

JAPAN'S MINISTRY of education will request an additional 4.8 billion yen (£21.5 million) from government funds to provide more scholarships for foreign students wanting to study in Japan. The budget for scholarships stands at 30.6 billion yen.

From the start of the new academic session in April the ministry hopes to provide scholarships for 6,900 foreign students - 527 more than they sponsored this year. The 37,000 other foreign students expected next year will be supported by funds from various sources including their own governments, employers and, in the majority of cases, from their own pockets.

The steady increase in the number of foreigners studying in Japan over the past 10 years is expected to allow the ministry to meet its target of 100,000 foreign students by the end of the decade.

But the ministry has been criticised for increasing the quantity of foreign students without improving the quality of conditions in which they have to live and study. A severe shortage of accommodation means many spend a great deal of time, and money, finding somewhere to live. Most of them end up sharing cramped rooms some distance from their universities.

The high cost of food and travel provides additional burdens, with some students forced to take part-time jobs to make ends meet.

Most problems are experienced by the 20,000 foreign students studying at universities in Tokyo, where the cost of

Yen for foreign scholars

Japan is on target for 100,000 overseas students by the year 2000. John Greenlees looks at the high cost of studying there

living is highest and accommodation hardest to find.

A recent survey of living arrangements revealed that 80 per cent live in private rooms, 8 per cent in dormitories provided by public organisations, and only 12 per cent in university residences.

There is growing concern that many foreign students are leaving Japan with negative experiences, and the government has been urged to ease the problem by providing more student housing and financial support.

Those fortunate to win ministry scholarships receive stipends that cover the cost of tuition, lodgings, meals and a return air-ticket between Japan and their home country.

The scholarships also enable students to take intensive Japanese language lessons prior to enrolling for their formal degree courses.

At a recent seminar for foreign students in Tokyo, speakers also complained of

poor learning facilities and unimaginative teaching at many Japanese universities.

New Zealander Alan Neil said his three years in Japan had allowed him to learn Japanese and to observe how the Japanese live and work. "But from a formal learning point of view the stay had been a disappointing one."

American student Lucy Hamilton agreed that most lectures are uninspiring and that, like Japanese students, many foreign students have been quick to skip classes.

"Japanese higher education," she said, "is too textbook- and lecture-oriented for students used to more practical and discussion-type learning."

An analysis of the courses followed by foreign students in Japan last year shows that 26 per cent were in social sciences, 21 per cent in humanities, 20 per cent in engineering, 6 per cent in home economics, 5 per cent in agriculture and 5 per cent in medicine.

Growing international interest in Japanese industry and finance has attracted more foreign students to business courses. At Waseda University in Tokyo, 34 of 92 first year students who enrolled for the university's graduate business course are from overseas. Waseda, which is one of the country's most prestigious private universities, also has 50 foreign research students attached to its business school.

The lack of enthusiasm for postgraduate courses among Japanese students leaves many vacancies for foreign students. At the Tokyo Institute of Technology, a national university which specialises in science and engineering courses, around 30 per cent of the students undertaking doctoral courses are from overseas.

Courses at vocational schools have also become popular with foreign students, particularly those from developing Asian countries where graduates with knowledge of Japan's advanced technology are in considerable demand.

A ministry survey of the origins of Japan's foreign students shows that 90 per cent are from nearby Asian countries, including China, South Korea and Taiwan.

Despite recent increases, the number from Western countries remains low, leaving an imbalance between the number of Japanese students studying in the West and Western students studying in Japan. More than 25,000 Japanese students are in the United States while fewer than 3,000 American students are in Japan.

A more balanced "brain-trade" is one of the aims of the government's policy of internationalising universities.

Once their courses have been completed many foreign students try to remain in Japan to work for Japanese companies. The Sanwa Research Institute reports that 34 per cent of the foreign students it interviewed would like to find jobs in Japan.

Companies, faced with labour shortages, are keen to recruit foreign graduates. A record 800 foreign graduates of Japanese universities were hired last year. Graduates with foreign language skills, and knowledge of overseas markets, are particularly useful to the growing number of Japanese companies with worldwide operations.

But although the revised Immigration Law makes it easier for foreign students to remain in Japan, there is still a reluctance to issue work permits to large numbers of foreign nationals. Government officials say the skills of Japan's foreign graduates are badly needed in their own countries and that the country wants to avoid exploiting the intellectual talent of other countries.

A self-taught sociologist

BY GEOFF TANSEY

VLADIMIR YADOV is an optimist. A friendly, cigarette smoking professor, he is the kind of person who sees crises as times of opportunity. This is just as well since, as director of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union and president of the Soviet Sociological Association, he faces a tough challenge.

"The higher education system is open for changes, improvement and modernisation - ideologically and politically," he says. "There are no restrictions. It is up to particular institutions to organise education, to invite professors, establish new courses."

Sociology faces particular problems, having been virtually banned for much of the history of the Soviet Union. Most people there see sociologists as opinion pollsters, because only the applied, empirical aspects of it were officially approved and used for survey work in social planning.

But his generation of broad-based sociologists are a "peculiar lot", he says, "coming mostly from philosophy, and therefore interested in general social philosophy not just empirical studies". Most were self-taught from books that became available in the Khrushchev liberalisation of the early 1960s.

Professor Yadov was the only Soviet sociologist to study abroad when, as one of 20 exchange students from a range of disciplines, he came to the department of social anthropology and sociology at Manchester University for a term in 1963, before going on to London School of Economics for work on social psychology.

In the Brezhnev era, this generation with both theoretical and practical interests worked on, often in different guises. Today, its friends actively engage in the politics of perestroika and reshaping the Soviet Union.

