

The Extent of Influence of Professional Standards on Teachers of Special Education in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This paper focused on the important of professionalism for special education teachers and how it helps teachers in charge of teaching students with disabilities. The study was conducted through a qualitative approach and data was collected by a researcher developed semi-structured interview which was piloted prior to using in order to collect data. The participants were nine Saudi SET female teachers (six of them in mainstream and three in special school) aged 23-42 with different level of experience. The purpose of the study was investigating the teachers' attitudes towards professionalism and started with a comparison between special education teachers (SET) who teach in special schools and those teaching in mainstream school. The researcher also extensively elaborates on what it means to be professional in this respect. As well as, the researcher came up to realize that the teachers who are teaching the students with disability exert too much effort compare with other teachers in mainstream school. In conclusion, the researcher concludes that because of the rise in number of the disabled in Saudi Arabia, only professional teachers should be the candidates to do this kind of job.

Key words: *Mainstream school, Professionalism, Special education*

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1. Introduction

Regarding the matter of professionalism, there are different views. Reviewing literature sheds light on the importance of the matter but in the context of Saudi Arabia and in particular in special schools for the learners with disabilities the issue has not been considered remarkably. Evans (2011) defines 'Professionalism' as a way to keep people in their jobs safe (occupational control), a way to get people to work together (socially built and dynamic institution), and it is also a way to use knowledge as social capital; a system that includes norms, moral standards, and service quality, foundation for relations between professionals and service users or general public, producer of particular identities, and base on which professionals work. Professionalism is also a way for people to be recognized as having certain skills and abilities. while Sockett (1993) describes professionalism as 'the manner of conduct within an occupation, how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality, and their contractual and ethical relations with clients As a result, no matter how hard one tries to identify a consensus on the definition of the term 'professionalism', people still have different takes on its meaning.

Generally speaking, it appears that professionalism relates to what is required and expected from the personnel in any job (Day,

1999). In addition, as shown by Hoyle, “professionalism can be defined as the policies and methods used by staff members in a particular profession to improve position, income and situation” (Hoyle 1967, as cited in Evans, 2008, p.315). As such, a professional can be described as an informed and skilled person whose task focuses on providing knowledge to a number of people in a specific context. Being a professional can also mean having the knowledge of how to deal with other people, and having the ability to reach a decision, react appropriately, examine situations and offer guidance.

Following an exhaustive search for a definition of teacher professionalism, “no one decisive description of the concept could be found due to how it continuously changes and how it has been given various definitions” (Helsby, 1999, pp.304-305). In addition, according to Hargreaves (2000), professionalism in the teaching field is subject to further exploration and definition given that it is constantly changing. Some researchers have still attempted to provide definitions of professional teachers, such as Wise (1989), who states that professional teachers are those who: have a firm grasp of the subjects they teach and are true to the intellectual demands of their disciplines; are able to analyze the needs of the students for whom they are responsible; know the standards of practice for their profession; and know that they are accountable for meeting the needs of their students. In addition, Sockett (1993) describes five main qualities that contribute to a teacher’s professionalism if correctly applied, including: character, committing to change and constant self-development, subject mastery, academic knowledge, and committing to interactions outside of the classroom.

Additionally, Ibrahim (2012) proposes that the process of professional development actually starts once a teacher identify one’s individual interests and consolidate one’s experience through a formal credential. While this may be viewed as the first step toward professional status, a qualification by itself does not confer professional capacity on an individual. Likewise, this evidence

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shows the importance of experience; the degree itself is not enough to make one a professional in the field.

As previously mentioned, one cannot offer a fixed definition of professionalism. Nonetheless, it is crucial to ensure the presence of a foundation for it, in order to guide professionals during their training and to enable them to improve professionally. Special education teachers face complex challenges in their work and in the implementation of professional standards to guide teachers to adhere to the best practices that help them in the field. It is also important to give credit to professional guidelines and their influence on professional development. As (Sachs, 2003) described, professional standards for teachers have significant potentials to stimulate teachers to assess their work, classroom activities and professional identities. From the definitions stated above, the researcher opts for CEC's definition, which offers important criteria that may improve and develop the knowledge and skills of SET.

