

Process of Institutionalization of Sociology in Bangladesh: Can it be Theoretically Addressed?

Monirul I Khan*

Abstract: The coinage of the term sociology took place in the early nineteenth century with an associated assumption that specific socioeconomic and intellectual developments in Europe at that time catalyzed its emergence. This particular phenomenon has furnished the basis for the formulation of one of the departing points of this paper. Taking the point further, the paper focuses on the question of how to address the issue of institutionalization of sociology in a country. It is asked as to whether the conditions similar to the ones observed in Europe are necessary for the development of sociology in other countries. In the light of this particular question and the experiences of Europe and other countries regarding the emergence of sociology, two particular concepts have been introduced, namely 'organic growth' and 'diffusion', to explain the process of development of sociology, equating the former with Europe and the latter with other countries including Bangladesh. Initiatives from the outside played a major role in the establishment of sociology in Bangladesh. While reviewing the process, an attempt is also made to assess the level of development of sociology in this country in terms of the parameters heuristically chosen, further suggesting that such indicators are not well articulated yet. To analyze the relevant development process of sociology in Bangladesh it is argued that two sets of factors can be identified that determine such development. They include 'structural factors' and 'agency' and a substantial part of the paper comprises of the empirical facts and analysis describing the function of these in the context of Bangladesh.

Introduction

There is a question mark at the end of the title of this paper to indicate the presence of ambiguities in the understanding of institutionalization of sociology in Bangladesh. This appears to be the case while looking at the issue in causal terms. At least two reasons may be attributed to the causes of such ambiguity. Firstly, it is not precisely understood what is meant by institutionalization of sociology (or for that matter, any discipline) and secondly, it is also not clearly spelt out what factors determine(d) the emergence of sociology as a discipline in Bangladesh and elsewhere. However, many text books on sociology are found to include a chapter on the history of the emergence of sociology describing the associated factors and such accounts may suggest that its introduction in other countries (apart from the country of its origin) would be difficult if there is a need for the presence of the same set of factors a priori⁵⁰.

* Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka. Email: hseg@bdcom.com

⁵⁰ Bottomore T. & Nisbet R (ed.). *A History of Sociological Analysis*, Originally 1978 by Basic Books, Inc., Indian Reprint 2004; Ritzer G. *Sociological Theory*, 1992, McGraw-Hill, Inc.

If we accept that the given perspective (i.e., deciphering the process of institutionalization) is really ambiguous then do we mean by institutionalization of sociology just the establishment of a department at the university(s)? Do we mean, given this situation, that the sociologists will effectively explain/theorize major social events or help the policy makers? Or does institutionalization also mean that without 'ideal' economic and political conditions sociology won't grow properly? While posing such questions, it may be recalled that there is a common belief that the emergence of different academic disciplines in natural and social sectors have followed a historical course based on a chain of causality! Such belief also implies that specific events which shaped the context of society, politics or intellectual arena, usually created the conditions for the emergence of a particular discipline. Following few lines from a standard textbook on the background of the emergence of sociological ideas will give credence to the observation made above, "All ideas have ancestors, and no one can write of the rise of sociological ideas in eighteenth century without folding a seamless tapestry and concealing most of the panorama it would otherwise display."⁵¹ Above quotation says that there was a long background to the emergence of sociological ideas and the following discussion of this paper will cast light on the elements commonly believed to have influenced such emergence.

However, one may argue against such assertion (chain of causes) that thinking about society which started in the Greek philosophy gradually reached the present form in a linear manner, being chronologically connected (major Greek philosophers wrote on right type of social order, social equilibrium and other issues which are still given attention to as classical pieces). The relevance of counter argument surfaces when it is found that the development of different theoretical schools in sociology (e.g., later twentieth century) proceeded in a non-linear fashion hardly with any logical/sequential connection to each other. For example, structural functionalism and interactionism (or symbolic interactionism) developed almost side by side in the early and middle twentieth century with hardly any logical connection, except one was concerned with the macro (e.g., system) and the other with the micro (e.g., individual) perspective.

