
EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS IN ESSENTIAL CLOTHING CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

Dr. Amelita M. De Vera
Pangasinan State University – Lingayen Campus
Lingayen, Pangasinan

ABSTRACT

*This qualitative research examined the lived experiences, challenges, and perceived skill development of learners engaged in acquiring foundational knowledge and practices in clothing construction. Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study sought to understand how learners navigated the technical and personal aspects of the training. Findings revealed that while learners initially struggled with measurement accuracy, cutting patterns, sewing machine operation, and understanding technical terminologies, consistent practice and guided instruction gradually helped them build confidence and competence. Many participants highlighted feelings of accomplishment upon completing simple garments, emphasizing how these outcomes deepened their appreciation of craftsmanship and fostered patience, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Challenges such as limited access to quality materials, time constraints, and frustration with precision work were also reported, underscoring the need for more hands-on guidance and available resources. Despite these obstacles, learners acknowledged that their participation led to significant skill development not only in technical proficiency but also in resilience, adaptability, and collaboration. Peer support and instructor feedback enriched the learning process, demonstrating that clothing construction served as both a practical skill and a platform for personal growth. The study concluded that essential clothing construction techniques contributed to learners' independence, discipline, and teamwork, with implications for curriculum development in vocational and technical education. It is recommended that training programs integrate more structured demonstrations, provide adequate resources, and encourage collaborative learning environments. Furthermore, the development of a comprehensive reference material, such as the proposed book “**Essential Techniques in Clothing Construction**”, is suggested to serve as both a practical guide and an academic resource for learners, teachers, and practitioners.*

Keywords: *Clothing construction techniques, learner experiences, skill development, vocational education, craftsmanship*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to create garments through clothing construction techniques is one of the most fundamental skills in the field of Home Economics, Technical-Vocational Education, and Fashion-related programs. Essential clothing construction techniques such as proper stitching, cutting, seam finishing, pattern making, and fabric handling serve as the foundation for producing quality garments. These skills not only foster creativity and craftsmanship but also instill values of patience, resourcefulness, and precision in learners. In educational contexts, clothing construction is more than just a technical subject—it is a training ground for discipline, problem-solving, and self-expression.

Despite the importance of these techniques, many learners encounter diverse experiences that shape their learning journey. Some find motivation and fulfillment in applying their skills to real-life projects, while others struggle with challenges such as lack of resources, limited practice opportunities, or difficulty in mastering intricate tasks. The learning environment, teacher guidance, and personal attitudes also play a critical role in shaping how students perceive and engage with clothing construction activities. These varying experiences highlight the need to explore the perspectives of learners to better understand both the challenges they face and the skills they gain.

Qualitative research offers a meaningful avenue to capture the lived experiences of students engaged in clothing construction. By listening to learners' narratives, educators and curriculum developers can gain valuable insights into how teaching strategies, resources, and assessment methods can be improved. Furthermore, examining these experiences provides an opportunity to uncover the transformative impact of clothing construction on learners' personal growth, confidence, and practical competencies.

The scope of this study is limited to exploring the lived experiences of learners in essential clothing construction techniques within a classroom-based setting, focusing on how they acquire, practice, and apply basic sewing and garment-making skills. It seeks to understand their challenges, learning processes, and perceived improvements in technical and creative competencies. The study is delimited to selected learners currently enrolled in clothing construction courses and does not include advanced dressmaking or fashion design programs, as the intent is to capture foundational skill development. Furthermore, the research emphasizes qualitative data gathered through interviews, observations, and reflections, thus excluding quantitative measures of performance or proficiency. Findings may not be generalized beyond the specific group studied, but they aim to provide meaningful insights that may inform future curriculum enhancements and instructional strategies in essential clothing construction.

This study sought to examine the perceptions, challenges, and learning outcomes of students involved in this subject. It aims to provide a deeper understanding of how learners navigate their learning journey, the skills they acquire, and the meaning they derive from the process. Through this exploration, the study aspires to contribute to enhancing teaching practices and enriching the learning experiences of future students in clothing construction and related fields.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the experiences of learners in essential clothing construction techniques to understand their challenges, learning processes, and skill development.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What experiences did learners share regarding their engagement in essential clothing construction techniques?
2. How did learners describe the challenges they encountered while learning essential clothing construction techniques?
3. In what ways did learners perceive that their skills and knowledge were developed through essential clothing construction techniques?

