



Sources of Occupational Challenges for High School EFL Teachers in Kuwaiti Public Schools

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Abstract:

This study is undertaken to determine what high school EFL teachers consider to be the main challenges of their teaching practices. Two research questions were investigated applying the descriptive analytical methodology. In that respect, a researcher-developed questionnaire was employed. Four areas of concern were covered as follows: occupational challenges, administrative challenges, language classroom challenges, and peer-relationship challenges.

One hundred and fifty male and female high school EFL teachers participated in this study. T-test was employed when appropriate to analyze data in relation to the research questions. T-test showed significant differences among participants in relation to gender, nationality, major of qualification, educational district and experience in certain dependent variables of investigation.

The study concluded with several important remarks in relation to the investigated areas of the questionnaire.

Introduction:

Being a teacher is not an easy job to practice. Teachers at all stages of public education are holding responsibility for the successful implementation of educational policies, goals, content of assigned textbooks, and the application of appropriate teaching methods. They are always holding accountability to the public and media to any encountered problems. Although, Chandler et al. (1971) described teaching as the 'The Mother of Professions', no doubt, it can be described as well as the 'mother of troubles'.

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Like other teachers, high school teachers shoulder complex job responsibilities which reach into all corners of high school life. It is complex because teachers not only have to teach, educate, and help students develop positive attitudes and emotions, but also they have other school tasks and responsibilities to fulfill. They have administrative expectations to meet. In addition, teachers live in a mini society in which they have to deal with on daily basis. This requires them to build good relationships with colleagues as well as other school members. How much happy and satisfied they are, or not, will be reflected either positively or negatively on their lives, their school relationships, their contacts with others, as well as with their students and their teaching practices.

In the State of Kuwait, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers are considered an important factor to the success of students' English language learning. This has become more obvious as English language proficiency became a requirement for the admission at Kuwait University. High school EFL teachers join their colleagues in the expected educational role of teaching and fulfilling expected related tasks of their profession. These tasks include lesson planning, teaching aids preparation, exam preparation and correction, etc. In addition, they shoulder other administrative expectation.

However, before we ask for more from EFL teachers regarding the quality of their teaching and participation in the school life, it is important to look at the working conditions they encounter daily and how encouraging these are to make teachers put all their efforts into effective teaching practices. When EFL teachers face continuous challenges and difficulties in their schools, this makes them unsatisfied, stressed, burned out and alienated. They even think of leaving their jobs for the sake of more relaxed and distressful ones or they just retire (Brown, 1985, Al-Sheik, 1988, Davis, 1993, Fogelson, 1993, Fontana & Abouserie, 1995, & Al-Shafey, 1998). Abel and Sewell (1999) point out that teachers experience more work-related stress than non-teachers. According to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 1980: 7) occupation challenges result in teachers' tension and stress. "This can stem from the lack of teaching materials, schedules

that do not allow for breaks, discipline problems, public pressure, lack of preparation or in-service training for new programs, poor physical conditions in some schools, and the failure of administrators to support teachers against parental pressure and student misbehavior”.

Statement of the Problem:

Occupational challenges can influence negatively the teaching performance of the EFL teachers. The present study will investigate the sources of occupational challenges of high school EFL teachers in the State of Kuwait. The goal of the study is to look at areas of challenges for teachers that affect the degree of their job satisfaction.

Aim of the Study:

This study is undertaken to determine what high school EFL teachers consider to be the main challenges of their teaching practices in Kuwaiti public high schools. It looks for significant differences among the sample population in relation to the selected demographic variables: gender, nationality, major of qualification, degree, educational districts and teaching experience. It aims at providing suggestions on how to eliminate these challenges before they lead to serious and unpleasant consequences. It also aims at providing support to the beginner of EFL teachers to prevent them from facing the same challenges.

Significance of the Study:

The current study is of educational significance for the following reasons:

- 1 - Lack of research attention on the challenges high school EFL teachers encounter during their teaching in the Arab countries and in Kuwait.
- 2 - It brings to light the type of occupational challenges high school EFL teachers face in the State of Kuwait with special reference to public schools.
- 3 - It aims at suggesting ways to overcome these challenges.

Limitations of the Study:

This study looks at the occupational challenges of high school EFL teachers in the State of Kuwait. A sample population of 150 represents male and female EFL teachers in two educational zones out of the six educational zones in Kuwait. Therefore, generalizations of results are limited to this population.

Review of Literature:

EFL teachers' job is a difficult one. It is not just a matter of going into the classroom and teaching. EFL teachers have a more multipart to play. They have lessons to plan, different types of meetings to attend, students to deal with, exams to write and correct, extra-curricula activities to prepare, exchange visits to attend, many expectations to meet, and human and social school relations to maintain. Their daily school life is very full of work to do and activities to perform to the extend that they do too many tasks and play too many roles at the same time and try to be effective. This is what DeCicco and Allison (1999: 273) define as "mission clutter". Not surprisingly, many of these responsibilities which teachers are overloaded with are not related directly to teaching. Ironically, when anything goes wrong teachers are the ones to be blamed. There is always unfinished work that needs to be taken home. So even their social lives outside school walls are not theirs any more. Their minds are always busy with school, its responsibilities and what they will do next. Such a life is pressurizing and stressful. This needs to be taken care of if we want our schools to keep good teachers and achieve our educational goals.