Emergence of Sociology: Structurally Determined or Historically Coincidental

As is commonly known, Sociology as a discipline formally started with the coinage of the term by August Comte in late 1830's. Related myth also says that the progress made in natural science by that time, the emergence of Enlightenment, losing faith in religion that previously held sway over the world of politics and knowledge were among different contributing factors that constituted the background of the emergence of sociology. Although, the very tradition of analyzing society

⁵¹ Bierstedt R., 'Sociological Thought in the Eighteenth Century' in *A History of Sociological Analysis*, Bottomore T. & Nisbet R (ed.) Originally 1978 by Basic Books, Inc., p:3.

preceded the formal emergence of sociology, what was new about sociology (or positivism for that matter) was the supposition that society could also be treated as a natural object, a phenomenon (verifiable, discernible etc.). Similarly Enlightenment allowed free/critical thinking while religion encapsulated thought within the framework of an absolute power (e.g., God) whether it fit the 'practical' experience or not.

If it is assumed that all these factors were necessary for the emergence of sociology as a discipline it may sound like structuralism or determinism! If this is the case (i.e., there were determining elements), how would we come to terms with the question as to why the so called Dark Age was followed by a period of Enlightenment associated with the emergence of sociology (it could be otherwise, e.g., more darkness) or why it happened in the period generally associated with it? More precisely how two opposite types of intellectual regimes could emerge one after another? Similarly why some thinkers (e.g., Marx) living in the same period (i.e., nineteenth century) proposed a completely different set of views regarding society and social change compared to the founding father of sociology August Comte. If it is argued that all the events regarding the emergence of sociology took place in a systematic manner (in the sense of having definite cause and effect), a number of subsequent developments may not be causally explicable or fit in the broader framework of linear analysis. One may also argue that specific causes have been assigned through back projection (perhaps in some arbitrary manner) and thus Renaissance, Enlightenment, French Revolution and other similar historical moments have been connected to explain the emergence of sociology. It may even be argued that without such background sociology would not emerge as a discipline in a particular society. Interestingly, however, with the exception of a few European countries, sociology in most places has been incorporated into the university curricula without any of the countries having a cumulative history (e.g., Dark Age – Renaissance – Natural Science – Sociology) of that nature.

However, one should not ignore the different types of characterization of the period of the emergence of sociology in the West, particularly comparing the Middle Age with Dark Age by the radical philosophers belonging to the school of *philosophes*, who portrayed it as intellectually clouded or suppressed. While sociologists like August Comte subscribed to a different view. In a relevant write up Giddens notes that "Comte rejected the essential idea of "Enlightenment" itself, that the Middle Ages were also the Dark Ages...⁵²" What is notable in this regard is the giving of importance to the contextual factors of society by both groups of thinkers - in other words both groups have assigned relatively less importance to the role of the individual.

⁵² Giddens, A., 'Positivism and its Critics' *A History of Sociological Analysis*, Originally 1978 by Basic Books, Inc., Indian Reprint 2004, p:289

Whatever counter arguments are provided against the popular view of the emergence of sociology in Europe it is still the dominant one in the relevant literature. As long as we subscribe to this view we may call it an 'organic model' since it seems to have come out of the intertwining of the society and the intellectuals. Whatever factors (e.g., intellectual tradition, supporting social class or new social process) were there for the emergence of sociology, they were rooted in that society, and took shape gradually over the subsequent period, in an interactive manner. In plain words it was neither an isolated effect of social revolution of that period nor the mere culmination of a certain intellectual tradition.

