

### 3.1.1 General Candidates' Performance

The table below shows the performance of candidates in the three papers offered in 2021 in the KCSE English Examination. Similar Data for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 is also provided for comparison.

**Table 7: Candidates' Overall Performance in English (101) in the last five years**

Year	Paper	Candidature	Maximum Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2017	1		60	25.89 (43.30%)	7.12
	2		80	28.24 (35.30%)	11.73
	3		60	19.42 (32.37%)	5.92
	<b>overall</b>	<b>610084</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>73.55 (36.77%)</b>	<b>22.57</b>
2018	1		60	29.15 (48.58%)	8.51
	2		80	24.78 (30.98%)	9.42
	3		60	18.85 (31.42%)	6.58
	<b>overall</b>	<b>659953</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>72.78 (36.39%)</b>	<b>22.27</b>
2019	1		60	29.00 (48.00%)	8.23
	2		80	33.00 (41.25%)	11.08
	3		60	20.00 (33.33%)	5.70
	<b>overall</b>	<b>69549153</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>82.00 (41.00%)</b>	
2020	1		60	25.38 (42.30%)	7.70
	2		80	26.69 (33.30%)	12.08
	3		60	20.66 (34.40%)	5.38
	<b>overall</b>	<b>743984</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>72.73 (36.37%)</b>	<b>23.51</b>
2021	1		60	24.66 (41.10%)	8.88
	2		80	27.37 (34.20%)	11.43
	3		60	21.73 (36.23%)	6.90
	<b>overall</b>	<b>822933</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>73.76 (36.88%)</b>	<b>24.97</b>

From the table above, it can be observed that:

- Performance of candidates in 2021 improved slightly by 1.03 points from 72.73(36%) in 2020 to 73.76(36.76 %) in 2021. On the whole, the results were comparable to those of the previous year.
- There was a slight drop of 0.62 points in candidates' performance in Paper 1.
- The mean performance of candidates in Paper 2 and 3 improved but not significantly.
- 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.



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 an investigative report on causes of decline in students' participation in games and sports. Most of the candidates used the correct format and style. However, the main problem in their work comprised gaps in logic as many candidates failed to link their conclusions or recommendations to their findings.

#### 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 rewrite their corrected pieces and resubmit them for marking with the aim of ensuring that they address pinpointed weaknesses in the different types of writing that they undertake.

### 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. It tests the learners' ability to read with understanding, predicting the missing words using the contextual, syntactic and discourse clues provided. To perform well in this test 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.

#### Advice to Teachers

Students should be provided with plenty of practice using a variety of texts and contexts. They should also be guided to identify and 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 3b

The 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. Most of the students were unable to identify the stressed syllables.

#### 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.



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 and 2

#### Question 1

This question tested the conventional unseen comprehension. As usual, questions which required higher order thinking skills like making inferences and integrating information from different parts of the passage were not answered correctly by many candidates. In addition, instead of thinking critically and paraphrasing information to indicate comprehension, many candidates resorted to simply presenting chunks of lifted sentences as their responses.

#### Advice to Teachers

The key to better performance in reading comprehension skills is consciously teaching learners comprehension skills including selecting information, paraphrasing, identifying major and minor points, making inferences, drawing conclusions, integrating information from different parts of a passage to answer a question, note making and summary writing. These skills can be enhanced through adequate practice using different types of texts.

#### Question 2

The second Comprehension was based on the play, *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen. Comprehension based on literary texts 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 most of the candidates had not read the text well enough to answer questions comprehensively.

#### 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. Further, teachers should advise against over-reliance on guide books. Creating a reading culture is essential for good performance in the language.

#### Question 3

Performance in Question 3 has been fluctuating based on what is tested in a particular year. Usually, the candidates perform better when a question is based on Oral Literature, and dismally when Poetry is assessed. This time round the question was based on an oral narrative and was friendly to most of the candidates. As such, they performed well in all the test items.

#### Question 4

Candidates generally performed poorly in grammar. Performance was particularly poor in question 4 (d) which required them to complete the given sentences using idioms. Further many students lost marks because of spelling and punctuation mistakes.

#### 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 spelling and correct use of punctuation is an essential element of grammar.



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 reported that none of the questions was ambiguous or open-ended.