Occupational challenges can be a source of stress and job dissatisfaction. Several studies looked at the causes of teachers stress, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. However the context of high school EFL teachers was not particularly researched. In the State of Kuwait, the studies that investigated teaching as an occupation are limited in number and of a broader focus on teaching in general which has no relation to English language teaching context in particular. Therefore, the literature that will be referred to in this study will have a

broader scope by looking at problems related to teaching as an occupation rather than occupational challenges and problems which EFL teachers encounter.

Al-Jalal (1985) studied the educational systems in the Arab Gulf Countries. He concluded that the main problem which affects the educational systems in the Gulf is related to teachers. He found that teachers are isolated. This is due to the low social status of the teaching occupation and of teachers in comparison to other occupations. Al-Jalal related it to the fact that teachers are not involved in any decision making processes. On the contrary, teachers have to execute whatever decisions imposed on them without any objection. Teaching is not a well-paid occupation, especially when compared to other occupations like, medicine, engineering, law and many others. Al-Jalal added that at work, teachers find themselves with limited teaching resources and aids, in addition to the poor working conditions. This makes many teachers reconsider their choice of such occupation. Many teachers have left the profession or have to put up with the consequences like suffering from occupation stress and burnout.

Similarly, Byrne (1998) stressed that a lack of control in the decision-making process contributes to teachers stress and burnout. It is argued that teachers feel greater job satisfaction when they are involved in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, this involvement of teachers in decision-making process could be seen as an opportunity to get into a greater conflict with their administrators (Davis and Wilson 2000).

The degree of self-burnout in high school teachers highlighted in Askar et al. (1986) study. He looked at the following variables: students behavior, teachers-teachers relationship, supervisor-teacher relationship, evaluation, self-conflicts and psycho-physiological symptoms of self-burnout. Some of the major findings are: male teachers are more exposed to self-burnout more than female teachers. Male teachers, as well encounter self-burnout in their relations more than female teachers. Both male and female Kuwaiti teachers are more to suffer from work pressures than non- Kuwaitis. As for supervisor-teacher relationship, all teachers face pressure and self-burnout. And

finally, those teachers who spent between 5-9 years in the profession are more to suffer than others from psycho-physiological symptoms of self-burnout.

In a study conducted by Al-Shiek (1988) some variables were explored to see their effects on teachers performance. He reached that there was a positive connection between the following variables and job satisfaction:

- 1 - The more teaching experience teachers gain the more satisfied they become.
- 2 - The more income teachers make the more satisfied they are.
- 3 - The more social appreciation they receive as teachers the more satisfied they are.

Al-Shiek concluded that financial, psychological, educational backgrounds, and evaluation methods are important variables which influence teachers' job satisfaction and effective teaching performances.

Al-Ibraheem (1989) drew the attention to the fact that teachers morale is going into a continuous decline. To many, teaching is an occupation that attracts only high school graduates who did not have the chance to join prestigious and major colleges for promising future jobs like doctors, accountants, engineers, and so on. According to Al-Ibraheem even parents would not prefer their sons and daughters to end up being teachers. Based on that, Al-Ibraheem named the teaching occupation as the 'occupation of troubles'.

Occupation belonging among teachers in Kuwait was the focus of Al-Kandary (1992) study. He aimed to identify the problems and reasons that lead to the lack of occupation belonging. He tested teachers' attitudes towards their occupation based on three main areas which are occupation belonging, academic preparation and materialistic and moralistic ones. Al-Kandary concluded that gender and nationality were the most influential variables in stating the degree of occupation belonging among teachers or the lack of it. Kuwaiti teachers were of more positive attitude towards belonging to their occupation than non Kuwaitis.

Yousef (1985) addressed the education crisis in the Arab World. He identified that the main issue problems which the educational systems in the Arab world suffer from are poor teacher preparation and the lack of effective training programs. He explained that although many Arab Countries spent a fortune on teacher preparation programs, the methods applied in teacher education and training are very out-dated and do not match the future needs of teachers. In addition, there is a lack of proper applications of theory into practice when running those programs. Teachers need to know what kind of competencies they have to possess. They need to know how to transfer a cognitive objective into a behavioral one. One of the main tasks of teachers should be achieving the expected changes in students' behavior.

Teacher occupational challenges as causes of teacher stress, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction have been discussed in education research for several decades. The causes of teacher stress vary as there are several factors that contribute to it.

In Leon County, Florida, Fogelson (1993) studied factors which contributed to occupation stress in elementary teachers and administrators. The sample was 33 administrators and 160 teachers. The findings revealed that the level of occupation stress varied based on how the sample individually perceived the stress factors. However, those factors were influenced by age, education qualification, administration styles, interpersonal relationships and communication.

The factors which contribute to both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among intermediate and high school teachers and principals were studied as well. Ulriksen (1996) found that teachers viewed work itself, achievement, responsibility, recognition and possibility of growth as factors which contributed to their self-satisfaction and content (i.e., feeling good) during a satisfying job experience. Accordingly, there is a relationship between teacher job satisfaction, teacher commitment, and school effectiveness (Woods & Weasmer, 2002).

Similarly, Clarke and Keating (1995) studied teacher satisfaction by looking at the most satisfying and dissatisfying factors. They

concluded that teachers' interaction with their students was the most satisfying factor. However, the lack of administrative support was the most dissatisfying factor. Surprisingly, pay did not appear to be a satisfier or a dissatisfier factor for teachers.

According to Nesbet (1999) the lack of administrative support, low pay, and crowded classrooms add to teacher stress. Other studies stressed that student misbehavior and confrontations with them are key factors to teacher stress (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Byrne, 1998; Morris, 1998; Woods & Weasmer, 2002). Among the major factors of teacher stress as most research found are administration issues, student misbehavior, inordinate time demands, limited opportunity for promotion, substandard pay, lack of resources, large class size, and fear of violence (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Adams, Heath-Camp, & Camp, 1999; Byrne, 1998; Embich, 2001; Roper, 1998; Sheesley, 2001; Weisberg & Sagie, 1999).

