

3.0 PART ONE: ANALYSIS OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

3.1 ENGLISH (101)

3.1.1 General candidates performance

The table below shows the performance of candidates in the three papers offered in November/ December series 2022 in the KCSE English Examination. Similar Data for the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 is also provided for comparison.

Table 10: Candidates' Overall Performance in English (101) in the last five years

Year	Paper	Candidature	Maximum Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2018	1	659953	60	29.15 (48.58%)	8.51
	2		80	24.78 (30.98%)	9.42
	3		60	18.85 (31.42%)	6.58
	overall		200	72.78 (36.39%)	22.27
2019	1	697222	60	29.00 (48.00%)	8.23
	2		80	33.00 (41.25%)	11.08
	3		60	20.00 (33.33%)	5.70
	overall		200	82.00 (41.00%)	
2020	1	743984	60	25.38 (42.30%)	7.70
	2		80	26.69 (33.30%)	12.08
	3		60	20.66 (34.40%)	5.38
	overall		200	72.73 (36.37%)	23.51
2021	1	822933	60	24.66 (41.10%)	8.88
	2		80	27.37 (34.20%)	11.43
	3		60	21.73 (36.23%)	6.90
	overall		200	73.76(36.88%)	24.97
2022	1	877773	60	28.29 (47.15 %)	8.78
	2		80	27.67 (34.59 %)	11.81
	3		60	19.94 (33.23 %)	6.40
	overall		200	75.88 (37.94%)	25.00

From the table above, it can be observed that:

- Performance of candidates in 2022 improved slightly by 1.06 percentage points from 73.76(37 %) in 2021 to 75.88 (37.9 %) in 2022. The results were therefore comparable to those of the previous year.
- There was a slight drop of 1.79 percentage points in candidates' performance in Paper 3.
- The mean performance of candidates in Paper 1 and 2 improved by 6.05 and 0.39 percentage points respectively.
- As the table indicates, the overall performance in the subject for the five years still falls below the ideal mean of 50%.

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. It tested the syllabus adequately and all the questions were within the candidates' experiences.

Observations on candidates' performance are as follows:

Question 1

Question 1 assessed the candidates' ability to write a speech observing the correct format and style. The main problems in candidates work included, mixing up the acknowledgement protocol for guests and inability to use features of spoken language. In addition, a good number of students were unable to interpret the demands of the question.

Advice to Teachers

The key to better performance is providing students with plenty of practice in all types of functional writing. Learning gains can be enhanced if students are given opportunities to revise their writing addressing the shortcomings identified through self, peer and teacher assessment.

Question 2

As usual, most of the candidates performed poorly in the cloze test. The test assesses a variety of integrated reading and grammatical skills. Besides, it tests the learners' ability to read with understanding, predicting the missing words using contextual, syntactic and discourse clues provided within the text. To perform well in this test one has to have command of grammar and a good vocabulary. Learners should also pay attention to punctuation, as this can also help them make intelligent guesses to fill in the gaps appropriately.

Advice to Teachers

Students should be provided with plenty of practice using a variety of texts and contexts. They should also be guided to use available clues to fill in the missing words. Moreover, they should be guided to better understand that each blank space is not a discrete item, but part of the whole; hence, they should always read a passage several times before filling in the blanks.

Question 3a (i)

The candidates were expected to describe the rhyme scheme of a given poem and explain its function. Many students did not know if the rhyme scheme was regular or irregular. Some students indicated that it was irregular yet provided the functions of a regular scheme. This confusion indicates that the learners had not understood the concept.

Advice to teachers

It seemed that students were reproducing stock answers without relating them to the given poem. This should be discouraged by ensuring that they understand concepts and apply this understanding to various situations as per the demands of the given questions.

Question 3(c)

Candidates were expected to underline the stressed part of given words in sentences. The sentences provided a context to enable them decide whether a word was used as a noun or a verb in order to respond correctly. Many students were unable to do this; consequently, they failed to identify the stressed syllables in the given words.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should teach word stress rules and provide learners with adequate examples. Today several audio aids such as mobile phones are available to help improve students' listening and speaking skills. Teachers should facilitate the use of such aids to assist learners understand the concept better.

3.1.3 English Paper 2 (101/2)

The paper was reported to have tested all skills in a balanced manner. Nevertheless it was reported that students found the poem challenging. Further, 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.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should impress upon learners that proper spelling and correct use of punctuation is an essential element of Language.

Question 1

This question tested the conventional unseen comprehension. Generally the candidates performed well in this section. However, it was reported that most candidates could not handle questions that tested higher order skills; in such questions many students simply responded by presenting chunks of lifted sentences which did not meet the demands of the given questions.

Advice to Teachers

Learners should practice answering different kinds of questions that cover various comprehension skills. These include recall, interpretation of information, summary and note making, inference, integration of information from different parts of a passage as well as tone attitude, language use and author's purpose.

Question 2

This question assessed comprehension based on a set text. The test requires candidates to not only use the information in the given excerpt but to also use their knowledge of the set text. Most responses indicated that many candidates had not read the text well enough to answer questions outside the excerpt.

Advice to Teachers

Students should be encouraged to read the set books well enough to recall needed information and make necessary inferences as per the demands of the test. In addition, teachers should devise adequate strategies for encouraging students to read all the prescribed texts.

Question 3

The question was based on a poem. As usual, candidates perform poorly when question 3 is based on a poem. The situation was the same this time round. It was reported that the poem proved to be challenging for many candidates.

Advice to Teachers

It is important for teachers to find ways of making poetry accessible to all learners. For instance, they can start with simple poems with content that is relevant and interesting to learners at this level. Learners should also practise writing simple poems on familiar subjects that interest them.

