

Professionalism Criteria in the Egyptian Civil Service System: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Professionalism means that a field or an occupation has the same characteristics of a traditional profession like medicine, engineering, and law. The aim of this paper is to scrutinize five main criteria of professionalism in the Egyptian civil service system (ECSS), specifically public administration (PA) positions (e.g., managers, human resources officers, etc.). These criteria include: the academic background required to hold a job related to the PA field, professional licensing, training, codes of ethics, and self-regulation (associations or syndicates). The paper sought to contribute in filling the gap in the literature regarding examining comprehensive criteria of professionalism in the Egyptian case and it ended up with a number of recommendations for the policy-maker. This study depended on a qualitative analytical methodology through scrutinizing seven successive laws of the civil service in Egypt with regard to the professionalism standards, besides some secondary data. The research concluded that professionalism criteria were developing in ECSS across time. It has partially fulfilled numerous criteria of professionalism in PA entailed providing the opportunity by the law to require a specialized academic qualification to fill a specific job, licensing through examination, and having codes of ethics. However, it still needs to boost other standards to be fully professionalized, such as establishing a regulatory body for PA occupations and an accredited training school. It found that the legal framework is flexible; thus, the internal executive regulation of each public entity can be easily reformed to satisfy professionalism criteria in the recruiting process. Hence, the legal framework is not a hurdle to professionalism in civil service, despite some of the shortcomings.

Keywords: Professionalism, Egyptian Civil Service, Recruiting Requirements, Senior Positions, Public Administration Profession.

Introduction

The process of professionalization, transforming an occupation to a profession, usually takes place gradually, and it may proceed over centuries. Professionalism may not be the only treatment for civil service problems. However, it is correspondent to the perceptions of such eminent figures as John Stuart Mill, Aristotle, Max Weber, and Woodrow Wilson that maintaining a democratic system depends on the efficiency of specialists in public service (Kearney and Sinha, 1988).

In the past, the use of the term “profession” was limited to several specific occupations such as medicine, engineering, law, or teaching. A chief characteristic of such professions is the requirement of specialized knowl-

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edge and skills, whereas their acquisition is developing over time. As knowledge is expanded and time passes, many occupations have acquired the status of professionalism; accordingly, senior administrative positions should be professionalized to be more effective (Batoool et al., 2016). One more advantage for professionalism, it affords a framework for resolving problems and disputes at the organization. Likewise, effective conflict management is more likely to take place when professionals dominate the vacancies (Mbegu, 2018). Academically, professionalism is one of the most significant and controversial issues in the public administration literature, and it needs further study (Heilman, 2016; Streib, 2010).

Since, a supportive legal framework is a prerequisite of reforming the public sector and a core element for developing good governance (Amagoh, 2021), it is desired to analyze the civil service laws to examine the characteristics of professionalism. This would help in evaluating the readiness of this legal framework to follow a professional perspective in the recruiting process of the higher-level positions and vacancies related to public administration specialties such as the fields of human resources management, public finance, policy analyst, etc. In this context, the Egyptian case will be tackled in this study to track the progress of achieving professionalism in the civil service legal framework. The paper adopts the procedural definition of professionalism based on precise criteria that will be inspected in the successive versions of civil service laws in Egypt.

This paper is divided into five sections. Section (1) identifies the criteria of the concept of professionalism, while section (2) discusses the literature, then section (3) determines the general framework of the study. Section (4) subsequently analyzes the civil service legal framework and other data according to professionalism indicators. Finally, section (5) presents the conclusion and recommendations.

What is Professionalism?

At first glance, professionalism could be comprehended as achieving the tasks with high effective performance. In the same sense, it may refer to the quality of effort or standards of work performance. Hence, the work that has been done in a good or a standard method can be described as 'highly professional' (Kanes, 2009). Actually, this paper does not adopt this meaning; however, as shown below, professionalism is identified as a number of criteria that applied to a job or vocation, so its status can be changed and turned to a profession similar to medicine and law.

The most crucial indicators discussed in the literature can be extracted as the availability of the following (Bottery, 1996; Cooper, 2004; Fox, 1992; Heilman, 2016; McCabe et al., 2017):

- Field-related educational background, based on specialized body of knowledge.
- Specialized training in a school that combines both scientific knowledge and skills.
- Professional associations.
- Independent oversight.
- Codes of conduct and ethics.
- A monopoly on the provision of the service, perhaps through mandatory licensing requirements, or by taking formal examinations to join the profession.
- Serving the public interest and altruism.

The paper will adopt these criteria, with an amendment to combine the criterion of theoretical knowledge with the educational background, the independence with the professional associations, and the orientation towards the public interest with the codes of conduct and ethics. This is due to the close connection between each indicator that is integrated with the other, as it is almost a part of it or a logical consequence of its existence. For instance, no academic certificate can be offered, if there are no theories and concepts that can be taught; as well, the presence of the associations is the most crucial indicator of professional independence, and serving the civil service values is part of the ethical codes.

Literature Review

There are two trends in the literature examined the issue of professionalism. The first trend focused on defining the concept and outlining its principles. On the other hand, the second one tackled almost a single dimension of the professionalism concept in specific case studies. This section will review these studies to determine the theoretical gap, define professionalism, and extract its criteria. Afterwards, points of divergence between this paper and the literature will be indicated as well as how this paper will take advantage from the previous studies.

First Rrend: Literature Studied the Concept of Professionalism

Professionalism is known as a social and historical term (Carvalho, 2020). It includes specialized knowledge, values, and norms of practice that may include overriding the public interest (Steinfeld, 2016). In a broader meaning, it involves following the ethical standards often set out in codes of conduct and ethics. Regarding the "Specialized technical knowledge", it implies that only 'professionals' possess it, while "theoretical knowledge" involves the understanding of concepts and theories relevant to the profession. The distinction of a profession can be maintained through establishing rigorous and competitive selection procedures, training, accreditation, and codes of conduct and ethics (Andersen and Pedersen, 2012). It could be mentioned that the essence of professionalism is based on the fact that knowledge and skills of a specialized field require an understanding of abstract concepts and formal certification to be qualified for a vacancy in this field. That is, the employees' academic background and cognitive qualifications should be commensurate with the nature of their jobs (Evetts, 2011).

