

# CHAPTER VII: PROCESS MAPPING OF SLC OPERATIONS\*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Nepal's education system has undergone several changes in terms of its structure, curriculum, administration, and financing. Critics, however, argue that the examination system of Nepal largely remains the same (World Bank, 1996), despite numerous efforts to improve the examination system. Many say that Nepal has a highly modern curriculum but an outdated examination system. In simple terms, the function of any examination is to test the learning achievement of students. Normally, students' achievement level is measured against the objectives and learning outcomes specified in the curriculum. Studies have concluded that the SLC examination has virtually failed to perform its basic function of measuring the learning level of students (CERID, 1996; Bista, 2000). The act of entire teaching and learning is directed by the contents of the SLC examination. One major purpose of the examination is to serve the curriculum and instruction. This is, however, not the case with the SLC examination. The essence of schooling is reduced to 'test scores.' Analysts say that, as a result of heavy pre-occupation with the examination, teaching-learning activities are mainly limited to a lower cognitive level at the cost of higher order knowledge such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, etc. What goes on in Nepalese classrooms, especially at Grade 9 and 10, is basically note giving, factual memorization, or recall of texts. Both the policy-makers and educators in Nepal are now beginning to recognize that the quality of schooling cannot be improved without improving the quality of examinations. Improving the quality of examinations calls for serious reform in the ways examinations are planned and conducted.

While there can be multiple explanations for the alarmingly low performance of students in SLC, OCE's practices and processes may, in part, have contributed to lower the quality of testing as well as the performance of students. Studies in the past have not examined OCE processes and practices. In fact, the existing understanding about the internal functioning of SLC is very limited. This chapter provides insights into how various activities involved in SLC are planned and executed, while highlighting areas where reforms are needed to improve the quality of SLC examinations and, eventually, student performance. In short, the chapter is about what goes on inside the OCE and how various activities are performed.

For details on the objective and methodology, please refer to 'An Analysis of the Process involved in preparation and execution of SLC'.

## 2. MAJOR FINDINGS

This section summarizes the major findings and conclusion of the study 'Analysis of the Technical Quality of Test Materials used in SLC'.

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\* This chapter is based on the report 'An Analysis of the Process involved in preparation and execution of SLC' prepared by Prof. Dibya Man Karmacharya for the SLC Study Team.

## 2.1 Activity Schedule of OCE

Managing a nationwide system of public examinations is a massive task. Although there are a number of professional/technical tasks associated with the SLC examinations, much of it involves logistics management. There are tasks that need to be undertaken routinely with a high degree of efficiency. Typically, OCE operations begin with test development and culminate in the publication of results, followed by issuance of certificates. Over the years, OCE has gained experience in managing many of these operations. Many a time, OCE operations have been poorly organized. In recent years, there is an activity schedule to guide these operations (Table 1). The schedule shows that OCE remains extremely busy for about eight months preparing for and conducting the SLC examinations. The remaining four months are said to be spent on analyzing, reviewing, and discussing matters for improving the system. However, very little has happened on this front.

**Table 1. Activity Schedule of the OCE**

SN	Activity	Schedule
1	Student registration (Regular)	May-October (Baishakh-Aashwin)
2	Test construction & moderation	Octobr 15-December 15 (Ashoj 15–Mangsir)
3	Test paper printing	Dec. 15 -January (Paush–Magh 15)
4	Examination center selection	December 15-Jan. 13 (Paush)
5	Administration of test (Regular)	March 14-March last (Chaitra 2 <sup>nd</sup> week)
6	Marking, entry and verifications	April-June 1 <sup>st</sup> week (Baishakh–Jestha)
7	Result publication	June 2 <sup>nd</sup> week (Jeshtha last)
8	Supplementary examination	June 3 <sup>rd</sup> week (Shrawan 1 <sup>st</sup> week)
9	Supplementary result publication	July 3 <sup>rd</sup> week ( Bhadra 1 <sup>st</sup> week)
10	Re-totaling (Regular)	July 3 <sup>rd</sup> week-August 2 <sup>nd</sup> week (Shrawan)
11	Re-totaling (Supplementary)	November (Kartik-Mangsir)
12	Certification (Marksheet only)	After 15 days of the publication of results

