

## **Strategies for Facilitating the Activities of Itinerant Tailors in Niger State**

**Fabusuyi G.S.**

Department of Home Economics  
College of Education, Minna

### **Abstract**

The study examined the strategies which could be adopted to facilitate the activities of itinerant tailors in Niger state. Five research questions guided the study. The population for the study consisted of 1549 itinerant tailors and 379 teachers of Home Economics in the state. This gave a total population of 1,928. The sample was made up of 154 itinerant tailors and all the 37 Home Economics teachers, who were present at the meeting of Home Economics Teachers Association in the state giving a total of 191 respondents. The tailors were purposively selected from the three geo-political zones with equal representation of the 3 major towns across the state. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection which was face validated by three experts in related fields. Data were analysed using the mean scores. Findings revealed among others that the activities carried out by itinerant tailors are limited.

**Keywords:** Itinerant, Tailors, Strategies, Activities, Skills

### **Introduction**

There are very few occupations which can give the same degree of pleasure and satisfaction as tailoring. Tailoring can help to express interest and skill in design and colour, and making of garments that reflect taste and ideas.

Tailoring is an ancient craft which man's ingenuity gradually enabled him to make new tailoring materials. This made the making of garments became less difficult. Tailoring according to Igbo and Iloeje (2012) means making something so that it is exactly right for someone's particular needs or for a particular purpose. This implies that

skill and dexterity are needed to achieve good results. Interest and applications are needed to learn tailoring activities. The sense of achievement experienced on the completion of a well constructed, wearable garment is indeed worth working for. Tailoring involve designing, cutting, fitting and sewing of clothes and other household articles. It is a highly skilled activity involving craft, which is most personal and essential of all the applied arts (Vanderhoff, 2004).

Obiakor (2006) stated that activities are things that people do especially in order to achieve a particular aim.

According to Clayton (1997), tailoring activities is a vocation, which involves skills in designing, taking measurements, cutting, fitting and sewing of clothes. Activity involves doing something because the individual enjoy practising it. Vanderhoff (2004) noted that tailoring activities are valuable skills to have. He observed that knowing how to sew well is an activity which can help to save money by making or repairing clothes for self, family members and or for someone else.

Vanderhoff (2004) further pointed out that these activities can generate money and serve as a means of expressing creativity. Creativity in tailoring can best be expressed when the activity is carried out in a comfortable place. This is supported by Weber (1990) when he expressed that there is not much joy in tailoring if the work has to be packed up every time there are other things to do. Weber (1990) further observed that, the ideal is to have somewhere to leave it untouched. However, there are itinerant tailors who move about with all the tailoring materials which make the job stressful.

According to Obiakor (2006) itinerant mean formal travelling from place to place, especially to work. Itinerant tailors can therefore be seen as those tailors that move from one place to another with their sewing/tailoring facilities such as the sewing machines, scissors, tape measure, threads, zips, buttons, hooks and eyes and other handy tools in the process of carrying out their tailoring activities for them to earn a living. The itinerant tailors move

from one street to another with the weight of the hand sewing machine and other sewing accessories which may probably not be complete for the daily tailoring activities. This is a problem which may result in job limitations. Moving up and down in the harsh weather and the sitting posture involved in carrying out the tailoring activities is also a challenge to health. This is not in line with suggestion by (Neal, 2000) that, the ideal tailoring environment should have a large table with a smooth surface on which to layout the work. Neal (2000) further observed that a seat where the tailor can sit comfortably with the knees underneath the table is a necessity; this will enhance comfort and facilitate tailoring activities. The skill to select, cut and sew clothes and other household articles and repair clothes freely without any problem is all about facilitating the activities of tailors. Horn and Gurel (1981) opined that, a good knowledge about the use and care of sewing tools and equipment will facilitate tailoring activities.

