, the didactic means, etc.); • the principle of complexity and variability of adults' learning/training activities.
--	---

The contents 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:

- 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;
- better knowledge of the social/professional environment, of the representative cultural traditions and with recognized formative value;
- establishing contents aimed at the participation of community and personality in the efforts of economic development and in acquiring favorable behaviors for the protection of life and active participation of adults in professional and/or non-professional activities (personal training).

It should be mentioned that the stacking of contents takes into account, on the one hand, the order in which the offer of contents of the various types of activity takes place, and, on the other hand, the recommended pace of adults' learning. This factor works closely with the adult's age and his or her degree of motivation, but also with their ability to adopt a more or less rapid pace of learning; it is also related to the extension and/or complementarity of the contents.

Traditionally, the coherence of contents within the adults' curriculum presupposed that each dimension of learning was conditioned by the context/situation and valorized vertically and horizontally in the curriculum design.

Vertical coherence presupposes the assumption of a certain aspect's contents – the initial professional training as a basis for those of lifelong professional training, as well as a certain continuity of the contents, which amplifies and deepens as the lifelong learning continues.

Horizontal coherence allows the adult to acquire competences that they can transfer and apply in their professional or non-professional activity.

The attention paid to horizontal coherence is justified by: giving greater effectiveness to the activity of adults' learning and education; achieving a saving of time for learning, insofar as the acquisition of learning contents diminishes the repetitions, allowing the transfers of acquisitions from one type of activity to another type of activity; an openness to life and to lifelong learning.

Horizontal coherence could also be facilitated by an interdisciplinary approach to adults' learning and education. This would, however, involve a thorough rethinking of the lifelong vocational training system, even before the profound restructuring of the adult curriculum.

In this sense, the issue of contents' application is usually one of the most complex issues facing decision-makers and education.

In this context, the curriculum should find answers to at least the following questions:

- What are the necessary and sufficient contents for the full realization of the intended outcomes, generated by the adults' needs?

- What should be the optimal amount of recommended and contextual content?
- What diversity should be included in the contents in relation to the diversity of forms of training, outcomes and educational needs of adults?
- What is the extension (so the “start” and “end” levels of contents for a particular field)?
- How deep must the selected contents be in relation to the intended purposes?
- Should the extension of contents be diminished in favor of their depth, or vice versa?

The answers to these questions should take into account: adults’ learning levels, adult’s qualification, reasons for adult’s learning; the learning needs and opportunities of adults in different forms of education: formal and non-formal ones.

The determinants and principles for designing and stacking contents in the adults’ curriculum are complemented by a set of requirements and criteria.

The requirements for structuring content units are intended to: (1) develop such a structure of instructional material that would be more rational and economical in terms of assimilation; (2) determine and introduce a mechanism for restricting or expanding content units that would relieve adults of the need to retain a large amount of information; (3) group and stack the subject in such a way as to ensure the more effective development of adults’ skills in professional or non-professional terms.

Achieving these requirements involves a system of material structuring criteria, which can be presented as follows: the *criterion* of structuring a relatively unitary complex of knowledge, skills and attitudes (competences); the *criterion* of stacking the knowledge system according to their complexity and contextuality; the *criterion* of continuity and progress of content units [2, p.55-63].

In order to ensure the efficiency of adults’ learning and education, it is necessary to select and interpret the contents in relation to the specifics of the profiles and types of activities, but also to the fields of professional or non-formal training of adults.

For example, in the initial or lifelong vocational training of adults in the field of technical occupations it is necessary to: take into account changes in the content of labour activity; systematization of praxiological information; identification and conscious study of current topics and topics dictated by the needs of adults in lifelong vocational training, qualification or retraining; ensuring the interconnection between theory and practice.

It should be noted that the content can be seen as one of basic training, as one of lifelong training, retraining or individual training.

In other words, it is important in the selection, organization and application of contents from the curricular perspective to take into account:

1. the specifics of fields, profiles and types of activities of initial and lifelong professional training of adults and their personal (general culture) development;
2. adults’ learning and education needs and opportunities;
3. forms of adults’ training and education, but also the outcomes pursued;
4. diversity of adults’ learning and educational contexts and situations;
5. rapid changes in the labor market and new requirements for employees skills;
6. ways and principles of structuring the contents in relation to the forms and purposes of adults’ learning and education: *the linear principle* – ensures continuity in the study of subjects; *the concentric principle* – involves returning to the subject learned only to another degree of complexity; *the spiral principle* – ensures the continuity without interruption of the deep study of new subjects/themes; *the combined principle* – combines all the listed principles.

