

3.3 FRENCH (501)

In the year 2014, KCSE French Examination was tested in the following three papers;

Paper 1 (501/1) – tested listening Comprehension, Dictation and Composition.

Paper 2 (501/2) – tested Reading Comprehension and Grammar.

Paper 3 (501/3) – tested Reading Aloud, Exposé and Conversation. This is an oral paper.

CANDIDATES' GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The table below shows the performance of candidates in French (501) in the years 2013 and 2014.

Table 11: Candidates' Overall Performance in French for the last two years

Year	Paper	Candidature	Max. Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2013	1		45	24.19	7.59
	2		30	15.29	6.56
	3		25	17.28	4.05
	Overall	2838	100	56.73	16.89
2014	1		45	24.13	6.93
	2		30	14.47	6.63
	3		25	17.83	3.99
	Overall	3117	100	56.40	16.27

The following observations can be made from the table above:

- (i) The candidature in French language continues to increase steadily.
- (ii) Paper one and two saw a slight decline in performance.
- (iii) Performance in paper three, which is a practical paper improved with a small margin.
- (iv) In general, as a result of the decline in two papers, the performance in French language as a subject declined slightly with 0.37 from that of last year. However the average and the spread of the marks for the candidates in the combined mean and standard deviation is good.

3.3.2 French Paper 1 (501/1)

This paper consists of three sections:

Section 1: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Question 1 -5

In 2014 examination, this area dealt with the identification of people, giving directions, programme, numbers, leisure activities, career and customer complaints. The recording included instructions. The passages were played twice to allow candidates to listen and respond to the questions.

Weaknesses

Candidates had many spelling errors. They confused words which have similar sounds. Simple figures and numbers posed a challenge to them too.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should continue working on simple topics like numbers, dates through and through till form four. Spelling tests should be done regularly to ensure the candidates' ears get used to correct French pronunciation, intonation and accents. Teachers need to encourage peer assessment in spelling so as to establish a system in the learners right from form one.

Section 2: Dictation

In this section, candidates are expected to reproduce a dictated passage. The Dictation passage is recorded on a tape, with various punctuation marks and is marked out of 5 marks. The passage is read three times. The first time it is read through for the students to acquaint themselves with the text. The second time, it is read with pauses calculated to enable the candidates to write down what he/she has heard. The third and the last time, it is read through without pauses.

Weaknesses

Some candidates had problems spelling some verbs in the first person singular form and gave different versions.

Advice to teachers

Students should be given opportunities to listen to various accents by listening to authentic materials which presents different speakers. They should also be taught how to analyse text structures.

Section 3: Composition

In the first composition, the candidates were to write a dialogue between oneself and a teacher. They were to explain why they were late. In the second one they were to write an essay on the loss of a bag during a trip.

Weaknesses

Formal address was a challenge to some candidates. They could not differentiate the register used when talking to the peers and talking to the teacher. Some would not be consistent with one and could mix the two. The vocabulary needed for leisure activities and travelling was not readily available to others. This gave them a difficult time when they needed to express themselves in the second essay.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to train the students on formal ways of addressing people and how to be logical while explaining events and how these events happened. They should also train students to see the positive side of the teacher instead of seeing teachers as unkind, insensitive, and impatient.

3.3.3 French Paper 2 (501/2)

This paper consists of 2 sections.

Section 1: Reading Comprehension

In this section, candidates were expected to answer questions after reading a passage. In this section, other higher level of cognitive skills were tested.

Weaknesses

The candidates always tended to lift long excerpts from the passage hoping the answers would be within the picked portion. Others answered based on general knowledge and not the passage.

Advice to teachers

Candidates should be exposed to more reading of passages, short stories, news item etc.

Section 2: Grammar

Questions 6, 7 & 8

Candidates were expected to manipulate grammatical structures learnt to create alternative sentences. They were to fill in blanks or match sentences depending on their comprehension.

Weaknesses

Candidates answered the questions without making changes or even using the right grammatical structures. Some filled blanks without understanding the context or without coherence.

Advice to teachers

The teachers should give students more practice to grammar and transformation of sentences. More work needs to be done in training the learners how to fill in sentences.

3.3.4 French Paper 3 (501/3)

This examination is administered by assessors. It is a face to face examination. It tests the candidates' knowledge of communicative and grammatical skills as well as vocabulary. It tests their ability to understand the input stimulus and instructions and respond by using their skills in an oral context.

Section 1 Reading aloud (cards A and B).

Section 2 Exposé (Cards A, B, C and D)

Section 3 Conversation

Each candidate is given 15 minutes to prepare after choosing cards at random for both sections 1 and 2. Use of dictionaries, textbooks or any external material is not allowed.

Section 1: Reading Aloud

The candidates are expected to read in correct French, respecting liaison, intonation, articulation, punctuation as well as show comprehension. It could be a dialogue, a monologue or a description. Both cards are of equal difficulty and more or less the same length.

Weaknesses

In the conversation, the ill prepared candidates only responded by yes or a no answer. They would also give irrelevant answers. At times they simply kept quiet. Reading passages and Exposé posed problems to some candidates because they were not familiar with some names or words. Some did not use punctuation well.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to often redo work covered in earlier years so that the skills earlier acquired do not get lost. There is need for more phonetics exercises. The teaching cassettes, KNEC aural examinations cassette and other CDs can be used to practise correct pronunciation.

Section 2: Exposé

The candidates were to talk on topics based on the following themes; industries, clean environment, issues to do with tourism, importance of learning foreign languages and sports. They were to analyze and synthesize their ideas in a coherent and logical manner with appropriate vocabulary and expressions.

Weaknesses

Candidates did not prepare adequately on the given topics. They would concentrate only on one area in the topic and forget the rest. Sometimes vocabulary and grammar were not appropriate. Some lacked coherence.

Advice to teachers

Students should be given more work on vocabulary related to various topics in the syllabus. In preparation for the examinations the learners need to be trained on how to present arguments, the disadvantages and advantages and also how to take a position and defend it in argumentative topics.

Section 3: Conversations

The conversation topics were drawn from the syllabus and included; family, school life, environment etc.

Weaknesses

Few students had memorised some dialogues. This brought difficulties in conversation when they forgot and were unable to continue in a natural way.

Advice to teachers

French days and co-curricular activities need to be encouraged in the school. Students should participate in as many as possible to be able to practise the language e.g. in verse speaking and drama. This will give them the confidence which will lead to better performance.