The term "professionalism" could be used to denote the existence of self-control for the members of a profession. This can be achieved through the foundation of a regulatory body like associations or syndicates, which has an accountability and disciplinary system to control those members who make mistakes during work or fail to comply with codes of conduct and ethical rules. Additionally, these bodies may establish educational programs, codes of conduct, and selection procedures to ensure the independence of the profession (Noordegraaf, 2016). Furthermore, a profession may have a specific license to practice after receiving the considerable knowledge usually accredited by the professional organizations (Evetts, 2011). Of note, the literature in this section used the descriptive analytical approach to discuss professionalism, and this paper aligns with them in this sense.

Commenting on the Literature

According to the above, and by applying to the field of public administration, an employee should have a certificate or a degree in public administration or public affairs, which is a main condition to consider the field as a profession. From the researcher's point of view, it is possible to compensate for this condition - obtaining a university degree or postgraduate studies in the same specialization - through entry examinations or a relatively long-term training in a specialized school that works to qualify those enrolled in jobs related to public administration, especially leadership positions.

It is noted that all the previous nominal definitions of professionalism focus on the same context, and the core difference between them is that each trend pays more attention to one dimension of professionalism than others. Other literature has presented sets of professionalism indicators that are somewhat similar in a way or another, which was discussed in the first section of this paper.

The researcher believes that some of these demonstrated definitions—in this section and the previous one—may be characterized by some exaggeration. Whilst it is usual to define professionalism in the context of moral values, it is unreasonable to set serving the common good and altruism or overriding the public interest as the

primary motive of a profession, with personal gains set aside. It is common sense that among the employees' motives to work is self-realization for example, plus obtaining a wage that enables them to live, and other personal benefits that are offered by a profession. This opinion does not negate that working for the public interest should be one of the goals, which can be included under the umbrella of codes of conduct and ethics.

Second Trend: Literature Addressed Professionalism in Case Studies

A number of literature has tackled the issue of professionalism in various areas and countries, whereas the Arab countries' case studies and Egypt as well were often absent from that discussion. This literature approached the theme of professionalism in public administration regarding these case studies: the United States of America, Nigeria, India, and Hungary. Most of these writings have focused on the local management rather than the civil service, especially the senior managerial-positions. They concentrated predominantly on almost one dimension of the criteria of professionalism to address these case studies.

Sudhipongpracha (2011) examined how differences in the form of municipal government affect the public professionalism. By using the survey method, it found that the difference in the form of government affects professionalism in the city of Illinois in contrast to the case in the city of Thai. Through studying the same American context, Janousek (2015) dealt with the impact of the proximity of master's programs in public administration (MPA) to municipalities on the nature of management professionalism in local government in the United States of America (USA). It depended on the statistical method using the multiple regression model in addition to the comparative method. He found the access to master's programs (MPA) within the states affects the nature of professionalism in local government. For that reason, the increase in the distance between the municipality and master's programs (MPA) in universities within the states is negatively related to the professionalism of local government.

From another perspective, Okafor (2015) argued there is a series of unprofessional behaviors that have impeded the effective and efficient performance of the public administration in Nigeria, despite the existence of a constitutional and legal framework that provides for professional foundations in public administration. Okafor (2015) used a qualitative methodology that focused on descriptive analysis. Hence, he reached a set of these behaviors and factors, including corruption, lack of discipline, and the employment of unqualified and incompetent individuals. Regarding the Indian case, Sharma (2008) contended the problem is that there are only a few departments of public administration within the Indian universities and colleges. Additionally, public administration is taught in the Indian universities as a purely academic field. The same as the previous study (Okafor, 2015), Sharma (2008) utilized the descriptive analysis. The study concluded there is a need for a major restructuring in the public administration curricula along with the teaching methodology in India (Sharma, 2008).

In view of the professionalization of public administration in Hungary, Gellén (2014) has addressed that many theorists have considered public administration in Hungary is characterized by the rule of legal culture, and this culture hinders the application of professionalism and efficient performance. Through using the descriptive analysis, it concluded that the subject of professionalism has received vital institutional support in Hungary, where the National University of Public Administration has become the institution officially responsible for professional training in the civil service. There are still ongoing reforms in relation to the issue of professionalism, which he considered as inconsistent with the legal culture in Hungary.

Comparing and Discussing the Literature

Sudhipongpracha (2011) and Janousek (2015) have focused on professionalism in local management level in the USA, while other studies that tackled the civil service addressed a single criterion of professionalism. For example, Sharma (2008) explained the factor of studying public administration as part of

professionalism. Further, both Okafor (2015) and Gellén (2014) analyzed the factors that negatively affect professionalism in public administration, but in different countries, which are Nigeria and Hungary.

Okafor (2015) and Gellén (2014) emphasized the significance of the role that legal framework plays in strengthening or weakening professionalism in public administration. While Okafor (2015) considered that the legal framework is supportive for professionalism in Nigeria, but still Nigeria has problems. On the other hand, Gellén (2014) thought that the legislative stalemate is the leading reason that hampers the application of professionalism. This paper aligns with these two studies in giving attention to the civil service legal framework to inspect professionalism in the Egyptian case.

Identifying Research Gap and Importance of Literature

This paper is distinct from the literature because it analyzes the concept of professionalism through its diverse dimensions. Additionally, it examines the Egyptian case to contribute in filling the theoretical gap, as previously presented there is a gap concerning applying the concept of professionalism in the Arab countries generally. Thus, this paper tried to fill this theoretical gap by depending on a comprehensive procedural definition of professionalism, plus analyzing one of the Arab countries' case studies, which is Egypt.