Source: OCE

## 2.2 Student Registration

Students appearing in the SLC examinations have varying status. A student sitting for SLC for the first time registers as a regular candidate. Those who fail in one or two subjects are allowed to take SLC the same year by organizing a chance examination, which is known as the supplementary examinations. The provision of chance examination within the same academic year helps students continue their studies further without having to wait for another year. Those who cannot pass SLC either as a regular or a supplementary candidate have to ‘repeat’ all the subjects as ‘exempted’ examinees. Students can also appear as private candidates. These students must have completed formal education up to Grade 8. They can register for SLC through the District Education Office (DEO) with the recommendation of a teacher or someone who holds a Bachelor degree stating that the student studied under his/her guidance. In this case, the DEO will put up a send-up test for the candidate and let him/her register for SLC only if she/he gets through the test.

Typically, student registration in SLC begins in Grade IX. This process starts within six months of the academic session of the school (Ashwin/October). As a part of the registration, students fill up a form provided by OCE to the schools. The DEO then sends the completed forms back to the OCE, which provides a registration number to each student. OCE starts necessary planning and preparation for the coming SLC on the basis of the number of students registered in Grade IX. This gives enough time, almost one and half year, for planning and management of the SLC. In Grade X, the students are again required to fill up another form after they get

through the send-up examination administered by their schools. The students who fill up the SLC Examination Application Form are given symbol numbers by the DEO of the concerned district. Although registration in Grade IX as well as in Grade X is a regular process, many during our fieldwork felt that there was no need for double registration. Further, a seminar of the ex/present officials of OCE suggested that the process of registration should be decentralized either at the district or regional level because OCE is already over-burdened. They also suggested one registration instead of two as at present.

### 2.3 Test Development

OCE employs school teachers for preparing test papers. Multiple sets of test papers in each of the six core subjects are developed for five regions. Besides this, two parallel sets of questions are developed in Mathematics and English respectively for each region. The Controller decides which set goes to which region. The main purpose behind using parallel sets and multiple sets is to avoid cheating and copying. In the same way, the use of parallel and multiple sets helps in cases of question leakage.

Workshop or orientation for the test developers has been more than rare. However, the test developers were given guidelines to follow during paper writing (OCE 2057/2000). It was also known that nobody from outside the Kathmandu Valley had been involved in the test construction process. None of the 46 teachers of the six core subjects interviewed in the field had got an opportunity of being a question setter. The reason given by OCE for this was, of course, shortage of time. It was difficult to invite teachers from outside the Valley and orient them before assigning them the task of writing the test papers. Not much time was available for test development and paper moderation. The purpose behind moderation is to make the question paper error-free from the point of view of language, content, coverage of the curriculum, pursuance of the specification grid, distribution of weightage and instructions. The available time for test development and moderation is not enough.

It was reported that the questions were developed in haste because time was limited and that there were, therefore, chances of mistakes creeping in. Further, the test developers themselves did not work in earnest. They copied questions from books and old test papers rather than develop original questions themselves using the specification grid provided. Studies have reported cases of question items copied straight from the guidebook or textbook (Khadka et al. 2058). OCE neither did possess professional capacity or technology nor had any dependable way of being sure if the question setting was correct and maintained the standard.

The five different sets of test papers for the five regions are known as multi-sets. The multi-sets are not parallel in nature, so they treat the students differently in different regions. By 'parallel' we mean uniformity of standard and coverage of all the essentials of the test. It is obvious that the test papers should treat the examinees the same way the country over, but they do not do so. No doubt, the use of multi-set test papers helps in improving the assessment practice. Parallel sets are believed to minimize malpractice in examinations (Pradhan et al. 2001). Teachers often preferred parallel forms of tests. The main advantage of such tests is that they minimize cheating. The students interviewed also felt that the chances of copying and cheating are minimized.