In the context of Bangladesh the emergence of sociology has been a case of borrowing from abroad. How much importance should we then attach to such factors (so called factors informing the background) regarding the evaluation of the function of sociology in Bangladesh is, thus, a relevant question. If we call these objective or structural factors (in the sense that these were rooted in the class configuration, practical events or intellectual practices in society) then these were hardly present here. Will it then mean that the development of sociology is not possible here (in Bangladesh) in the manner of the West, since the pre-conditions are absent? Of course, the issue is not a simple one and in the remaining part of the paper the complexity of this issue will be gradually addressed. However, before proceeding further, one point may be emphasized that the historical account of the development of sociology is not completely a linear account even if it is uncritically believed for the sake of simplification.

Objective of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to explore the process of institutionalization of sociology in Bangladesh (both in historical and analytical terms) and the identification of relevant causal/determining factors (if any). The main objectives are:

- i. Identification of the factors that seem to have determined the development of sociology in Bangladesh;
- ii. Assessment of the possibility of propounding a theoretical model to explain this emergence;
- iii. Formulating some ideas about the state of sociology in Bangladesh.

Departing Points: Outlining Factors that Determine its Functioning

Relevant studies on the emergence of sociology in Bangladesh are relatively limited. Apart from offering the history of its emergence, such studies are useful for learning about the functional problems encountered by the discipline in the course of its development. What such study could also do is to cast light on the factors catalyzing the emergence of sociology and creating the

opportunity for theorizing the process (assuming it is yet to be done!). In other words, how far these acted as causal factors and what is the magnitude of such effect?

Most text books on sociology follow a ritual of portraying its emergence in the nineteenth century Europe. We also mentioned that in the causal analysis of the emergence of sociology, a broad social matrix of the corresponding period is depicted with the claim that it shaped the development of sociology, which we have briefly described above. It may sound simplistic if we argue that the introduction of sociology was not a logical step in countries which were different in terms of the elements that characterized Europe in the early nineteenth century. It may also sound ridiculous to say that one can produce a condition similar to Europe in other countries in order to introduce sociology! However, it is not just sociology; many other ideas or institutions that originated in Europe have been introduced later in Asia, Africa or Latin America. The anthropological term 'diffusion' may be appropriate to explain such introduction borrowed from other societies⁵³. Actually, the spirit of diffusion propelled not only the introduction of sociology in different countries in the twentieth century; it has been the case for many other ideas and institutions, such as democracy or the market economy.

In a peripheral country like Bangladesh sociology was borrowed from abroad like many other academic disciplines although its subsequent development was much different from the one that took place, for example, in the United States, where also it was borrowed from Europe. Although problems were encountered in the process of development of sociology in the United States as well, its nature was different from those that took place in Bangladesh. While the problems regarding the institutionalization of sociology in the case of Europe or USA were largely intellectual or theoretical, it was hardly of that nature in Bangladesh. It was more about the process, capacity of the sociologists and the stagnancy of the institution.

One should not spend much time in deciphering the background of the establishment of sociology in Bangladesh while dealing with the process of its institutionalization. A recent paper describes it briefly and the major points noted in it are the following⁵⁴:

- i. It was initially introduced as a course at the Masters level as a part of political science;
- ii. Foreign experts recommended its establishment as a separate discipline;
- iii. Donor organizations such as UNESCO came forward to finance the establishment of the department and bore the cost of running the departments for the initial few years.

⁵³ Harris, M. *Rise of Anthropological Theories*, Thomas Y Crowell Co, 1968.

⁵⁴ Islam S.A. & Islam N., 'Sociology in Bangladesh: Search for a New Frontier, in *Sociological Bulletin*, 54 (3), 2005.

In the article on the state of sociology in Bangladesh referred to above a number of factors were pointed out to explain the problems of its functioning. A simple classification on the basis of these factors as well as others (i.e., of the author) will be made now in the following to outline a framework to analyze the course of development of sociology. These are divided broadly into two categories, namely, subjective/agency related and objective/structure related.

Subjective/Agency Related

- i. The devotion and commitment of the sociologist;
- ii. The tradition of pursuing scholarship regarding society seriously, which is an outcome of the first one;
- iii. The presence of creative intellectuals of *avant garde* genre, pursuing knowledge for knowledge sake, less instrumental for material gains.