Marlow et al. (1996) examined the reasons of teachers for leaving their teaching profession in the Northwestern United States. The study looked at the opinions of 212 teachers from K-12 grades at random selection. Several reasons were mentioned as causes for leaving the profession. They are grouped as follows:

- 1 - students (discipline, lack of motivation, and poor attitudes);
- 2 - emotional factors (lack of fulfillment, boredom with the daily routine, stress, and frustration);
- 3 - lack of respect (community, parents, administrators, and students);
- 4 - difficult working conditions (class size, work load, non-teaching duties, paper work and lack of supply); and
- 5 - low salary and reward.

Kyriacou (1998: 7) categorized the main sources of stress into five main groups:

- 1 - poor pupils behavior, ranging from low levels of pupils motivation to overt indiscipline;
- 2 - time pressure and work overload;

- 3 - poor school ethics, including poor relationships with head-teacher and with colleagues;
- 4 - poor working conditions, including lack of resources and poor physical features of the building used;
- 5 - poor prospects concerning pay, promotion and career development.

Generally, Kyriacou (1998: 5) indicated that “ the wealth of research published on teacher stress over the last 20 years has indicated that most teachers experience some stress from time to time, and that some teachers (somewhere between a fifth and a quarter) experience a great deal of stress fairly frequently”.

Summary:

Drawing on the above literature review on occupational challenges, the main issues will be summarized below. Undeniably, education research on the factors which contribute to teachers stress and occupational challenges asserted several ones to be the primary cause. In that respect, some of the major factors are:

- 1 - social status
- 2 - salary
- 3 - work itself
- 4 - limited possibility of growth
- 5 - lack of recognition
- 6 - responsibility
- 7 - administration
- 8 - students misbehavior
- 9 - students lack of motivation
- 10 - large class size
- 11 - peers interrelationships
- 12 - lack of resources

The above mentioned factors are known to be the main challenges of the teaching occupation that play a significant role in overwhelming teachers with worries and leading to a stressful life. However, the degree of these challenges is perceived differently by individuals based

on their own teaching experiences. The numerous studies on occupational difficulties and teachers stress drew our attention not only to the sources of stress as encountered by teachers in general, but also such sources of stress vary from one subgroup to another.

As for the State of Kuwait, it is worth mentioning that the population of EFL teachers is a mixture (See Table 1). There are Kuwaiti EFL teachers and non-Kuwaiti EFL teachers who come from different Arab countries as well as other non-Arab countries. The demand on non-Kuwaiti EFL teachers is growing. This is applicable to all stages of public education including high school stage. This can be explained by two major factors. First, there is a shortage of Kuwaiti EFL teachers (Al-Mutawa, 1993). Second, the population of Kuwait is growing, and in return, the number of high school students joining public education schools is increasing.

Despite the knowledge base EFL teachers possess and have access to during their teacher preparation studies, the actual teaching experience in schools is different. It is important to keep in mind that non-Kuwaiti EFL teachers have attended different teacher preparation programs based on the home country they come from. Therefore, the risk to encounter occupation challenges for both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti EFL high school teachers is high. This would have an effect on them and on their teaching practices. This brings their occupation satisfaction into focus.

Research Questions:

This study investigates the following as the main research questions:

- 1 - What are the occupational challenges that could negatively influence high school EFL teachers' teaching practices and professional development?
- 2 - Are there significant differences in the perceived occupational challenges among the participants with reference to the demographic variables: gender, nationality, major of qualification, degree, educational districts and teaching experience?

Method:**Population:**

The population of this study is high school EFL teachers. The total population is 150 male and female teachers from two educational zones. Male teachers represent 104 (69.3%) of the population while female teachers represent 46 (30.7%) (See Table 1). The researcher took the responsibility of distributing and collecting back all 150 questionnaires. The population represents approximately a sample of the EFL teachers in those two educational zones.

TABLE 1
***Frequency distribution of the demographic characteristics
of the population of the study***

Variable Labels	Value Labels	Frequency	Valid %
Sex	Male	104	69.3
	Female	46	30.7
Nationality	Kuwaiti	33	22.0
	Non-Kuwaiti (Arabs)	117	78.0
Major of Qualification	English and Education	93	62.0
	English Arts	57	38.0
Degree	BA	128	87.1
	Diploma After BA	19	12.9
Educational Zone	Asima	66	44.0
	Hawalli	84	56.0
Experience	Up to 10	29	20.4
	10 +	113	79.6

(Number of subjects = 150)

Instrument:

The present study followed the descriptive analytical methodology. A questionnaire was employed for this study. It was developed by the researcher based on reviewing related literature. It queried teachers on occupational challenges that affect their teaching performances inside the language classroom and their daily school practices. The

questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section sought demographic data of the population covering the following variables: gender, nationality, major of qualification, degree, educational zone and teaching experience. The second section covers four domains. Domain 1 “Occupational challenges” consists of 11 items. Domain 2 “Administrative challenges” covers 12 items. Domain 3 “Language classroom challenges” comprises 9 items. Finally, domain 4 “Peer-relationship challenges” consists of 11 items.

Validity and Reliability:

Validity:

Three faculty members of the College of Education reviewed the questionnaire. Feedback was considered to clarify the wordings of some items. Also, a pilot study of 10 teachers resulted in the final refinement of the questionnaire items.