It benefited from the literature to identify the theoretical gap. The literature also has elucidated the significance of the topic of professionalism, and it urged further study of the issue of professionalism in public administration, which accorded more importance for this paper. Moreover, it assisted to detect the core principles of professionalism that would be applied in the Egyptian case, which enriched the theoretical framework of the paper.

Research Framework

This section will present the research problem of the study and its main objectives. Afterwards, it will discuss the research importance and questions, besides the methodology.

Research Problem

The literature has discussed the issue of professionalism generally and a few studies have tried to apply almost a single dimension of professionalism in various countries that do not contain any of the Arab ones. Due to the scarcity of data about professionalism criteria in Egypt, there is a need to assess the availability of these criteria by using primary data. Additionally, it was noticed that some signs indicate that professionalism criteria need to be improved in the Egyptian system. For example, by surfing the website of the 'Egyptian Government Jobs Portal' affiliated to the Central Agency for Organization and Administration (CAOA, 2022), it was observed that it does not require a certificate in public administration to occupy a senior managerial-job, which is considered one of the main criteria of professionalism. Accordingly, the main research questions include: to what extent is the public administration professionalism achieved in the Egyptian civil service system (ECSS)? And to what extent does the civil service legal framework hinder/support professionalism in the (ECSS)?

Research Objectives

This paper aims to achieve the following purposes:

- Defining the concept of professionalism.
- Identifying the professionalism criteria.
- Analyzing the development of the professionalism criteria in the Egyptian civil service concerning the public administration jobs.

- Investigating the realized and unrealized criteria of professionalism in the civil service.
- Exploring whether or not the legal framework hinders the implementation of the professionalism approach as a public-sector employment reform.
- Ensuring the readiness of civil service legislations for professionalism application on the practical level.

Research Importance

The significance of this research derives from filling the gap in the literature regarding the application of professionalism in public administration in Egypt. In addition, it studied professionalism as a comprehensive concept through analyzing all its five core criteria. It contributes in identifying a clear meaning of professionalism in public administration, which may pave the way for other researchers to apply the concept in various Arab countries or to conduct comparative studies with European models. Further, this paper comes as a response to the studies that called for the need to pay more attention to the issue of professionalism (e.g. Heilman, 2016; Streib, 2010).

On the practical level, it determined the criteria of professionalism that need to be enhanced in Egypt and it offered a number of recommendations to the policy-maker to develop them. Moreover, after achieving the recommendations and implementing professionalism criteria, there will be hope to increase the efficiency of the civil service, as mentioned by some studies (Batool et al., 2016; Mbegu, 2018).

Research Questions

- What is professionalism? What are its core criteria?
- To what extent does the Egyptian system adopt each of these criteria: requiring an academic certificate in public administration to hold a job in PA, requiring compulsory training, establishing associations for public administration jobs, and having a code of ethics?
- How were the professionalism criteria developed in the Egyptian civil service?
- What are the lessons that could be learned from the previous civil service laws in Egypt to currently improve professionalism in public administration?
- To what extent is the legal framework responsible for not applying some of the criteria?

Methodology

A qualitative methodology, based on scrutinizing primary data (civil service legal framework) and secondary data (literature), was used to conduct this research. There are about five chief indicators for professionalism, and the public administration jobs in the Egyptian civil service were investigated according to these criteria.

This paper depends on a descriptive analytical methodology through examining seven successive laws of civil service in Egypt beginning from 1951 until 2016 (the current implemented one). It compared them concerning the professionalism standards, besides other relevant decrees and acts such as decision no. 35/2019, in addition to some secondary data. The examination of these civil service legislations will help not only to analyze the past and current situation and get learned lessons, but also to determine the readiness or viability of the (ECSS) to apply professionalism. In other words, it contributes in checking the legality of the application and as well recognizing the drawbacks that obstruct the implementation.

Including the previous civil service laws in the analysis, were important to carry out a diagnosis of the continued and changed pillars concerning professionalism. This may help to distil lessons learned from the earlier laws.

After reviewing the literature, it was found that there is a paucity of the secondary data concerning professionalism criteria in the (ECSS). Therefore, this paper based its analysis mainly on primary data that includes the Egyptian civil service legal framework to scrutinize the criteria of professionalism.

The case study methodology was also utilized in this paper. It focused on the Egyptian system to understand professionalism in its context, which may be considered as a stride in filling the theoretical and practical gap in the literature. More case-studies are required in order to reach a framework of professionalism in the Arab region, so that a grounded theory could be generated.

Development of Professionalism in the Egyptian Civil Service

Professionalism criteria of Public administration have been evolved during various periods in the Egyptian civil service system. In this section, a brief historical background of the civil service legal framework will be presented. Then, professionalism criteria will be scrutinized in the (ECSS). Basically, this paper will focus on the educational background, Professional licensing through formal examinations, training, ethical norms, and availability of a regulatory body, as five core criteria of professionalism.

Historical Background

There are six laws that were enacted to address the Egyptian civil service since the early 1950s. These include: law no. 210/1951 on "Civilian State Employees System", issued during the reign of Farouk I 'King of Egypt and Sudan'; law no. 46/1964 on "The Civil Servants System Law in the country", initiated during the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser; law no. 58/1971 on "The Civil Servants System in the Country", promulgated during the era of Mohamed Anwar Sadat; law no. 47/ 1978 on "Civil Servants System in the Country", launched also during the reign of Mohamed Anwar Sadat; Decree-law no. 18/2015 on "Civil Service", promulgated under the presidency of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi; and law no. 81/2016 on "Civil Service" (Currently implemented). This means, legislations regulated the civil service in Egypt have started from the early 1950s with law no. 210/1951 and ended up with the current one, law no. 81/2016.

