

## **Problems and Solutions of Sociology in Azerbaijan**

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### **Introduction**

Globalization today has led to complicated social processes within communities and to new tendencies in civic development. These processes widen the scope of sociological research and make it central to the solution of problems of civil society.

Sociological research in Azerbaijan is the foundation of research in many fields. We face rapid development of the population and a surprising pace of events. Urbanization is now affecting large sections of rural society, public opinion is changing at cosmic speed, as is the demographic composition of the population. In all these areas research is necessary.

Is sociological condition in Azerbaijan satisfied to research and analyse exist position?

In this paper we try to examine current situation of Azerbaijani sociology, in other words to determine its institutional level, the importance of sociologists and their degree of professionalism, determine the completeness of social awareness and its consistency with the social demand, the problems related to the methodology, to test the quality of sociology education and finally offer the way of solution the problems of science of sociology in Azerbaijan.

### **I. The Problems Related To the Methodology and Context of the Sociological Research**

Perestroika (1985) and subsequent years revoked the ideological prohibitions and ideological control over the sociology through the Soviet Republics. **(WEINBERG 2004:8)** On the background of changing attitudes towards sociology in the Soviet Union simultaneously emerging an interest towards sociology also in Azerbaijan. Indeed, in the result, the face of sociology changed. Social perspectives were of importance. There were founded private (non-governmental) units where there had been taught social perspectives. There had been widened the relations with Western scientists and mutual research had been held.

Sociology started to spread through high educational institutions. In the end of 80s, in high educational institutions regarding to social profile there were founded groups and laboratories on economical bases which they were studying the problems of industrial sociology, labor groups, social planning and administration. First candidates of sociological sciences were emerged. In 1999 composing from members of the Institution of Philosophy, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences there were founded the group for being engaged in sociological research. Later in 2001, that group revamped to the department of sociology. **(Azimova 2006:114)**

As if, new century carried the sociology forward. These positive developments that emerged in sociology engendered some kinds of problems. Huge scientific groups divided into small groups, as a rule, according to western projects. There were not any sustainable, permanent and large-scale researches; sociologists were not concentrated on the social need of society or overall country, but on western instructions. Except the projects which supported by the Western organizations, research technologies were deteriorated. Several surveys on public opinion concerning the marketing researches were about to destroy Sociology as a science. **(Bagirzadeh 2004:32)**

There had been spread the stereotypes against sociology through the ordinary society and Scientifics that Not only in society but also in science there was a conception that Sociology was a stereotype as a science which led to public survey.

Sociological organizations, after getting riddance of the ideological orders that had been imposed by Soviet administration, started to study those which are coming from abroad. Since then there has not been any inquiry for analyzing the society from that aspect. And the institutions which are responsible to make the macro analysis were lacking the financial resources for such substantial researches. The juridical sociology with an ever having opportunity for touching to the social difference topic by purpose of regulating the relations between the poor and rich do not exist in Azerbaijan. Commercial sociological centers do not afford it by their own possibilities. That is why subject area of Azerbaijani study defines with western customers directly or indirectly in the shape of competitive selection, proceeding from their own conception of ranking significance of social problems of Azerbaijani society.

Generally, spectrum of issues is reflecting the problems of western society. Importance of gender concept in the western sociology could be explained by cultural specification and general composition of social problems. From the point of view of us, in modern Azerbaijani sociology gender issue is not adequate according to family values of Azerbaijan people, though this is the conditional priority for western financial funds.

## **II. Lack of the Social Theory**

All scientific studies achieve perfection when it has got its own theoretical bases, in other words, when it has got exact system which is including analyzed and logically completed comprehension that based on empirical knowledge and their scientific method. Common sense says that, currently one of the most important duties of Azerbaijani sociology seems the founding of overall sociological theory. National sociology can not exist, unless its theoretical aspects have analyzed. **(Suleymanov 2006:117)** Out of overall theoretical context, Azerbaijani sociology seems like the collection of directions of sociology.

In the Soviet period prohibition against social theory caused by the controversy against Marxism and Leninism. **(Khalilov 2005:71)** Despite all, Marxism and Leninism were esteemed as a Soviet sociology and it was forbidden to establish new theory. **(Lane 1970:44)** Now, there is no any prohibition on social theory but at the same time there are no any opportunities for its probable improvements. In general there is no study on sociological theories

“Scientific proof” of Marxism theory was an important phenomenon for the development of Sociology in 90’s. This led to the conceptual vacuum which was speedily filled up with western theory and conceptions.

It would be correct if we note that western theory and approaches were enclosed to the collective or disciplined imitations of theoretical work. But these western theories are born in western societies, notably concrete countries with their own set of problems, with their own categories and means of interpretation of the situations **(Barsukova)**

Shift all theoretical devices of modern sociology onto a language of native aspen is extremely unproductive. Always problems of inadequacy of adopted theoretical schemes and conceptual structures arise.