Reliability:

Coefficient Alpha Cronbach was calculated to obtain a measure of consistency and reliability of the instrument for all items in its four domains. The reliability value is presented in (See Table2).

TABLE 2
Classification of Totals & Reliability Analysis

Variable Label	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Occupational Challenges	.615	11
Administration Challenges	.931	12
Classroom Challenges	.802	9
Peer-relationship Challenges	.935	11

Data Analysis:

Version 14 of the SPSS program is used. T-test is applied when appropriate to analyze data in relation to the research questions. Frequencies and percentages are used in the analysis. Tables and figures are used to present and discuss the data.

Research Findings:

In this section of the study, the results are discussed in relation to the research questions presented earlier. Teachers were asked to indicate their opinions by check marking one of the five descriptors, which range from “strongly agree = 1” to “strongly disagree = 5”. The forthcoming sections show the results of the data analysis:

Results Pertaining to Question Number One:

Question 1. states the following: “What are the occupational challenges that could negatively influence high school EFL teachers’ teaching practices and professional development”?

To answer this question the four questionnaire domains “occupational challenges, administrative challenges, language classroom challenges, and peer relationship challenges” were investigated as believed to be the main sources of difficulties to teachers and then of occupational challenges. The results revealed by this study were grouped according to the type of challenge as follows:

- Occupational Challenges;
- Administrative Challenges;
- Language Classroom Challenges; and
- Peer Relationship Challenges

Occupational Challenges:

By examining the 11 items listed under domain 1 “Occupational Challenges”, the main findings are discussed below (See Table 3).

Teachers face different occupational challenges which are reflected on their ratings. As for their job status, 46% agree that teaching receives a low social status. This indicates that teachers are aware of it. This negatively reflected on their perception of their career. Some teachers lack parents’ respect which is sometimes practiced in front of students. In return, teachers receive limited morale support as 54.7% strongly agree on item no. 2. For such a demanding job, teachers are in need of morale support from many different sources like the society, the Ministry of Education and the school administration to relief them from the pressure they encounter from the low social status which their

TABLE 3
Frequency distribution regarding teachers' opinions on "Occupational Challenges".

Variable Names	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %
Low social job status	41	27.3	69	46.0	2	1.3	15	10.0	23	15.3
Limited morale support	82	54.7	56	37.3	0	0	6	4.0	6	4.0
low payment	102	68.0	41	27.3	1	.7	2	1.3	4	2.7
Few training courses	29	19.3	66	44.0	2	1.3	25	16.7	28	18.7
Teaching different levels (i.e, years1, 3, & 4)	17	11.4	53	35.6	2	1.3	26	17.4	51	34.2
Large syllabus to cover	25	16.8	62	41.6	3	2.0	19	12.8	40	26.8
Limited cooperation from supervisors	18	12.1	30	20.1	2	1.3	26	17.4	73	49.0
Few supervisory visits	12	8.0	31	20.7	3	2.0	26	17.3	78	52.0
Obliged to follow scope & sequence plan and finish it on time	48	32.0	63	42.0	1	.7	10	6.7	28	18.7
Lack of freedom to try new teaching methods	20	13.3	58	38.7	1	.7	18	12.0	53	35.3
Lack of subject-related references & books in school library	53	35.3	50	33.3	1	.7	22	14.7	24	16.0

job receives. The effort teachers make and put in their daily practices requires a good payment to make it an attractive job. However, 68% strongly agree that their job is of limited monetary incentives (i.e, low payment) as shown in item no. 3. This is especially very true for non-Kuwaiti teachers (Arabs), as they are employed on yearly contracts. In-service training courses are vital for the development of teachers. Yet, 44% of the participants agree that the training courses offered are few (item no. 4). Although teachers did not consider teaching different group levels (i.e. years 1, 3, & 4) as a challenge to their effort, item no. 5, they will be more creative and effective in their teaching if they are more focused on a certain year group and level of the textbook series. The large syllabus to cover is considered another factor that brings challenges for teachers. Among the population, 41.6% agree that the syllabus is large, item no. 6. In that respect, 42% agree that they are obliged to follow the scope & sequence plan and finish it on time. This puts teachers under a great pressure and have to work against the clock. This factor becomes more challenging, especially if their classes hold low achievers or uncooperative students, as shown in item 9. 38.7% of the participants agree that they lack the freedom to try new teaching methods, item 10. Slightly more than 35% (35.3%) strongly agree that the lack of many subject-related references & books in school library is considered an occupational challenge for them, as in item 11.

Items 7 and 8 inquired about the educational supervisors. Teachers find that their educational supervisors are cooperative and provide them with a sufficient number of classroom visits. Thus, for these two items teachers strongly disagree to consider supervisors as a challenging factor. For item no. 7, 'limited cooperation from supervisors', received 49% of participants strong disagreement. In item no. 8 'few supervisory visits', 52% of the participants strongly disagreed.

From the above, high school EFL teachers encounter a great deal of the occupational challenges that could be negatively reflected on their perception of their occupation and the willingness to show enthusiasm in their daily practices and co-operations. Yet, these challenges can be easily overcome by the Ministry of Education.

Teachers should have an ownership over what they do in the classroom. This includes applying different teaching methods and teaching relevant topics to the suggested ones in the textbooks. Teachers should have access to good resources and references to broaden their knowledge and up-date their information.

Administrative Challenges:

The 12 items listed under domain 2 “Administrative Challenges” revealed several findings (See Table 4).