As noted above, the titles of these laws were not changed significantly, except for the last two laws named "Civil Service", yet professionalism standards were transformed to some extent, as it will be explained in this research. This new naming 'Civil Service' reflects a disparate philosophy in dealing with the system. These recent laws have become more professional and based on merit and competency, as well as more oriented towards the service in terms of serving the public, which was underlined by the experts and the drafters of the decree-law no. 18/2015 (Nasreldeen, 2016). Further, it is observed that law no. 47/1978 was applied for a long period from 1978 until the enactment of the decree-law no. 18/2015 that was short-lived.

These six laws have agreed on some points and differed in others regarding the employment and its requirements that reflected on professionalism. Analyzing the related legal articles would assist in examining the professionalism criteria in the process. Since the issue of professionalism cannot be investigated without addressing the higher-level administrative positions, so law no. 5/1991 concerning Key Civil Service Jobs in the Administration of the State and the Public Sector will be discussed, along with other relevant decisions, such as decision no. 35/2019.

Job Requirements (Educational Background):

This criterion is concerned with the compatibility of an academic qualification and the field in which the job belongs to. In this respect, the job requirements in the six civil service legislations, law no. 5/1991, and also decision no. 35/2019 will be analyzed in order to reach a conclusion on the basis of evidence whether these requirements underlined the appropriate educational credentials pertinent to public administration.

1- **Specialized Academic Qualification**

Analyzing the employment requirements is the first step in exploring the professional principles in Egypt. Regarding these requirements in the civil service, law no. 210/1951 (Article 6), stated that those who are appointed to one of the jobs must meet eight conditions, one of them is that they must have the necessary academic qualifications to fill the vacancies.

Actually, this law adopted a number of professionalism standards, and the most substantial one is the matching between academic qualifications and job categories. This criterion specifically is controversial in the literature, whereas a group of writings such as Pugh (1989) and Streib (2010) claimed that the employment of managers in the public service does not depend on whether the applicant obtaining a degree in public administration or public affairs or not; as a result, the public administration field has an evident weakness point in this criterion of professionalism. Law no. 210/1951 nevertheless indicated this criterion explicitly when it mentioned that applicants of administrative and technical positions “must have the necessary academic qualifications to fill the position” (Article 11). It implies, the Egyptian civil service entities were authorized by the legal framework to apply this principle of professionalism since the 1950s. Consequently, these public entities have the permission to stipulate a condition that only those who got certificates in public administration or its related fields can apply for the higher-level leadership positions or other public administration occupations.

2- **Meeting the Job Description**

The linkage between an academic qualification and a job nature mentioned in law no. 210/1951, was slightly changed in 1964. Law no. 46/1964 just stated that an applicant should meet requirements of the job description. It can be noticed that unlike law no. 210/ 1951, the subsequent one did not directly pay much attention to the suitable academic qualifications that should fit a definite position.

Afterwards, law no. 58/1971 did not witness a notable development in terms of professionalism. The same as law no. 46/1964, it referred to fulfilling the job description without shedding the light on the required academic qualifications specifically. One more disadvantage, it added that the condition of meeting the requirements of a job description may be waived by the competent authority. It should be pointed out that the next civil service regulation, law no. 47/ 1978, did not restore the necessary symmetry between an academic qualification and a job category. It only followed the other laws by stating the need to fulfil the requirements of a job description (Article 20). This can be described as a fallback from professionalism or simply de-professionalism of public administration.

3- **Criteria of Selecting Senior Positions**

Depending on ‘appointment’ to senior positions or ‘seniority-based promotions’ for employees, until the early 1970s (law no. 58/1971), may reduce the chance of implementing the standards of professionalism; unless, the decision of appointment itself would be made according to the professionalism criteria.

To the contrary of the earlier, law no. 47/ 1978 set up a system of recruiting the senior administrative positions depending on a selection process rather than appointments or inevitable promotions. This opened the door for implementing the aspects of professionalism, as the selection process could be made upon these aspects.

Under law no. 5/1991, senior leadership positions in the civil service including the government, local administration units, public bodies, and government agencies shall be occupied for a period not exceeding three years, renewable for one or more periods. The executive regulation of this law set out the selection criteria, whereas a candidate should: satisfy the requirements of the position, attach to his application a statement of their most prominent achievements and contributions, and submit their proposals for the de-

velopment of the unit in which they apply for. Law no. 5/1991 did not emphasize on public administration as a required field of specialization to hold a senior position, though it just mentioned that an applicant should meet the requirements, which is vague or ambiguous, and deemed as a weakness point for professionalism in public administration.

Furthermore, in law no. 81/2016, recruitment is based on a competitive process, overseen by the Civil Service Council. Moreover, this law retained the scores of the entrance examination as one principle of the selection process. Despite this, neither of them mentioned the required educational qualification, but merely indicated that the applicant must meet the requirements for filling the position, which may implicitly include the required educational qualification. Generally, recruiting process in law no. 81/2016 is almost similar to its counterpart in decree-law no. 18/2015; hence, they achieved the same level of professionalism.

4- Moving Towards Classifying Jobs into Categories

A new stage has been started when jobs were grouped into categories so that it would be easier to require a specific academic qualification for each group including public administration positions. Decree-law no. 18/2015 (Article 11) and then law no. 81/2016, explicitly divided the jobs into four categories (Article 10), included these groups: specialist functions, technical jobs, clerical occupations, and craft and services functions. Consequently, diverse rules of employment and promotions might be followed in each group separately. This new orientation may pave the way to follow the principles of professionalism in the desired groups. In this case, the executive regulations at the governmental entities could require specialized educational background in management or public affairs to be accepted in the occupations of public administration and to be selected in senior positions. Both legislations referred to satisfying the requirements of the job description as a condition to fill a post. This may allow the public entities to stipulate a condition in these job descriptions by which a certification in public administration should be a prerequisite to apply for a vacancy relevant to public administration.