1.1. Special Education and Professionalism

In the area of special education, there are different concepts of professionalism related to the nature of the work of teachers of special Education (SET). Scholars have also studied the term 'professionalism' in the context of special education teaching. Lim and Ando propose that professionalism requires five widely acknowledged educational principles: 1) teaching practice, 2) professional knowledge and skills, 3) collaboration among teachers, 4) collaboration with parents or other professionals, and 5) passion for education. In the same way, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2009) outlined the Standards for Initial Preparation of Special Education Professionals based on ten initial roles which describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all professional special educators share. The latter were explored in depth under "foundations, development and characteristics of learners, individual learning differences, instructional strategies, learning

environments and social interactions, language, instructional planning, assessment, professional and ethical practices, and collaboration” (CEC, 2009, pp. 26–30). In 2015, the CEC reduced the number of standards to seven, which are: 1) learner development and individual learning differences; 2) learning environments; 3) curricular content knowledge; 4) Instructional pedagogy assessment; 5) instructional planning and strategies; 6) professional learning and ethical practice; 7) and collaboration (CEC, 2015).

In other words, as pointed out by Netto (1974), there are a number of traits that professional teachers in special education need to have. For instance, special education teachers (SETs) should be chosen from the highest level in the teacher population and have to be both extremely apt and willing to work in the field of special education. In addition, they have to be patient and understanding when dealing with people with disabilities, to be integrated in the personal life of the disabled person and to show deep understanding of their requirements, issues, and feelings. Another required quality is to be fully committed to the philosophy and the targets of working with people with special educational needs.

1.2. Statement of the problem and purpose of the study

In Saudi Arabia, the field of special education needs witnessed a number of interesting developments. According to Al-Mousa (1999), a noted development in Saudi Arabia over the last few years was the spread of special education services, with special education institutes that follow the segregation model. In spite of the studies focusing on the matter of professionalism, there is a lack of related literature on Saudi Arabian teachers' attitudes towards professionalism in general and special schools. In particular there is not a remarkable number of qualitative research in this field in the context of Saudi Arabia. The researcher thinks that there is shortage in the literature of the field for which she finds it necessary to correlate professionalism to practice; the theoretical aspect should find its empirical way in the process of teaching. As far as she

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knows, not many studies were conducted in the field; this is where the significance of the study lies. Therefore in order to conduct the present study, the researcher tackles the problems encountered by teachers teaching students with disabilities. Accordingly, the objectives of the study are multifarious, but all of them pour into the final goal which is how to better teach this type of students to make them match with their counterparts, to be equal with their peers in mainstream school.

The present study was an attempt to answer the following question:

RQ: To what extend Professional Standards influence on Teachers of Special Education in Saudi Arabia?

2. Literature Review

The researcher here outlines the major views regarding special education and educators and their status in Saudi Arabia, in addition, to professional standards in special education. Al-Mousa (2010) confirmed that it is no longer futuristic fantasy to educate children with special needs in mainstream education schools, but rather an established fact. Consequentially, the initial steps to enhance special education services have contributed to major developments in these services, such as the passage of laws that safeguard the rights of individuals with disabilities, ensuring that maximized quality special education services are in place and providing training and continuous development for qualified professionals in charge of delivering these services.

The training and teaching of SETs in Saudi Arabia has occurred mostly through the special education department of King Saud University (KSU), which was officially introduced in 1984–1985 as the leading department focusing on the subject of special education. The department's establishment seems to have evolved in order to meet the demands of professionals in special education in Saudi Arabia and to “prepare specialized people in the field who must have the necessary skills that enable them to work in this field”

(Hussain, 2009, p. 11). Furthermore, a requirement in KSU's policy is that students applying to the special education department score no less than 85% in their high school academic results (College of Education, 1999). The program aims to prepare SETs in a variety of special education majors, such as: visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental retardation, learning disabilities, and gifted and talented. Students in the program are admitted directly out of high school, and they are usually full time students. The course of study requires 128 credit hours, most often completed in four years (College of Education, 1999).

In this department, SETs are also trained to assume responsibility and to gain awareness of the several essential elements of becoming a professional, including developing and applying individualized education plans (IEPs), providing direct instructions to learners with disabilities, and arranging sessions with parents and regular education teachers to discuss matters of relevance to students with disabilities. Such discussions may involve collaboration in order to develop more effective teaching methods and strategies or to better manage behavior (Hussain, 2009). Based on KSU's four-year preparatory programme, the professional behavior features in Saudi Arabia primarily focus on enhancing teachers' qualifications in order to attain professional consolidation after the graduation stage.

