Many become debtors at a young age

THE PTPTN scheme is creating a generation of youths who start off their careers indebted.

Datuk Denison Jayasooria (pic), Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (Kita), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), said this was even worse for those studying in private institutions where fees were higher.

"Those in private institutions are there not because of choice but were unable to secure a place in public universities," he said.

"The fees structure of private higher education must be reviewed and also the enlargement of opportunities via the 20 public universities, community colleges and human resources training centres.

"How can we see young people going to the market place with a RM100,000 education loan to repay? The fees structure between public and private providers is really high. It’s a kind of injustice for us to create a generation especially the next generation of young people in debt.

"Education must be regarded as a right and it is the responsibility of political leaders to ensure that we institute policies and find the money to ensure that the human resources is really built. This is the real asset of the nation — our younger generation."

Denison believed the policymakers must have public consultation on what money was available and how the nation was spending it.

"We might have to cut in other areas but not in education in order to ensure high quality of education," he said.

"For a start, we can reduce the number of JPA scholarships for study overseas for the first degree.

"Our best undergraduate students must study at home. This will ensure better standards and higher recognition for local universities."

Malaysia Bangkit chairman Mohd Shahid Mohd Zaini, one of the co-organisers for the anti-PTPTN rally held at Dataran Merdeka last Saturday, said the PTPTN was a burden to students as living expenses were "very high".

"A total of RM120 out of the monthly repayment goes to service charges, so very little of that amount goes to actual repayment," he said.

"Students become debtors at a very young age. This also causes the existence of more criminals since this burdens today’s youth."

He also believed the government should take over higher education and make it free, stating that Petronas and government-linked companies’ profits could meet the costs.

Shahid also denied that their request was politically-motivated as Malaysia Bangkit had lobbied both Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Pakatan Rakyat de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to support their cause.

"Anwar joined in when we called on him. We have no problem if the government wants to join us. But we have had no support or calls from them so far. We support those who support us," he said.