

## **The Philippine STAR**

### **Headlines**

#### **700,000 high school students unfit for college**

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More than half of the 1.3 million graduating students in public and private high schools are unfit for college, the Department of Education (DepEd) admitted yesterday when it released the results of the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) administered last Jan. 17.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said that the NCAE results merely validated previous annual results of achievement tests given to fourth year high school students.

The assessment showed that a majority of high school batch 2007 are not fit for college and should take the technical and vocational track, but instead want to be "dancers and actors."

National Education Testing and Research Center (NETRC) director Nelia Benito yesterday said that out of the 1,305,211 examinees who took the NCAE, 777,236 or 59.55 percent garnered low scores in the general scholastic aptitude test of the exam which made up the biggest part of the test.

The DepEd shied away from saying that the majority of the students flunked the test, stressing that there are no passing or failing marks since the examinations are meant only to guide students in their career choices.

Only 49,066 or 3.76 percent got high scores while 478,909 or 36.69 percent showed a "moderate aptitude" for college.

Instead, the NCAE results showed a big percentage of the students have a "high aptitude" for technical-vocational education.

#### **Tech-voc education**

In the Technical-Vocational Aptitude (TVA) test, DepEd officials said that examinees scored comparatively better.

A total of 711,526 or 54.51 percent got scores indicating a high aptitude for tech-voc programs; 468,901 or 35.93 percent had moderate aptitude; while 124,780 or 9.56 percent showed low aptitude.

Lapus said that the NCAE should spur students and their parents to

consider "tech-voc" education and training as an alternative to college after graduating this March, to take advantage of the thousands of blue collar jobs currently available.

"The tests supports our theory that a lot of our students are better fit to take the technical-vocational track. And it supports the shift in our policy directions for education," Lapus said yesterday.

### **Job mismatch**

DepEd under Lapus has vigorously pushed for the strengthening of "tech-voc" education and training in the 261 "tech-voc" high schools under the supervision and control of the department.

The move came with the gathering of government figures which showed that there were more than half a million blue collar jobs not being filled due to a shortage of skilled workers in the country while millions remain unemployed.

"We have to address what we call as the 'job mismatch'. Out of the 2.6 million unemployed Filipinos, around 1.1 million are college graduates.

"But at the same time, we have 650,000 tech-voc jobs available in the local market, and we cannot fill in the vacancies because our tech-voc job applicants lack the required tech-voc skills," Lapus said.

Lapus expressed the DepEd's hope that students and parents will take advantage of the NCAE in charting their future after high school graduation.

"Students need to be given career counseling support and parents need to be informed and re-educated to appreciate viable alternatives to the college diploma," Lapus said.

### **Dancers and actors**

However, the test results also showed that many are interested in a career in "the arts" after getting their high school diploma.

"They want to be dancers and actors," Lapus observed.

From the answers given to a series of specific questions in the Occupational Interest portion of the NCAE, 427,116 or 32.72 percent were shown as having "artistic" occupational interest.

Benito said that examinees who were counted as inclined to the arts showed that they enjoy or had preference for activities that "look at the artistic side of things" such as forms, designs and patterns.

Those considering occupations in this area want to be singers, dancers, musicians, radio/TV announcers, directors, make-up artists, poets/lyricists, fashion designers, interior decorators, graphic designers,

landscape architects, painters, sketch artists and photographers.

A far second in the preference of the graduating students was "social" activities or pursuits with 185,886 or 14.24 percent of the examinees showing such an inclination.

Examinees who fell under this group were seen to be interested in pursuing activities that assist other people and promote learning and personal development.

Those who go to "social" occupations, the DepEd said, become nurses/caregivers, teachers, law enforcers, judges, counseling psychologists, religious workers, health educators, business managers, community workers, news reporters, librarians, and ushers and lobby attendants.

On the other hand, only 11.18 percent or 145,925 of the examinees showed interest in "mechanical" occupations.

The NCAE had four major components that sought to determine the aptitude of examinees in general scholastics, technical-vocational, entrepreneurial skills, and non-verbal ability. The test also had a fifth part that questioned examinees on their occupational interest.

Aptitude for college was mainly measured by the general scholastics aptitude (GSA) test of the NCAE which carried 220 items. The technical-vocational aptitude (TVA) test had 50 items, the entrepreneurial skills (ES) test had 30 items and the non-verbal ability test had 30 items.

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