The question is whether only four years are enough to prepare teachers for special education, as well as what criteria the department of special education uses to judge whether all teachers are well prepared. Many Saudi studies have shown a lack of teacher preparation. According to Mosa (1995), the implementation of any educational reform should go hand in hand with constantly evaluated and reviewed teacher preparation. Despite the fact that the special education program at KSU has existed for almost two decades, there has been no tangible results in terms of the effectiveness of the evaluation process relating to these training programs and the teachers in charge of educating students with disabilities. Al-Abduljabbar (2000) found the major issue to be the

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short supply of professionals in charge of carrying out the program in the field of special education. In addition, Al-Quarini (2011) claimed that Saudi public-school teachers lack adequate preparation or training to engage in education that is inclusive and to meet the various expectations of learners with multiple needs. Similarly, an Arabic study carried out in Egypt by Al-Khwalidh and Abu-Zainah (1987) revealed that a high proportion of those employed in the educational sector all over the Arab world do not possess the relevant experience or training.

Similarly, a number of research studies in Saudi Arabia have shown that the teachers seem to be completely dissatisfied with their training. In addition, as stated by Hussain (2009), Saudi SETs think that several elements in their teaching are not adequately dealt with in the relevant curricular programs of the University's department of special education. Another study by Al-Nahdi (2014a) found that some SETs lack the ability to prepare effective lessons and manage their classrooms effectively. Moreover, Saudi SETs highlighted the significance of providing additional information regarding how to promote IEPs, along with the significance of promoting cooperation with school administrators and mainstream teachers.

Based on the above premises, it could be claimed that the special education department has no solid foundation to rely on due to the absence of professional standards. Thus, while the teacher training program at KSU has been fixed for years, there is no clear evaluation of the programs offered by the special education department in KSU. Although it was established 25 years ago, there is scant evidence on the program's success (Hussain, 2009). However, in higher education, the officials in the Ministry of Higher Education and Saudi universities recognize the importance of evaluating and improving higher education programs (Al-Babtain, 1998). Even though the importance of evaluating teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia is recognized, the country still lacks the institutional accreditation that could help improve the evaluation process.

Another point may be related to the absence of specific standards for SETs, with many teachers asserting that there are differences between what they have learned and the reality of their profession. As indicated by Al-Humaidy (1993), there are no formal procedures or plans in place as of yet between higher education (initiator) and the schools (place of application). As Al-Mousa (2010) argued, the reason for this is due to how SETs lack defined professional standards to adhere to when working with students with disabilities. In this situation, it can be argued that if Saudi universities adopt international standards, programs or ideas may resolve the problem of lack of professionals in special education and teacher training, and this solution could improve and develop the professional and teacher training.

As Al-Nahdi (2014a) said, it is important to adopt new ideas that have proven their effectiveness in raising the performance of teachers. An argument was also put forward by Al-Mulhim (2014) claiming that offering appropriate impetuses to SETs in Saudi Arabia could have a beneficial effect on their performance and efficiency. This would also contribute successfully to professional development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Al-Nahdi (2014b) stressed the same idea by pointing out that the experiences of other countries should be used as a learning repertoire. Saudi Arabia, for example, might use the CEC's professional standards, which categorize the understanding and abilities necessary for transition professionals (Al-Nahdi, 2014b, p. 8). According to previous literature in Saudi Arabia, there could be a plethora of likely solutions to provide insights into relationships between standards and teachers' abilities, which thus necessitates continuous teacher professional development (Al-Sahari, 2012).

With regard to professional standards in general education, the researcher outlines the attitudes of several writers as follows:

Burickett (2010), revealed that in order to measure the effectiveness of teachers' activities in the classroom, it is important to use professional standards that, as confirmed by Al-Harbi (2015), refer to what teachers need to be aware of and adhere to in the

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classroom. Owen and Lamb (1996) also defined professional standards as a set of guidelines that teachers can adopt to help them promote a climate that fosters thinking and learning skills. Arguably, professional teaching standards are suitable for evaluating what teachers should do in the classroom and how well they do it.