In recent years, the modular approach to contents’ organization has been widely applied.

In fact, the modular approach groups the content of education in the form of significantly and functionally completed structural elements – blocks, modules, modular units. It is a well-structured, coherent and adaptable system, ensuring the variety of educational content and processes in accordance with the outcomes, available resources, as well as the needs of labor market and of adult.

There are two levels in the structuring of learning content on modules at the professional level: the macro level groups the content into blocks, modules, modular units, and the micro level – into learning elements. The blocks, in turn, include basic and complementary modules. The basic module offers an initial qualification in a profession/specialty, complementary modules – an increase in the level of professional training. This ensures continuity in advanced training [8, p.185-186].

Therefore, the content of adults' learning and education (formal and non-formal) is the structured set of values and experiences in all fields of science, culture, art, technology, professional and non-professional practice that at some point becomes the benchmark in designing and conducting the educational process.

The establishment of contents for adults' learning and education must be approached from the perspective of sources of their selection and related to the fields and profiles of adults' education.

In this regard, we indicate a dynamic classification of contents selection sources for adults' education:

- *renewing the values of human education, culture and civilization;*
- *the evolution of exact sciences:* epistemological mutations and revolutions, methodological and interdisciplinary transfers, frontier disciplines and unique combinations of disciplines, accelerating the pace of development, generalizing the use of computer technology in education and research, etc.;
- *the evolution of technologies:* the exceptional impact, first of all, of computerization on industrial (robotic) and agricultural production (advanced technologies), on urbanization (new postmodern urban concepts), on family life, lifestyles and family budgets;
- *the evolution of labour world:* the tendency of generalizing the labor market's computerization, the migration of labor force towards the tertiary sector (services) and quaternary (the information sector);
- *the evolution of social sciences and humanities:* the increased role it should play in the formation of attitudes (responsibility, solidarity, patriotism, etc.), of abilities (critical spirit, intellectual autonomy or capacity for self-learning, inventiveness, etc.), emphasizing the importance of spiritual life and education for values;
- *the evolution of (humanistic - n.n.) culture and art:* democratic participation in community life, new currents, the formation of a critical attitude in the field of cultural life - literature, painting, music, cinema, etc.;
- *evolution in the field of sports and tourism:* promoting the knowledge and rapprochement of peoples, cultivating the olympic spirit, developing ecological tourism and protecting the common heritage;
- *the increased impact of future on present:* the introduction of prospective exercises, the cultivation of responsibility for one's own destiny and the planning of future;
- *the aspirations of young people and adults:* educational institutions must meet the present and future interests and choices of future generations in training, emphasizing the cultivation of ethical values, the need for democratic life, the desire to communicate and know the world, to effectively participate in decision-making processes;
- *the growing importance of media:* advantages brought by the generalization of information main-lines – cable and satellite television, printing media, the Internet (Open Distance Learning), as well as dangers related to the control and manipulation of information, problems related to education regarding mass media;
- *the acquisitions of pedagogical research:* contemporary society, marked by dynamism, complexity, interdependence and globalization, imposes high standards on the selection and organization of content and inter- and transdisciplinary learning: modularity, indicators of contents' relevance, lifelong learning, formative assessment, new ways of initial and lifelong training of trainers;
- *the issues of contemporary world:* characterized by universality, globality, interdependence, priority character, urgency and gravity, imposes certain contents related to new education – education for democratic life, ecological education, education for family life in the society of future, education for change, education for community life, etc. [5; 3].

Therefore, the approach of adults' learning and education contents from the curricular perspective can be presented in a generalized plane in Fig.1.