### 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 expected to create a story ending: *I eventually realised how important it is to live peacefully with our neighbours*. The candidates were expected to come up with a story to illustrate how important it is to live peacefully with neighbours.

#### Weaknesses

Grammatical mistakes and weak paragraphing were noted in many scripts. Many candidates did not know how to organize their work. They therefore exhibited weak use of mechanics of writing. Generally, many candidates lacked creative use of language.

#### Advice to Teachers

Learners need to be taught creative writing skills. In creative writing, candidates should aim at making their compositions be easily understood. In addition, they should not make their readers bored or disinterested. They should strive to engage the reader's imagination by using language to create images to communicate in a memorable way. Candidates should always use language creatively to trigger the reader's emotional response.

#### Question 1 (b)

The question tested candidates' competence in expository writing. They were asked to write a composition explaining *what can be done to reduce crime in Kenya*. The candidates were supposed to present an objective description of how crime can be reduced. In other words, they were expected to deposit information on this topic. Expository essays should be simply informative.

#### Weaknesses

Many candidates did not present clear and logical explanation on how crime can be reduced. They did not bring out compositions that remained focused on the topic. It is also important to note that creative use of language is still a powerful tool in expository compositions, yet many candidates ignored it.

#### Advice to teachers

In a discursive essay, arguments should be clearly presented in pleasant language. Learners should also 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 the appropriate use of linking words to create cohesion. The learner's opinion should be restated or summarized in the conclusion.



*Blossoms of the Savannah*, H.R. Ole Kulet

The candidates were required to write an essay based on the set text to support the idea that *misunderstandings in families can cause serious conflicts in relationships*. The candidates were supposed to respond to this assertion with close reference to the relationship between Ole Kaelo and his daughters. Candidates were expected to identify instances of conflict between father and daughters, then explain with textual evidence the effect of the conflict on the victim.

**Weaknesses**

It was noted that many candidates were unable to bring out strong illustrations from the set text to support the idea that *misunderstandings in families can cause serious conflicts in relationships*. They could not identify instances of confrontation and explain plausibly the outcome of the conflict. This was strong evidence of poor grasp of the story.

**Question 3**

**The Optional Set Texts**

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

(a) **The Short Story**

Chris Wanjala (Ed.), *Memories We Lost and Other Stories*

The candidates were asked to write a composition to support the assertion that *distance between parents and their children can be an obstacle to effective parenting*. They were supposed to draw relevant illustrations from Lesley Nneka Arimah's short story, "Light".

**Weaknesses**

Many candidates' responses lacked the expected details and illustrations from the short story. Some candidates reproduced the short story without making conscious effort to select relevant information on how distance between parents and their children an obstacle to effective parenting can be.

(b) **Drama**

David Mulwa, *Inheritance*

The candidates were asked to use illustrations from the play to write an essay to support the assertion that *even though some African countries have leadership challenges, they have a lot of potential for economic growth*. They were supposed to demonstrate understanding that Kutula Republic is economically endowed despite leadership challenges.

**Weaknesses**

Some candidates could not plausibly illustrate how Kutula Republic is economically endowed despite leadership challenges. They failed to identify and use appropriate illustrations from the text.



John Steinbeck, *The Pearl*

The candidates were supposed to use illustrations from the novel, *The Pearl*, to support the assertion that *true friendship is hard to find, and many people associate with us for what they stand to gain*. They were expected to anchor their illustrations on the relationship between Kino and other dishonest characters in the novel.

### Weaknesses

Many candidates were unable to identify the two-faced characters and explain their intent to support the assertion. Many candidates presented weak essays without textual evidence. The essays lacked textual details to build strong arguments.

### General Advice to Teachers on Essays Based on Set Texts

Teachers should remind students that in essay questions, they should do more than memorize facts. As they read the questions, learners should look carefully at the wording of the questions and, where necessary, underline key words to address the demands of the question sufficiently. 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. In addition, students should always endeavour to arrange ideas in a series of clear, logically connected sentences and paragraphs.

### General Comment on the Paper

Candidates' performance in English Paper 101/3 is still unsatisfactory. Relentless effort is still required in the teaching and learning of imaginative compositions and essays based on set texts. In order to enhance learners' language proficiency levels, teachers should encourage them to read both intensively and extensively. Most candidates still do not write essays in a way that demonstrates their understanding of the set texts. They should also aim at writing their compositions with correct spelling and grammar.