

## The Beliefs of University Teachers about the Applicability of Adult Learning Principles and Their Influence on Their Professional Practices in Ethiopia

Dr. T.Sharon Raju\*, Temesgen Oljira Geleta\*\*

\*Andhra University, Head, Chairman, BOS in Education (UG),  
Department of Education

\*\* PhD Scholar. Andhra University

### Abstract

Adult learning and how it differs from that of children is a topic of ongoing discourse. This study, therefore, focuses on exploring the beliefs of university lecturers about adult learning principles and the impact of these beliefs on the application of the principles in Ethiopia. A qualitative case study was used to undertake the research. In this study, data were obtained from interviews performed with eight lecturers and focus group discussions conducted with sixteen learners. The data were analyzed through a thematic approach according to adult learning principles framed by Knowles (1980). The results reveal that lecturers fail to apply applicability of adult learning principles. Their beliefs hold them back from applying the principles to facilitate learning. Therefore, finding an alternative method that could alter lecturers' beliefs and then benefit adult learners is imperative.

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**CORRESPONDING  
AUTHOR:**

**Temesgen Oljira  
Geleta**

tmsgnljr@andhrauniversity.edu.in

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## INTRODUCTION

It is strongly claimed that adult learners have a disparate set of needs from those of children (Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1997; Yih & Huijser, 2011; Loeng, 2018). The traditional model of teaching which assigns to the teacher full responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, when it will be learned, and if it has been learned do not address the needs of adult learners (Knowles, 1980, 1984, 1990). Adult learning theories state that meaningful learning occurs when adults are allowed to guide their own learning (Merriam, 2008). According to Knowles et al., (1990) & Gravani (2012), once adults have arrived at the independent self-concept, they develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction. They resist situations in which they feel others are imposing their will on them.

Adults learn if they are active, self-directed, and autonomous (Merriam, 2008). It is also recognized that adults need a different approach to teaching (Nuckles, 2000). This approach is known as andragogy (Knowles, 1980). The concept of andragogy was introduced to English speakers in the twenty-first century and later popularized by Knowles (Loeng, 2018). To regard adults as self-directed learners, facilitators' beliefs about how adult learn are critical since beliefs affect one's thoughts and actions. Research suggests that beliefs govern attitudes, decisions, and practices (Hindin, Morocco, Moot & Aguilar, 2007; Buehl & Beck, 2015). Vermunt & Donche (2017) also claims that beliefs and learning strategies are highly connected. This study aims at investigating the beliefs of lecturers toward adult learning theory and their influence on its application.

### Teachers' beliefs and their influence

Changing culture which teachers have already established as a result of their belief is challenging. As suggested by Long et al., (2019), some beliefs are more central than others and the central ones are more difficult to change. According to Richardson (2003), teachers bring with them strong and most likely central beliefs about teaching. Richardson (2003, p. 2) defines belief as, "...psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true". Buehl & Beck (2015) state that teacher belief is the result of personal experiences and the system develops through unconscious experiences. For Shavelson & Stern (1981), teachers' beliefs are systems that direct what they perceive and act upon. Munby (1982) also states that teachers' beliefs are thought that use prior knowledge to guide what teachers think about learners' behavior.

The belief held by someone determines how he/she acts and behaves (Chai, Teo, & Lee, 2009). In turn, these determine the way a person receives new information and develops perception. Therefore, patterns of perception are influenced by held beliefs. Teachers interpret change through their lens of beliefs, which forms a basis for rejecting, accepting, or modifying change in terms of their own school, community, and class situation (Fullan, 2007).

According Long et al., (2019) all beliefs have a cognitive component representing knowledge, an affective component capable of arousing emotion, and a behavioral component activating action. The knowledge influences the value system that develops and the system, in turn, determines behavior. Beliefs have a possibility of resulting in becoming value in which the already held inclination transfers to actions. The affective components of belief are important to regulate the time and energy teachers spend to perform a task (Long et al., 2019).