Itinerant tailors travel from one place to another which probably make their job stressful, many of them do not know how to stitch clothes very well, they do not know how to cut, no knowledge about appropriate use of colour and no knowledge of ironing. The nature of their job which involved carrying sewing equipment and tools do not make it easy for them to carry all the important items needed to facilitate their activities. Many of them may probably not be able to afford buying all the necessary sewing tools. The sitting position in which they carry out their

job is also a challenge to health. There is the need to facilitate the activities of this group of tailors.

Itinerant tailors occupy important position in our society. This is because most of the clothing repairs of families and households in our society are being carried out by them. The sedentary tailors are mostly occupied with cutting and sewing of new clothes. The busy nature of their job does not allow them to have the time to loose and mend old clothes. This gap have created job for itinerant tailors and making them to be relevant to almost all families in Nigeria. There is therefore the need to proffer strategies for facilitating the activities of this group of tailors. A well-planned series of action for achieving effective job facilitation is the strategy.

Olaitan (2005) defined strategy as a well planned series of actions for achieving an aim. He explained that, it involves the ways and means of making use of available human and material resources intelligently and skillfully to arrived at a vision. Making use of available input to generate output through effective planning process is strategy. According to Craig (1983) effective strategies for facilitating the activities of itinerant tailors should involve knowledge and skill if maximum value is expected. Adequate knowledge which involves knowing about appropriate technique for sewing and a good tailoring plan is necessary. Skill which is the ability to do something very well especially because one has learned and practiced it is also necessary. According to Osinem and Nwoji (2005) skill is the ability to perform

an act expertly. Expertise or proficiency in the performance of a task is needed by itinerant tailor who travel from one place to another carrying their working tools and equipment all around in order to perform their daily job for sustainability. Most of these tailors engage in clothing repairs and alterations.

According to Weber (1990) clothing repairs involve changing of size, shape, length or design of garment. Neal (2000) in addition observed that clothing repairs and alteration include such tailoring activities as changing decorative - trims, collars and cuffs, making and replacing patches and fastenings. These tailoring activities are very important to families and households in our society. The fully established sedentary tailors claim not to have time for such jobs. They concentrate only on sewing new clothes. The bulk of family clothing repairs now rest on the itinerant tailors which many of them do not do very well. Many of these tailors cannot change collars and cuffs, they also use threads that are not matching in colour and very many of them cannot cut and change styles. Trekking around streets, carrying the sewing machine and other tools which are not often complete and the sitting position in which they carry out their activities is stressful and not in line with the suggestion of Neal (2000) that a seat where the tailor can be sit at comfortably with the knees underneath the table is a necessity. Inability to get the complete tailoring tools around them is a problem which can limit job. These are probably, associated with

ignorance and poverty. Okeke (2005) observed that appropriate skills to facilitate tailoring activities have not attained the expected level. Supporting this Njoku (2002), opined out that different clothing alterations and repairs require varying amounts of skills in sewing. With time and patience it is often possible to perform the activities. Ezeobele (2006) pointed out that it is however, unfortunate that some people lack necessary tailoring skills needed and the result is poor output.

There is therefore the need for government and other stakeholders to address the problems of this group of people.

The government, the society, curriculum planners and the itinerant tailors will benefit if the findings of the study is adopted:

The government will benefit when the problems/needs of itinerant tailors are known and adequately addressed it will help in solving the problem of youths under employment. Itinerant tailors will benefit when the stakeholder are aware of their problems and help them, this will facilitate their activities for improved work output and sustainable development.

The curriculum planners will benefit in that, the findings will shed light on skills deficiency and training needs of itinerant tailors thereby aiding appropriate curriculum planning.

The society will benefit when itinerant tailors are adequately trained and skilled because there will be better output for consumer satisfaction. For this reason, it has become necessary to identify strategies for facilitating the

activities of itinerant tailors in Niger state.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the strategies for facilitating the activities of itinerant tailors in Niger State. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. activities carried out by itinerant tailors in Niger state.
2. tailoring tools needed to facilitate the activities of itinerant tailors in Niger state.
3. sewing skills needed to facilitate the activities of itinerant tailors in Niger state.
4. problems encountered by itinerant tailors in carrying out their jobs in Niger state.
5. strategies that could be adopted to facilitate the activities of itinerant tailors in Niger state.