After the tests are developed, they go through a process known as moderation, in which subject experts are supposed to check the papers and make improvements before finalizing them, where necessary. Though moderation is an effective measure for maintaining the standard of the

question papers, it seems that this process was not followed properly by the OCE for the lack of time and professional expertise. That was why the test papers used in SLC were not completely error-free. This was reported by a group of teachers who were involved in test setting and answerbook marking. They stated that not even the parallel sets were actually parallel to each other. Since the test papers were used to measure one uniform national standard, it was suggested that the OCE should not use different levels of test papers for different regions. The ex and present officials of OCE felt that, to make the moderation process effective, the test papers need to be set much ahead of time, may be a year ahead of the examination. At times, the test papers are developed in haste with little or no time for moderation. The establishment of an item bank appears to be a solution to this problem.

It was found that test developers often do not use the specification grids while developing the tests. During our fieldwork some suggested that the test paper developers should have at least 10 years of teaching experience and that they should be thoroughly familiar with the curriculum and specification grid. It was also suggested that a plentiful of question items should be developed and stored in an item bank. To make the test construction maximally reliable and economic, the need for an item bank was strongly felt.

A group of teachers said that if the present system is to be continued, it would be better to consider only Grade X for SLC examination. This would avoid duplication of the registration of the students (in Grades IX as well as X). The participants recommended making Grade IX and X independent by curriculum and by introducing the provision of separate examinations. The OCE officials were also found in favor of separating Grades IX and X. They saw no rationale in combining two years in one test.

## 2.4 Printing of Test Papers

Test paper printing is a sensitive issue. The OCE officials were found divided on the issue of printing. Some participants felt that it was necessary to print the test papers outside the country from the point of view of security and secrecy. Others felt that it would be wise to get the paper printed within the country by establishing a security press. According to them, printing the papers in India would not stop paper leakage. They suggested the use of Janak Educational Materials Production Center (JEMC) for printing purposes. JEMC have the infrastructure and manpower enough to run a security press. If the printing is done within the country, it will save about 15 to 20 hundred thousand rupees each year. It was also known from JEMC that MOES had already given permission for establishing an education security press within JEMC and that the Government had allocated budget. But the decision has not been implemented yet. The ex and present officials of the OCE suggested the establishment of a security press within OCE. The OCE officials did not seem to oppose the idea of establishing an education security press within the premises of JEMC, but they preferred having a small printing mechanism of their own under whatever good name. They thought that this would make question paper printing more cost-effective, easier and faster and, at the same time, help keep what is printed secret as well as confidential. The OCE has at least 50 items to get printed every year. The items include from letter pads to ledger books to conduct day-to-day administrative activities as well as test papers, marksheets, and certificates (at least 2,500,000 sheets each). The establishment of a security press within the OCE or outside will be cost-effective and efficient. The press can be kept busy in printing all necessary items for OCE and other related offices.

## 2.5 Administration of Test/Examination

### Send-up Examination

The send-up examination is a screening device used by the schools to select students academically qualified for SLC. At present, the schools themselves hold the send-up examination at the end of Grade X. Besides, clusters of schools have been conducting the send-up examinations on mutual understanding for maintaining a uniform standard. In public schools, the send-up examination is tied up with the financial policy of the Government. According to the rule, the schools will incur a budget cut of 30 percent if they fail to get at least 10 percent of their candidates pass SLC. Similarly, there will be a 20 percent budget cut if the schools are unable to have 20 percent of their students pass for three consecutive years (HMG 2060/2003). Besides, it has been a prestige issue for the schools. As a result, the schools use send-up examination to screen their students for SLC examinations.

### Bodies Responsible for Conducting SLC

The highest body is the SLC Examination Board chaired by the Secretary of Education. The Board has nine members, consisting of eight administrators and one educationist appointed by the Ministry of Education. The OCE is the secretariat of the Board. The Board makes policy decisions regarding the entire SLC process. It is not made for carrying out tasks of development and innovative nature (HMG, 2003). The Board makes decisions on a number of things to be done prior to the conduct of the examination. Tasks such as fixing of the centers, deciding on the exact dates of the examinations, packing and dispatch of question papers and answerbooks to the districts, etc are done on the basis of Board decisions. Similarly, it plans security measures, fixes answerbook-marking centers, and manages supplies of logistics for conducting the examination. The Secondary Education Action Plan (MOES, 1998) has recommended reform in the membership of the Board by including representatives from professional and academicians.