Therefore, actions taken and practices exercised by lecturers are strongly influenced by their beliefs (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Other scholars such as Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) add that the attitudes of lecturers affect the methodology they use. Long et al., (2019) conducted a study on bridging the belief-action gap in the teaching of thinking. Their study shows that there is a strong relationship between beliefs and actions. Devine, Fahie, & McGillicuddy (2013) also carried out a study regarding the

influence of beliefs and practices and find out that beliefs determine actions. These important factors, beliefs, are difficult to change. Wallace & Priestley (2011) state that changing a belief is extremely difficult and it takes time to alter the already fossilized ideas.

## **Adult learning principles and their roles in helping adult learning**

Andragogy is the theory of adult learning that explains how adults learn and how it differs from how children learn. Knowles (1984) claims that adult learners have a disparate set of needs from those of traditional learners. He compares adult learning with that of teaching children, pedagogy (Blondy, 2007). For Knowles, the pedagogical methods of teaching give full responsibility for making all decisions and it assumes learners have dependent personalities (Knowles, 1984). The adult learning principles (andragogy), however, take a different approach and assumes adult learners are responsible for their own learning and they develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others as being capable of self-direction. They resist situations in which they feel others are imposing their wills on them (Knowles, 1984).

The ideas of adult learning principles are mostly grounded in the following six basic assumptions: the need to know, rich in experiences, self-concept, readiness to learn, intrinsically motivated, and orientation of learning. This research focuses on these six principles because they are assumed as effective method of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1970; Merriam, 2008). Adults learn for a purpose. They are eager to know the benefit of learning and the disadvantage of not learning (Vella & Vella, 2002). As Knowles (1984) states adults learn primarily out of necessity and learning should be a satisfying and pleasurable experience. To make learning successful, it is important to involve adults to decide what they learn, to set their goals, and to plan. Loeng (2020) states that self-direction is a continuum that exists to some degree in every person and learning situation, the degree in adult learning, however, much more important.

In addition to knowing the purposes of learning, adults draw upon prior experiences when undertaking new learning experiences. They have more diverse experiences in comparison with younger learners. Consequently, adults learn best where learning activities are associated with real-life experiences (Mezirow, 1997). They are mature and therefore have accumulated experiences and have a wide knowledge base. Those experiences can also lead them to biases and single-mindedness. Therefore, adults need to recognize that unlearning is at times required. This means that facilitators need to take into account their learners' diverse experiences with care. Brocket (2005) asserts that adults' tendency towards self-direction is influenced by experiences as well as factors such as the educational level, quality of life, and independence. Learners who have self-directed learning skills can easily become lifelong learners (Loeng, 2020). To address these needs, using varieties of different instructional methods is recommended (Knowles, 1990).

While younger learners might need to be guided through their learning, mature learners usually learn more if they are autonomous in deciding what and how to learn (Harrison, 2000). Self-concept is, therefore, used as a guiding source of learning, and does not need rigorous instructional intervention (Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Vella & Vella (2000) also add that adult learners want to use their time and energy on the task that helps them solve practical and immediate problems. Therefore, the roles of lecturers shift from transmitter of knowledge to facilitator (Tekkol & Demirel, 2018). Self-directed learning, as (Winne, 2010) emphasizes, mature learners have a self-concept of controlling their learning and behavior.

Readiness to learn is also another principle of adult learning. Adults are more inclined more toward learning experiences that help them cope with situations they face in their daily life (Knowles, 1980). The content to be taught and the learners' needs should match with their expectations. Therefore, the willingness to learn comes from perceiving the relevance of the knowledge to be learned. Adults learn best when they know that knowledge has immediate value for them (Vella & Vella, 2002). Therefore, need learning to be timely and relevant. The assumption is that facilitators need to realize adult learners come to learning for very specific reasons. According to Yih & Huijser (2011), facilitation skills are very important as they can help facilitators allow learners to direct their learning. Demirören et al., (2020) state that to help learners develop self-regulated skills, facilitators should encourage active participation of learners by questioning, explaining, justifying, and evaluating ideas during the session as these can trigger adults' readiness to learn.