All of the above three may also be lumped together under a broad category called 'agency', a term now popular in sociological literature which connotes creative urge in a broad sense. Such a factor (i.e., individual creative initiative) is not typical for a particular social formation or mode of production. However, we have categorized this further to explain the constituting ingredients.

Objective/Structural

i. *Societal demand for scholarship on society*: This implies that the emergence of knowledge is largely related to the social formation and mode of production of a society. For example, the demand for knowledge in information based society like in the post industrial/late capitalist society is much greater than in the early capitalist or pre-capitalist society. To some extent the demand for knowledge is contingent upon the forms of communicative structure any society puts in place. If a social formation (or power structure) heavily draws its strength or legitimacy from distorted or partial communication then societal demand for knowledge including scholarship will be automatically limited and there may be negative efforts for the suppression of such knowledge (think of the opposition of the church against free thinking based production of knowledge in Medieval Europe).

ii. *Level of intellectual development of society*: While certain economic and political factors may determine knowledge development, the very level of knowledge development can be an independent factor not directly emanating from any material premise. For example, the Enlightenment or the *Brahminical* scholarship provided impetus to the knowledge production in Europe and the Indian sub-continent respectively. Perhaps knowledge itself creates a new dynamics of its further production.

iii. *Resources to build infrastructure for knowledge development:* Development of an academic discipline and knowledge production practices also depend on the resources spent for this purpose. In natural science research, resources play critical role to procure equipment while in the social science it is necessary to arrange research fund, books, journals or others.

Outlining Parameters to Ascertain the Functioning of Sociology

At the outset of this paper it was mentioned that there is a lack of precise framework to assess how effectively an academic discipline is functioning in a university, thus, a few parameters may be suggested. These are gathered from both casual and systematic discussion on the issue. In casual parleys the reflection on the standard of a discipline often alludes to the quality of research, quality of the teachers or the quality of the students. Keeping these points in view we have proposed the following:

i. *Research excellence:* Contribution of the academic at the national and international levels in terms of research papers, new concepts or theories;

ii. *Public image:* Image of the discipline in the public;

iii. *Anchoring:* State and other institutions seeking support from academic disciplines;

iv. *Commodity value:* Commodification is a major characteristic of the knowledge industry at the age of capitalism, both at early and late capitalisms. Its extreme example could be found in the auction of paintings, or in the survival of refined aesthetic (e.g., music, art) through the network of market exchange. Academic disciplines at the university level are not free from its effect and the concept of 'instrumental reason' of the Frankfurt School implies why market demand is referred to in the judgment of the 'superiority' of a discipline. We may clarify this point by a simple example: job value of the degree from different disciplines determines interest of the admission seekers to get admitted to the universities in the first year.

What has been Diagnosed up to the Present

In the light of the above parameters what has been found regarding sociology in Bangladesh? What follow below are a brief discussion of these points.

i. *Absence of significant research:* The number of research, as has been noted, conducted by the sociologist is relatively small in number⁵⁵. Regarding the focus of the research that took place so far, the village society is predominant. Reason underlying this trend could be the predominance of agricultural in the country. What is striking is the diagnostic and exploratory

⁵⁵ Islam S.A. & Islam N., Op cit

nature of the village research including mine⁵⁶. The scholars have hardly ventured into building new concepts of village society. If we compare the neighboring country of India it will be found that many of them ventured into such constructions. Just recall the famous e-criterion of Utsa Patnaik⁵⁷. I can remember the concept of 'cyclical kulakism' of Bertocci or the notion of persistence and polarization by Bhaduri et al that may claim the credit of originality⁵⁸. On the other hand the village studies done by the sociologists of Bangladesh scarcely ventured into such coinage. Most of them, including mine, were engrossed in pursuing the Marxist framework to understand the village society. While the work of exploratory and diagnostic nature are equally important the coinage of new concepts can draw attention of a wider public and gives special status to the creativity.

