

Service to humanity is one of the major core values and an important component of Kenyatta University's mission statement. To accomplish this mission, the university initiated the Directorate of Community Outreach and Extension Programs (COEP) in 2007. The directorate is charged with the responsibility of organizing Kenyatta University community to give services to the Kenyan communities based on their needs by equipping them with knowledge, skills, information and other resources in order to improve their quality of life. The Directorate operates under four (4) major programs, one of which is training the underprivileged youth from the surrounding communities in employable trade skills. Currently, this program is training the youth in Tailoring and Dressmaking. The programme was initiated in 1999 to train youth from the neighbouring Kiwanja Village. Since then, the Directorate has expanded its catchment area to include youth from other neighbouring communities. The target population is the underprivileged youth who are either primary or secondary school leavers/drop outs majority of them being household workers, teenage mothers and others who could not continue with their formal education. This paper outlines the findings of a study done in 2011 to determine the status and in-service training needs of the program graduates from the first ten years since inception. The major findings indicated that 76 percent of those who registered for the training completed it. The trainees who completed the program either became self employed, got jobs in related and unrelated areas while others did not work at all. Those working in dress making related areas were not fully able to cope with market demand since they had never upgraded their skills after the initial training. Those who were not working at all and those working in unrelated areas could not retain their skills after leaving the centre due to lack of practice. Most of the problems experienced by program graduates revolved around lack of adequate skills, lack of initial capital to start personal business, lack of interest, and low self confidence especially in context of the current apparel and fashion industry which is technologically developing very fast both locally and internationally. It is evident that most of the program graduates require further training to close the gap between their skills and the skill requirements in the job market. This paper highlights the status and training needs of the program graduates as indicated in the research findings.