As for item 1 ‘executing non-teaching duties’, 52% of the participants strongly agree. When teachers are faced with such duties, their energy will be drained on non-instructional tasks. This, definitely, will be reflected negatively on their teaching performance and class-room management. Teachers (32%) agree with item 2 regarding ‘school administration being biased towards some teachers’. This indicates that school administration is unfair towards some teachers. Among the participants 40% agree that they are assigned extra-teaching load. Assigning extra teaching load affects teachers’ performance. Undoubtedly, they will be in a teaching situation where they only deliver the lesson without having a chance to apply themselves fully. Item no. 4 ‘communication between school administration and teachers is weak as it receives 30.7% of the participants’ agreement. In item no. 5, (32.2%) agree that the responses of school administration to teachers’ suggestions are weak. 34% agree that the school administration does not encourage teachers to develop their teaching performance, as shown in item 6. In addition, 34.7% strongly agree that the school administration is concerned with superficial practices rather than effective teaching, as stated in item 7. Among the participants, 32.7% agree that the faculty meetings with the principal are traditional and routine. Furthermore, the working climate & conditions do not encourage creativity, and this item received 33.3% of strong agreement. As for item 10, the work load is assigned without taking teachers’ opinions 30% of the participants strongly agree.

The above items reveal another challenge which teachers face from the school administration. Therefore, the school administration

TABLE 4
Frequency distribution regarding teachers' opinions on "Administrative Challenges".

Variable Names	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %
Executing non-teaching duties.	77	52.0	43	29.1	0	0	9	6.1	19	12.8
School administration is biased towards some teachers.	33	22.0	48	32.0	2	1.3	16	10.7	51	34.0
Assigned extra- teaching load.	56	37.3	60	40.0	1	.7	19	12.7	14	9.3
Communication between school administration and teachers is weak.	25	16.7	46	30.7	1	.7	35	23.3	43	28.7
Responses of school administration to teachers' suggestions are weak.	33	22.1	48	32.2	5	3.4	27	18.1	36	24.2
School administration does not encourage teachers to develop their teaching performance.	26	17.3	51	34.0	2	1.3	28	18.7	43	28.7

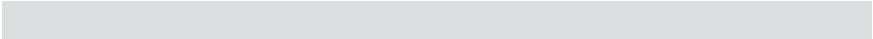


TABLE 4 (Cont'd)
Frequency distribution regarding teachers' opinions on "Administrative Challenges".

Variable Names	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %
School administration is concerned with superficial practices rather than effective teaching.	52	34.7	38	25.3	2	1.3	22	14.7	36	24.0
Faculty meetings with the principal are traditional and routine	31	20.7	49	32.7	6	4.0	22	14.7	42	28.0
Working climate & conditions do not encourage creativity.	50	33.3	45	30.0	2	1.3	21	14.0	32	21.3
Work load is assigned without taking teachers' opinions.	41	27.3	44	29.3	1	.7	19	12.7	45	30.0
School administration lacks concern for teachers' lives.	25	16.7	47	31.3	1	.7	25	16.7	52	34.7
School administration puts various kinds of pressure on teachers.	24	16.0	48	32.0	0	0	23	15.3	55	36.7



is encouraged to revise its relation with the teachers and make its best to solve the above mentioned difficulties as they are the main source for the administrative challenges for teachers. However, if teachers suffer from the superficial role of some school administrations, schools will end up with the teachers they deserve. In other words, competent teachers will leave for better schools where they will be treated fairly and respectfully, and only incompetent teachers will remain.

On the other hand, teachers strongly disagree with items (11, & 12). Here are the percentage for each one of them. In item 11, “school administration lacks concern for teachers’ lives” 34.7% strongly disagree. Finally, item 12, ‘school administration puts various kinds of pressure on teachers. 36.7% strongly disagree.

Language Classroom Challenges:

The following findings are derived from the 9 items listed under domain 3 “Language Classroom Challenges” (See Table 5).

Having a large class size is another challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers as they face difficulty in involving all students in classroom participation. In that respect, 55.3% strongly agree that large class size is a challenge. Students’ participation is crucial for practicing English as a Foreign Language. However, 54% of the participants agree that their students’ participation in class discussion is weak. This brings items (6 & 7) into focus. In item 6, 43.3% of the participants strongly agree that their students depend totally on them for their learning. In addition, 45.3% agree that their students lack interest in learning English, as shown in item 7. Although, 48.7% strongly disagree with item no. 5 which is ‘hard to build friendly teacher-student relationship’. 42.7% agree that ‘students are noisy & misbehaving’ as shown in item 4. This creates chaos in the language classroom and brings another challenge for teachers on how to bring the class into control. This is clearly seen in item 3, as 37.3% of the participants agree that it is hard to discipline students. Item 8 ‘limited teaching aids’ receives 38.7% of the participants’ agreement. Finally, 43.3% strongly agree that classrooms are not attractive learning environments, as shown in item 9.

TABLE 5
Frequency distribution regarding teachers' opinions on "Language Classroom Challenges".