Furthermore, adults respond favorably to intrinsic motivators (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). To be encouraged to learn, adults look for convincing reasons (Knowles, 1980). Knowles (1984) states that adults are motivated to learn mostly by internal factors, such as increased self-esteem, self-actualization, or recognition. Knowles believes that adults are best motivated to succeed with their educational goals when they are recognized and appreciated for individual contributions to the class. For meaningful and engaging learning to happen, offering reasons why learning is happening matters (Blondy, 2007; Winne, 2010).

Another principle of adults' learning is their orientation toward learning (Knowles, 1984). Since adult learners are mature, their time perspectives change from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application (Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Consequently, their orientation toward learning shifts from content-oriented to problem-centered. Mature learners spend their time on the activities and skills that help them to solve practical problems (Vella & Vella, 2000). Self-directed learning can enhance the opportunities of using learning in need-based ways (Winne, 2010). Adult learning principles, therefore, encourage self-directed learning. In problem-based learning processes, both learners and facilitators may face difficulties in the process of transition from being dependent to independent. A facilitator's role is helping, providing guidance instead of solutions (Demirören et al., 2020).

Generally, adult learning principles recommend facilitation instead of teaching because facilitators are more conscious of requirements and recognize the needs of learners than teachers (Merriam, 2008). In facilitation, learners and facilitators coordinate the session; facilitators help learners to determine their own way of learning, and priorities are connecting concepts/theories to learners' experiences (Blondy, 2007). In teaching, however, teachers are the primary controller of the session, ways of learning are decided by teachers, and priorities are given to concepts/theories (Harrison, 2000).

The teaching approach set in the Educational and Training Policy of Ethiopia is an active learning methodology. Independent, collaborative, and cooperative learning, however, is poorly practiced (MoE, 2018). According to the personal observation of the researcher, lecturers of Ambo University tend to use the traditional approach of teaching although the policy recommends active learning methods. Adult learning principles, which are a typical example of active learning approaches, put learners at the center of learning. This study investigates the belief held by lecturers about adult learning principles and their influences on the practice in one department of Ambo University, the Educational Planning Management Department. To this end, the research questions leading this study are:

- a. What are the beliefs of lecturers toward the usage of adult learning principles?
- b. How do these beliefs influence lecturers in applying these principles?

## Methods

In order to address the research questions posed above, a qualitative case study approach was used. Case study research is a method with strong philosophical underpinnings, providing access to detailed information about targeted groups in the study (Yin, 2009). According to Long et al., (2019), examining belief requires access to what lecturers think, say and do. This access is actualized by following a case study approach for this study, as it provides a wide range of information in exploring lecturers' beliefs regarding adult learning principles' applicability.

## Sampling

The educational system of Ethiopia uses various modalities to expand the chances of learning for its citizens. One modality is summer in-service programs sponsored by the government for its employees; accommodation, tuition fees, and other living services are covered by the government. This modality of learning open up chance for teachers who have already graduated and want to upgrade their profession after serving for some years (MoE, 2015).

Enriching schools with effective and successful leaders is one of the aims of the educational system of Ethiopia. To achieve this aspiration, different training phases are followed (Tesfaye, 2018). One of the programs currently running to train school leadership is known as a postgraduate diploma in school leadership (PGDSL) training. The participants of the program are graduates who have already graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Education and are at work. The objective of the program is to produce school principals and supervisors who improve the quality of instruction and learning in schools (MoE, 2014).

The participants of this study are lecturers and learners in the Department of Educational Planning and Management. In this department, there are 11 lecturers of which two are female and the rest are male. There is one male department head. The working experiences of these lecturers range from nine to 22 years. Out of 11, a total of eight lecturers (including the head of the department) participated in the interviews; out of these, seven are male and one is female. In addition, 16 learners of which three are female and the rest are male were purposefully included in the study.