Review of Related Literature

Research on clothing construction and related pedagogical approaches has expanded in recent years, offering valuable insights into how learners experience the acquisition of technical sewing and garment-making skills. Valle-Noronha (2020) highlighted the importance of student-centered workshops in pattern cutting, where learners actively engaged in trial, reflection, and iteration. The findings demonstrated that exploratory learning methods improved students' confidence and deepened their understanding of the relationship between construction decisions and garment fit, underscoring the value of learner autonomy in technical skill development.

Building on the significance of experiential learning, Myers and Eike (2020) evaluated a service-learning "stitch shop" and found that authentic, community-based applications of construction skills enhanced learners' motivation, technical proficiency, and self-efficacy. This integration of real-world practice allowed students to see greater relevance in their classroom activities, suggesting that practical, socially engaged experiences can positively influence perceptions of skill mastery.

In parallel, innovative instructional approaches have emerged to support learners in mastering essential clothing techniques. Temple (2022) emphasized the role of recorded video lessons as supplementary resources for garment construction, noting that the availability of step-by-step visual guides helped learners overcome anxiety, reinforced procedural recall, and enabled flexible review outside the classroom.

Similarly, Sun (2024) advocated for the integration of virtual simulation and online platforms into clothing design courses. By blending digital and hands-on practice, learners not only gained greater procedural clarity but also benefited from diverse opportunities for skill application, addressing the limitations of monotonous teaching strategies and scarce practice resources.

At the systemic level, broader educational concerns have also shaped learners' experiences in garment construction programs. Asuncion et al. (2023) identified a persistent mismatch between academic curricula, workplace competency standards, and access to advanced industry tools such as CAD/CAM systems.

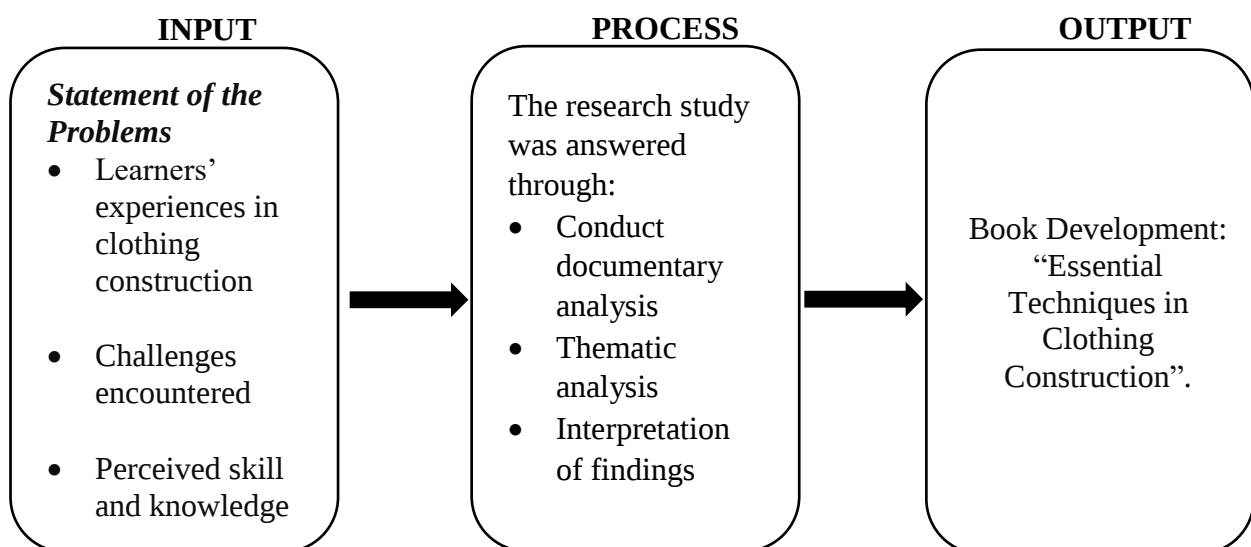
These gaps often left students underprepared for professional demands, affecting their sense of readiness and engagement with core construction practices. Taken together, these studies demonstrate that learners' experiences in clothing construction are influenced by a combination of hands-on, student-centered learning, the integration of innovative digital tools, and structural issues in curriculum design and industry alignment. This body of literature underscores the need to explore not only how learners acquire technical skills but also how they perceive their preparedness and motivation in relation to the evolving demands of the clothing and fashion industry.