Variable Names	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %
Large class size.	83	55.3	55	36.7	0	0	8	5.3	4	2.7
Students' participation in class discussion is weak.	51	34.0	81	54.0	0	0	14	9.3	4	2.7
Hard to discipline students	8	5.3	56	37.3	4	2.7	27	18.0	55	36.7
Students are noisy & misbehaving.	27	18.0	64	42.7	1	.7	26	17.3	32	21.3
Hard to build friendly teacher-student relationship.	7	4.7	35	23.3	1	.7	34	22.7	73	48.7
Students depend totally on teachers for their learning.	65	43.3	63	42.0	1	.7	10	6.7	11	7.3
Students lack interest in learning English.	47	31.3	68	45.3	3	2.0	19	12.7	13	8.7
Limited teaching aids	56	37.3	58	38.7	1	.7	19	12.7	16	10.7
Lack of attractive learning environment.	65	43.3	52	34.7	4	2.7	11	7.3	18	12.0

It is important for a successful foreign language learning to consider the capacity of the class size. The smaller the class the better learning achieved. Students will have a greater opportunity to practice the language and make the effort to be active during the class period. In addition, teachers will reflect more easily on their performance and bring creativity into focus while teaching. It is very necessary for both teachers and students to be in an attractive learning environment to be more into the teaching/learning process. This will have a positive influence on the teaching/learning process. It will create a very relaxing and appealing learning environment. From the above, the language classroom is a another source of teachers' occupational challenges.

Peer-Interpersonal Challenge:

Table (6) below shows the frequency distribution of the participants regarding the "Peer-Interpersonal Challenge".

In item 1 'hard to work as a team' 40% of the participants strongly disagree. This proves that teachers get along with each other. 38.7% strongly disagree on item 2 'teachers do not exchange subject-related information'. As for item 3, 'anxiety in the work atmosphere' 38.7% strongly disagree. Similarly, 36% of the participants strongly disagree that jealousy exists among them, as shown in item 4. Slightly more than 37% (37.3%) strongly disagree with item 5 'lack of cooperation among teachers'. As for item 6 'unequal teaching load', 39.3% strongly disagree. As well, teachers strongly disagree with item 7 'hard to establish a friendly relationship with teachers'. The rating for this item is 56.7% of strong disagreement. Teachers do not experience 'high negative criticism from other teachers'. Thus, 47.3% of the participants strongly disagree on item 8. 70.5% strongly disagree with the statement 'I feel unwelcomed with peers' as listed in item 9. Half of the participants (50%) strongly disagree that the 'relationships among teachers are characterized by belonging to certain groups or nationalities'. This is indicated in item 10. Finally, 54% of the participants strongly disagree on item 11 'I feel that others do not consider my points of view'.

By looking at the rating of the participants to the items presented

TABLE 6
Frequency distribution regarding teachers' opinions on "peer-interpersonal challenge"

Variable Names	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %	Freq	Valid %
Hard to work as a team	14	9.3	52	34.7	0	0	24	16.0	60	40.0
Teachers do not exchange subject-related information.	12	8.0	54	36.0	3	2.0	23	15.3	58	38.7
Anxiety in the work atmosphere	15	10.0	42	28.0	1	.7	34	22.7	58	38.7
Jealousy among teachers.	17	11.3	44	29.3	0	0	35	23.3	54	36.0
Lack of cooperation among teachers.	8	5.3	47	31.3	0	0	39	26.0	56	37.3
Unequal teaching load.	14	9.3	47	31.3	1	.7	29	19.3	59	39.3
Hard to establish a friendly relationship with teachers	2	1.3	28	18.7	0	0	35	23.3	85	56.7
High negative criticism from other teachers.	4	2.7	33	22.0	0	0	42	28.0	71	47.3
I feel unwelcomed with peers.	4	2.7	13	8.7	2	1.3	26	17.4	105	70.5
Relationships among teachers are characterized by belonging to certain groups or nationalities.	17	11.3	34	22.7	0	0	24	16.0	75	50.0
I feel that others do not consider my points of view.	2	1.3	29	19.0	0	0	38	25.3	81	54.0

in domain 4 “Peer-Relationship Challenges”, it is clear that peer-relationship does not cause any occupational challenges by any means. This suggests that the participants are in good terms with each other. They understand how to relate to each other as a member of the teaching staff. This demonstrates that teachers work as a team.

Results Pertaining to Question Number Two:

Question 2. states the following: “Are there any significant differences in the perceived occupational challenges among the participants with reference to the demographic variables: gender, nationality, major of qualifications, degree, educational districts and teaching experience”?

Table 7 shows that there are significant differences between males and females regarding their opinion on “Occupational Challenges”, “Administrative Challenges” and “Language Classroom Challenges”. The mean value for male is more than the mean value for females on the three challenges. This means that female participants agree more than the male participants in all the three domains.

TABLE 7
T-test results for comparing respondents’ opinions regarding the challenges according to “Gender”

Variable Names	Male			Female			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Occupational Challenges	101	2.842	0.628	46	2.488	0.584	3.231**	145	0.002*
Administrative Challenges	102	3.096	1.161	45	2.219	0.948	4.454**	145	0.000*
Language Classroom Challenges	104	2.552	0.819	46	2.249	0.683	2.198*	148	0.029*
Peer - Relationship Challenges	104	3.858	1.026	45	3.521	1.154	1.769	147	0.079

* Significant at $\alpha = .05$

** Significant at $\alpha = .01$

TABLE 8
***T-test results for comparing respondents' opinions
regarding the challenges according to "Nationality"***

Variable Names	Kuwaiti			Non-Kuwaiti (Arabs)			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Occupational Challenges	32	2.386	0.651	115	2.827	0.598	3.615**	145	0.000*
Administrative Challenges	33	2.068	0.938	114	3.047	1.140	4.506*	145	0.000*
Language Class- room Challenges	33	2.293	0.778	117	2.506	0.790	1.374	148	0.172
Peer - Relation- ship Challenges	32	3.469	1.215	117	3.835	1.023	1.720	147	0.088

* Significant at $\alpha = .01$

T-test shows that there is a significant difference in "Occupational Challenges" and "Administrative Challenges" with reference to nationality. The mean value for the non-Kuwaitis (Arabs) is more than the mean value for Kuwaitis on these two challenges. This means that Kuwaiti participants agree more than the non-Kuwaiti participants in both domains.