## Data collection

One of the major data-gathering tools was a semi-structured interview conducted with lecturers. Interviews help to seek out individual experiences and perspectives (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews were constructed depending on the theoretical background of adult learning principles. A guiding protocol was used to prepare interview questions. Beliefs of lecturers about these principles and their practices were gathered through interview. Interview was recorded and later transcribed. Each interview lasted for about an hour. In addition, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted. FGD help attain a deeper shared meaning of responses and provide a unique opportunity to obtain rich group interaction ( Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2009). To triangulate the data obtained from lecturers through interviews, FGDs were also conducted with learners. Breen (2006) asserts that FGD can help the researcher to understand l experiences. Two focus groups with eight participants in each group were conducted. The FGDs were audio-recorded and the researcher's notes were transcribed for analysis. To enhance the credibility of the data, the findings of the study were communicated with respondents and necessary modifications were assured. To maintain ethical standards, the researcher secured informed consent from informants and also guaranteed anonymity.

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively. First, the data gathered from interviews were transcribed. Then, they were coded with specific references to the six adult learning principles framed in this study (fig.1). Once the initial groupings were developed, the framework employed for this research guided the process of data analysis as the emerging codes, categories, and themes were constantly related to the six learning principles. The data from FGD were analyzed initially by looking for the theoretical frames. In addition, they were analyzed for their similarity or disparity with the responses from the interview results. To keep the anonymity of the participants, abbreviations ( e.g. IR= interview; FGD = focus group discussion) were used.

## Results

In the following section, the analysis of the belief of lecturers toward adult learning principles application in facilitating adult learning and their influences on lecturers' practice are presented by referring to the six principles.

### The need to know

Knowing the purpose and the goals of learning are crucial in making adults' learning effective (Knowles, 1984). Most of the lecturers, stated that they believe in introducing the goals of the course and the objectives of the daily lessons, yet they stated that they do not disclose all they do in class. According to their belief, expressing the purpose of each activity is not important for learning. They believe that deciding learning activities and instructions entirely falls on lecturers. The claims were that it is not necessary to communicate the why and how of instructions to learners. one participant claimed: “ *I introduce the purpose of the course and objectives of the lessons, but I do not think it is relevant to make my learners know the reasons for each thing I instruct them...* ” A similar view was expressed by another interviewee, “ *making learners involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning may lead the program to become less effective because learners lack the knowledge and skills to decide on the type of instruction and assessment.* (IR4)

As the data reveal, lecturers do not communicate to learners the why and how of learning. Most decisions are made by lecturers. The following is a description of the experiences of another interviewee:

*My teaching is guided by the nature of the content I teach. It does not depend on the needs of learners. The curriculum requires methodologies that help achieve the objectives. Valuing learners' needs may not lead to successful teaching and learning. During teaching, I do not give much attention to let learners know everything while delivering the lesson. (IR8)*

The focus group discussions held with learners also confirm that lecturers make most of the decisions without engaging learners. One of the informants during FGD explained: “*I have rarely come across a situation that has involved learners in making decisions. We, as learners, have not been given proper opportunities to express our needs*”.

### Learners' Experiences

The data suggest that considering learners' prior experiences in the learning process is not taken into consideration. The reason is that both lecturers and learners seem comfortable in the traditional method. One lecturer reflected: “*giving chances to the learners to learn by themselves appears impracticable in our context. Both lecturers and learners are the product of the traditional approach. They assume learners as passive recipients in the process of the teaching-learning process*”. (IR2)

Another participant expressed that he prefers the traditional approach of teaching. According to this respondent, the traditional approach is more effective than the learner-centered approach. He expressed his view as follows:

*In our current context, the traditional method to teaching is better than learner-centered approach. I do not come across any colleague who is effective by the new approach and me, too. In my view, we are detaching from traditional methods without understanding the active learning methods. (IR4)*