From this point of view the main aspect is not taken into consideration: Azerbaijani society is leaving the totalitarian status, its solid institutions are remain from the soviet times and they differ a lot from the western ones.

For sure, new institutions are being built or being proclaimed, nevertheless, most of the times we do have to deal with old institutions. Dispersibility of current sociology and its western financing makes it impossible to make long-term studies, researches.

The results need to be seen quickly. Nevertheless, short-term studies do not let to analyse the difficulties of modernity. For instance, in order to study social stratification of the present Azerbaijani society we need selection that resembles all the groups of this society, all the regions, all the national communities, not taken into consideration the age-related structure of the population, financial status of the families, their structure and so on. There is no such sorting and not every scientific staff can develop such selection.

Another paradox arises: western money works, but western theories do not. The thing is that Sociology is national. In different national societies problems and the appearance of the society are different. Therefore, average level western theories, for instance, political theory, middle-class theory blinded with western society are suited only for general scheme and needs concretization but this concretization is not being acquired.

Originality of our own daily reality thereby is not being analysed and is understood very weakly. Therefore, going back to where we started, I will say: in the best case (and the most productive) a routine, rough and descriptive sociological work. Consumer behaviour, youth behaviour and so are being fixed. But this is just clear description without any theoretical task and attempt for comprehension, notably, this is not the intellectual work itself yet.

But demand for serious theoretical investigation of such significant sociological problems as social structure of the society, mechanisms of self-identification, cultural transformation of the society is huge enough. It's obvious that the moderately worked out theories remain to be a weak side of Azerbaijani sociology.

In this meaning, lack of social theory either in sociological and contential level brings to sensational breaking of confidence of the society to results of sociological researches. And because of it the quality of sociological theory is not only methodic problem, but also a matter of social status of sociology.

### **III. Problems related to sociological education**

The second group of problems in the sociological education in Azerbaijan is related to the quality of the education in question. On the one hand, this is a problem of having low-skilled teaching staff and lacking effective mechanisms of professional expertise in this sphere. On the other hand, it is the problem of unavailability of a clear idea on who shall be taught what and for how long.

Since the beginning of 90s the sociology started being actively introduced into the system of social sciences. One of the most important features of activities in the social sciences in Azerbaijan, like in other Soviet socialist republics, was that ideological departments in the higher education system were reformed into the department of sociological and political studies.

Since 1989 the universities started the development of social scientists; out of these universities only 2 had the relevant departments, 2 had separate divisions and departments of sociology. Later on some of them were closed due to lack of demand in the labor market for the graduates from the departments of sociology. At present, only 2 universities of Azerbaijan train social scientists and even here there are some problems.

One of the significant circumstances which objectively hinder the development of teaching sociology in Azerbaijan in a professional way is the low-skilled teaching staff. It is obvious that we did not have a staff on sociological studies, they simply were not trained. The current development of staff on social studies is an illusion of the current sociological studies. Even in most favorable situations at the first stage one needs to train and develop professorate so that they can teach. And there is no need to state the experience in theory and an intellectual work on the problems of the society of other countries which are in completely different situations in terms of development compared to Azerbaijan or the USSR. Not to teach students based on

foreign manuals, via abstract courses on history of sociology, but let's us on our own study, think about the nature of our own society, keep mentioning on its dark points for which so far an adequate language for description, and category for explanation do not exist. **(Kashemoglu 2004:47)**

We still have very big disruption between utterly scholastic academic teaching (built on narration of western theories, approaches, methodology of calculation and statistic processing of data) and the practice of the modern social surveys. There are almost close to none number of scientists who can bring together these two tasks. At present, those who really teach social studies first of all don't have academic background in this field, and second, most of them were brought up in old "soviet" times in terms of world outlook and science and are unable to overcome their heritage in full. A certain paradox arises here: the future sociologists are taught by non-sociologists.

The young teachers – graduates from the sociology departments are mainly at their preliminary stage of professional–pedagogical adaptation. There are strict and almost ubiquitous scarcity of those who can teach sociology based on high-quality methods. There many good mathematicians and statisticians, who do not feel social problems, and on the opposite side, many sociologists don't possess corresponding methods. Such a difficulty in sociological professional education can be overcome not due to quantitative but qualitative factors, which means first of all establishment of a rigor personnel framework in the form of powerful faculty body, big and rich library that will be supplied with new books on a constant basis, strong informational and technical computer base, invitation of renowned scientists to teach different courses and organization of scientific consultations, conducting conferences, discussions and round tables, i.e. to do all that can stimulate the young generation of sociologists (and not only them) towards scientific researches and self-actualization.

When we talk about the problems related to the improvements of sociological education, we would not forget the characteristics and quality and publication level of its presenters and promoters. As a rule, those local articles (majority pertaining to the high education institutions), in sort of thesis, which overwhelming majority are presented in any scientific conference and mostly they are written to fulfill the plan related to their scientific work, are the unique measurement criteria of efficiency of publication. After all, it's important to note that the publishing and distribution of specialized periodic sociological publications in a big amounts seem to lack. Beside, there are few of sociologists whose articles are being published in a regular international sociological journals.