In each district, a three-member SLC Examination Coordination Committee (ECC) is constituted under the chairpersonship of the CDO. The other members of the committee are DEO and the District Superintendent of Police (DSP). The committee is responsible for fixing examination locations, appointing the center superintendent, and providing security. The executive and security responsibilities go to the DEO and CDO. All the CDOs (except one) that the study team interviewed had several years of experience with respect to SLC.

### Appointment of Superintendents and Invigilators

In six out of the ten examination centers the superintendents were appointed from among the secondary head teachers and teachers selected for the centers. Four of them said that the DEO had selected them and the other six said that they had been appointed as per the decision of ECC. Fifty percent of them had the experience of conducting the examination for 10 to 30 years and the other fifty percent had an experience of 1 to 6 years. It was known that in some districts political parties pressurized the examination committee to appoint teachers loyal to them as superintendents. The number of invigilators was found to be proportionate to the prescribed ratio, one invigilator for twenty examinees (1:20).

Generally, schools with sufficient physical facilities are selected as examination centers. The general practice is to recruit one superintendent for each center. The superintendent is allowed

to employ up to two assistant superintendents for the center and one invigilator for every 20 examinees in consultation with DEO and CDO. The superintendent, assistant superintendent(s), and invigilators are not assigned to the center where their own students sit as examinees (OCE, 2004/2061, p. 112, 6.27 Kha). However, this rule was not strictly followed in the supplementary examination of 2003. The superintendent is given a list of guidelines governing the overall management of the examination (OCE, 2003/2060).

Twelve of the 23 invigilators interviewed had participated in the examination works on the request of the superintendents. The others had been recommended by DEOs and their own schools. About three-fourths (71%) of the invigilators were drawn from local primary schools. It was assumed that the primary teachers would not be able to unfairly help the examinees in writing answers, which of course, did not seem to be true. There were primary teachers (with more than the SLC qualification), lower secondary teachers and secondary teachers, and also people from outside the teachers' community. Observation showed that even the invigilators who came from among primary teachers helped the examinees by providing answers to the questions. They generally overlooked the unfair practices of the examinees. Their only concern was to control noise during cheating and copying. The invigilators often protected the candidates. Security people also talked about this behavior of the invigilators. As the invigilators were local people, they did not like to be strict in the examination halls. One invigilator said, "The students become hostile if we do not allow cheating. There are therefore risks for the invigilators."

The superintendents stated that the school/center should be made fully responsible for taking care of everything during examination hours. Nowadays, the general practice is that the school only provides space as requested. The school has nothing to do with the examination. The superintendent and invigilators picked up from outside might not be familiar with the local community. This might create a communication gap between the superintendent and the community. As a result, mistrust might crop up between them. The community is the intruder and the superintendent the ruler. Therefore, it was suggested that the staff of the concerned school should be employed for examination operation purposes.

A second view was that superintendents and invigilators should be taken from outside, so that local people and politics may not influence them. There are no directives or guidelines as regards the qualifications of the invigilators. In some centers, primary teachers were employed as invigilators in the hope that they would not be able to guide or help students in writing answers. In this sense, this seemed to be a good idea, but this had some drawbacks. It was observed that the examinees did not obey or respect them much. It seemed that the invigilators were there only to protect the examinees. They only watched the examinees consulting with each other, copying from each other, and passing chits to each other. In some cases, they even helped the candidates get chits from outside and warned them against the approach of an examination authority. In some examination centers, the superintendents even did not know the invigilators because they were appointed by the DEO. It was suggested that full authority for managing the examination center and appointing invigilators should be given to the superintendent.

### **Pre-Examination Activities at the Examination Centers**

Generally, the examinees were allowed to enter the examination hall half an hour earlier. In a majority of centers, the police and examination officials checked the students and asked them to leave their books, guides, and notes, outside. However, in some centers this was found to be a mere formality and, in others, the officials tried to be strict. The students who had lost or

misplaced their ID cards were asked to wait in a corner till all other students were checked. The students who had lost their cards were found feeling nervous and some of them even cried and shed tears. After their verification by their own school teachers/ head teachers they were allowed to enter the examination rooms.

There were cases where students had difficulty locating their seats, and they were often found running nervously from one room to another. Though there was a seat-plan notice posted somewhere, the symbol numbers of the students who had registered late were missing from the list. The students were not able to understand why their names were withdrawn or missing from the list. It was known that the symbol numbers of the students who had registered and paid the examination fee at the eleventh hour were not in the list. The name list was printed and sent to the examination centers before the students had registered and paid the fee.