Lecturers believe that learners' experiences cannot be a guiding tool of learning. This is the assumption that the lectures make and then ignore learners' experiences. The instruction given does, therefore, not take into account the experiences of learners. The data reveal that lecturers rarely consider the experience of learners. Here are excerpts from two respondents: “*even if lecturers want to apply the active learning approach, there are factors that hold them back. The nature of courses are not conducive for the application of experience-based learning.*”(IR1)

Another interviewee :

*In our context, making adults self-responsible may not lead them to be effective in their learning because of their background. The education system learners pass through does not fully allow them to be self-responsible. As a result, I do not usually let them decide on the types of methodology and nature of learning activities to be applied. (IR8)*

Likewise, the data from FGD with learners show that the experiences of learners are not considered in the teaching-learning process. Learners poorly allowed performing a task or solving problems. One student expressed the following:

*There is no special treatment for us. The lecturers treat us like children. We do what they order us to do. Everything is decided by them. Our experiences are seldom considered. Except for very few lecturers, most are even unwilling to accept the smallest request from a student. (FGD)*

## Learners' Self-concept

During the interviews, lecturers stated that if learners are autonomous for decision, they become reckless. The context does not encourage learners' autonomy. It makes them expect lecturers to deliver lessons rather than being responsible for their own learning. One of the participants expressed:

*How is it possible to promote self-learning where contents are already determined externally? The nature of the course does not allow independent learning. The assessment is provided to check whether the learners have achieved the objectives or not. This makes learners focus on being certified rather than acquiring knowledge. They focus more on grades than on gaining knowledge. (IR8)*

The data suggests that lecturers have a low level of confidence in the adult learning principle's applicability. The approach, as well as the background of learners, influence the way lecturers view the applicability of self-directed learning. One of the participants expresses that the traditional approach of teaching is more reliable than that of self-directed learning.

*I have taught for a long time. I have had opportunities to work under different educational policies that apply different teaching approaches: teacher-centered and student-centered. When I compare, learners who are taught according to teachers centered approach are more competent than those who taught by learner-centered approach. (IR6)*

Another participant added:

*Our culture does not allow us to explore things by ourselves lest we commit mistakes. It does not favor learning by trial and error. Learners rarely try to do new things to avoid committing a mistake. This perception makes them develop a recipient character. This compelled me to follow the traditional approach of teaching. (IR4)*

Self-directed study is not well practiced as lecturers' belief toward adult learning principles are influenced by the context. The focus group discussion conducted with learners notes that lecturers dominate the decision-making process. Furthermore, the program or the curriculum denies learners chances to participate in the decision-making process. The voice of the learners is insignificant in making decisions, even when high participation of learners is necessary. One of the themes emerging from focus group discussion with learners on self-directed learning is:

*Lecturers fail to take into account the demands of learners. They like lecture-style instruction. They are more concerned with content coverage than with learners' learning. The methods to teaching and learning are controlled by teachers. There are just a few occasions when lecturers enable learners to make decisions on matters that require our inputs. Lecturers are fully responsible for activities, examinations and teaching techniques. (FGD)*



## Readiness to learn

When adult learners are aware of the importance of contents, learning is enhanced (Blondy, 2007). This implies that when contents are immediately applicable to their needs, they are ready to learn. The data from the interview show that lecturers are not ready to consider learners' needs because they assume the context is not conducive.

Data indicate that the beliefs of lecturers on the readiness of learners to run their own learning are not promising. One participant reflects:

*Learners lack a self-dependent attitude toward their own learning. They are not confident enough to manage it. Learners expect lecturers to teach, guide, and shape them. Therefore, letting them relate current learning with the experiences they have already acquired is impractical as they are not ready. (IR3)*

Another respondent states:

*In our context where there is insufficient resources, inflexible curriculum and poor experiences, I do not think that learners readiness to learn makes the learning process effective. From my point of view, this approach cannot work in our current context. (IR5)*

The lecturers say that the nature of the courses determines their actions. They are determined to accomplish the objectives of courses rather than addressing the needs of learners. One of the participants expresses his view as follow:

*Making learners autonomous does not result in successful learning. When I try to make learners more independent, their leaning suffers. I once assigned learners assignments that they hat to complete alone and then remark on in class and they were not ready. (IR3)*

The data from the focus group discussions conducted with learners also shows that lecturers overlook the needs of learners. They seldom listen to learners' interests. During the discussions, the learners state that their needs are rarely valued.