Similarly, certain performance standards can be utilized to gauge quality and to encourage and support teachers to perform well in a number of fields. These standards include: individual features and human relationships, familiarity with the subject matter, the efficiency of the application of instructive material, classroom management approaches, the provision of a suitable learning climate, the assessment of teachers' instruction, and the level of students' learning (Sahari, 2012). Arguably, the teachers are expected to already have appropriate knowledge in their field, but standards help to guide how educators are prepared, hired, developed, supervised, and evaluated. According to Sachs (2005), arguments regarding teacher professional standards have been focused on highlighting the significance of teaching standards, including the adoption of such standards to enhance teachers' performance, in addition to their use in improving the teaching sector.

Through professional standards, teachers are also given support to make headway in their professional fields rather than being evaluated as effective 'good' or low performing 'bad' teachers. It is the introduction of standards that enables teachers to pursue learning and adopt fresh and creative approaches to instruction in their respective areas (Sahari, 2012).

According to the Australian College of Educators' National Reference Group on Teacher Standards Quality and Professionalism, establishing professional standards for instruction assists in making teachers' knowledge and capacities evident to individuals inside and outside the profession in addition to providing the means by which good teaching can be identified,

rewarded, and celebrated (National Reference Group for Teacher Standards Quality and Professionalism, 2003). Given the vital contribution made by professional teaching standards in that, they can be key determinants for creating an ideal learning environment for novice teachers and in advocating educational reform, ensuring that teachers are highly qualified and have continuous professional development should be a foremost national priority (European Commission, 2005).

As for professional standards in professional education, the following ideas shed light on the issue in a somewhat detailed way. In the field of special education, historically, the influence of legal acts, policy changes, studies, and the increasing variety of students have necessitated continual changes in the role of SETs and how they help students with disabilities. More specifically, SETs are responsible for educating students with developmental, behavioral, learning, and in other needs that have been legally designated as special needs. Moreover, all SETs are required to be highly qualified to deal with diversity students according to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation 2011, and one can refer to a 'highly qualified teacher' as a teacher in possession of a bachelor's degree and full state certification and who exhibits a grasp of the subject content knowledge. In addition, according to Cook and Schirmer (2003), highly qualified special educators refer to individuals who adopt research-based approaches for students with SEN and who are highly knowledgeable about current pedagogical practices in terms of special education learners. This means that highly qualified special educators should be knowledgeable in applying educational operations for students with disabilities on an individual basis. However, this raises the question of how assured high quality can be for SETs.

Likewise, it is required of the special education teacher during the daily currency to follow different paths with each student, such as utilizing different teaching methods, evaluations, and behavior depending on what the students need. Al-Quraini & Rao (2017, 1) explained that quality teaching, which incorporates a variety of in-

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class and out-of-class activities, is crucial to student success and learning. Effective classroom management needs instructors to possess the necessary understanding, attitudes, and a number of abilities together referred to as "teacher competence." Additionally, Mamlin (2012, 53) identified six broad components that SETs must know: 1) knowledge about the job; 2) instruction about student characteristics; 3) leadership education; 4) collaboration; 5) law, legal responsibilities, and IEPs; and 6) the access and progress of students in content being taught and learning to learn. However, SETs in some countries fail to achieve this requirement, meaning that they do not meet the needs of special-needs students, which leads to serious consequences. For example, Saudi Arabia is experiencing a lack in terms of the evaluation procedures' ability to decide the eligibility of students with special needs and whether they qualify for related services in the kingdom (Al-Quraini, 2011). For specialists in the special education field, this is a highly important element in special education, for it identifies the special education students in order to put them in the right place to receive the appropriate services.

On the other hand, among the requirements, SETs also need to collaborate and work together with general teachers in the school by participating in the development of plans, evaluations and follow-up for students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom. According to Fennick and Liddy (2001), mainstream education teachers and SETs need to share responsibility for planning and teaching activities in a mainstream class. Despite the many countries that have attempted to address the highly-qualified requirement through implementing collaboration and co-teaching in the education context, Geiger et al. (2014) report that teachers feel unprepared or not ready for collaboration and co-teaching. However, research conducted with both general education teachers and SETs indicates a lack of preparedness needed for preparation programs or specific standards. In Saudi Arabia, for example, it is proposed that institutions train special education instructors about

the critical nature of collaboration as a prerequisite for successful inclusion (Al-Quraini, 2011, 153). Moreover, it is advised that Saudi SETs should have the required skill sets that foster teamwork and facilitate communication and collaboration (Al-Quraini, 2011)