In the context of theory and method also such poor show of the sociologist cannot escape attention. Again we may compare the Indian situation, just recall the notion of Sanskritization of Srinivas, while there is ample scope for debate on the appropriateness of this concept, we have not found any corresponding concept developing here⁵⁹. If I am not mistaken, only in a few works of the sociologists e.g., Nazmul Karim, or Nazrul Islam, such innovative venture could be found⁶⁰. While the former worked on a particular concept (i.e., prebendalization) of Weber for reformulation, the latter, noticing the strong allegiance to the phenomenological or interpretive approach in sociological theories at the cost of positivistic (a la empiricism) kind of approach, bemoan the "end of sociological theory" !

ii. Poor public image: This factor has also to some extent affected the growth of the discipline. There is a perception among the people (e.g., aspiring students, academic or intellectual) that sociology is not a serious discipline or does not require much intellectual efforts to ensure a degree! Extreme example of this image crisis is the following remark circulated over time that sociology department is a "lipstick department", meaning a department of the girls in a derogatory sense. While such attitude reflects overall ignorance of the society about the content or meaning of social science, it also reflects a point that the discipline is yet to earn a favourable reputation in the larger society. Islam & Islam have shown in their paper that for a long time the standard of the curricula of sociology was very

⁵⁶ Khan M.I., *Irrigation and Agrarian Structure in a Village of Bangladesh with a Special Relation to Labor Relation*, unpublished Ph.D. DU, 1991

⁵⁷ Patnaik U., *Peasant Class Differentiation: A Study in Method with Reference to Haryana*, OUP, 1987.

⁵⁸ Bertocci, P. *Elusive Villages: Social Structure and Community organization in rural East Pakistan* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1970; Bhaduri A. et al 'Persistence and Polarization: A Study in the Dynamics of Agrarian Contradiction' in *JPS*, 13:3, 1986.

⁵⁹ Srinivas, M.N., *Social Change in Modern India*, Originally published by University of California in 1966, Indian reprint by Orient Longman, 1995, pp:1- 48

⁶⁰ Karim A.K.N., *Dynamics of Bangladesh Society*, Vikash Publishing, 1980; Islam N. *End of Sociological Theory and other essays on theory and methodology*, Ananya, 2005.

simple and backward⁶¹. This could be one of the factors why sociology failed to produce reasonable impact among the critical (e.g., policy makers) social groups in the country. Image crisis is also believed to have discouraged the top students of the public examinations to seek admission in this department. Actually, the poor image is also related to the function of other parameters discussed in this section.

iii. Limited Anchoring: Present anchors of sociology in Bangladesh are mainly confined to the departments of different universities. This comes to notice more strikingly when it is compared with other branches of the social science disciplines, particularly economics. Sociology has experienced a tremendous growth of branches or sub-fields in the recent time as reflected in the following observation, 'A ...significant change is the more rapid pace of restructuring of subspecialties in sociology. An indication of this, at least in the USA, is that more than one-third...of the sections in the American Sociological Association were founded in the 1990s, while the other two-thirds were formed at a relatively slow pace beginning in the early 1960s'⁶². To what extent other disciplines are interacting with sociology to address different issues may be considered as an important factor in judging whether it has multiple anchors. Also, to what extent government and its policy makers have been consulting with the sociologists could be used as another indicator of such anchor. The relevant scenario is not encouraging. For the sake of clarification we may look at the association of the economists of Bangladesh who are at present playing an important role to influence the policy options of the government. We may also cite examples from other countries. From the 1960s onwards American government provided resources to the sociologists in institutional form to explain the relevance of the Welfare State during that period⁶³. On the part of the government of Bangladesh, such requirement has hardly been felt. Experts' knowledge has hardly been sought in our country to resolve major social crises. It may be related to the long tradition of autocratic rule and 'partial' democracy. As we know autocratic rulers hardly bother for public opinion to govern the country and the partial democratic rulers are rather engaged in manipulating public opinion in their favor. They will be interested in the kind of expert's knowledge that approves their legitimacy.

iv. Limited commodity value: How valuable is the certificate of sociology? If compared with the past its commodity value has increased particularly with the opening of job sector through the NGOs. However, compared to economics or business study its commodity value is lower. Although the sociology graduates can take part in the competitive examinations for different government jobs and can also land in the private sector jobs, a department with "major" in

⁶¹ Islam & Islam, op cit.