"Now many sociologists are engaged in political life," he says, "certainly many more than from other academic disciplines. He reels off a list of names advising republic leaders, like Tara Starovoitova, a professor of sociology from Leningrad and expert on ethnic relations who advises president Boris Yeltsin. "But we must be visible not only in politics but as scientists." This depends on the professional quality of the sociologists - and with most of the professionals busy in politics, they need new blood.

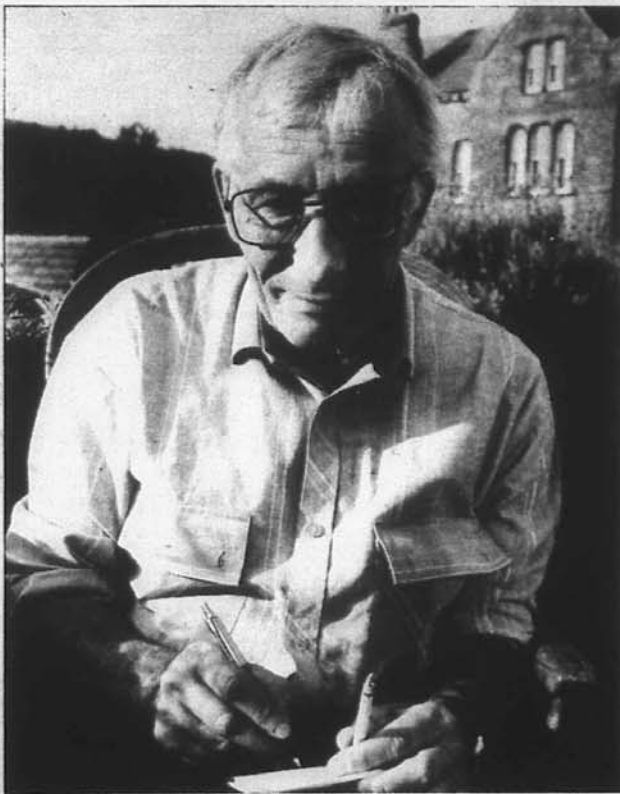
In Manchester to lecture at a 12-week summer school for 20 young Soviet sociologists, Professor Yadov said British universities were playing a crucial role in laying firm intellectual foundations for young Soviet sociologists. "They will come back knowing what sociology means. Moreover, the people attending, from a wide range of republics, develop a network which will be important in the future development in the country."

There is now an active Moscow club for the British summer school sociologists, which is planning a conference in Moscow on modern and post-modern society. This intensive short-course training may be more valuable than long-term overseas training, he believes: of about 100 students to go on courses in the US recently, no more than five have returned and he fears too many will be tempted to stay on abroad.

Professor Yadov is reluctant to predict the future for higher education but is pleased that the republics have agreed to keep an all-union central higher education ruling body. This will allow republics that lack specialisms in their universities to send students to other republics for education without having to pay more.

A change Professor Yadov would welcome, is linking the traditionally separate universities,

Geoff Tansey talks to the man at the heart of Soviet social science



Vladimir Yadov: born optimist

which teach, and the Academies of Sciences, which do research.

The new method of funding higher education may threaten fundamental studies whether in philosophy, sociology or natural sciences, he believes. Under the new system, universities will depend upon money they earn. This will come from two sources - the state as in the past but also private sources, like industries, ministries, and the emerging private sector. Students will be state-funded after passing the exams or be sponsored by industry or other sectors.

He is concerned about the quality of sociology teaching, since sociology faculties and departments only appeared in universities from 1988, when the Com-

unist Party central committee decided to treat the subject as a normal science.

As central controls break down and universities go their own ways, existing sociology departments are behaving differently. In Moscow, for example, staff are open, keen to invite foreign specialists and people from the Academy. In Leningrad, however, the lecturers are not sociologists, and concentrate only on techniques and methods of empirical research.

Basic research in the Academy of Sciences is also in danger since there is no union budget for it. One solution may be to turn the Soviet Academy of Sciences into a Russian Academy of Sciences, but he believes the Russians do not

want all the institutes presently under the Academy.

These institutes are often huge, with hundreds of staff. His own, for instance, has about 300 professional and 50 technical staff. The Russians favour smaller core staffs with others hired on short-term contracts for specific projects.

Professor Yadov favours such a move, seeing it as part of the same process as in the rest of Soviet society - entering a market society which must come to terms with science.

"But I'm optimistic: people with initiative will go up and those without or who are poor sociologists will lose. That is good, not bad." It will be an interesting sociological study to see if that optimism is proved right.

Albanian genocide charge

BY VERA RICH

ALBANIAN STUDENTS, dissatisfied with their poor living conditions and with the slow tempo of progress towards democracy, last week staged a huge "anti-totalitarianism" rally in Tirana University's freedom square.

The students, joined by lecturers, secondary school pupils and members of the public, ritually burned a portrait of former Stalinist leader, Enver Hoxha. They demanded that his tomb be removed from the national heroes' cemetery. In future, said one speaker, "democratic principles will be our only idol".

Nevertheless, the students do not envisage a society without heroes. Already the Albanian student movement has its own "martyr for democracy, Arben Broci, who was killed in a clash with police in April this year.

His brother, Driton, was among the speakers at the rally, and stressed that "true democrats do not demand revenge" but only the true process of the law. It would be wrong, he said, to replace one class war with another.

But pro-democracy students are not willing to simply forget the past. They want proper legal accounting. One speaker, Blendi Gonxhe, described the charges of "financial and material corruption" now being filed against officials of the former regime as insufficient and "improper".

Such people, he said, should first be charged with genocide against certain sectors of the Albanian population - a crime which exists in the Albanian legal code.

Mr Gonxhe also condemned recent attempts in the Albanian media to relate the pro-democracy student movement, which began in December last year, to political parties and group interests. Students would not allow themselves to be used for partisan political purposes.