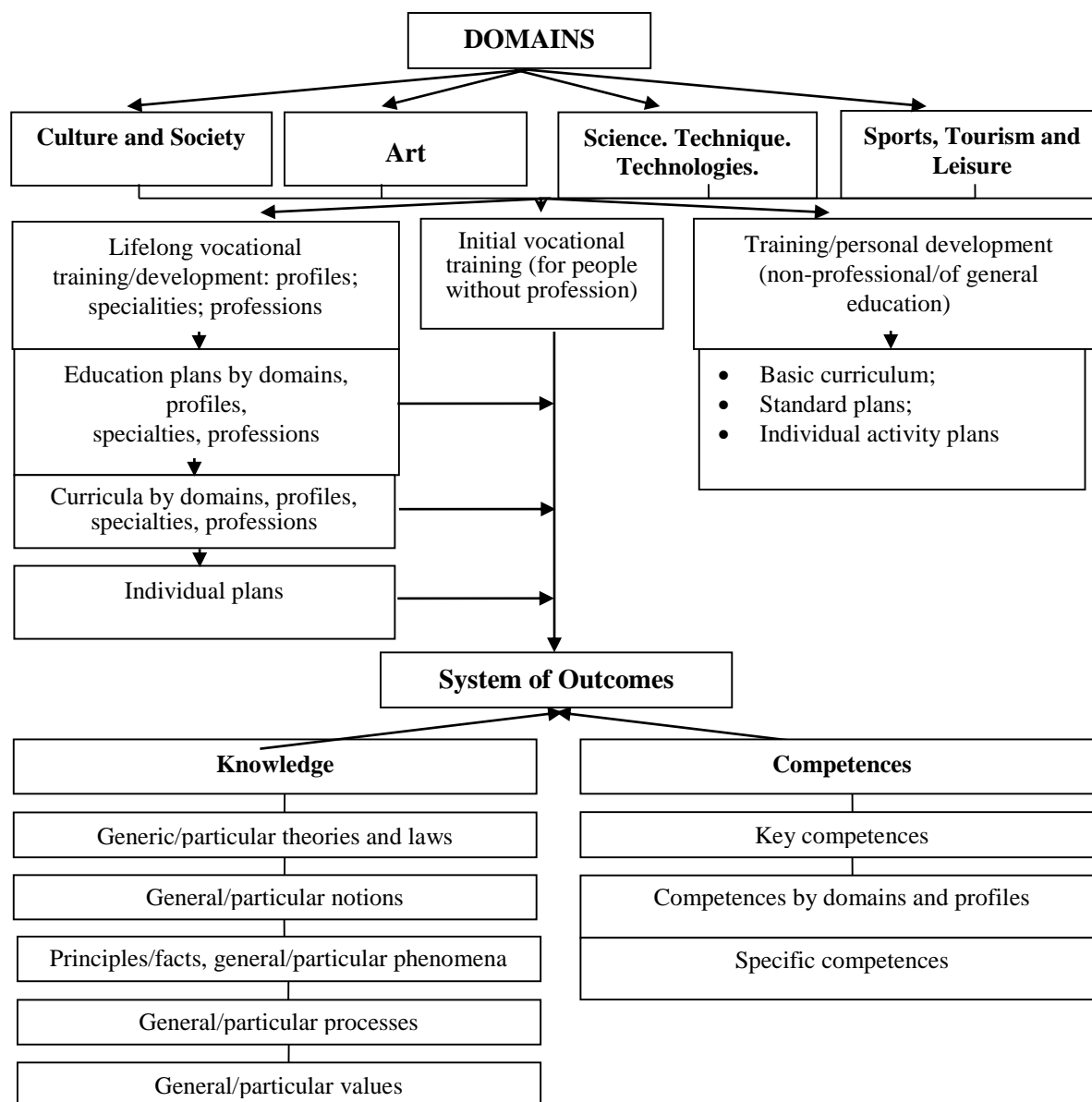


Fig.1. Content of Adults' Learning and Education in Structure of Educational Curriculum

Results of Study on Perception of Content by Adults Involved in Various Forms of Learning and Education

In the context of 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 study was carried out on the basis of five groups/lots of respondents: teachers in lifelong vocational training courses; young people trained in a trade; 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 adults' education institutions (modeled on popular universities or specialized centers) that would provide services for all categories of adults and in various fields formally and informally on the dimensions of professionalism and of general culture training.

