

3.0 PART ONE: ANALYSIS OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

3.1 ENGLISH (101)

3.1.1 GENERAL CANDIDATES PERFORMANCE

Table : Candidates' Overall Performance in English (101) in the last four years

The table below shows the performance of candidates in the three papers offered in 2017 in the KCSE English Examination. Similar Data for the years, 2014, 2015 and 2016 is also provided for comparison.

Year	Paper	Candidature	Maximum Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2014	1	482499	60	29.02(48.37%)	8.80
	2		80	28.70(35.88%)	11.26
	3		60	19.97(33.28%)	6.30
	overall		200	77.68(38.84%)	24.28
2015	1	525621	60	29.37(48.95%)	8.28
	2		80	31.86(39.82%)	12.43
	3		60	19.35(32.25%)	6.13
	overall		200	80.58(40.29%)	24.40
2016	1	571644	60	29.15(48.58%)	8.15
	2		80	20.39(25.49%)	10.86
	3		60	18.52(30.86%)	5.23
	overall		200	68.06(40.29%)	22.03
2017	1	610084	60	25.89(43.30%)	7.12
	2		80	28.24(35.30%)	11.73
	3		60	19.42(32.37%)	5.92
	overall		200	73.55(40.29%)	22.57

From the table above, it can be observed that:

- (i) The subject mean rose by 5.48 points from 68.06 with a standard deviation of 22.03 to 73.55 with a standard deviation of 22.57. The improvement was attributable to improved mean performance in Paper 2 and Paper 3. Performance in Paper 1 declined by 3.26 points. The overall performance still falls short of the ideal mean of 100 (50%), calling for innovation in curriculum implementation.
- (ii) Performance of candidates in Paper 2 improved significantly from 20.39 in 2016 to 28.24 in 2017.
- (iii) Performance in Paper 3 improved minimally by 0.9 points from 18.52 in 2016 to 19.42 in 2017.

The section that follows focuses on the candidates' areas of difficulty and gives suggestions on how such areas can be better taught.

3.1.2 English Paper 1 (101/1)

The paper was reported to have been appropriate for the target candidates. Observations on candidates' performance are as follows:

Question 1

Question 1 tested the candidate's ability to write a speech using the right format and style. Good candidates performed well but the weak ones had low scores as they failed to use the expected format. A good number of candidates lacked the creativity to infer the expected content from the given situation.

The key to better performance is providing the candidates with plenty of practice in all types of functional writing.

Question 2

Candidates performed poorly in the cloze test. As usual many failed to make use of the provided contextual, syntactic and discourse clues.

Teachers should train students to make use of given clues to enable them make intelligent guesses. They should also urge candidates to read widely. The grammar and vocabulary they need as well as a wide range of contexts are to be found in well written literature that abounds all around them.

Question 3a (i)

Candidates were required to identify the features that contributed to the oral nature of the given song. Majority of them failed the test as they could not differentiate between sound devices and oral features in a song.

Teachers should cover all aspects of the syllabus to avoid disadvantaging candidates. They should especially provide candidates with the necessary exposure to all the genres of oral literature.

3.1.3 English Paper 2 (101/2)

The paper was reported to have been the right level for the candidates and to have tested all skills in a balanced manner. However, an analysis of candidates' work revealed poor comprehension skills. Candidates also made many errors of punctuation, spelling and grammar. Given this is a language paper, these errors attracted penalties.

Question 1

This question tested the conventional unseen comprehension. It was noted that majority of candidates could not handle questions that tested higher order skills; they performed dismally in questions that required analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Question 2

The second Comprehension was based on the play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Candidates were

required to not only use the information in the extract given but to also use their knowledge of the se text. Majority of the candidates had not read the play well enough to place the extract in its context as required in 2(a) and 2(f); hence, the two questions were performed poorly.

Students should be encouraged to read with understanding and express such understanding in their own words where necessary. They should also read the set books and avoid overreliance on guidebooks.

Question 3

Question 3 was based on an oral narrative. Majority of the students did well in the section.

Question 4

Section (a) proved difficult to most candidates. The candidates were required to rewrite sentence according to given instructions. Besides the comprehension of the input sentence, the candidates were needed to be conversant with the rules of grammar governing the changes. This was evidently lacking in the work of most of the candidates.

Noteworthy, major weaknesses noted in candidates' work in this section included poor punctuation and gross spelling errors. These attracted serious penalties in all the sections.

Teachers should cover all the grammar topics in the syllabus and encourage learners to pay attention to punctuation and spelling and to avoid losing marks needlessly.

3.1.4 English Paper 3 (101/3)

1. The paper was reported to have been appropriately pitched with the language being within the level of the candidates. However, candidates continue to perform poorly in the paper. The major weaknesses noted are as follows: Poor mastery of the language leading to failure to adequately interpret given tasks and compose credible and interesting accounts;
2. Little knowledge of the texts evidenced by scanty illustrations;
3. Inadequate composition writing skills evidenced by candidates' inability to plan their essays, disorganized organizational skills, and inadequate mastery of the mechanics of writing;
4. Poor interpretative and critical thinking skills.

Question 1 Imaginative Composition

This question tested the candidates' creativity, originality and ability to communicate in writing.

Question 1 (a)

The candidates were required to compose a story weaving the three given objects into an interesting account. Some candidates failed to include some of the objects; hence their accounts were incomplete.

Question 1 (a)

The question tested candidates' ability to write an expository essay on the effects of corruption. Some candidates presented their work in note form instead of developing an essay.

Teachers should teach different types of writing and provide learners with ample practice. They should also impress upon them that the expository composition is as concerned with linguistic ability as it is concerned with the points.

Essays Based On Set Texts

The questions proved quite demanding because the candidates lacked both the essay development skills and the content to illustrate their claims. Many candidates displayed little knowledge of the texts by giving scanty illustrations. There were also some who failed to interpret the tasks correctly leading to irrelevant narrations.

General comments on the paper

Performance in this paper remains depressed indicating that there is a lot to be done in the area of composition writing. Once again teachers are called upon to teach composition writing skills and ensure that learners know their texts well. Candidates should also be given ample practice in essay writing.