

# Identifying the effective components of adult education curriculum design in post-primary and presenting a conceptual model

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## ABSTRACT

The overall objective of this study was to identify the effective components in designing the adult education curriculum in post-elementary and presenting a conceptual model. The present study is mixed research (quantitative and qualitative) and in terms of purpose, applied research. The statistical population of this research included documentation, educational experts, and specially curriculum experts. The data were analyzed by thematic analysis during three stages of descriptive coding, interpretive coding, and integration through inclusive themes. The results showed that the twelve components constitute the main cornerstone of the adult education curriculum in the post-elementary. These components include philosophical foundations, sociological foundations, psychological foundations, political foundations, content, goals, evaluation, teaching and learning strategies, learning time and space, teaching and learning activities, learning materials and resources, and team working. Based on these components, a conceptual model was designed that consists of contextual influencing factors: political, sociological, cultural, and psychological factors, goals and content, and influential components: time, space, learning resources, and evaluation.

**Keywords:** Adult education, Curriculum, Adult learners, Post-elementary

## Introduction

In Iran, education as a dynamic, valuable, and expensive institution has the enormous responsibility of guiding human beings, salvation and attaining a higher level of the best life. In this regard, the main aim is the growth and flourishing of the potential talents of the community in all its dimensions, and their preparation for a prosperous life is aimed at educating.

To achieve these transcendent goals, strategies must be clearly outlined and policies must be defined. In the field of adult education, the curriculum must be specific because of the type and nature of the work, breadth and diversity. Adult education is an activity organized to create a learning community through the transfer of up-to-date knowledge and skills to adults so that they can move towards evolution and excellence and participate actively in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of their community <sup>[1]</sup>.

It is necessary to design an appropriate adult curriculum because of dispersal in the adult education curriculum, lack of a coherent and integrated system for identifying, accepting, and attracting illiterate adults, inadequate standardization of text and curriculum content, inadequate educational facilities, and inappropriate curriculum and activities and the education process, poor outcomes, lack of accurate statistics and information from illiterate adults, and illiteracy unwillingness to become literate and complete in literacy courses and on the

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other hand technological change in the contemporary world and the need to align the country with these changes and the growing demand for adults to continue the education process. The results of comparative studies of adult education systems in other countries show that the purpose of this system is to prepare people to enter the labor market in order to achieve economic and social goals, to educate good citizens, and is to meet their needs. It is why adult education emphasizes experimentation and project-based learning, learners' needs and interests, and the use of information and communication technology with emphasis on skills, life, and vocational training, and the flexibility of time and place <sup>[2]</sup>.

The current educational systems of the world are moving towards long-term planning. It is time for a serious revision of the adult education curriculum. The design and development of an adult education curriculum will serve as a basis for planning adult education <sup>[3]</sup>.

On the other hand, considering the efficiency of the Literacy Movement organization in planning and developing previous courses (literacy, consolidation, and transfer) and their successful implementation, until the end of the elementary school, the organization's main mission is planning for future courses.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education, in particular the Literacy Movement, should have a program for adult (sixth grade) transfer graduates, as well as adults who for any reason have not been able to obtain a diploma degree, so examining the essential components of this design it is a necessity.

In the above documents, also great attention has been paid to the importance of the education system of the community and its role in the cultural promotion of the country. For example, according to Article 30 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "the government is obliged to provide free education to all nations until the end of secondary education and free higher education to the extent of self-sufficiency of the country"<sup>[4]</sup>.

Also, according to the Twenty Year Vision Document, 1404 features of Iranian society have been seen in this landscape, with an emphasis on the growth of culture, education, and research. In other upstream documents, such as the Basic Education Transformation Document, five-year socio-economic development programs, government approvals, the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council, the Higher Education Council, has been emphasized the right of everyone to education and the right to educational justice for the community <sup>[5]</sup>.

In the light of what has been said, we can say in short that the affirmations, approvals, and recommendations of international forums, high-level documents, the nature of adult education, the contemporary and spatial appropriateness and appropriateness of the contemporary world, international and global relations, the changing world of communications and Information, all in all, lead us to realize the desires in this field <sup>[6]</sup>.