#### **Research Question**

The following research questions were used to guide study:

1. What are the activities carried out by itinerant tailors in Niger state?
2. What are the tailoring tools needed to facilitate the activities of itinerant tailors in Niger state?
3. What are the sewing skills needed by itinerant tailors to facilitate their activities in Niger state?
4. What are the problems encountered in carrying out tailoring activities by itinerant tailors in Niger state?
5. What strategies could be adopted toward facilitating the activities of itinerant tailors in Niger state?

## **Methodology**

**Area of study:** Area of study was Niger state using three major towns each under the three emirate councils: Bida, Minna and Kontagora which are zones A, B, and C respectively. Itinerant tailors in Niger state engage in clothing repairs and the kind of work they do demand that they work in large communities and markets in order to get enough patronage to make money for economic survival.

**Population for the study:** The population for the study consisted of 1549 itinerant tailors and 379 Home Economics teachers in secondary schools and Colleges of Education in Niger state. This gave a total population of 1928 subjects. The study is on ways of facilitating the activities of itinerant tailors in the state. These group of tailors travel from one place to another carrying their sewing tools and equipment to perform their job which is mainly clothing repairs. These tailors are mostly concentrated in large towns and market places to enhance patronage. Most of the itinerant tailors are illiterates and communicate mostly in Hausa language. Overtime some of them learn to speak pidgin English for effective communication and patronage.

**Sample for the study:** The sample consisted of 154 itinerant tailors working in Niger state and 37 registered members in attendance of Home Economics Teachers Association Meeting. These teachers were used because of their relevance to the study. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select three towns each from the three geo-political zones.

Zone "A" Bida (21) respondents, Mokwa (19) respondents and Lapai (14) respondents respectively. Zone "B" Minna (21) respondents, Suleja (22) respondents and Gwada (10) respondents. Zone "C" have Kontagora (18) respondents, Kagara (12) and Rijau (17) respondents. This gave a total of 154 itinerant tailors. All the 37 teachers of Home Economics were used giving a total of 182 respondents. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the itinerant tailors.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** Questionnaire consisting of 79 questions was used for data collection. The validation of the questionnaire was ascertained by three experts from the department of Home Economics, College of Education, Minna. The reliability of the instrument for data collection was calculated from the responses of twenty (20) respondents who were served on pilot scale. The group did not form part of the final sample using respondents. The data was computed using Cronbach's Alpha Reliability index for internal consistency of the instrument. The coefficient of the analyzed data was 0.9812 confirming the reliability and consistency of the instrument.

**Data Collection and Analysis Technique:** The questionnaire contained questions related to the five research questions which were sectioned accordingly. A total of 191 copies of the questionnaire were produced and personally administered by the researcher to ensure high return rate. The questionnaire was distributed to the 37 Home Economics teachers at the

meeting which they all filled and returned immediately. The itinerant tailors used were illiterates so, interview method was adopted based on the questions which the researcher filled and used. All the copies were properly filled and were used for data analysis. The data were analysed using the mean and any item with a mean score of 3.50 and above was agreed with (accepted) while any item with mean score below 3.50 was regarded as disagreed with (unaccepted).

1. Four types of activities were carried out by itinerant tailors (see table I).
2. Twelve tailoring tools were needed by the itinerant tailors to facilitate their activities (see table 2).
3. Twenty one tailoring skills were needed by the tailors to facilitate their activities (see table 3).
4. Thirteen problems were encountered by the itinerant tailors in carrying out their duties (see table 4).
5. Six strategies were identified for facilitating the activity of the itinerant tailors (see table 5).