TABLE 9
***T-test results for comparing respondents' opinions
regarding the challenges according to "Qualification"***

Variable Names	English Education			English Arts			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Occupational Challenges	90	2.725	0.694	57	2.740	0.533	.137	145	0.891
Administrative Challenges	92	2.647	1.187	55	3.129	1.083	2.461*	145	0.015*
Language Class- room Challenges	93	2.355	0.805	57	2.630	0.740	2.091*	148	0.038*
Peer - Relation- ship Challenges	92	3.624	1.118	57	3.970	0.968	1.998	147	0.055

* Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

T-test (See Table 9) shows that there is a significant difference in “Administrative Challenges” and “Language Classroom Challenges” with reference to qualification. The mean value of the English Education teachers is less than the English Arts teachers in both domains. This means English Education teachers agree more than the English Arts teachers on these challenges.

TABLE 10
T-test results for comparing respondents opinions regarding the challenges according to “Degree”

Variable Names	BA			Diploma after BA			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Occupational Challenges	127	2.737	0.623	17	2.743	0.754	.036	142	0.971
Administrative Challenges	126	2.850	1.197	18	2.773	0.975	.032	142	0.794
Language Classroom Challenges	128	2.467	0.764	19	2.474	0.969	.034	145	0.977
Peer - relationship Challenges	127	3.797	1.062	19	3.402	1.148	1.495	144	0.395

T-test shows (See Table 10) that there is no significant difference with reference to degree.

TABLE 11
T-test results for comparing respondents opinions regarding the challenges according to “Educational Area”

Variable Names	Asima			Hawalli			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Occupational Challenges	64	2.800	0.660	83	2.867	0.613	1.154	145	0.250
Administrative Challenges	64	2.837	1.164	83	2.819	1.180	0.092	145	0.927
Language Classroom Challenges	66	2.471	0.746	84	2.450	0.827	.166	148	0.868
Peer - Relationship Challenges	66	3.978	1.020	83	3.579	1.087	2.300*	147	.024*

* Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

T-test shows (See Table 11) that there is a significant difference in “Peer - Relationship Challenges” with reference to the Educational Area. The mean value of Hawalli Area is less than the mean value of Asima Area. This means that teachers in Hawalli agree on this challenge more than the teachers in Asima do.

TABLE 12
***T-test results for comparing respondents opinions
regarding the challenges according to “Experience”***

Variable Names	5-10			10 +			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Occupational Challenges	29	2.599	0.545	110	2.778	0.638	1.383	137	0.169
Administrative Challenges	28	2.271	0.905	111	2.998	1.188	3.021**	137	0.003*
Language Class- room Challenges	29	2.295	0.700	113	2.509	0.807	1.308	140	0.193
Peer - Relation- ship Challenges	29	3.683	0.960	112	3.772	1.113	.395	139	.693

** Significant at $\alpha = 0.01$

T-test shows (See Table 12) that there is a significant difference in “Administrative Challenges” with reference to the teaching experience. The mean value shows that teachers with 5-10 years of experience agree on this challenge more than teachers with 10 + years of experience do.

Conclusion:

In the present study, the possible sources of teachers’ occupational challenges were identified by distributing a questionnaire to the participants of high school EFL teachers in Kuwaiti public schools and rating their responses. Four domains were investigated: occupational challenges, administrative challenges, language classroom challenges, and peer-relationship challenges. The present study attempted to provide an answer to the previously stated research questions. The results identified predictors of teachers mean sources of occupational challenges.

According to teachers' responses to the four domains covered by the questionnaire, the mean sources of the occupational challenges they encounter the most are occupational, administrative, and language classroom ones. As for domain 1, the 'Occupational challenges', limited monetary incentives received a high percentage. Next, it came the limited morale support and the low social job status the teaching profession receives. These are very important findings to consider. In order to keep good teachers satisfied and willing to continue teaching, the Kuwaiti society in general, and the Ministry of Education in particular, must assert the vital and fundamental role played by teachers in educating future generations and building the future society. This creates the necessary morale support which teachers look for and raise their voices asking for. In addition, parents need to show respect when talking about teachers and when addressing them directly in front of their children in schools. As for limited monetary incentives, it is important to reconsider teachers' salaries, especially for the non-Kuwaiti (Arab) teachers. Low payment will lead to a great loss of qualified teachers baring in mind that the majority of high school EFL teachers are non-Kuwaitis (Arabs). They will seek other job opportunities either locally in private schools or abroad in other Gulf Countries. It is necessary to keep teachers up-dated with the current theoretical backgrounds and practices of their major. Thus, in-service training courses are a must to connect them with their field of specialization and bring them every now and then to the world of real language interaction through contacting colleagues during training courses.

By shedding light on domain 2 'Administrative Challenges', many causes for teachers' occupational challenges are highlighted. The most highlighted item is executing non- teaching duties. Assigning extra-teaching load is another major predictor for their challenges. Teachers are faced with very discouraging working climate and working conditions, in addition to other highlighted items mentioned in the discussion under this area. The lack of administrative support is another key factor for the encountered challenges. Correspondingly, this may lead to societal criticism which adds to the low social job

status already teachers feel. Accordingly, school administrations need to request more teaching staff to avoid assigning extra teaching loads or non-teaching duties. The more the relaxed and appealing the working conditions are the more satisfactory teaching performance teachers practice. Administrators must give teachers extra support and encourage them to apply themselves by listening to their suggestions and strengthening the channels of communication.