## Motivation to learn

Adults are more likely to want to learn when they are interested in the issue being addressed because they see the usefulness of the learning (Merriam, 2008).

The data in this study show that most lecturers believe that their learners' desire to learn is externally motivated. According to lecturers' view, learners attend the program to secure benefits. Here are examples of excerpts illuminating these views:

*I do not think the learners are here to learn for self-development. They lack the motivation of accomplishing activities that do not directly relate to grade point. They usually consider their actions in terms of earning a grade that, in turn, results in salary increment (IR2)*

Another interviewee added:

*Learners are not ready to be independent. Letting them decide the contents they learn and the*

*assessment used will not be productive because adult learners associate their learning with earning a grade. They do not want to fully engage in the learning process, they wait for lecturers' back-up. (IR7)*

Students lack commitment of taking responsibility for their own learning. When they are given chances to lead their learning by themselves, they expect lecturers' intervention. The lecturers indicate that they are not satisfied with learners' achievement in self-guided learning. The following is an extract from an interview response:

*If you create an environment that makes learners autonomous, for instance, to participate in setting activities, the purpose of learning will be jeopardized. In this case, learners adjust things in a way that only satisfies them. I think, they may not choose activities that lead them to attain the needed objectives. The contents and activities they choose may be inappropriate. (IR5)*

According to the focus group discussion held with learners, lecturers seldom express reason for activities and assessments. Learners describe that the dominating approach of lecturers made them question the validity of their own actions.

## Orientation to learning

Adult learners need to know the reasons for 'why and when' before they are actively involved in the learning process (Knowles, 1984; Blondy, 2007). Knowing the reasons alone may not guarantee that they learn, but they may question the immediacy of the new knowledge and skills to be applied in their life. The data for this study reveal that most lecturers lack the belief in making learners engaged in life-centered learning experiences. They do not have a firm belief in the importance of emphasizing on immediately applicable knowledge. A participant said, "... letting learners plan and guide their own learning may be effective. But, in our context, this does not work..." (IR7). Another interviewee also adds, "... since the curriculum is designed at national level, it is difficult to adjust with learners' needs..." (IR4).

Most lecturers mention that focusing on the areas that immediately address the needs of learners requires time, readiness, and resources. They claim that the actual context is not suitable for self-directed learning. A participant states:

*Offering real-world examples and creating scenarios that gratify the needs of learners are acceptable, yet the time we have and the readiness of learners do not allow us to emphasize and think about how contents can immediately be applied in their life. (IR3)*

Participants of the focus group discussion express a similar view.

*Lecturers spend most of the time on the description of theoretical concepts which are seldom applicable in our life. The real problems we usually face as learners lack attention. The examples they take may help us in our future life, but it is not directly applicable in our current situation. (FGD)*

Participants of FGD claim that what they learn and do in the classroom poorly prepares them for solving immediate problems. According to their views, lecturers do not work to meet learners' immediate needs. However, they usually spend time covering theoretical concepts.

## Discussion

It is strongly claimed that adults learn best when they guide their own learning (Knowles, 1980, 1984, 1998; Merriam, 2008; Loeng, 2018), and the principles of adult learning state that contexts that allow adult learners to learn independently and autonomously are needed. This study tries to explore the beliefs of lecturers towards the applicability of adult learning principles in facilitating adult learning and their influences on actions. Accordingly, the results of the study indicate that lecturers have a lot of doubts that their students are ready to be handled according to adult learning principles. Consequently, they are unable to effectively apply the principles since their beliefs impact their actions. (Hindin et al., 2007).