Moreover, the high illiteracy rate among the country's active population of around 18 million illiterate people in Iran emphasizes the importance and necessity of designing a specific adult education curriculum in the post-graduation period given the lack of a unique curriculum that matches the needs of these groups and their characteristics and needs of society. The purpose of this study was to study the adult education process in a comprehensive way and to meet their educational needs, to investigate the effective components in designing an adult education curriculum in post-primary education, and to draw up a comprehensive, realistic, appropriate, and efficient curriculum. The purpose of designing a comprehensive and appropriate model of adult education in the Islamic Republic of Iran is to answer the following questions:

- What are the effective elements in designing a post-primary adult education curriculum?
- What are the characteristics of a suitable curriculum model for adult education in post-primary education?
- According to point of view of experts how is the validity of the designed model for adult education in post-primary education?

## Methodology

The present study in terms of purpose is applied and in terms of the type of research is descriptive. Due to the nature of the problem and the objectives of the study, a qualitative and quantitative (and exploratory) mixed method was used. The statistical population of this study included: all upstream documentation related to adult curriculum and education, such as the Constitution of the State, the Fundamental Education Change Document, the National Curriculum Document, the Comprehensive Scientific Map of the Country, the Horizon Outlook Document 1404, General System Policies, Supreme Council Approvals Cultural Revolution and Higher Education Council, Literacy Movement Statute and Eradication Program Subjects and theoretical content including books, articles, and research related to adult education and its curriculum in Iran and part of foreign books and articles' adult educators, scholars, and specialists. In this study, according to the aims and questions of the study, 10 teachers master, and experts of curriculum and adult education were selected by theoretical sampling (theoretical) and snowball. Selecting the first person based on theoretical sampling and the other people are based on snowball sampling. Upstream documents and research conducted over the past 7 years were also considered as examples. In the quantitative section, the statistical population included the study of documentation and identification of elements of the adult education curriculum. The combination of components was done through document mining and semi-structured interviews. In addition, an early version of the post-

elementary adult education curriculum model was made available to professionals and professors in the field.

The statistical sample in the quantitative section was 25 professors and experts in the field of adult education based on theoretical and snowball sampling method. In this way, first, one of the professors was selected based on indicators such as work experience, field of study, and specialty and then used to nominate the next person. The qualitative part of this research, which is the dominant part of the research, was documenting and interviewing. In order to collect data in the qualitative part of this research, which is the dominant part, documentary and interview methods were used.

Qualitative section results were used to develop a researcher-made questionnaire to answer the quantitative research question. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect data. In order to gain credibility, a parallel accurate information acquisition technique was used, which involves the presentation of data analysis, and its results have been presented to adult education and curriculum professionals, thus enriching the credibility.

Transferability, which replaces external validity in the quantitative domain, can be generalized to other domains and contexts; the results of this study can be generalized to adult education centers in post-primary Iran.

To verify this research, a member review technique was used which includes instructors and specialists in curriculum development and adult education.

For the purpose of validity of the researcher-made questionnaire, 10 teachers and curriculum specialists and 5 teachers and specialists of adult education in the country who are familiar with the subject of research, were used.

In the quantitative part, to validate and analyze the researcher-made questionnaire was also used factor analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by Cronbach's alpha method (Table 1).

**Table 1: Results of Validation of Research Components Based on Cronbach's Alpha Method**

Cronbach's Alpha	Variables	Number
0.793	philosophical foundations	1
0.826	sociological foundations	2
0.784	psychological foundations	3
0.847	political foundations	4
0.806	content	5
0.781	goals	6
0.852	evaluation	7
0.744	teaching and learning strategies	8
0.843	learning time and space	9
0.795	teaching and learning activities	10
0.817	learning materials and resources	11
0.834	Teamwork	12

The data were analyzed in three stages:

In the first phase, the researcher review upstream documents, scientific papers, research articles, books, online resources, and curriculum reviews of some countries in the field of adult education and related elementary and post-secondary curricula, and then based on this review. The researchers identified the factors influencing the design and development of an adult education curriculum in post-primary education in Iran.

Secondly, in order to explain the suggested curriculum model using the semi-structured interview form, the necessary information and perspectives on the research topic were gathered from the interviewees (professors and specialists of curriculum and adult education). The MAXQDA12 software was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews.