⁶² Blau Judith R. 'Preface' in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, Judith R. Blau (ed.) 2004, Blackwell publishing

⁶³ Gouldner A.V. *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, Heinemann, 1973.

sociology has not even been launched in the private universities even after more than one and a half decades of the establishment of private universities in the country! We do not have reliable data about the scale of employment of the sociologists in different organizations. Thus, it is not possible to make any judgment on the basis of speculation. However, in the different public universities which are mainly funded with the public money sociology departments have been founded.

Special Features of the Problems in Bangladesh

Apart from the above parameters there are a few other operational features deserving attention in the assessment of the functional status of sociology in Bangladesh. Some uniqueness will be found regarding these features in the sense that they are not universal and are seen in other countries. But their significance has made them a part of the growth of the discipline.

i. Manipulation and Conflict of Power in Academic Arena: Power conflict is noticeable in most institutions including the departments of the universities in Bangladesh⁶⁴. Thus, how power mechanism operates in a department of a university and what implication does it have to improve/affect academic environment is a relevant question. It may be illustrated with several examples. Issue of exercising power arises distinctly in the context of the employment of teachers. University job is still coveted in terms of social prestige. There are other aspects with which the teachers are concerned, such as scholarship for higher study, research grant or housing. Decision making regarding the above benefits involves the exercise of power. Incidentally different sociology departments in Bangladesh on different occasions have gone through a complex process of manipulation of power with the resultant conflict, which has often seriously affected the academic spirit. In this complex phenomenon some teachers/administrators almost overtook the role of institution by manipulating power in the decision making process about employment or for distributing different benefits to the teachers. Entailing power conflict often resulted in the creation of factions and sub-factions within the department affecting the academic environment significantly. Since all sociology departments in Bangladesh at present function in the public universities, which enjoy certain amount of autonomy, negative consequences of power conflict on academic spirit could not come to the proper notice of the outsiders (although sometimes newspapers have reported such occurrences). The so called “teachers’ politics” also contributed to the continuation of such power game at the departmental level. While intra departmental power conflict (in terms of diverse ideological position of the teachers or as an outcome of mere personality conflict)

⁶⁴ Although not directly related to the main focus of the paper, power and the accompanying process is seen as an independent phenomenon in societal mechanism as in the case of Foucault. For example, ‘...it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy. These are humble modalities, minor procedures, as compared with the majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great apparatuses of the state.’ in Foucault M. *Discipline and Punish The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin, reprint 1991 p:170.

may not be unusual in other countries, its extremity and particularly as a manifestation of individual's power exercise has reached a pathological state in Bangladesh.

ii. State and the Universities: A kind of complex relationship has emerged between the state and the public universities, which is also partly responsible for the deterioration of the educational standard in Bangladesh. It is needless to mention that the sociology departments and other respective disciplines and departments have also been affected by such disturbing relationship. In extreme cases many university teachers over the years have built close relationships with the major political parties of the country only to seek personal benefits. Immediately after the independence this relationship was in the form of ideological allegiance of the university teachers but gradually transformed into a kind of partisanship – interest of the teachers was in some instances molded by such partisanship. Since the university teachers command fair amount of dignity and influence in the society the state and the ruling parties did not hesitate to utilize/manipulate such partisanship of the teachers. In the context of the appointment, promotion and distribution of other occupational benefits such partisanship came to be rewarding for many teachers.

iii. Distortion of the process of overall educational process: Not only the university education, pre-university education has also been seen affected in the given situation. A particular mindset characterized by extreme material pursuit has surfaced strongly almost replacing the welfare attitude of the teachers of the preceding generations. In common parlance this issue receives attention. For example, in the past society was used to observe that the teachers pursue moderate standard of living and their reputation was largely dependent on their depth of scholarship, teaching performance or other related parameters, which is no longer the case. The quality of pre-university education has also dropped significantly particularly in the context of necessary background that a sociology student requires. Although there is a need for effective analytical capacity to grasp sociological literature, capacity for understanding abstract concepts and descriptive skill now significantly absent among the students taking admission into sociology.