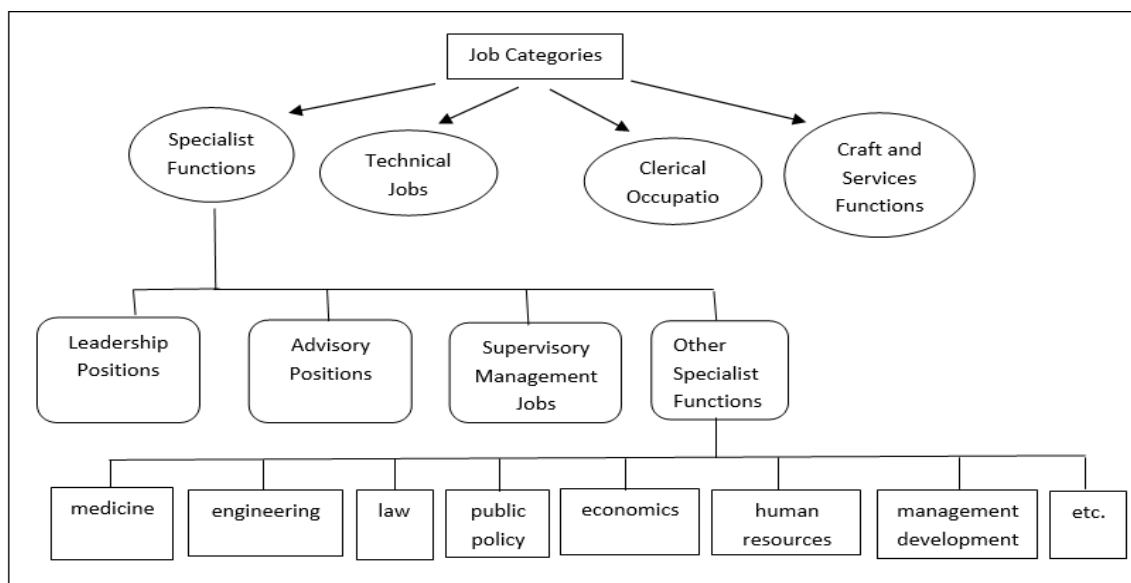
According to both, the decree-law and law no. 81/2016, the appointment shall be made on the basis of competence and merit, without favoritism or mediation, through a central announcement on the Egyptian government portal website containing data related to the job and requirements of its occupation, in a manner that guarantees equal opportunities and equality among citizens. Indeed, highlighting these values of competence and merit is an obvious alignment with professionalism.

In this framework, decision no. 35/2019 should be addressed while discussing professionalism criteria, which was issued after the current implemented law on civil service. It defined specific occupational categories or job groups, along with the conditions and controls for transferring amongst them. Moreover, it set a number of standards to assess each job, the most central of which are achieving the necessary levels of the following: knowledge, academic qualification, skills, experience, besides the nature of the job's tasks and the level of responsibility. Overall, this decision follows the professionalism principles especially that knowledge and academic qualifications, emphasized in the decision, are keywords for professionalism and this decision used them to evaluate and compare jobs.

As shown in figure (1), the decision divided jobs into four core categories, similar to those mentioned in the Civil Service Law. Under each of these categories, there are a number of career clusters, which include all types of government jobs. Additionally, it stated the level of qualification needed to occupy each type of these posts. This career cluster is considered as a container that includes jobs that are similar in the nature of duties and responsibilities, although they differ in the levels of financial hierarchy. Career clusters are kind of qualitative occupation groups or simply sub-groups.

The first category, specialist functions, consists of four career clusters or sub-groups, which are leadership positions, advisory positions, supervisory management jobs, and other specialist functions. This last

cluster, in turn, incorporates various occupational sub-groups such as medicine, engineering, law, public policy, economics, human resources, and management development, etc. An essential requirement for any sub-groups of jobs under the specialist functions category is holding an appropriate academic qualification that fits the nature of the work.



Note: created by the author using data from decision no. 35/2019

Figure (1). Job Categories and Occupational Clusters

One of the crucial requirements of the first job cluster, leadership positions, under the specialist functions category is the minimum level of theoretical knowledge needed to occupy any of the jobs under this set, which should be a university qualification at least. It can be observed that the decision depended on a vital professionalism feature, which is the required “theoretical knowledge”, and it utilized this term frequently in most of its articles.

Article no. (1), in the same decision, identified that a job description card should contain the job requirements encompassing theoretical knowledge necessary for the job, experience, training, passing the required exams, skills, abilities and personal attributes. In case of the deployment of employees to another sub-group in the same chief category, they should fulfil the conditions of this new position indicated by its job description (Article 5). To make it clearer, an employee occupying a job at a specific career cluster may apply for a position in another cluster, for example, it is allowed for the incumbents of an advisory position to apply for a leadership one, if they satisfy its requirements.

According to the researcher, it can be comprehended that as a result of the issuance of decision no. 35/2019, it might become acceptable for an applicant holding an appropriate qualification to occupy a position of a department manager. For instance, it is possible for a manager of a department of engineering to hold a university degree in public administration, management, public affairs or any other appropriate field and not necessarily in engineering. This orientation encourages the achievement of professionalism in the civil service system because it set the stage for the public administration degrees’ holders to encumber a post in the first category (specialist functions). In addition, they can be recruited in the career clusters of leadership positions, advisory positions, or supervisory management jobs. Moreover, under this decision, they are qualified for jobs in the last cluster (other specialist functions) related to the sub-fields of public administration such as public policy, human resources, and management development. This may enhance the implementation of professionalism principle relevant to requiring specialized academic qualification to fill its correspondent job.

Professional Licensing through Formal Examinations

Examination, as illustrated earlier, could be perceived as one indicator of professional licensing to control a profession through a formal entry. Starting from the 1950s, the civil service laws have embraced the idea of entrance exams, although it was suspended in specific periods due to some social and political considerations. At present, the civil service regulations give emphasis to this aspect.