Question 4

Candidates generally performed poorly in grammar. Performance was particularly poor in question 4 (c) which required them to rearrange jumbled up words to form meaningful sentences. Further, many students lost marks because even though they made meaningful sentences, they forgot to punctuate them correctly.

Advice to Teachers

It is important to ensure that all the topics in the syllabus are covered and that adequate practice in all aspects of grammar is provided. Teachers should also impress upon learners that proper and correct use of punctuation is an essential element of grammar.

3.1.4 English Paper 3 (101/3)

It was reported that the paper tested the syllabus adequately. It was also well balanced in terms of skills tested and comprised both challenging and easy questions. In addition, the time allocated for the paper was adequate. It was further revealed that none of the questions was ambiguous and open-ended. However, the candidates exhibited:

1. Low scores in imaginative compositions due to lack of competence in grammar and mechanics of writing.
2. Dismal scores were noted in essay questions based on set texts, which were attributed to weak illustrations and insufficient grasp of literature set texts.
3. Candidates work also revealed lack of critical thinking and interpretive reading because most of them were only giving the story line of the set texts.

Question 1 Imaginative Composition (Compulsory)

Imaginative compositions require candidates to showcase their creativity and originality in the use of English Language.

Question 1 (a)

In this question, candidates were required to write a story that begins "*when I arrived home, I found a crowd gathered in our compound. Everyone seemed very happy.*" The candidates were expected to create a story to illustrate a situation where he/she arrives home and finds a happy crowd gathered in their home/ compound. The candidate was expected to narrate what exactly made the mood carnival.

Weaknesses

Grammatical mistakes and weak paragraphing were noted among candidates. Many candidates were unable to use language creatively because of limited linguistic abilities; the compositions were rather flat.

Advice to Teachers

Learners need to be taught creative writing skills. They are supposed to be taken through the process of writing sparkling sentences and how to choose flavoured words that match the context of the writing task. They are supposed to make readers glide from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph.

Question 1 (b)

The question tested candidates' competence in expository writing. The candidates were expected to come up with expository compositions explaining *how discipline in schools can be improved*.

Weaknesses

Many candidates give weight to points, on how discipline can be improved, rather than creativity in language use. They did not present clear and logical explanation on how discipline in schools can be improved. It is important to note that creative use of language is still a powerful tool in expository compositions, yet many candidates ignored it.

Advice to teachers

Learners should be reminded to begin each paragraph with a powerful issue topic sentence followed by reasons and supporting details. Ambitious learners can even write their essays using facts based on research reports while presenting both sides of the issue. Learners should be guided on appropriate use of linking words to create cohesion. The learner's opinion should be restated or summarized in the conclusion.

Question 2

The Compulsory Set Text

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

The candidates were required to write an essay based on the set text illustrating how *a male dominated society poses certain challenges to women and how some women resist the limitations imposed on them*. Specifically, they were supposed to illustrate how Nora fights her way in a male dominated society.

Weaknesses

A good number of candidates were unable to provide relevant introductions, content details, and conclusions. Many candidates did not adequately address the second part of the question that required them to explain how some Nora resists the limitations imposed on her.

Question 3

The Optional Set Texts

The Optional Set Texts comprise the Short Story, Drama/Play, and The novel

(a) The Short Story

Chris Wanjala, *Memories We Lost and Other Stories*

The candidates were asked to write a composition in support of the statement: *People suffering from mental illness need unconditional love. This may help them to cope better with their condition*. They were supposed to draw relevant illustrations from the short story "*Memories We Lost*" by Lidudumalingani Mqomboti. The task required candidates to explain how the narrator and other characters in the story were able to show love to narrator's sick sister and how this demonstration of love helped the sister to cope with her condition.

Weaknesses

Many candidates lacked paragraph development skills. The responses were deficient of the expected details and illustrations. Many candidates reproduced the short story without making conscious effort to select relevant information—a reflection of weak interpretation of the text.

(b) Drama

David Mulwa, *Inheritance*

The candidates were asked to use illustrations from the play to write an essay to support the assertion that *corruption always catches up with those involved and ends up embarrassing them*. Specifically, the candidates were required to explain how Leader Lacuna Kasoo's corrupt nature catches up with him and embarrasses him.

Weaknesses

Many candidates were able to bring out Leader Lacuna Kasoo's corrupt nature but failed to explain how it ended up embarrassing him.

(c) The Novel

John Steinbeck, *The Pearl*

The candidates were supposed to use illustrations from the novel to explain *how gaining fortune and popularity can make some people become envious thus leading to insecurity*.

Weaknesses

Many candidates did not provide relevant illustrations to show that Kino's fortune and popularity almost cost him his life.

General Advice to Teachers on Essays Based on Set Texts

- Teachers should use the integrated approach in the teaching and learning of English language.
- Teachers should encourage learners to effectively read set texts several times because practice makes perfect.
- Teachers should facilitate critical thinking learning activities during classroom teaching and learning of English language.
- Teachers should assist learners to discover the feelings and intentions of the author (author's message) and question characters thoughts, actions, and motivations.
- Learners should practice intensive reading with specific aims and tasks.

General Comment on the Paper

Many candidates are not adequately prepared on the demands of the test. They lack effective writing skills both in compositions and essays based on set texts. Many candidates do not have knowledge of the set texts and are evidently weak on reading skills.

Candidates' performance in English Paper 101/3 is still unsatisfying. Unrelenting effort is still required in the teaching and learning of imaginative compositions and essays based on set texts. To enhance learners' language proficiency levels, teachers should encourage them to read both intensively and extensively.