Although adult learning principles suggest that learners need to know the purpose of activities, assessments, and actions that happen in the teaching-learning process (Németh, 2014; Loeng, 2020), the results of this study show that lecturers are not in a position of making learners know what is going on in the process of learning. They assume that addressing learners' needs is difficult to manage. Although they try to communicate the objectives of the course, they fail to meaningfully involve adult learners to decide in how and what they are learning. Kim (2020) states that adult learning can be successful if adult learners participate in planning their learning. One possible reason why lecturers find it difficult to believe in the applicability of the principles may be that the teaching and learning culture they have developed influences their beliefs and actions (Serbessa, 2006).

The results also show that the lecturers also fail to acknowledge the contribution of adult learners' experiences for learning. This, however, is inconsistent with approach of adults' learning. Studies claim that adult learners' experiences can highly contribute to effective learning (Mezirow, 1997). Studies also indicate that experiences may lead to biased learning and may lead to flaws in learning (Robinson, 1992). As most literature states, however, the experiences of learners if used properly can positively contribute to adult learning. The background of learners affects the tendency to link their past experiences to learning if appropriately used (Harrison, 2000; Nuckles, 2000; Gravani, 2012). The current results and previous study's inconsistencies maybe because lecturers are not ready to make learning participatory and the culture may influence their attitude. Furthermore, the culture of learning that learners experience may also influence lecturers belief.

Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own learning (Vella & Vella, 2000). They need to be autonomous in directing their learning. According to the results of this study, however, lecturers have little faith in learners' capability to manage their own learning. The results of the study differ from the assumptions stated by the adult learning principles. One possible reason why the results are not in harmony with previous studies may be the impact of contexts. The lecturers seem to think that the self-concept of adult learning is susceptible to influence. This may result from not knowing how the principles are applied. In addition, lack of facilitation skills may also influence lecturers' beliefs and actions.

Readiness to learn is one principle that is assumed to help adults learn effectively. According to the result of the current study, lecturers have a long way to go in recognizing students' preparedness. Studies, however, indicate that adults are more inclined to have better learning experiences that help them cope with the situations they face in their daily life (Knowles, 1980). Blondy (2007) also states that adults

learn more when they are aware of the importance of the contents. Learners' self-efficacy may influence the belief of lecturers about adult learners. Winne (2010) states that teachers' beliefs about learners' ability to learn greatly influence their experiences.

According to the result of this study, lecturers inclined in assuming that learners are extrinsically motivated. They believe that learners' desire to learn is externally motivated. However, as the adult learning principles portray, adults are intrinsically motivated to learn (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2008). While younger learners do not necessarily want to know why they are required to learn, adult learners need to be involved in the learning process. Thus, the results of the study and adult learning principles are in contrast. This inconsistency may be due to culture of learning. According to lecturers' belief, learners want to learn for promotion, salary increment, and incentive. This implies the drive behind learning is not developmental but instrumental. Therefore, lecturers may be influenced by the traditional approach of learning and teaching process.

Regarding the orientation of learning, the results show that lecturers fail to engage learners in life-centered learning experiences. They lack a firm belief in the importance of emphasizing practical and immediately applicable learning. They fail to inform their learners about the importance of learning in solving their immediate problems. Adult learning principles, however, state that adult learners essentially learn new things if they are applicable in solving the problems they encounter on a regular basis. They do not only want to know applicability but also whether or not the learning is applicable in the immediate future (Knowles, 1984). The finding, however, shows that lecturers rarely admit the possibility of making learners engage in the learning process. The inconsistency between lecturers' beliefs and adult learning principles may be because of their experiences.

Similarly, the result of this study also shows that lecturers seldom encourage learners to learn by themselves. Their beliefs fail to make learners feel that they are a part of the learning process. If learners are unable to question the importance of the learning and get unsatisfactory responses, they potentially alienate themselves (Harrison, 2000).