In the third step, experts' opinions were used to validate the designed model and the independent t-test was used to analyze the data.

What are the effective elements in designing a post-primary adult education curriculum?

In the analysis of the interviews, the thematic analysis process was formed, integrated into pervasive themes, and a thematic network of 4 factors was formed. These twelve direct factors influence the design of the adult education curriculum in the post-elementary curriculum and its components

The results of the above integration analysis showed that the twelve components form the core of the post-elementary curriculum. These components included philosophical foundations, sociological foundations, psychological foundations, political foundations, content, goals, evaluation, teaching, and learning strategies, learning time and space, teaching and learning activities, learning materials and resources, and karmic. On the one hand and on the other hand they are influenced by philosophical, psychological, political, sociological foundations also there are internal relationships between the components themselves. Content influenced by goals, learning resources, strategies, and evaluation is also influenced by other components such as goals, content, and strategies.

In the second step, the Delphi technique was used to identify the indicators. Because using expert opinion and research literature, effective indicators on designing adult education curriculum in the post-elementary period were identified, and finally, based on expert opinion, variables assessment tool and research model were prepared. Therefore, qualitative research identified two main dimensions and four indicators. Finally, the index was identified after performing three rounds of the Delphi method.

What are the characteristics of a suitable curriculum model for adult education in post-primary education?

**Table 2: Descriptive analysis of research variables (quo status)**

Variables	Number	Average	Middle	extent	Standard deviation	Variance	variation range	Minimum	Max
philosophical foundations	25	2.397	2.500	2.500	0.718	0.515	3.750	1.250	5.000
sociological foundations	25	2.499	2.600	3.000	0.697	0.486	3.800	1.200	5.000
psychological foundations	25	3.421	2.500	2.500	0.696	0.484	4.000	1.000	5.000
political foundations	25	2.426	2.333	3.000	0.848	0.719	4.000	1.000	5.000
content	25	2.318	2.333	2.333	0.776	0.603	4.000	1.000	5.000
goals	25	2.410	2.333	3.000	0.860	0.739	4.000	1.000	5.000
evaluation	25	3.471	2.667	3.000	0.847	0.717	4.000	1.000	5.000
teaching and learning strategies	25	2.474	2.667	3.000	0.804	0.647	4.000	1.000	5.000
learning time and space	25	3.440	2.333	3.000	0.830	0.689	4.000	1.000	5.000
teaching and learning activities	25	2.586	3.000	3.000	0.827	0.683	4.000	1.000	5.000
learning materials and resources	25	3.576	3.000	3.000	0.801	0.641	3.333	1.667	5.000
Teamwork	25	2/510	2/433	3/000	0/880	0/749	4.000	1.000	5.000

Table 2 presents the 12 descriptive indicators of the research. As can be seen, the variables of psychological foundations (mean 3.42), evaluation (mean 3.47), learning time, and space (mean 3.46) are also learning materials and resources. (Mean 3.57) are above the theoretical mean of the research instrument

(mean 3). It can be said that among the 12 variables studied, these variables have the closest distance to desirable status. In other variables, the calculated average is less than 3, which is not desirable in the adult curriculum.

**Table 3: Descriptive analysis of research variables (desirable status)**

Variables	Number	Average	Middle	extent	Standard deviation	Variance	variation range	Minimum	Max
philosophical foundations	25	3.293	3.286	3.143	0.624	0.390	3.857	1.143	5.000
sociological foundations	25	3.457	3.667	4.000	0.719	0.518	4.000	1.000	5.000
psychological foundations	25	3.430	3.600	3.600	0.698	0.487	3.800	1.200	5.000
political foundations	25	3.514	3.714	4.000	0.666	0.443	3.286	1.571	4.857
content	25	3.417	3.333	4.000	0.758	0.575	4.000	1.000	5.000
goals	25	3.460	3.333	4.000	0.803	0.645	4.000	1.000	5.000
evaluation	25	3.484	4.000	4.000	0.836	0.700	4.000	1.000	5.000
teaching and learning strategies	25	3.431	3.667	4.000	0.859	0.738	4.000	1.000	5.000
learning time and space	25	3.577	3.833	4.000	0.735	0.540	3.833	1.167	5.000
teaching and learning activities	25	3.569	3.636	4.000	0.582	0.338	3.000	1.727	4.727
learning materials and resources	25	3.422	3.480	3.480	0.521	0.272	2.760	2.000	4.760
Teamwork	25	3.160	3.033	4.000	0.803	0.615	4.000	1.000	5.000