**Findings:** The following findings were made:

**Table 1: Types of activities itinerant tailor carryout**

S/No	Activities Engaged	Mean	Remark
1	Adjust length of garment	4.94	A
2	Replace zipper	3.90	D
3	Mend holes	3.52	A
4	Change styles	1.63	D
5	Adjust waist-band	2.51	D
6	Change lace, bias and ribbons	2.91	D
7	Change seams	4.22	A
8	Cut and sew new clothes	1.04	D
9	Take body measurement	1.32	D
10	Change collar	2.91	D
11	Change cuffs	2.63	D
12	Oil the machine	4.69	A
13	Make simple machine repairs	2.80	D
14	Replace sleeves	2.35	D
15	Iron clothes	0.24	D
16	Alter necklines	1.22	D
17	Cut and change pockets	2.52	D

A = Agree

D = Disagree

Table 1 shows that itinerant tailors engage in few activities, they scored the highest mean of 4.94 in item 1 which is adjusting length of garment, oiling of machine followed with 4.69 in item 12, item 7 scored 4.22 mean for changing of seam and mend holes which is item 3 scored a mean of 3.52. Other activities engaged in are rated below decision limit of 3.50 means, this indicates that their job is limited in practice.

**Table 2: Needed working tools by itinerant tailors to facilitate their activities.**

S/No	Tailoring tools/equipment	Mean	Remark
1	Tape measurement	3.62	A
2	Yard stick/metric stick	0.00	D
3	Small ruler	0.00	D
4	Guage	3.84	A
5	Seam ripper	3.65	A
6	Scissors	4.96	A
7	Tracing wheel	2.16	D
8	Dressmaker's carbon	1.46	D
9	Iron	1.24	D
10	Ironing board	1.44	D
11	Processing ham	2.88	D
12	Pins	4.82	A
13	Hand needles	4.41	A
14	Thimble	3.74	A
15	Pin cushion	3.82	A
16	Pinking shears	3.66	A
17	Sewing machine	4.98	A
18	Machine oil	4.44	A
19	Screw driver	3.72	A

A = Agree

D = Disagree

Table 2 revealed the working tools needed by itinerant tailors to facilitate their activities. The respondents agreed with items 1,4,5,6,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 as tools required to facilitate their job. Item 2,3,7,8,9,10 and 11 are not rated as essential tools.

**Table 3: Needed tailoring skills by itinerant tailors to facilitate their activities.**

S/No	Needed sewing skills	Mean	Remark
1	Preparing fabric (preshrink)	1.42	D
2	Taking body measurement	4.08	A
3	Fabric selection and characteristics	4.10	A
4	Machine care and maintenance	3.95	A
5	Using the sewing machine	2.19	D
6	Cutting clothes for garment construction	4.84	A
7	Ironing	3.81	A
8	Making patterns	4.97	A
9	Fitting clothes	3.98	A
10	Speed and accuracy	3.61	A
11	Changing bias, ribbons and lace	3.56	A
12	Relining coats and jackets	4.86	A
13	Adjusting fit for physically challenged persons	4.86	A
14	Replacing zippers	3.59	A
15	Changing and adjusting waist band	4.02	A
16	Changing collars	3.61	A
17	Changing cuffs	4.13	A

18	Altering neckline	4.22	A
19	Mending tears and holes	4.32	A
20	Changing pockets	3.55	A
21	Changing sleeves	3.71	A
22	Changing facing	3.94	A
23	Piping edges	4.01	A

A = Agree

D = Disagree

Table 3, showed that the respondents need skills to facilitate their activities. Items 1 and 5 as very low mean, this indicates that respondents needs little or no skills in preparing fabrics and using of the sewing machines. All other items are rated very high as indicated in the table, which means they require various skills as identified.

**Table 4: Problems encountered in carrying out tailoring activities.**

S/No	Problems encountered	Mean	Remark
1	Inadequate tools	4.96	A
2	Sitting posture	4.96	A
3	Stress of trekking	4.96	A
4	Tiredness from weight of machine	4.96	A
5	Inadequate skills	4.98	A
6	Inadequate knowledge of new fabric and handling	4.98	A
7	Communication	4.69	A
8	Lack of access to loan	4.61	A
9	Low income	4.98	A
10	Limited job opportunity	4.23	A
11	Hostility by some customers	4.42	A
12	Weather condition	4.25	A
13	Lack of recognition by government	4.96	A

A = Agree;

D = Disagree

Table 4, showed that itinerant tailors in Niger state encounter problems, ranging from inadequate sewing tools, sitting posture, stress of trekking, communication, low income, weather condition, non-recognition by government among others, when carrying out their activities. All the 13 items were rated very high.