Thus, these requirements reflect the importance for these teachers to be sufficiently prepared for the variety of challenges associated with supporting students who experience highly diverse learning needs. Special education teachers should meet the requirements and needs of learners more than other professionals. According to Brownell et al. (2014), student needs can be divergent across disability categorizations. Also, student and teacher placements and services are situated across a number of classroom settings, with several teachers allocated to the same students. In addition, student reaction to teaching is highly variable. In the field of special education, it is therefore important to ensure that such educators are able to oversee, direct and monitor, and collaborate with general teachers and parents of students with disabilities in the process of carrying out the necessary inclusion programmes. These are the kind of persons who are absent from the field of special education (Raheem, 2013). It is also important for SETs to go about their profession governed by the right standards. A question could be raised regarding how SETs deal with different categories of students with disabilities in the shade of requirements. Specifically, which criteria or standard do they follow to ensure a successful goal? This is hard to determine in the absence of standards.

3. Methodology

The present study was conducted through qualitative approach and data collection was carried out through an interview and also sampling method was purposive sampling. Teddlie (2007) argued that "purposive sampling techniques are primarily used in qualitative studies and may be defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions." (p. 77)

3.1. *Participants*

The participants of the study were nine female teachers aged 23-42 with different level of experience of teaching. Six of them were teaching in mainstream schools and three in special schools. The researcher asked the teachers in two mainstream and special schools to take part in the research and nine teachers accepted. They were asked to participate in an interview session.

3.2. *Instruments*

The instrument which was used to collect data was a semi structured interview which was developed by the researcher based on the findings of the previous studies in this field. The interview was piloted by asking two highly experienced teachers having experience of teaching in both mainstream and special schools. Actually pilot interviews were carried out with two female teachers—one teaching in special school and one in mainstream school—to ensure the suitability of the different sections of the interview schedule (e.g., the clarity of the interview questions and the time required for the interview). Following the points they mentioned were applied and it was reviewed again. Finally an interview with seven questions got prepared.

3.3. *Procedure*

The researcher adopted a qualitative method to develop the topic of this research paper discussing and elaborating on issues of professionalism and how to be a professional. She presents more than one definition and provides details on what it is felt to be appropriate for them. The paper is divided into the following parts which are covered up through presenting the relevant literature. These parts are:

Definitions of professionalism and what it entails, while also shedding light on the state of special education in Saudi Arabia with

regard to professionalism and the requirement for Saudi special education teachers to adhere to professional standards, with a particular emphasis on the meaning and significance of such standards in general and on special education, and on the Council of Exceptional Children's (CEC's) professional standards in terms of the definition and importance of special education teachers. In addition, it provides justification as to why these standards were chosen for this paper and the advantages that they yield for special education teachers. Finally, it discusses the efficiency of these standards providing any evidence against such arguments.

In order to do the research, interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face, in Arabic—the participants' native language—to help them to clearly express themselves. At this point of the data collection process, all teachers who had indicated their willingness were interviewed. All the interviews started with a friendly welcome in order to establish a rapport with the participants. I then explained the nature of the study, participant confidentiality, the interview recording process, and the participant's option to withdraw from the study at any time. Subsequently, I asked the participants to sign consent forms. The interviews were digitally recorded using audio recording, and most of the interviews took roughly 45–60 minutes to complete.

In order to analyze collected data, thematic analysis of the qualitative data was carried out. Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). As Braun and Clarke (2006) stated, there are six detailed steps including researchers familiarizing themselves with the data, creating initial codes, looking for themes, revising of themes, giving definitions and names for the themes, and generating of a report.

4. Results

The present study was aimed to investigate Saudi SET teachers' perspective of professionalism in mainstream and special schools in Saudi Arabia. The collected data through interview with the

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participants were analyzed by the researcher the results of which are as follow:

Table 1
The first part of the interview regarding definitions of professionalism

Theme	Sub-theme	Dimensions (arranged by the number of times they appeared across the interview)
Definitions of professionalism	Being treated as a professional	Being respected
		Feel free and self-confident
		Being encouraged
		Being appreciated and get promotions and awards
		Having a clear occupational path
		Clear expectations

According to table above we can see the themes and subthemes regarding the first part of the interview where the participants were asked about definitions of professionalism, their understanding of the matter, the features and points which can be important for them regarding the matter of professionalism.