It is clear in Table 3 that the correct answer to all the research questions is compiled. Also, the mean of all variables is above the mean of 3. mean and mode show that most respondents chose options 3 and 4. Each research question was analyzed separately using the partial least squares technique. Finally, the general model of the research was tested using the same

technique. Based on this table, the desirable status of the research variables is presented. According to the calculations, the average of all the variables calculated has increased. This evaluation indicates that experts need to revise and upgrade the components of the desirable adult curriculum components.

**Table 4: Summary of Delphi (First Round) Technique Results Effective on Curriculum Design**

Factor Analysis	Maximum	Minimum	variation range	Standard deviation	Average	Number	Variables
733/0	5	3	2	0.681	4.627	25	philosophical foundations
665/0	5	2	3	0.744	4.140	25	sociological foundations
720/0	5	3	2	0.655	4.154	25	psychological foundations
769/0	5	3	2	0.748	4.471	25	political foundations

789/0	5	3	2	0.723	4.701	25	content
601/0	5	3	2	0.767	4.143	25	goals
855/0	5	3	2	0.543	4.774	25	evaluation
709/0	5	2	3	0.415	4.379	25	teaching and learning strategies
861/0	5	3	2	0.707	4.774	25	learning time and space
625/0	5	3	2	0.533	4.832	25	teaching and learning activities
640/0	5	3	2	0.640	4.105	25	learning materials and resources
909/0	5	3	2	0.707	4.622	25	Teamwork

According to the results in Table 4, considering all the factors above 0.7, it can be concluded that all the dimensions identified in the qualitative section (by an interview with experts) are acceptable and can be considered as the main dimensions in the case questionnaire.

One of the constant discussions with the Delphi technique is to reach an agreement and end its rounds. In this study, Kendall's coefficient of the agreement was used to calculate the experts' viewpoint:

**Table 5: Kendall's coefficient of agreement**

Significant amount	Degrees of freedom	Kendall coefficient	Number of experts	Number of components	
0.001	24	0.543	25	70	First round
0.001	22	0.654	23	64	Second round

Based on the above Table results, the Kendall coefficient value in the first round of the Delphi technique is 0.543. It has been shown that the unity of opinion among experts is moderate. Also, the significant value is 0.001. It was found that the results can be trusted with a confidence of 0.95. As a result, regardless of the components that score below the threshold intensity, the other components are used for study in the second round. Kendall coefficient in the second round of Delphi technique 0.654. It was shown that the unity of opinion between the experts was good. Also, the significant value is 0.001. It was found that the results can be trusted with the confidence of 0.95. Therefore, the Delphi technique was stopped in the second run and the identified components were used for the final analysis.

## Discussion and Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, it can be said that several factors need to be considered to be effective in adult education programs, to review current programs, and to consider the factors mentioned in planning. What is noteworthy in the paradigmatic model of research are contextual, environmental, and causal issues that have not been seriously addressed in current programs, and this is an important point for the interviewees to consider. Even the strategies outlined in the present study will also be affected by these factors, as they represent important points at the micro and macro level that adult education is confronted with. In this regard, the basic social characteristics of adult education should be examined and activities should be undertaken [7]. In general, adult education programs that consider the opportunity to educate people about empowerment in various fields and to provide workforce