About 15 minutes before the start of the examination, answerbooks were handed to the students. As soon as they received the answerbooks, they began to write their symbol number, registration number, center, subject, date etc. on the front cover page as required. Neither the examinees themselves felt the need for going through the instructions printed on the front cover of answerbook nor did the invigilators tried to explain the instructions to them. Many students were found writing on the backside of the cover page of the answerbooks, which were to be torn out after the coding. This means the answers written on the backside of the cover page would not be checked because the page was not meant for the examiners. Similarly, the examinees did not follow the instructions regarding the margin space to be left nor were they aware of the risk involved in writing a part of an answer on one page and another part in another page.

### **Practical Examination**

Some subjects requiring examination of the practical component, assessment (of 25% weightage) is conducted at the concerned schools by their own teachers except in English and Computer Science. The examinations in English and Computer Science (of 20 % weightage) are conducted on the spot at the examination centers. The mark is sent to OCE through respective schools. Even though the CDC has provided a separate guideline for conducting the practical examinations and school-based assessments, these examinations were not problem-free. It is said that the schools generally awarded marks leniently and the marks did not match the marks of the SLC (written) examination. Teachers have been criticized for being careless about conducting the practical examinations. There is a big difference between the scores in practical assessment taken by the schools and those of the SLC final (see Report on the Technical Quality of Test Papers for details). There was a wide gap between the scores obtained by the examinees of the same ability, which possibly owed to individual differences in performance rating. There was a suggestion that practical examinations should be held in the resource centers rather than at schools. The ex and present OCE officials felt the need for making the teachers accountable for assessing their students periodically as required and dissuading them from allotting marks at the end of the session without following the guidelines properly. For this, they felt that the teachers were required to be trained properly on the assessment and evaluation processes. In this regard, one head teacher said, "Drop the internal assessment system if it cannot be managed properly." The assessment of practical activity is an important part of student learning. So, it will be wise to think and take action to strengthen this part of assessment rather than altogether drop the practice.

## **Physical Conditions of Examination Centers**

As the examination centers were housed in secondary schools, the centers used whatever facilities the schools had. For the examination, the schools were completely closed for about 10 days. Some schools shifted their school hours and others closed down for the whole examination period.

### **Seating Arrangement**

Irrespective of gender, only two examinees were allowed to sit on a bench which could accommodate three in a regular classroom. In some cases, three examinees were seated on one bench for lack of space. The classrooms of schools were used for examination. Desks and benches were set in two rows with a small passage in between. In most cases, there was hardly any space left between the benches in the rows. On an average, the space available to the examinees sitting on a bench was less than one square meter. In such cases, students had to climb on or over the bench if they needed to go out. Some students complained of not feeling comfortable during writing because there was no space to move their legs. This happened particularly with the examinees whose benches were fixed against the walls for want of space. This did not allow them to stretch their legs. In a majority of cases, the space was found too tight. On the other hand, this helped the students copy answers or consult with their peers in front and back. Similarly, since two students sat together on a bench they could easily move, copy, and talk to each other. There were cases where examination rooms did not have enough ventilation and light. Especially, the examinees seated in the corner or back of the room had difficulty in writing and reading their paper.

### **Toilet Facility**

In almost all the examination centers, there were separate toilets for boys and girls (at least one for each). Besides, there were also common toilets in 40 percent of the centers. In about 41 percent of the toilets, water was available and more than half (52%) of them were found clean. In the examination centers, where both boy and girl examinees had to share the same toilet, the girl examinees felt uncomfortable.

### **Drinking Water Facility**

Except in two centers, drinking water was served in the room whenever the students requested for it. However, some students complained that the water was not served in spite of repeated request. In two centers, the examinees had to go out of the room to drink water kept outside at the cost of valuable time.