#### **IV. Is there demand for sociologists?**

If to mean specialists analyzing social processes and mass form behavior under the notion of sociologist, in that case there is no demand for such specialists. There is demand for marketing specialists studying situation in the markets, interviewers engaged in surveys. Students of sociological faculties are always feel anxious about, if they find job after graduating from this specialty. Academic labor market is too small, and in nonacademic there is almost no demand. Decreasing interest of society and its administrative structures in sociologists and their opinion, is partly explained by the speed of transformational process. As a result of very high dynamism in any problematic sphere, "Slow down effect" decreases the value of sociology for practice. The effort to minimize "slow down effect" brings to situation when sociologists begin to work with traditions of journalistic genre.

Instead of directing market, and firstly media market- sociology is in wholly subordinate situation to it. Public opinion surveys practically give nothing either to mind or heart of any ordinary person. That is why the sociologist image among population is – a "person, distributing surveys", but not a thinker, analyst, or predictor.

Sociology as a science is relatively young, and its age in Azerbaijan is absolutely considered as some decades. On one hand it means that the science has many opportunities for development, on the other hand sociologists often have to prove their right to live (sometimes – to existence, if to remember about today's realities of Azerbaijan). For people finishing such education interested in scientific activity, it becomes incomprehension of his own function in this process and opinions about not having perspectives in the field of the science. As a result new specialists – sociologists leave sociology, not finding the place in it for themselves.

## **V. Public acceptance problem in functioning of sociology in Azerbaijan**

Sociology in its context must be public science. And it is public science. We must take into consideration that sociological truth is always in the intersection of scientific thoughts and social realities, our comprehension of these realities and public practice. It is better to concretize the problem of public acceptance taking into consideration its different aspects. The first aspect – is an aspect of interaction of sociology with society, with large auditorium. It is the problem of popularization. C. Mills was saying that, sociologists must learn to popularize their ideas and do it in more clear language. **(John Eldridge 1983)**. The second aspect – interaction of sociology with authority. It is necessary for sociologists to work in collaboration with authority. What does it mean? It means the following: sociology helps authority to realize its functions, to raise the level of culture and efficiency of government rule. In its turn, authority guarantees freedom of scientific work through different forms of governmental support, uses the results of sociological works for more adequate expression of national interests, and for more confident choice of state development strategies. The third aspect – is about interaction of professionalism with citizenship. I am deeply sure that, just civic responsibilities conditions the necessity of our high professionalism.

Sociologists must completely cognize their sociological responsibility in front of society. It is regretful that, many negative tendencies tell opposite. Commercialization of science as well as sociology, often gives cause to distortion of sociological information in favor of customer, give rise to conjunctive researches and carries to breaking of contact from academic and higher education science. The result is destruction of sociological structures and organizations, social apologetics (unsubstantiated, without any supportive scientific analysis of authority decisions), deprofessionalism of many “sociological researches”, which demonstrates ignorance and dilettantism of pseudo-scientists.

In these conditions the important question is the problem of consolidation of sociologists, overcome disconnection, systematic character in exchanging information and publications. Under solidarity it is not meant the identity of opinions, but the ability and desire to differentiate between personal scientific interest in your own professional activities and solution of common problem to raise prestige of sociological science in society and in authority structures.

It demands creation of line of continually functioning organizational structures. In the first instance, organizing of scientific-informational centre, which is able to get information about works held by sociologists and bring it to sociological scientific community's notice through Internet; creation of Council of directors and rectors of sociological academic institutions and higher education organizations and coordinating Council of editors of journals in sociological profile. It is necessary coordination of scientific works and participation of sociologists in international sociological organizations etc..

The Union of Sociologists of Azerbaijan created in 2006 to put before itself these purposes.

As well as other sciences sociology can develop on the basis of world theoretic heritage. Today we try to integrate into world sociology knowledge, to use it for enriching of Azerbaijan sociology. We are already a member ISA and we are running under it. At the time we are cooperating with the analogical and regional organizations. Namely, I would like to note the participation of Union of Sociologists of Azerbaijan in the Turkish World Union of Sociologists.

Since 2005, the organization is the regional sociological union to be created by Turkic-language sociologists. (**Tuna 2008:18**)

### **Brief Conclusion**

It must be said that, final appreciation of sociological field of knowledge in post-soviet Azerbaijan is highly contradictory. It seems that, time is needed for Azerbaijan sociology to get features of mature independent science, realization of the role of sociological community in society.

Among the coming purposes of sociology should therein be the research of social sciences in Azerbaijan, problem in social relation and attitudes and collisions, social policy relevant to public development by the state.

Only in case of understanding importance and actuality of sociological investigations a certain progress will be reached in the society. And then dialectical relations between society and sociology would come into action. Because development of sociological science would be an indicator of the level of all areas of government and society.

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