should be reviewed [8]. In fact, programs should be structured to fit the activities of individuals. Activities such as supporting continuous improvement, empowering provinces to identify areas in need, developing strategies to address specific needs, piloting targeted strategies, integrating solutions into a broad program, and assessing the impact of targeted strategies can help to achieve great goals [9]. It is worth noting that those training programs will be suitable for adults who are involved in formulating educational goals into both work and education, in common, and in all purposes. In fact, educating adults should be broader than learning to read and write and should pay attention to the variety of literacy needs [10]. In this context, however, the integrated literacy program with the development of work-related training and skills training has increased in many training programs [11]. However, more support should be given to vocational training combined with vocational workshops [12], as many research results indicate that learning does not take place without the transfer of education to life. The education and career of an adult will decrease the quality of educational outcomes [12]. Another point concerns the learners' own circumstances, which should also be appropriate to motivate this group. Because motivation is an important element for an adult to develop educational activities and one's perspective on literacy [13]. On the other hand, many people enroll in training courses to achieve personal goals and interests; the group's expectation of receiving training services is to increase their employment by acquiring training options and market choices or for the sake of gaining social respect and goals, they turn to cultural and promotional activities that can be a good helper [14]. In this regard, the overall goal of the country's education system should be to keep in mind that adult learners must understand the issue of acquiring new knowledge

and improving their living conditions culturally through such educational programs <sup>115</sup>. Of course, the ability and training activities of educators to teach these people will also be crucial not only to enhance their ability to manage the classroom but also to create and maintain a learning environment. Incentives are important for adult learners <sup>116</sup>. So, if they want to achieve progress and achievement in the pursuit of their goals, which include the development of literate people, social habits and life skills, capable of solving life's problems, interested in working and producing, and lifelong learning. The more successful we are, the greater the focus on the core components of our adult education curriculum.

Considering the findings and results of the above research, twelve main and influential components were identified in this research, using the literature of adult education and using the opinions of experts in the field of adult education. They were studied and based on the relationships derived from the interactions of the components, a model for adult education is presented as follows (figure 1):

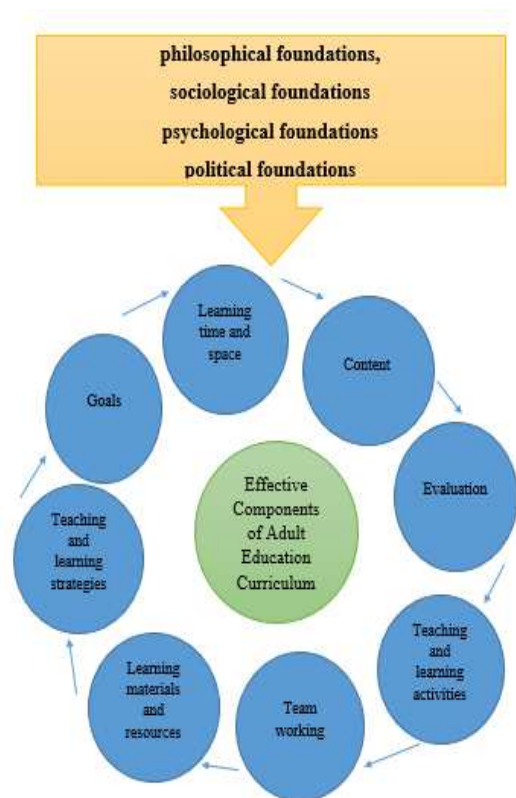


Figure 1: Adult Education Model

## Results

Based on the findings of the present study, to design the components of the adult curriculum in post-primary we should consider the following characteristics:

- Objectives, content, teaching, and learning strategies, evaluation, learning time and space, teaching-learning

activities, cardiology based on philosophical, sociological, political, and psychological principles.

- Adult education goals are designed and tailored to learners' real needs through an entrepreneurial, inclusive, and research-oriented approach in three areas of knowledge, insight, and skill and with respect to indigenous, human values, and social norms. Objectives provide social, political, responsibility, role-playing, enhancing verbal and non-verbal communication skills, self-direction, and decision making.
- Content should be organized and designed with features of consistency, comprehensiveness, proportionality, interactivity, context, and flexibility.
- Assessment with a process-based approach in cognitive, emotional, insight, and skill dimensions.
- Use integrated, direct, and indirect teaching strategies depending on the nature of the goals, content, and teaching position.
- Given the nature of the goals and content, use interactive spaces with two simultaneous and asynchronous in-person and virtual approaches.
- Use diverse, flexible, and resilient learning environments.
- Reconstruct and organize appropriate learning time and space using learners' lived experiences.
- Different learning resources according to individual differences and different learning styles.
- Form groups of learners' work groups and teams according to the nature of the goals, content, learning strategies, interests, and shared and complementary skills.

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