1- Beginning of implementing competitive examinations mechanism

In the 1950s, it was precedent that law no. 210/1951 referred to the employment entrance exam in its articles no. (6), (15), and (16). These written and oral examinations should be held on a competitive basis and the candidate with the highest score should be employed. This is considered a strength point in applying the criteria of professionalism, as it established the rules of merit and competition. As mentioned in section (1), some have argued that obtaining a license to practice the profession can be substituted by taking examinations, which is a vital standard to professionalize a field.

Law no. 210/1951 provided for the recruitment that shall be made through an examination in the following jobs: sixth-grade jobs in the higher technical and administrative staff, besides eighth and seventh-grade in intermediate technical jobs (Article 15), as the applicant must successfully pass the exam scheduled for the position. The process of job placement takes place according to a rank of final results of the written and personal examinations, so the applicants with the highest scores should be selected (Article 16). In some cases, exceptions from the examination may be made by a decision of the Cabinet (Article 17), which is against professionalism.

In 1964, law no. 46/1964 maintained the idea of filling posts by passing exams and arranging their scores, and it added that when the results are equal in order, the Minister shall have the choice of who will be appointed among the equals (Article 10). A new article has been added to law 46/1964, which included that vacant positions should be announced, and this reflects transparency. The method of announcement should be determined by a decision issued by the responsible minister, and that decision also should set the essential guidelines of the exams (Article 9). Appointment to the first-grade jobs and higher positions shall be made by a decision of the President, and the other posts' appointment decisions shall be taken by the competent minister or whoever exercises his powers (Article 16).

2- Suspending Entry Examinations

As an exception to law no. 46/1964 on Civil Servants System, law no. 14/1964 was issued and set a temporary exception from some employment provisions in the original law. It stipulated that it is permissible to appoint graduates of universities, Al-Azhar and higher institutes within two years from the date of implementation of this law in vacancies at ministries, departments, public institutions and governorates, without holding competitive recruitment exams stipulated in law no. 46/1964. Provided that, they should receive the necessary training.

Law no. 14/1964 has prolonged for a further two years under law no. 26/1966, which also added that the provisions of law no. 14/1964 are extended to include those who have technical or vocational secondary qualifications (Article 1). After that, law no. 2/1968 and law no. 31/1970 were issued, respectively, in continuation of enforcing law no. 14/1964 for a period of two new years in each. Later, these provisions became permanent under law no. 85/1973. Accordingly, employment was guaranteed to all graduates under this policy known as the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) (Assaad, 1997; Ikram, 2007).

Indeed, these policies of employment could be considered as a major stumbling block for implementing any of the professionalism criteria, while these policies may have been socially effective. Simply, according to these policies, all the graduates had been hiring in the civil service regardless of the university

degree specialization, which means it disregarded the competence and merit principles. Competitiveness standards were also ignored, as law no. 14/1964 has suspended the article that prescribed the job entrance examinations; therefore, recruiting was an automatic process.

Unlike law no. 46/1964, law No. 58/1971 set objective criteria for selecting applicants when their exams results are equal. In this sense, upon equal rankings, appointments are made according to the highest in qualification, the oldest in graduation, and the oldest in age, respectively (Article 6). However, these articles were considered suspended due to the initiation of law no. 85/1973 that set an exception from some employment provisions such as passing the exams as a requirement to fill a job in the civil service, the same as the amendments established by law no. 14/1964. Additionally, law no. 58/1971 mandated the competent authority to determine the jobs that shall be or shall not be filled with an examination (Article 5), which is one more negative point for professionalism as long as entry exams could not be held if the competent authority decided to.

3- Recalling and Institutionalizing the Examination Process

Occupying jobs after examination and setting a number of criteria for selecting from the equals in exams' results was confirmed by law no. 47/ 1978, the same as law no. 58/1971, which is an indicator of maintaining professionalism principles. It affirmed that announcing the posts should be in at least two daily newspapers (Article 17), and this represented transparency and equality.

Furthermore, law no. 47/ 1978 provided institutionalization of the appointment process through forming a civil service affairs committee headed by the Central Agency for Organization and Administration (CAOA), among the functions of this committee is to consider appointments (Article 3). CAO A was created in 1964 by law no. 118/1964 as an alternative to what was known as the Personnel Bureau. The process of institutionalization and setting competitive entrance exams also refers to following the track of professionalism and merit principles.

Concerning senior leadership positions, a committee was responsible for the selection process and it had the right to arrange exams and interviews under law no. 5/1991. The scores of the applicants are arranged based on the weights divided between 50% allocated to their achievements, and 50% to proposals submitted to develop work regulations in the relevant entity (Article 10). The aforementioned committee nominates a number of candidates to attend training according to their ranking. Then, it prepares the final ranking for applicants, who successfully passed training, according to the grades obtained by each of them in the two elements stipulated formerly.

It is demonstrated that the executive regulation of law no. 5/1991 entailed a core professionalism principle for senior positions. It concerned with competitive written and oral exams, and there was a logic behind the ranking of the scores, as weights are divided between specific elements.

In 2015, occupation of positions shall be made through an examination executed by (CAOA) through a selection committee and supervised by the responsible minister. Provided that, the appointment should take place based on the rank of the examination scores and the top scoring applicants will be granted the position (Decree-law no. 18/2015, article 13). The Human Resources Committee inside each agency should handle the appointment to positions other than senior management and executive management (Article 4). It is noted this decree-law focused on the examination process and it maintained the principle of institutionalizing this process through the role of (CAOA), which represents a progress towards professionalism.

Currently, law no. 81/2016 followed the same approach of the decree-law no. 18/2015 regarding the examination, thus article no. (12) is the same as article no. (13) in the decree-law mentioned above. In addition, the Human Resources Committee has the same role under this law.