**Table 5: Strategies for facilitating the activities of itinerant tailor activities.**

S/No	Strategies for job facilitation	Mean	Remark
1	Access to loan	4.69	A
2	Skill training programme by government and non-governmental organization (NGO)	3.94	A
3	Workshop on entrepreneurship education	3.94	A
4	Workshops/seminar of health and stress management	4.95	A
5	Apprenticeship training	3.65	A
6	Formation and formal registration of group with government for recognition	2.99	A

A = Agree;

D = Disagree



Table 5, showed that the ways in which the job of itinerant tailors can be facilitated through access to loan, skill training programmes by government and non-governmental, organizations (NGOs), workshop of health and stress management, workshop on entrepreneurship education and apprenticeship training. The table also indicates that formation and formal registration of group with government for recognition might, but not necessarily facilitates the activities of itinerant tailors.

### **Discussion**

The study has generated information on activities carried out by itinerant tailors in Niger State. The finding of the study revealed that majority of the itinerant tailors carry out limited tailoring job as indicated on Table 1. The respondents scored the mean of 3.50 and above in only 4 items which are 1,3,7 and 12 out of 8 identified activities. The itinerant tailors only, adjust length of garments, mend holes, change seams and oil their sewing machine. This is not in line with Clayton (1997) who pointed out that the major qualification for employment as a tailor is "better-than average" sewing skill. These tailors are not skilled as such their earning capacity is limited to the little job they are able to do. In her fact finding effort, the researcher observed that the itinerant tailor are very poor. They live together in cluster of eighteen to twenty-two with all the sewing machines and accessories in just that one room. The earning from the job is not enough for sustenance. Itinerant

tailors must be prepared to work on different types of garments and features on them Clayton (1997).

Table 2 revealed that itinerant tailors in Niger state require working tools to facilitate their activities such tools as revealed are tape measure, guage, seam ripper. Scissor, pins, hand needles, thimble, pin cushion, pink shears, sewing machine, machine oil and screw driver. These were rated very high in the table. This is in line with Anyakoha (2010) who pointed out that knwoledge of sewing equipment/tools is necessary to become an accomplish tailor, Neal (2000) gave a list of important sewing tools while Weber (1990) noted that, success in tailoring depend on the availability and effective utilization of relevant tools and equipment. Itinerant tailors actually require these tools to effectively carry out their jobs.

Table 3 sort to find the needed tailoring skills by itinerant tailors to facilitate their activities. The result of the finding revealed that out of the twenty three identified tailoring skills, the respondents do not require only two areas which are preparing fabric 1.42 and using the sewing machine 2.19. The respondent rated twenty-one skills very high as areas of skill needed. Relining of coats and jackets, adjusting fit for physically challenge persons and making patterns were rated above 4.85. Okeke (2005) supporting the need for skill learning noted that, appropriate skills in tailoring have not attained the expected level. Jenkins (2006) observed that, mistakes in tailoring can be

avoided by learning the proper procedures in tailoring.

The finding of the study in table 4 shows that the itinerant tailors encounter problems in the course of doing their jobs. The respondent identified inadequate tools, sitting posture, stress of trekking, tiredness from weight of machine, inadequate skills, inadequate knowledge of new fabrics and handling, low income and lack of recognition by government are rated 4.96 and above. Other identified problems are communication 4.69, lack of access to loan 4.61, limited job opportunity 4.23, hostility by some customers 4.42 and weather condition 4.25. All the problems identified must be adequately addressed as this will enhance the activities of itinerant tailors.