Table 2
The second part of the interview regarding the differences between the extents of importance of professionalism in mainstream and special education

Theme	Sub-theme	Dimensions (arranged by the number of times they appeared across the interview)
Difference in mainstream and special schools	The importance of professionalism in special schools	Being aware of the differences among the learners
		Being more patient and tolerant
		Being more enthusiastic and eager
		Having difficulties to convey meaning

The results revealed that the participants believed that being professional is more important for teaching in special schools with

only disable students. They mentioned some differences in terms of patience, eagerness and awareness of psychological differences.

5. Discussion

The present study was aimed to investigate Saudi SET female teachers' attitudes towards professionalism in mainstream and special schools. The research question was:

RQ: To what extent Professional Standards influence on Teachers of Special Education in Saudi Arabia?

The findings of the study revealed that the SET teachers who are teaching in special schools make too much effort comparing with the teachers in mainstream schools. In conclusion, the researcher concludes that because of the rise in number of the disabled in Saudi Arabia, only professional teachers should be the candidates to do this kind of job. Also the participants had different definitions of professionalism which means there is a gap in teacher education in the field of professionalism.

In the participants perspectives professionalism can be defined as being respected, feeling free and self-confident, being encouraged and reinforced, getting promotions and praised, having a clear occupational path and being aware of expectations clearly. Also the participants believed that there is a great difference between professionalism dimensions and characteristics in the context of general and special schools where a professional teacher in a special school must be aware of the differences between the learners in the two mentioned contexts, more patient and tolerant, more eager and enthusiastic and also they stated that the teachers in special schools face with more difficulties to convey meaning.

Many researchers have noted that the nature of the work, special education, requires that teachers continually update their knowledge; this is especially true because of the constantly changing legislation and improved research in the field. In addition, SETs need experience, training, and standards to reach the level of professionals so as to fulfil the unique requirements of learners

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enrolled in special education. They also need to collaborate with all parties involved to assist these individuals with proper approaches and programs. Professional standards can be a powerful tool to help teachers maintain a high standard of instruction and ensuring that instructional abilities are properly developed. In this regard, Sachs (2003) stated that professional standards might indeed elevate teachers' stature and promote their professional growth and development... they will have an impact on teachers' classroom performance, professional engagement, and responsiveness to change. The CEC offers one of the most famous professional standards in the world for serving SETs, as they help develop the qualifications and skills of SETs that deal with a diversity of special needs. Additionally, the CEC's standards can assist teachers in acquiring a firm grasp on their roles and obligations, which includes continuous professional development.

This standard may be the best solution particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia. However, it appears that applying professional standards could be more useful when both methods—top-down and bottom-up—are joined. According to Girdwood (2013), "using a top-down strategy for planning is better in the initial stage when the first step is the authoritative decision that the name implies and centrally located actors are seen as the most important to attaining the intended impact." (Matland, as cited in Girdwood, 2013, 2) The bottom-up approach provides more freedom to SETs as a target group, and to the institutes in charge of applying such standards. It also assists them to be more conscious of the advantages, and disadvantages of that. It is important to note that the analysis process is linked to the bottom-up approach. Where shareholders start their application 'with the target groups and services delivery because they and the target groups are the actual implementers of policy' (Girdwood, 2013). It can be argued that these two methods are complementary; one cannot prefer one approach to the other, as they both have a significant influence on the application of the process. As such, both approaches can be

called upon, when putting standards into practice, in addition, to ensuring the success of the application of standards. Teachers and institution evaluations are essential for addressing weaknesses and affectivity of the standards.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The present study was an attempt to investigate Saudi Arabian teachers' perspectives of professionalism in mainstream and special schools. The findings revealed that being a professional SET means more than just having a certificate; that alone is not sufficient to reach the necessary level of professionalism in special education. Also the findings indicated that the teachers participating in the study had different definitions of professionalism. The believed that teaching in special schools requires special skills and more professional teachers must be used in these schools. The findings of the study can be considered very important for teachers, stakeholders, curriculum developers as the findings of the present study in line with the findings of previous studies revealed that paying attention to the matter of professionalism particularly in special schools for students with disabilities can be considered very important.

The researcher came up to the following recommendations: Teachers should collaborate with parents and other colleagues for the benefits of students with certain disabilities. Also in future studies the matter of gender can be considered as a possible effective factor. Meanwhile, Saudi educational institutions should create concise professional standards or adopt standards, developed by and used in other countries for that will help improve the methods of teaching special education students, and the standards will become the guidelines for special education departments at Saudi Arabian Universities.

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