Training

Numerous studies explored training as a core element of professionalism. It dealt with the training process from diverse scopes such as: its formality, duration, and the importance of the training schools (e.g., Wilensky, 1964; Barker, 2010; Evetts, 2011; Noordegraaf, 2016). Due to its significance, it will be investigated in the civil service system as following:

1- Emergence of Internal Training within the Entities

It is noteworthy that law no. 210/1951 overlooked the criterion of the employees' training and it did not tackle this issue. In any case, this law was enacted in the 1950s, yet it approached a lot of the attributes of professionalism at an early stage, although it failed to spot others such as training.

Afterwards, training was an alternative to the examination under law no. 46/1964. The articles concerned with holding the competitive recruitment exams, as a mechanism to join the civil service, were theoretically mentioned in the law. Later, these articles were suspended under law no. 14/1964, and replaced by receiving the necessary training as mentioned before. Law no. 14/1964 pointed out the issue of training, as one criterion of professionalism, which is an advantage over law no. 210/1951.

According to law no. 58/1971 (Article 15), for the employees to be promoted, they must successfully pass the training provided by the relevant unit in which they work. The law tackled the training criterion while articulating the process of promotion. Nevertheless, it did not handle the training issue as a recruitment requirement. Consequently, it no longer made sense as a professional licensing mechanism.

Beginning from the late 1970s, law no. 47/1978 gave a little more attention to training than the previous ones. Article no. (37) is the same as article no. (15) in law no. 58/1971, which dealt with training as a requirement for promotion. Under law no. 47/1978 (Article 61), every unit has to put in place a system to train its affiliated employees and develop their skills. It highlighted that each unit should offer training programs; therefore, the process of training should be handled internally. Thus, it undermined the possibility to establish a training school to be responsible for the training programs because it is considered as an external entity. It is a downside in terms of professionalism since receiving training programs at a specialized school would reinforce professionalism.

2- The Shift Towards Offering both Internal and External Training

As previously illustrated in law no. 5/1991, the selection committee should nominate candidates for senior positions to attend the required training programs. Nonetheless, some higher job categories can be exempted from the training requirement. In accordance with article no. (13), the Central Agency for Organization and Administration (CAOA) should develop an integrated program to prepare and develop both experience and skills of candidates for leadership positions according to the level of each one. In addition, training may take place in the internal or external centers, or both. As evidenced, this law had further progressed towards professionalism due to allowing training either internally or externally; hence, it allowed the employees to attend training at a separate institution or school.

Eventually, much emphasis has been given by decree-law no. 18/2015 and law no. 81/2016 to the employees' training. Article no. (19) in decree-law no. 18/2015 and article no. (17) in law no. 81/2016 added that successful completion of training is necessary to hold top management positions. What is more, both granted each unit the right to establish a center of human resources development, and employees may receive training programs from other external accredited agencies (Article 7). This is perceived as satisfying one of the key professionalism indicators, which is training and its institutionalization. Both legislations are modeled on law no. 5/1991, as they paved the way for receiving training at external agencies too. In this

context, some experts suggested that there is a need to establish accredited entities to provide training programs for the employees (Nasreldeen, 2016) that will be conducive to more professionalism. Both, the decree-law no. 18/2015 and law no. 81/2016, are identical regarding training arrangements, so they achieved the same level of professionalism in this sense.

Despite the establishment of the Egyptian National Training Academy in 2017 to prepare trainees to become leaders in various fields (National Training Academy, 2022), it is not compulsory to attend training programs for those who will hold senior administrative positions. Thus, the establishment of this Academy may partially fulfil the criterion of training because the civil service law did not state that it is mandatory to train the candidates for administrative senior positions in this Academy.

Ethical Norms

One more crucial aspect of professionalism is the ethical norms and principles that can be expressed through codes of conduct and ethics as elucidated in the first section. The Egyptian civil service system was evolving towards these principles until it obviously mentioned the code of conduct and ethics as a reference to employees' actions. This evolution can be demonstrated in the varying laws and regulations as shown below.

Law no. 210/1951 dealt with the ethical principles in the sixth section, entitled: 'Duties of employees and forbidden actions' that is similar to the codes of conduct and ethics, which is one of the professionalism indicators. Parallel to law no. 210/1951, law no. 46/1964 provided for ethical principles that should control the employees' actions pursuant to the eight-section in the law. It is a plus that the laws dedicated a distinct section for these norms. The question remains whether or not these declared moralities can be considered as an alternative to codes of conduct. Another issue is that these ethical principles do not address the higher managerial positions or the public administration specialties exclusively, but all who work in civil service including managers, engineers, doctors, etc. Subsequently, they are not limited to the public administration positions to assert that it met the standard of the availability of a separate code of conduct as a professionalism criterion.

In this regard, law no. 58/1971 mentioned the ethical standards and norms that employees should follow, including compulsories and forbidden actions. While, in the other laws, a separate section was devoted to employees' duties and disciplinary proceedings, it may point that law no. 58/1971 paid less attention to ethical norms than the earlier laws, notably only two articles discussed the norms and principles in it (Articles no. 52 and no. 53).

Along the same lines, section no. 10 in law no. 47/ 1978 was devoted to the ethical norms and duties, and it elaborated on the prohibited actions in public service. This is somehow similar to law no. 46/1964. Though, it also dealt with the norms, still it did not indicate that a separate code of conduct and ethics should be set. Therefore, it partially achieved one of the professionalism criteria related to a code of ethics.

Given that law no. 5/1991 is not a civil service one, it did not focus on the issue of ethical norms and it did not contain negative or positive measures regarding the code of conduct and ethics. Still, it could have stated that a code of ethics regarding the leadership positions in civil service should be set, which would have boosted professionalism, but it did not indicate this.

