

### 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 2012 in KCSE English Examination. Data for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011 is also given for comparison.

**Table 8: Candidates' Overall Performance in English (101) in the last four years**

Year	Paper	Candidature	Maximum Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2009	1	335,415	60	30.75(51.30%)	8.05
	2		80	26.99(36.66%)	12.21
	3		60	20.81(34.75%)	7.97
	<b>Overall</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>78.42(39.21%)</b>	<b>25.64</b>
2010	1	354,935	60	28.12(46.86%)	9.17
	2		80	31.07(38.83%)	11.61
	3		60	18.64(31.06%)	8.42
	<b>Overall</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>77.36(38.68%)</b>	<b>26.82</b>
2011	1	410,949	60	25.73(42.88%)	8.41
	2		80	28.53(35.66%)	12.46
	3		60	18.60(31.0%)	7.04
	<b>overall</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>72.84(36.42%)</b>	<b>25.14</b>
2012	1	434127	60	28.88(48.13%)	9.20
	2		80	28.77(35.96%)	12.91
	3		60	18.11(30.1%)	7.61
	<b>overall</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>75.76(37.88%)</b>	<b>27.34</b>

A glance at the means column indicates the following:

1. Performance of candidates in Paper 1 improved by 3.15 points from 25.73 in 2011 to 28.88 in 2012.
2. Performance in Paper 2 improved minimally by 0.24 points from 28.53 in 2011 to 28.77 in 2011.
3. Performance in Paper 3 dropped, by 0.49 points from 18.60 in 2011 to 18.11 in 2012.
4. The standard deviations for all the papers went up denoting a better spread of abilities.
5. Overall performance was impacted by the double improvement in papers 1 and 2. The subject recorded an improvement of 2.92 points from 72.84 in 2011 to 75.76 in 2012. However, this is not impressive as the improved mean represents 37.88 % which is far below the 50% mark that is ideal.

The section that follows looks at the performance in individual papers and highlights the difficulties encountered by candidates in the questions that were poorly performed.

### **3.1.2 English Paper 1 (101/1)**

#### **Question 1**

This question had two parts. Part (a) required the candidates to write an application letter in response to a given advertisement while part (b) required them to write a CV to accompany the application letter. Both questions tested the candidate's ability to write accurately using the right format and style.

#### **Weaknesses Observed**

According to the Chief Examiner's Report, some candidates failed to use the correct format. The letter format was well understood but in writing the CV many candidates left out required details.

#### **Advice to teachers**

Teachers are advised to teach all the aspects of functional writing, present examples of what the syllabus requires and provide adequate practice.

#### **Question 2**

This question required a variety of integrated reading and grammatical skills. It tested the learner's ability to read with understanding, predicting the missing words using the contextual, syntactic and discourse clues provided.

Many candidates scored below average marks. Weaknesses included candidate's inability to grasp the context, grammatical ineptitude and limitations of vocabulary.

#### **Advice to teachers**

To be an accomplished reader one has to have the grammar and ability to predict the structure and vocabulary in accordance with the collocation of words. Together with the guidance provided by punctuation, a candidate is enabled to make intelligent guesses and to confirm them once the passage has been covered. The key to better performance is providing the candidates with plenty of practice using a variety of passages. Teachers should impress upon the students the necessity of reading a given passage several times before completing the task.

### **3.1.3 English Paper 2 (101/2)**

#### **Question 3 poetry**

Question 3 was based on the reading, understanding and appreciation of a given poem. Part (a) of the question required the candidates to infer the message of the poem. Part (b) called them to give evidence of one of the concerns raised in the poem. In part (c) and (d) candidates were required to explain the use of a simile drawn from the poem and to identify and explain two aspects of irony in the poem respectively. Part (e) of the question required them to explain the meaning of words as used in the poem. In (f) the candidates were required to identify instances of alliteration in the poem. Finally, part (g) required them to explain the significance of the last two lines of the poem.

### **Weaknesses observed**

According to the Chief Examiner's Report, the poem was accessible to the candidates yet many of them scored poorly. Many candidates had problems with the interpretation of the poem and a majority of them were unable to identify and explain the use of the given stylistic devices.

### **Advice to teachers**

Poetry continues to elicit poor performance.

Teachers should take interest in poetry and subsequently interest their students in it. Only then will there be a meaningful and sustainable improvement in performance in the area.

### **3.1.3 English Paper 3 (101/3)**

This paper continues to be poorly done. Performance remained more or less constant but there is a perturbing declining trend that should not be ignored. There was a negligible decline of **0.04** points from **18.64** in 2010 to **18.60** in 2011. Again, performance in the paper dropped, by **0.49** points from **18.60** in 2011 to **18.11** in 2012.

Every effort needs to be made to improve performance in this paper by teaching composition writing and developing better approaches to teaching the set books. Candidates' mastery of the set texts is wanting and must be addressed if any improvement in this paper is to be realized.

### **Question 1 Imaginative Composition**

Candidates were expected to write a story illustrating the saying: 'People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.'

### **Weaknesses observed**

The art of creative writing is lacking in most of the candidates' work. Some candidates can hardly begin and develop a story.

Organizational skills in writing are also lacking; hence, the problem of poor paragraphing and lack of cohesion in the candidates' work.

Also, candidates demonstrated a Low level of language mastery leading to failure to adequately interpret the tasks and compose credible and interesting compositions. For instance, Instead of writing a story illustrating the saying: 'People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.' some candidates wrote on the literal sense of the saying and went on to show that glass houses are delicate and those who live in them should not throw stones!

### **Advice to teachers**

Teachers are advised to teach composition writing skills and put candidates through practice in writing the various types of compositions. They should teach composition writing in its entirety including brainstorming appropriate vocabulary, composing and combining sentences, building paragraphs, plot or argument development, mechanics of writing e.tc.

## **Question 2**

The compulsory question was said to have been challenging to the candidates. In this question, the candidate was required to bring out the truth and show how the truth was resisted by the characters whose self interests were threatened. This proved a hard task as it involved not only analysis of the characters, but also their interests and the repercussions of the truth. Additionally, many candidates were unprepared for the task as they displayed little knowledge of the text by giving scanty illustrations. Most of them merely narrated the story and made no attempt at giving evidence of the truth and showing how the truth was resisted. Poor writing skills also contributed to low scores as many candidates failed to develop their points and could not come up with an appropriate introduction and conclusion as required.

### **Advice to teachers**

It is evident that many candidates simply rely on synopses of the set books given in study guides instead of reading and interpreting the texts as required. In teaching the literary texts, all aspects of the texts should be taught. Of great importance is the candidates' mastery of plot, themes, characterization and stylistic devices. Teaching should aim at enabling the candidates to make their own reader response to the text with the teacher guiding, clarifying and explaining the difficult points.

In addition, candidates should be advised to read questions carefully, underlining the key operational words so as to ensure that all the aspects of a question are carefully addressed.