

3.3 FRENCH (501)

In the year 2013, 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 2012 and 2013.

Table 12: Candidates' Overall Performance in French for the last two years

YEAR	PAPER	CANDIDATURE	MAX SCORE	MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
2012	1		45	22.29	8.07
	2		30	15.65	6.10
	3		25	17.25	4.31
	Overall	2565	100	55.13	17.24
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

The following observations can be made from the table above:

- (i) The candidature in 2013 increased. This could indicate increase in the popularity of the subject.
- (ii) Generally there was a slight rise in performance from a mean score of 55.13 in 2012 to 56.73 in 2013. This improvement was contributed to by Paper 1 and Paper 3.
- (iii) Paper three being the face to face examination it continues to improve steadily every year. This could mean that the candidates are speaking more French and building confidence in use of the language.

3.3.2 French Paper 1 (501/1)

This paper consists of three sections:

Section 1: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Question 1 - 6

This year this area dealt with sport items, providing answers based on a medical report, an advert, extracting information from a menu, and a conversation. The candidates were required to listen twice to the recorded material with in-built pauses then answer the given questions.

Weaknesses

No major weakness was observed in this area. The performance showed improvement in this paper. Candidates though need to pay attention of spelling of words that resemble words in English.

Advice to teachers

They need to give exercises to students that give practice to differentiating words that resemble English words, develop ability to extract multiple answer from items listened to and revise forms of possessions.

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

There was some confusion of conditional tense with future tense.

Advice to teachers

More practice on various forms and use of the future tense and conditional tense should be given to students right from form one.

Section 3: Composition

This was the most popular question. This could be attributed to the gist of the question which asked the candidates to imagine and write a dialogue between them and the headteacher or school principal.

Weaknesses

Students had a challenge with the correct form of address. Many tended to reproduce text book essays learnt in class and memorised.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to train the students on various forms of register, how to develop an argument, develop narrative essays and discourage them from memorising and reproducing essays from the text books.

3.3.3 French Paper 2 (501/2)

This paper consists of 2 sections.

Section 1: Reading Comprehension

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

Weaknesses

The candidates always tend to lift excerpts from the passage in answering the questions instead of responding in their own words. In this way comprehension is evident.

Advice to teachers

Reading to understand and writing in one own words should be trained by the teachers beginning with simple book reports of simplified stories.

Section 2: Grammar

Questions 6, 7 & 8

Candidates are expected to manipulate grammatical structures learnt to create alternative sentences.

Weaknesses

Candidates were inclined to just answering the questions without considering the grammar correctness. Students do not seem to be familiar with the morphological structures of the French language.

Advice to teachers

The teachers should highlight to the learners that this section is a section on grammar and learners need to pay attention to what type of grammar structure is being tested that they may respond appropriately.

3.3.4 French Paper 3 (501/3)

This is a face to face examination. So far it is the favourite of the students. It tests the candidates' knowledge of communicative and grammatical skills, i.e. their ability to understand the input stimulus and instructions as well as demonstrate 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

The pronunciation of some words and numbers caused distortions. For instance Fabier /Fabienne, gamins/gamines, qualité, farine, agents, jardin,/jadine, 40/14 etc. The 3rd person plural also had some challenges.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to revisit work covered in earlier years at the end of the course. This is because the simple pronunciation problems were tackled in earlier classes in the syllabus. More phonetics exercises are invaluable. The KNEC 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 not present a balanced discussion. The vocabulary was not adequate and sometimes not appropriate.

Advice to teachers

Students should be encouraged to make a list of useful vocabulary based on the 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

This area was well handled and brought some improvement to the overall improvement of the paper. Few students though had memorised some dialogues. This led to difficulty situations when they forgot and were engaged by the examiners.

Advice to teachers

French days and co-curricular activities need to be encourage in the school. Students should participate in as many as possible to be able to practise the language. This will instil confidence and reduce on uncertainties.