Social Science, Sociology and Political Design in Bangladesh: Diffusion vs. Organic Growth

The role of UNESCO regarding the emergence of Sociology in Bangladesh is already underlined above, which was actually a part of a larger program. It entailed introducing new institutions based on the ideas originated abroad, particularly in the Urban/Industrial West. Sectors of society that were covered by new ideas were wide ranging. For example, the Institute of Social Welfare was founded to take care of emerging urban problems, while the Rural Academy at Comilla was established to popularize the spirit of cooperatives. Underlying all such initiatives was the urge to

set new processes modifying the older ones. West emerged as a model worthy of replication in terms of its economy, politics, technology and education⁶⁵. In consequence new ideas, rules, procedures were borrowed from abroad – grafting unknown elements in a different context!

Above examples in a body represents the process popularly called ‘diffusion’ in anthropological literature as mentioned earlier. Essentially it is borrowing, assembling, implantation or grafting of ideas, institutions from another society. However, the commentators on the recent social change in Bangladesh were not so sympathetic to the process of diffusion and sometimes believed (borrowing new ideas or institutions) it was actually a part of the design of the ‘Western Imperialism’ particularly to stave off the influence of the Soviet Bloc into the erstwhile Third World countries. Some radical critic could even smell the covert presence of American Intelligence CIA in the Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL later renamed as ICDDR,B) at Matlab, Comilla! While making judgments to what extent such remarks and observations were correct is not possible at this stage what does not miss our attention is the strong urge for the replication of Western Institution including the academic disciplines.

Above process (i.e., borrowing institution) has some theoretical implication. Some hints are already made above, few more may be further offered particularly regarding the concept of diffusion and organic development in the context of the emergence of institutions and ideas including sociology. If an institution/set of knowledge/school of thought develops in a manner that the proponent and the societal perspective are intertwined/inseparable which we have called ‘organically grown’ then fruitful will be noticeable at a greater length. In such process the dynamics/intellectual milieu of the respective society comes to play an important role both in conceiving and articulating the idea/theory, which would be completely different in the case of implantation of idea. In diffusion model the possibility of integrating such dynamics is unlikely/limited which may affect the expected outcome. Finally we may that the underlying objective of diffusion may be significantly disturbed if the societal urge for extracting benefits from this process is not present.

Determining Factors in Terms of Functioning: Further Reflection

Two sets of specific factors, as mentioned earlier apart from the unique one, may be analyzed further to explain the growth of sociology in Bangladesh. In a simple manner they have been categorized as subjective/agency and objective/structural factors.

⁶⁵ Some critics may find in it the attitudinal legacy of Western colonialism in which anything Western is praise worthy. Following Said one might even say that the construction of the ‘Orient’ in Western discourse has actually produced the sense of inferiority among the policy makers, intellectuals and literates of the erstwhile colonial countries presenting the West a model for replication. See in particular Said, E. *Orientalism, Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin, 1995 (later edition) & *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, 1994 (later edition).

By the factor agency what has been implied is the initiative and motivation of individual sociologists. It may also refer to in this context drive and commitment of the Bangladeshi sociologists to pursue a creative goal (e.g., writing good papers/ books, giving talks) in strong psychological terms despite different structural disadvantages (e.g., indifference of the colleagues, unavailability of good books/ journals, lack of competent peer group) .