Theoretical Framework

One of the theoretical frameworks that guided the study was **Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)**, proposed by David Kolb (1984). Kolb's theory emphasized that learning was a process whereby knowledge was created through the transformation of experience. It explained that learners progressed through a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In the context of clothing construction, learners did not merely acquire skills by memorizing steps, but rather by actively engaging in hands-on tasks such as cutting fabrics, sewing, and finishing garments. These concrete experiences allowed them to reflect on their actions, conceptualize sewing principles, and then apply improvements in subsequent tasks.

The framework was particularly relevant because it highlighted the active role of learners in constructing their own understanding of essential clothing techniques. Kolb (1984) suggested that practical, real-world engagement provided meaningful opportunities for learners to integrate theory with practice. As students participated in various clothing construction activities, they continuously cycled through practice, reflection, and adjustment, which deepened their skills and confidence. The theory also aligned with the qualitative design of the study since it focused on the lived experiences of learners as they engaged in skill development, personal growth, and problem-solving within the domain of clothing construction.

Conceptual Framework



In this study, the **Input** consists of the research questions that guide the exploration of learners' experiences in clothing construction. Specifically, the study seeks to determine what experiences learners shared regarding their engagement in essential clothing construction techniques, how learners described the challenges they encountered while learning such techniques, and in what ways they perceived their skills and knowledge were developed through these activities. These questions provide the foundation for gathering meaningful insights that reflect learners' lived experiences and perspectives.

The **Process** involves the use of a qualitative research approach to analyze and interpret the data collected. Learners' experiences, challenges, and perceptions are gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, or observations. The information is then examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, categories, and insights that reveal the depth of learners' engagement with clothing construction techniques. Through this process, the data are organized and synthesized, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the participants' voices and provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

The **Output** of the study is the development of a book titled "*Essential Techniques in Clothing Construction*." This book serves as a valuable resource that documents learners' experiences, highlights the challenges they faced, and illustrates how their skills and knowledge were enhanced through clothing construction activities. By compiling these insights, the book not only contributes to academic knowledge but also functions as a practical guide for future learners and educators. It offers structured content on essential techniques while embedding real-life experiences and reflections, thereby bridging theory and practice in clothing construction.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore the experiences of learners in essential clothing construction techniques. This design was deemed appropriate as it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the learners' reflections, practices, and challenges documented in their academic outputs. The population of the study consisted of learners enrolled in clothing construction classes, and purposive sampling was used to select documents that provided rich and relevant information about their experiences. Only materials such as reflection papers, learning journals, and course outputs directly related to clothing construction were included in the analysis.

Data gathering was conducted through document analysis, wherein the learners' written works were carefully examined to identify patterns and themes that described their learning journey in essential clothing construction techniques. The analysis followed a thematic approach, where recurring ideas and insights were coded, categorized, and synthesized to provide meaningful interpretations of the learners' experiences. This process ensured that the data were systematically examined and that the findings captured the essence of the students' perspectives.

The study was limited to the use of documents as sources of data, which meant that the researcher did not capture real-time verbal accounts such as interviews or focus group discussions. Despite this limitation, the method provided authentic evidence of learners' reflections and progress. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, as only documents voluntarily submitted and permitted for academic analysis were used. Anonymity and confidentiality of the learners were maintained by removing identifying details, ensuring that the study respected the rights and privacy of all participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the following questions were answered:

SOP 1. What experiences did learners share regarding their engagement in essential clothing construction techniques?

Learners shared that their engagement in essential clothing construction techniques was both a challenging and rewarding experience. Many described the process as initially overwhelming, particularly when confronted with technical skills such as accurate measurement, cutting patterns, and operating sewing machines. For some, the unfamiliarity with handling fabrics and tools created a sense of hesitation and fear of making mistakes. Despite these initial difficulties, learners emphasized that consistent practice and guided instruction helped them gradually develop confidence in performing tasks.

Several participants highlighted the sense of accomplishment they felt after completing their first projects, such as constructing basic garments and repairing simple clothing pieces. These achievements gave them a deeper appreciation of the effort and craftsmanship involved in clothing construction. Learners also pointed out that the practical nature of the activities fostered patience, creativity, and problem-solving skills, especially when they encountered errors and had to find ways to correct them. They acknowledged that the hands-on approach was an effective way to learn, as it provided them with tangible outcomes that reflected their progress.