The third significant source for teachers' occupational challenges is the language classroom and the language learners. Language teachers are facilitators of the learning process, directors of classroom activities and orchestra conductors of learners participation. However, facing uncooperative students who depend to a large extent on their teachers in their learning process will discourage teachers. Although building a friendly relationship with students is not hard, dealing with noisy and misbehaving students really hinders classroom interaction and brings the element of classroom control and management into question. Undoubtedly, this reflects the low social status the teaching profession receives. It is important to provide teachers with all the necessary teaching aids to help attract and involve students in the learning process. In addition, classrooms must be attractive learning environments to create the desired atmosphere to live the experience of learning a foreign language.

In conclusion, the above highlighted occupational challenges are predictors for future stress, job dissatisfaction and self-burnout for future teachers. Consequently, teachers may reach a stage when they simply decide to leave the teaching profession to avoid any extra complications. If these challenges are taken care of, teachers will be more productive and any new comer to the professions will experience better job conditions. Accordingly, teaching will be a very attracting profession and not vice versa.

Recommendations:

The findings of the present study and its relevant literature direct the attention to a number of issues as follows:

- 1 - It is important to establish dialogue between school administrations and teachers. This will help in identifying their problems,

worries, job pressures, and creating a friendly working environment.

- 2 - It is important to increase the number of in-service training courses so teachers become updated with the new approaches to language teaching and learning.
- 3 - It is vital to show more social respect to teachers and the educational role they play in educating future generations.
- 4 - It is important to encourage students to become more involved indirectly in the learning process by joining extra-curricula activities of the English language.
- 5 - It is necessary to create better working conditions including resources and better physical features of the buildings and the furniture used.
- 6 - It is necessary to reconsider the salary of non- Kuwaiti teachers as a means of attracting qualified EFL teachers to the profession.
- 7 - It is necessary to reconsider quality versus quantity in the English text-books to help teachers become creative in their job, and offer more time for learners to practice the language.

The present study has offered insights to what teachers in two educational districts in Kuwait addressed as occupational challenges. It is necessary to study the opinions of high school EFL teachers in the other educational zones to identify the common challenges among all high school EFL teachers.

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Appendix

Serial No.:

Kuwait University
College of Education
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Sources of Occupational Challenges for High School EFL Teachers in Kuwaiti Public Schools

Dear Teacher:

This questionnaire is designed to find out information about the “Sources of Occupational Challenges for High School EFL Teachers in Kuwaiti Public Schools”. Your participation is of great value as it will contribute to the findings of the study. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part one is on demographic characteristics. Part two covers the questionnaire items in each of its four areas.

Thank you for your co-operation.

The Researcher,

Part One:

Demographic Characteristics

Gender:	Male	☐ Female	☐
Nationality:	Kuwaiti	☐ Non-Kuwaiti	☐
Qualification:	Eng. & Education	☐ English Arts	☐
Degree:	BA	☐ Diploma after BA	☐
Educational Area:	Asima	☐ Hawalli	☐
Years of Experience:	1-5 ☐ 6-10	☐ 10 +	☐

Please check mark one of the five descriptors that represents your opinion.

Domain 1 “Occupational Challenges”.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neut- tral	Dis- agree	Strongly Disagree
1 Low social job status					
2 Limited morale support					
3 Limited monetary incentives/ low payment					
4 Few training courses					
5 Teaching different group levels (i, e, years1, 3, & 4)					
6 Large syllabus to cover					
7 Limited cooperation from supervisors					
8 Few supervisory visits					
9 Obligated to follow scope & sequence plan and finish it on time					
10 Lack of freedom to try new teaching methods					
11 Lack of subject-related references & books in school library					

Domain 2 “Administrative Challenges ”.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neut.	Dis- agree	Strongly Disagree
1 Executing non-teaching duties.					
2 School administration is biased towards some teachers.					
3 Assigned extra- teaching load.					
4 Communication between school administration and teachers is weak					
5 Responses of school administration to teachers' suggestions are weak.					
6 School administration does not encourage teachers to develop their teaching performance.					
7 School administration is concerned with superficial practices rather than effective teaching					
8 Faculty meetings with the principal are traditional and routine					
9 Working climate & conditions do not encourage creativity.					
10 Work load is assigned without taking teachers' opinions.					
11 School administration lacks concern for teachers' lives					
12 School administration puts various kinds of pressure on teachers.					

Domain 3 “Language Classroom Challenges”.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 Large class size.					
2 Students' participation in class discussion is weak.					
3 Hard to discipline students					
4 Students are noisy & misbehaving.					
5 Hard to build friendly teacher-student relationship.					
6 Students depend totally on teachers for their learning.					
7 Students lack interest in learning English.					
8 Limited teaching aids					
9 Lack of attractive learning environment.					

Domain 4 “Peer Interpersonal Challenges”.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 Hard to work as a team					
2 Teachers do not exchange subject-related information.					
3 Anxiety in the work atmosphere					
4 Jealousy among teachers.					
5 Lack of cooperation among teachers.					
6 Unequal teaching load.					
7 Hard to establish a friendly relationship with teachers.					
8 High negative criticism from other teachers.					
9 I feel unwelcome with peers.					
10 Relationships among teachers are characterized by belonging to certain groups or nationalities.					
11 I feel that others do not consider my points of view.					