

ADULT ARTS EDUCATION: A DELPHI STUDY  
FORECASTING THE ROLE OF THE ARTS IN A LIFELONG LEARNING SOCIETY

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As we deal with a rapidly aging population, the arts education and arts policy community needs to take an active role in providing insight into policies that address adult choices. This includes defining the role of the arts beyond K-12 education, intergenerational opportunities, and identifying connections with 'general well-being' age-based policies from leisure, recreation, and aging in the United States.

The Delphi Technique Method was used to identify what actions need to be taken to serve older adults and forecast the role of adult lifelong learning in the arts, as well as address the attitudes to such programming on the national, state, and local policy level. The anonymous Delphi – a qualitative forecasting method that is a structured group process that outlines the pros and cons of an issue, with the goal of identifying priorities of personal values and social goals – was sent to national stakeholders in arts policy, arts education policy, and gerontology. The stakeholders were chosen due to experience in their field, an exhaustive literature review, and recommendation from their colleagues. The data collected from this group identifies an overview of the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge of, and objectives and goals in serving the needs of adults and older adults in and through the arts. This research will provide insight into the characteristics and identify, if any, future predictions of local, state, and national initiatives of adult arts education.

Using the Delphi method, it was possible to develop a theoretical framework based on experts' vision, multiple perspectives, and comprehensive insight to address the role of the arts in a lifelong learning society. As we enter the twenty-first century, we are engaged in a wide-ranging process of redefining the character of the arts' common purpose. The door is open for the arts to become an important ingredient in the public purpose by involving the many adult learners of the twenty-first century. In order to take advantage of this opportunity and to accommodate the changing aging demographics, lifelong learning in the arts beyond K-12 education must be redefined.

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