Additionally, learners expressed that the collaborative aspect of the training enriched their experiences. Working alongside peers allowed them to share techniques, provide feedback, and encourage each other in moments of difficulty. The support of instructors was also regarded as crucial, with many learners noting that demonstrations, step-by-step guidance, and constructive feedback helped them understand complex procedures more effectively. Ultimately, their engagement in clothing construction techniques was not only about acquiring technical knowledge but also about gaining life skills that fostered independence, resilience, and creativity.

SOP 2. How did learners describe the challenges they encountered while learning essential clothing construction techniques?

- Learners expressed difficulty in mastering accurate measurements and pattern drafting, which often led to errors in garment fit and proportion.
- Many struggled with operating sewing machines, particularly with threading, controlling speed, and handling minor technical malfunctions.
- The complexity of stitching techniques such as hemming, seam finishing, and zipper application posed challenges for beginners.
- Learners reported time management issues, as some clothing construction tasks were more time-consuming than expected.
- Limited access to quality materials and tools hindered learners from practicing effectively.
- Some participants felt frustrated with precision work, especially in cutting fabrics and ensuring symmetry in garments.

- Learners experienced anxiety and lack of confidence, especially when comparing their outputs with peers.
- Understanding technical terminologies and instructions in clothing construction was described as overwhelming by several learners.
- Group activities sometimes created challenges due to differences in skill levels and pace of learning.
- Learners highlighted the need for more hands-on guidance and demonstrations from instructors to overcome their difficulties.

SOP 3. In what ways did learners perceive their skills and knowledge were developed through essential clothing construction techniques?

Learners perceived that their skills and knowledge were developed through essential clothing construction techniques by gaining a deeper understanding of both the theoretical and practical aspects of the craft. Many students emphasized that the hands-on nature of the lessons allowed them to translate abstract concepts into tangible outcomes. Through repeated practice, they became more confident in applying fundamental techniques such as measuring, cutting, stitching, and assembling fabric pieces, which gradually strengthened their technical proficiency.

Furthermore, learners expressed that their problem-solving skills and critical thinking were enhanced as they encountered challenges during the construction process. They learned to analyze mistakes, identify areas of improvement, and apply corrective measures, which fostered resilience and adaptability. This reflective process not only improved their craftsmanship but also developed their ability to work independently and think creatively in producing quality clothing pieces.

Another way learners perceived growth was in their appreciation of discipline, precision, and patience as integral to clothing construction. The meticulous steps required in sewing and garment-making taught them the importance of attention to detail and the value of accuracy in achieving desired outcomes. This instilled a sense of pride in their work and motivated them to uphold higher standards in their projects.

Lastly, learners acknowledged that their collaborative and communication skills were strengthened when they engaged in peer discussions, shared techniques, and received feedback from instructors. These interactions encouraged them to view clothing construction not only as an individual skill but also as a shared learning experience that could open pathways for professional growth. Overall, learners perceived that their development went beyond technical mastery, extending to personal and interpersonal competencies essential in both academic and real-life settings.

SUMMARY

The findings revealed that learners' experiences in engaging with essential clothing construction techniques were both challenging and rewarding. At the beginning, many of them felt overwhelmed by the technical demands of the tasks, such as accurate measurement, pattern cutting, and sewing machine operation. Some expressed hesitation in handling fabrics and tools

due to fear of making mistakes. However, through consistent practice and guided instruction, they gradually built confidence in performing the tasks. Learners shared a strong sense of accomplishment after completing their first projects, which deepened their appreciation for the effort and craftsmanship required in clothing construction. The practical activities also developed patience, creativity, and problem-solving skills, as they often had to correct errors during the process. Collaborative learning with peers and the guidance of instructors were regarded as vital in making the experience more effective and meaningful, as these encouraged mutual support, knowledge sharing, and step-by-step understanding of complex procedures. Ultimately, their engagement not only enhanced technical knowledge but also fostered independence, resilience, and creativity.

Learners also described the challenges they encountered while learning clothing construction techniques. Many of them struggled with mastering accurate measurements and drafting patterns, often resulting in garments with poor fit and proportion. Operating sewing machines was another source of difficulty, particularly in threading, controlling speed, and handling minor malfunctions. Complex stitching techniques, such as hemming, seam finishing, and zipper application, proved demanding for beginners. Some learners faced time management issues, as certain tasks required more time than they initially expected, while others were limited by the lack of access to quality materials and tools. The need for precision in cutting fabrics and ensuring garment symmetry also caused frustration. Furthermore, learners reported feelings of anxiety and low confidence, especially when comparing their work with peers, and found technical terms and instructions overwhelming. Group activities posed challenges due to varying skill levels among participants, and several learners emphasized the need for more demonstrations and hands-on guidance from instructors to help them overcome these barriers.