Table 2

Generalized Results of Express Study on Perception of Educational Content by Adults

No. crt.	Lots of Respondents	Courses Required for Lifelong Training, %	Courses Required for Retraining, %	Offers of Lifelong Vocational/Non-Professional Training Meet Your Needs, %	Options for One or Another Domain, %
1.	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •specialty courses – 80% •general courses – 40% •optional courses – 30% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-qualification courses – 30% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure – 60% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •vocational training – 90%; •general culture training – 60%
2.	Young people trained in a profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •specialty courses – 60% •general courses – 50% •optional courses – 55% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-qualification courses – 70% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure – 20% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •vocational training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – technologies; – economy; – building; – services.
3.	Young people without a qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •qualification courses – 90% 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure – 5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •vocational training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – technologies; – economy; – building; – services. •lifelong non-professional training
4.	Unemployed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •qualification courses – 40% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-qualification courses – 60% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure – 3% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •professional domains •re-qualification
5.	Retired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •qualification courses – 2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-qualification courses – 10% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure – 2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •development of general culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – art/culture – 15% – social sciences – 20% – sport – 10% – technologies/ computer science – 40%

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 trade 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.

Discussion Questions

The diversity of contents' approaches for adults' learning and education, but also the diversity of professional fields, typological categories of adults generate several contradictions and questions:

? *Can a Core Curriculum be developed for all categories of adults or for all areas of adults' education and what will this curriculum look like?*

? *What is the place and functions of contents in adults' learning and education curricula?*

? *How to ensure that the contents are up-to-date for adults in relation to the diversity of their learning and education needs?*

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; 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 professional and non-professional development activities of adults in formal and/or non-formal terms.

The approach of contents from the curricular perspective ensures, on the one hand, the restriction by deepening the reference sphere of 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 formative, qualitative effects on the directions of initial and lifelong professional training of adults, but also on the 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.

This curricular perspective gives the content of adults' learning and education a character, equally stable and dynamic: stable through the educational values of maximum formative efficiency; dynamic 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.

References:

1. CRISTEA, S. *Fundamentele pedagogiei*. Iași: Polirom, 2010, 400 p.
2. CRIȘAN, A., GUȚU, VI. *Proiectarea curriculumului de bază*. Cimișlia: Tip Cim, 1997.
3. GUȚU, VI. (coord.științ.), GRÎU, N. (coord.gen.), CRUDU, V. (coord.gen.), MARȚ, V. (coord.op.), BRAGARENCO, N., BURDUH, A., COSUMOV, M., COTOVIȚCAIA, D., FLOREA, V., GUȚU, VI., ȘEVCIUC, M., ȚURCANU, C. *Cadrul de referință al educației și învățământului extrașcolar din Republica Moldova*. Ministerul Educației, Culturii și Cercetării al Republicii Moldova, Universitatea de Stat din Moldova. Chișinău, 2021. 98 p.
4. JINGA, I., ISTRATE, E. *Manual de Pedagogie*. București: All, 1998.
5. *Metode și instrumente în cadrul educației nonformale în context TIA*. Agenția Națională pentru Programe Comunitare, Dezvoltare, Educație și Formare Profesională din România, 2000.
6. VĂIDEANU, G. Educația adulților – promovarea unor noi paradigme. În: *Paideea*, 1993, nr.1, p.20.
7. VĂIDEANU, G. *Educația la frontiera dintre milenii*. București: Politica, 1988, 326 p.
8. ВАСИЛЬКОВА, Т.,А. *Основы андрагогики*. Москва: Кнорус, 2009, 256 с.

Note: The paper was carried out within the State Program *Conceptual, Methodological and Managerial Framework of Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Moldova*, number 20.80009.0807.23.

Data About Authors:

Carolina ȚURCANU, PhD in Law, Associate Researcher, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Sociology and Social Work; Scientific Research Center "Education and Social Policies", Moldova State University.

E-mail: carolina.turcanu@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-8450-3075

Vladimir GUȚU, Doctor Habilitatis in Pedagogical Sciences, University Professor, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Sociology and Social Work; Scientific Research Center "Education and Social Policies", Moldova State University.

E-mail: vladimir.gutu@yahoo.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-5357-4217

Presented on 30.04.2022