Table 5 revealed that itinerant tailors in Niger state should be given access to soft loan, skill learning centres should be provided by government so that they can learn tailoring and be skilled. Workshops on skill development and health should be recognized to enlighten the itinerant tailors. They should go through formal apprenticeship training to make them competent and skilled for capacity building and entrepreneurship. They should also come together and form cooperative body to be officially registered for government recognitions.

### **Conclusion**

The finding of the study revealed that itinerant tailors are not skilled, they engage in minor tailoring activities such as the simple straight stitching and seam adjustment. This is a problem because it limits their jobs opportunities thus

making their earning capacity very low. The finding also revealed that this group of tailors have limited tools which affect their earning capacity. The finding as well revealed that the itinerant tailors in Niger state are faced with job challenges such as inadequate tools skills and knowledge. They also face problem of sitting posture, stress, communication and poverty.

### **Recommendation**

In view of the findings and discussions, the following recommendations were made:

1. Itinerant tailors should be encouraged to go on apprenticeship training so that they can be skilled before engaging in tailoring activities to enhance their earning capacity.
2. Itinerant tailors should purchase and utilize appropriate tools to facilitate their activities.
3. Government and non-government organization should assist this group of people to come together and should be assisted with soft loan for entrepreneurship and sustainability.
4. Seminars and workshops should be organized for itinerant tailors on stress management.

### **References**

- Anyakoha, E.U (2010). *Home Economics for Junior Secondary Schools*. Onitsha: Africana FEP Publishing Limited.
- Carrh, H. And Pomeroy (1992). *Fashion, Design and Product development*. London: Blackwell Scientific Publication.
- Clayton, N. (1997). *Young Living*. New York: McGraw-Hill companies.

- Cock, V.I (1991). *Dress-making Simplified 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. United Kingdom: Blackwell Science Limited.
- Craig, H.T (1983). *Clothing Comprehensive Study*. New York: JB Lippincott Company.
- Ezeobele, C.C (2006). Appropriate Skills Needed for Improving Entrepreneurship in Family Poultry. *Journal of Home Economics Research. HERAN (7) Special Edition*.
- Frings, G.S (1999). *Fashion from Concept to Consumer*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: [Http://www/prenhall.com](http://www.prenhall.com).
- Horn, M.J and Gurel (1981). *The Second Skin. An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing*. New York: University of Nevada.
- Igbo, C.A and Iloeje, C.I (2012). *The Basics of Dress Pattern Drafting*. Enugu: Inselberg Nigeria Ltd.
- Jenkins, K.M (2006). *Alternative Textile Core Technologies*. Retrieved on 20/10/2006. <http://www.p2.org>.
- Neal, M.M (2000). *Needle work for Schools*. Akure: Olaiya Fagbamigbe Ltd.
- Njoku, H.A (2002). Alleviating Poverty through the inculcating of Home Economics based life (Survival) skills in Rural women in Nigeria. *Journal of Home Economics Research*. 4 (2) 172 -178.
- Nworgu, B.G (2006). *Educational Research Basics Issues and Methodology*. Ibadan: Wisdom Publishers Limited.
- Obiakor, P (2006). *Introduction to Home Economics*. Owerri: City Prints.
- Okeke, C.O (2005). *Improving Students Skills Acquisition through Effective Clothing and Textiles Education in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State*. *Journal of Home Economics Research*. 6 (2) 84 - 89.
- Olaitan, S. O (2005). *Strategic Planning and National Development Nsukka*: Ndudim Press & Publishing Ent.
- Oseni, E. C (2003). *Junior Secondary Home Economics*. Lagos. Longman Nigeria Plc.
- Osia, J.E.D (2003). *Textile Design and Construction*. Asaba: The nations Reliable Printers and Publishers.
- Osinem, E.C and Nweji, U.C (2005). *Students Industrial Work Experience in Nigeria. Concept Principles and Practice*. Enugu: Cheston Agency Ltd.
- Vanderhoff, M (2004). *Clothing Fashion Fabric Construction*. New York: Clencoe McGrawHill.