600,000 SHS graduates to join workforce

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Some 600,000 senior high school graduates may join the country's workforce this year, according to the Department of Education (DepEd).

In a phone interview with The STAR, DepEd Undersecretary Tonisito Umali said previous data showed that only around half of the high school graduates proceed to college after graduation.

Only half of them – or around 25 percent of the original high school graduates – would be able to obtain a college degree in the next four to five years, he said.

The DepEd earlier said more than 1.2 million students from public and private senior high schools nationwide graduated last month, the first batch of graduates under the K-12 basic education reform program.

More than 765,000 finished academic strand programs, while almost 480,000 graduated with specialization in various technical, vocational or livelihood programs.

Fewer than one percent graduated in the remaining tracks: 4,758 in arts and design and 2,145 in sports.

While there have been developments that could give more students access to higher education such as the free college education law, Umali believes the number of students who would proceed to college would still be around half the number of the senior high school graduates.

A number of graduates are expected by their families to start working, while others may still face financial challenges that could prevent them from pursuing a college degree, according to Umali.

The DepEd will monitor and track the senior high school graduates to see if they will be able to secure jobs after graduation.

Employability

Earlier, the DepEd welcomed a survey that showed only 24 percent of companies are ready to hire senior high school graduates this year.

Education Undersecretary Jesus Mateo said the survey conducted by employment website JobStreet is a welcome opportunity for the DepEd to have a baseline data on employers' willingness to hire K-12 graduates.

"Twenty-four percent is about two in every 10 company employers, a good enough percentage to take in K-12 graduates in entry-level positions doing administrative and support work to technical, supervisory and managerial levels," Mateo said.

"It is a challenge at the same time for K-12 graduates to develop their skills and be the company's engine of growth. Coupled with the right attitude, they will surely succeed in the labor

market," he added.

The survey was conducted by JobStreet as part of its 2018 Fresh Graduate Report. It showed that only 24 percent of employers using the website are ready to hire the first batch of graduates of the K-12 program.

Undecided employers

It also revealed that 35 percent of employers on JobStreet are not ready to hire K-12 graduates, while 41 percent are still undecided.

The lack of available positions for non-college graduates and the supposed insufficient work experience of K-12 graduates were the primary reasons cited by employers who said they are not ready to accept senior high school graduates.

Those who were undecided said they are either evaluating the readiness of their companies or are still finalizing the timeline on when they would hire K-12 graduates.