Although it is difficult to ascertain the commitment level of a sociologist in concrete terms, actual scenario (functioning of the sociologists) does not show that we have many of the kind with a high level of commitment. Despite this apparent stagnancy over the years a few sociologists would be found with the distinction of commitment, following quote lends credence to the above observation, "Thanks to a handful of enterprising sociologists trained in western universities, not only has the number of courses taught in Bangladesh, and the University of Dhaka in particular, multiplied many times over, but also the content of those courses closely resemble the offerings in other parts of the world"⁶⁶. While the paucity of committed sociologist is underlined the significance of the agency factor is also pointed out.

Bangladesh is yet to produce a notable tradition of philosophical or social science exercises which could go beyond the national boundary in terms of uniqueness (e.g., some outstanding theories). Such factor (i.e., presence of a notable intellectual tradition) could have inspired the agency of the sociologists particularly in terms of intellectual production. Having been a predominantly peasant society even the other day and with a limited spread of literacy, sociological scholarship at the institutional level could not yet emerge in a significant manner. If the establishment of the higher educational institution (e.g., university) is believed to be one of the preconditions for the emergence of such tradition then Bangladesh would still be a weak candidate to such claim. We might say that the available agencies were not productive and strong enough to overcome the given structural disadvantages. The issue of structural disadvantages has other levels as found in the reflection of the following paragraph.

Islam & Islam pointed at the political economy of Bangladesh to explain the limited growth of sociological discipline. They called the social system as one based on 'booty capitalism'. Effective capitalism where surplus accumulation takes place in a productive manner there is a need for strong growth of the knowledge (particularly technical one) which was absent in the context of Bangladesh, Islam & Islam observed in this regard, "The growth of the middle class has largely been in the form of a rentier class that has benefited from economic windfalls of a booty capitalism and pervasiveness of patron-clientilism in the political sphere." What is implied here is

⁶⁶ Islam & Islam, *ibid.* p:379.

the absence of a class 'necessary' for the development of sociology as a concomitant of the absence of 'productive' capitalism.

Conclusion

It has been transpired in this paper that the present level of development of sociology discipline in Bangladesh is yet to reach a stage of distinct intellectual maturity. In order to understand the limitation of the emergence in the context of Bangladesh attention was given to the 19th century Europe when and where it first crystallized. Like many other countries it has been brought from abroad to be taught in the university. We have called the emergence of sociology in Europe as 'organic model' and in our country as 'diffusion model' in this paper. The factors which are generally put forth to explain the emergence and growth of sociology in the West have been divided into two sets, namely, subjective/agency related and objective/structural in order to ease our understanding. While it is easy to pull these factors together not so easy to point out their relative significance, which is the reason why at the outset skepticism has been expressed whether it (institutionalization of sociology in Bangladesh) can be theoretically addressed or not. While we do not intend to sound like the post-modernist that theorizing a social event is not possible, we also do not want to undermine the fact that there could really be a problem in properly theorizing a particular social event, in this case institutionalization of sociology. Such problem particularly emanates from the difficulty to identify the relative significance of different causal factors (e.g., agency vs structural) as well as point out an exhaustive list. What is said above of course nothing new but reminding its relevance yet today!

If the middle class is believed to have spearheaded the advancement of sociology in Europe and elsewhere, the same class is also responsible to produce ideological divergence within the discipline, how could then one come to term with this particular fact (i.e., ideologically divisive middle class) in a theoretical sense. Moreover, available theoretical tools are also not enough to explain a number of developments presently noticeable in the universities in Bangladesh affecting the growth of different disciplines particularly in the context of relationship to political parties/state and power conflict among the academic.

Finally, the process of institutionalization of a discipline or ideas by 'diffusion' is a problematic in a developing country like Bangladesh ranging from economy (e.g., initiative to develop market economy) to politics (e.g., initiative to develop democracy), the main reason of such problematic are structural and subjective both. In the given scenario there remains the opportunity for further causal analysis and the theory building about the development of sociology in Bangladesh and elsewhere.