The seventh section of the decree-law no. 18/2015 was dedicated to personnel conduct and disciplinary proceedings. This decree-law was pioneering for indicating the code of conduct and ethics for the civil service. This is one of the reasons why this decree-law was a distinguished endeavor to reform the civil service, which was stressed by the experts (Nasreldeen, 2016). In contrast to all the successive previous laws, this one explicitly referred to these codes of ethics that should be issued by the competent minister, which was considered as a key milestone towards professionalism in the civil service. Accordingly, it did

not go through much details about compulsories and forbidden actions, comparable to the earlier laws, whereas these actions were referred to the codes of conduct and ethics under this decree-law. It is worth noting that it underlined the significance of disseminating the culture of civil service and serving the public interest as a goal of the training programs, which was indicated in the literature as a professionalism sign as demonstrated in section (1). In the same context, law no. 81/2016 is similar to decree-law no.18/2015 concerning the ethical dimension and it contained the same articles on the line of the decree-law.

Availability of a Regulatory Body or a Syndicate

One of the most important criteria of professionalism is the existence of a regulatory body. The role of this organization is to control, offer training programs, set selection procedures, and hold examinations, which allows a profession to be independent. (e.g., Noordegraaf, 2016; Wilensky 1964; Cooper, 2004; Evetts, 2011).

In that sense, the Egyptian civil service system did not target this criterion of professionalism. This is because there was no discourse about an independent regulatory body for the leadership positions or public administration jobs in the legal framework of the civil service across time. The Central Agency for Organization and Administration (CAOA), established in 1964 (law no. 118/1964), could be generally considered a regulatory body. It may set employment requirements, procedures, and examinations as elucidated before, but still it is a governmental agency and is not an independent body. Another pertinent point is that its role is not limited to the jobs related to the public administration field, and it is dealing with almost all jobs' categories in civil service. This is why the establishment of (CAOA) did not satisfy one criterion of professionalism in public administration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the extent to which the Egyptian civil service meets the standards of professionalism and whether the legal framework affects the possibility of applying professionalism criteria. The advantages of adopting professionalism have been reviewed including the enhancement of the following: effectiveness in the civil service, efficiency of conflict management, and good governance. Additionally, studying professionalism in public administration has an academic significance, especially that it is a contentious topic.

The study concluded that the legal framework does not restrict the civil service entities from implementing the standards of professionalism, albeit with some flaws in these laws. At the same time, some laws did not support some professionalism criteria directly. For Instance, law no. 210/1951 obviously referred to the suitable university certificate as a prerequisite for applying to a vacancy, which matches the professionalism approach; whereas the other later laws only stipulated that the applicant should meet the requirements of the job description. Nevertheless, these laws still did not prohibit the public entities from setting the condition of holding a university degree in public administration or the related fields to apply for the senior positions or the public administration specialty vacancies. It is noticeable that the legal framework did not have articles contradict or prohibit the implementation of professionalism principles. Therefore, setting a code of conduct for the senior positions or establishing separate professional associations, for example, are legal actions because simply they do not violate the law. In fact, decree-law no. 18/2015 and law no. 81/2016, were the first to mention the codes of conduct and ethics. It seems that the recent laws became more professionalism- oriented and are not politically and socially guided.

To sum up, the current applicable law no. 81/2016 ensured the spirit of professionalism. It shed light on competitiveness, merit, and civil service ethics. In addition, it stressed on the importance of training for the employees and institutionalized its process as well. Accrediting an organization, such as (CAOA), to be

responsible for the training process can be slightly considered as an indicator of professionalism regarding the existence of a training school. However, the training at the Egyptian National Training Academy is not a must for the candidates of the senior positions. It assured that civil service culture should be embedded in the training programs, which matches the professionalism criterion of serving the public interest.

In decision no. 35/2019, under the first job-category (called specialist functions), it has leadership positions, advisory positions, supervisory management jobs, and other specialist functions include sub-fields such as human resources management and public policy. Hence, this may facilitate the application of requiring a matched academic degree in public administration for these specialized jobs. It can be concluded that the Egyptian civil service system has fulfilled numerous criteria of professionalism, yet it still needs to boost other dimensions, as illustrated in table I.

Table I. Summary of the criteria of professionalism in the civil service legal framework

Professionalism Criteria		Extent to which Criteria are Met in the Egyptian Civil Service System
1	Dealing with public administration jobs as a profession	Fulfilled through offering specialized job categories and clusters contain the sub-fields of public administration.
2	Requiring specialized educational background in public administration	Partially fulfilled as it is not obligatory to require an academic qualification in public administration to hold a job in the same field; however, the law provided the opportunity to require a specialized academic qualification. On the theoretical and legal level, it is fulfilled. On the practical level, it needs to be applied by the entities.
3	Professional licensing	Fulfilled through entry examination.
4	Offering specialized training programs	Partially fulfilled because there is no external training school, where long-term training is compulsory for candidates of PA senior positions.
5	Code of conduct and ethics	Partially fulfilled since there is a code of ethics for all the civil servants, but there is no distinct one for the public administration jobs like senior-administrative positions.
6	Availability of a regulatory body or a syndicate	Not fulfilled since (CAOA) is a regulatory body, but not an independent one.

Note: created by the author depending on this research conclusion

This research suggests that the civil service entities should start to implement the criteria of professionalism especially that the recent legal framework is not a hindrance. This will help in efficiently solving the administrative problems, as a result of assigning the right man in the right place to attain the merit-based principles.

It is recommended that the Central Agency for Organization and Administration (CAOA) and the relevant ministries may issue a decree to set new recruiting requirements for the senior administrative positions and other PA occupations demanding educational background related to public administration. In addition, a separate code of conduct and ethics for public administration jobs should be developed. What is more, the decree may commend to set up an independent syndicate and a training school (where long-term training is compulsory) for these kinds of jobs related to the public administration field. By this way, the public administration occupations would be fully professionalized.

Future Research

Future studies may investigate the professionalism criteria in other Arab countries to reach a model and to suggest alternatives to overcome any weakness points.

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