In terms of skill and knowledge development, learners perceived that their understanding of both theoretical and practical aspects of clothing construction improved significantly. The hands-on lessons allowed them to translate abstract concepts into concrete outcomes, enabling them to gain confidence in measuring, cutting, stitching, and assembling fabric pieces. Their problem-solving and critical thinking skills were also strengthened as they learned to analyze mistakes, implement corrections, and adapt to challenges, which fostered resilience and creativity. The process instilled in them an appreciation for discipline, precision, and patience, as these qualities were crucial in producing quality work. Learners expressed pride in their accomplishments and motivation to maintain high standards in their projects. They also acknowledged that their collaborative and communication skills improved through peer interactions and feedback from instructors. These experiences highlighted that their development extended beyond technical mastery, encompassing personal growth and interpersonal skills essential for both academic and real-life contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

- Learners' experiences in clothing construction were concluded to be both difficult and rewarding. Initial struggles with measurements, sewing machines, and fabric handling gave way to confidence through practice and guidance. Collaboration with peers and instructors further enriched their learning, helping them gain not only technical skills but also resilience, patience, and creativity.

- The challenges learners faced were concluded to include measurement errors, sewing machine difficulties, complex stitching, time constraints, and limited materials. These issues often caused frustration and anxiety, but learners recognized the value of more hands-on guidance and demonstrations to overcome such obstacles.
- It was concluded that learners developed technical, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills through repeated practice and reflection. They also learned discipline, accuracy, and patience while strengthening communication and teamwork, which extended their growth beyond technical mastery to personal and professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Learners' engagement in clothing construction can be further enhanced by integrating more structured hands-on activities with step-by-step demonstrations. Instructors should continue providing guided practice and collaborative tasks, as these fostered not only technical mastery but also creativity, independence, and problem-solving skills.
2. It is recommended that the challenges learners faced, such as measurement errors, sewing machine operation, and limited resources, be addressed by offering additional practice sessions, accessible tools, and simplified instructional materials. More interactive workshops and one-on-one guidance should be provided to help learners overcome technical and confidence-related barriers.
3. The development of learners' skills and knowledge can be strengthened by combining theoretical instruction with practical application. Opportunities for peer collaboration, reflective activities, and feedback sessions should be sustained to build discipline, accuracy, and teamwork while preparing learners for future professional pathways.
4. Lastly, it is recommended that the book *Essential Techniques in Clothing Construction* be developed as a comprehensive reference material that incorporates both theoretical concepts and practical step-by-step guides. The book should feature illustrations, simplified instructions, and reflective activities, making it a valuable resource for learners, instructors, and practitioners aiming to enhance competency in clothing construction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend my sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the success of this research. My deepest gratitude to the College of Teacher Education, the dean, faculty members, and students from the Lingayen campus for their valuable time and knowledge. I am also grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering support, and to PSU for the resources and assistance that helped make this study possible.

REFERENCES

- Asuncion, A. C., et al. (2023). Weaving gaps in garments education technology: Crafting responses to skills mismatch. Journal / Conference Article. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291123002619>
- Myers, B., & Eike, R. (2020). The impact of service-learning on apparel design students' self-efficacy of apparel construction, management, and communication skills (Project report/thesis). Iowa State University. <https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/bitstreams/c5ac2021-25b5-45b0-b67b-379cc9c178ca/download>
- Sun, X. (2024). Construction of innovative teaching models for clothing design major courses in the context of informatization education. Proceedings / Atlantis Press. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/126005043.pdf>
- Temple, E. C. (2022). Improving the teaching of TLE-Garment Construction through recorded video lessons (RVL) as supplementary learning tool. ResearchGate Preprint/Report. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364097003_Improving_the_Teaching_of_TLE-Garment_Construction_Through_Recorded_Video_Lessons_RVL_as_Supplementary_Learning_Tool
- Valle-Noronha, J. (2020). Experimenting pattern-cutting from a student-centred workshop. International Journal of Art & Design Education. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2020.1778798>