Lecturers' beliefs and actions are incongruent with adult learning principles. The learning process fails to give reasons for activities learners are meant to do. Adults are practical in their approach to learning and they want to know the relevance of the learning (Knowles, 1984; Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Therefore, connecting learning to the goals of learners will result in meaningful learning. According to the principle of adult learning, adult learners want to know why they learn something and how they learn it (Blondy, 2007). Furthermore, the values of learning need to be understood by adult learners (Knowles 1980; 1984). In this case, if activities and tasks provided for them are not meaningfully communicated, they are not ready to learn and this, in turn, affects the learning process (Knowles, 1984; Blondy, 2007). In general, lecturers are not in a position of respecting learners' inherent needs of knowing the reason for learning. The practice of the teaching-learning process on the ground is not problem-centered, but rather subject-centered. These beliefs have a significant influence on the way they think (Munby, 1982

; Buehl and Beck, 2015) as the context and background of learners and the experiences of lecturers have a significant influence on their beliefs. Gravani (2012) also adds that the experiences and self-awareness that adult learners bring to the classroom influence their learning. These aspects are, therefore, important for an effective learning process.

The failures of lecturers to apply the learning principles can make their own decisions in which independent, and prefer self-directed learning may result from the lack of trust they have in their students. Consequently, they dominate learners by using the traditional approach of teaching. This, however, contradicts adult learning principles. According to these principles, unless the psychological needs of

learners are met, adult learning usually remains ineffective (Knowles, 1984). Adults want to be offered choice and be encouraged to plan their learning goals, participate in decision making and be active in the entire learning process (Knowles, 1984; Merriam, 2008; Loeng, 2018).

The vast majority of lecturers believe that the application of adult learning principles cannot bring about a productive instructive learning process (Robinson, 1992). It is assumed by lecturers that using the principles to enhance learning is inconsequential in the existing context. They may come to these conclusions because of their exposure and experience.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The self-directed learning approach and facilitation methods of instruction are appreciated ways of helping adults learn. The result of the current study, however, shows that lecturers are poorly implementing them. It seems that there is lack of progress in using active learning methods. Since this does not go in line with the current approach of learning, methods like constructivism, problem based study, or/and community of practice may be used as an alternatives.

The researcher acknowledges that this research has limitations. First, the participants of the study are from one single institution and also lecturers' theoretical beliefs were assessed to investigate the influence on practices. The studies that deeply dig out what governs lecturers' beliefs and explore the relationship between other facets for lecturers' beliefs systems and practices are needed for more exploration. Despite limitations, this study reveals that lecturers' beliefs influence the ways learners are approached. Lecturers apply the traditional approaches of teaching which is contrary to adult learning principles. Using the appropriate method that considers the needs of learners can enhance learning; it provides an opportunity for both learners and lecturers (Turnbull, 2009). Lecturers who apply adult learning principles are likely to be effective in achieving learning objectives. Their practice is likely to lead to effective facilitation if the environments of learning are conducive. Furthermore, the belief of lecturers considerably influences their readiness of applying the principles which allow learners to guide their own learning.

Expecting lecturers to implement the learner-centered approach without considering their beliefs may lead to ineffective learning. Therefore, creating a conducive environment that develops lecturers' beliefs toward the application of adult learning principles is crucial.

Hence, equipping lecturers with facilitation skills both as continuous professional development and initial training is very important. If lectures fail to believe and apply these principles, the learning process may result in an ineffective learning process. Overall, the results of this study stress that lecturers' beliefs are an important component in thinking when instructing adult learners. Further investigation into the concept of adult learning may be researched in a more systematic approach.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

## **Author's Affiliation**

### **Dr. T.Sharon Raju**

Andhra University, Head, Chairman, BOS in Education (UG) Department of Education  
Email: [sharonrajut@gmail.com](mailto:sharonrajut@gmail.com)

### **Temesgen Oljira Geleta**

PhD Scholar. Andhra University  
Email: [tmsgnljr@andhrauniversity.edu.in](mailto:tmsgnljr@andhrauniversity.edu.in)

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