Many pathways for youth

I DISAGREE with Dr Vincent Tan ("Polygrads' aspirations: Consider a different varsity": last Saturday) that there are only two alternatives for students who cannot land a place in the three universities in Singapore – they can either forgo their aspirations to pursue a tertiary education, or go overseas if their parents are sufficiently well-off.

The higher education landscape and hence opportunities in Singapore have changed significantly over the last decade or so. There are more than three local universities in Singapore today. Besides the National University of Singapore, the Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University, there is the SIM University. And the Singapore University of Technology and Design is slated to open next year.

There are also foreign universities which have established campuses in Singapore, such as the James Cook University and Curtin University of Technology.

Several prominent speciality tertiary institutions offering bachelor’s degrees, such as the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and DigiPen Institute of Technology, have their presence in Singapore.

The Singapore Institute of Technology, which started two years ago and caters primarily to Singaporeans, is also intended to provide a quality university pathway for polytechnic graduates.

Besides the public initiatives, there exists an equally, if not more, robust and dynamic private higher education sector in Singapore.

Expansion in university places has been achieved in the private sector, particularly by admitting foreign institutions to provide tertiary education here.

A landmark finding based on a three-month independent research by Edupoll’s in-house team and published this year indicated that in terms of pure numbers, Singapore has the highest number of universities per capita in the world, given our small population base.

This is made possible through foreign university tie-ups with both public and private education institutions to provide the local population with the opportunity to attain qualifications without having to go overseas.

There are so many opportunities and possibilities to obtain a tertiary education in Singapore. Who needs to forgo his aspirations or leave home?

Dr Susie Khoo