## **2.6 Social Conditions of Examination Centers**

### **Family Cooperation**

Students' families supported them in a number of ways (Table 2). For the most part, students seemed to be satisfied with the help and cooperation of the family (90%). They said that their families did whatever they could do. More than half (58%) of them said that their families helped them by providing private tutors for difficult subjects or by sending them to coaching classes (7%). Similarly, 44 percent said that their family reduced their workload or released them from household works so that they could devote more time to their study. To add, 38 percent said that their parents provided them with materials necessary for the preparation of the examination

**Table 2. Family Cooperation During SLC Examination (N =203)**

No.	Cooperation	%
1	Provided private tuition	58
2	Sent in coaching class	7
3	Reduced or released from household work	44
4	Provided necessary materials	38
5	Managed residential accommodations	15
6	Provided separate room	6
7	Provided food and snacks on time	6

NB: Some respondents gave more than one response

and also gave moral support by encouraging them to do better. Similarly, 15 percent of the examinees said that their parents helped them in getting residential accommodation near the examination centers. Further, the students also mentioned that their parents provided them with separate rooms and timely food and snacks at home.

A small number of the examinees (N=8) felt that their parents did not provide them as much support during the supplementary examination period as they did during the regular examination period. The examinees expressed their dissatisfaction, saying that,

since they failed in the final examination, the family members behaved differently with them than before. Their parents did not provide them tuition facility nor did they release them from the household duties. They did not even give necessary monetary support.

### Accommodation

Residential accommodation was one of the things of great concern for the parents. Most of the examinees had to travel to the town and stay there throughout the examination period. They had

**Table 3. Accommodation During Exam (N=203)**

No.	Accommodation type	%
1	Home center	28
2	Hotel/Inn/Hostel	34
3	Rented room	16
4	Relative	19
5	Paying guest	3

to arrange for their accommodation themselves. For 28% of the total students interviewed, the examination site was the home center (the school where they studied), while for a large majority, this was not the case (Table 3). The examinees who came from outside had to travel a long distance. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the examinees from outside had sheltered themselves in hotels, hostels, and inns, and 16 percent in rented rooms. The rest were staying either with their relatives (19%) or as paying guests (3%). Most of the students were economically not

in a position to rent a room in a hotel. They were not able to afford eating in a restaurant. In some places, house owners were reluctant to rent out their rooms to the students. Due to high expenses and security problems girl students (mostly of the same school) formed a group of four to six and stayed together in a rented room. Of the 101 examinees staying in hotels, hostels, inns and rented rooms about 38 percent stayed single or double in a room. One-third of them stayed in groups of three to four and the rest (32%) in groups of five or more. The examinees (24%) staying in hostels and rented rooms prepared their food themselves on a work-share basis. They had with them luggage and baggage and utensils and foodstuff enough for the whole of the examination period. Others stayed with their relatives or in hotels and ate their meals in restaurants or cafes. A small number (3%) were staying as paying guests and another 3 percent had helpers to cook for them and take care of their belongings.

To get rid of the problem of accommodation and eating, some 40 percent of the examinees wanted to have some places, e.g., school hostels or similar places available for the period of the examination at an affordable cost. This would relieve their parents of worry.

More than half (56%) of the examinees were disturbed due to the movement of vehicles (Table 4). Some others (19%) had to do household work during the exam period. For 17 percent, having to stay together in groups in congested rooms without enough bed facility for all was very uncomfortable. Further, queuing up for turn into the toilet and dining hall wasted their time. Another disturbing factor was load-shedding (14%). Similarly, strikes, lack of coaching, search and inquiry by security people were also mentioned (by 2-4% in each category) as factors hampering preparation for the examination.

**Table 4. Disturbances in the Preparation of Examination (N=98)**

No.	Accommodation type	%
1	Movement of vehicles	56
2	Had to perform household work	19
3	Group staying in a single room	17
4	Load- shedding	14
5	Lack of cooperation from house owner	8

NB: some gave more than one response

### Experience of the Examination

Asked about their feeling (when they were entering the examination hall), 44 percent of the examinees said that they were worried about the questions and the results of examination (Table

**Table 5. Experiences of the Examination (N=203)**

No.	Experience	%
1	Worried about the questions and results	44
2	Confused and nervous not being able to find their seats	19
3	Nervous being a new place amidst army and police	15
4	Excited	15
4	Worried thinking about the behavior of the invigilators and other fellow	8
5	Nothing	6

NB: Some participants gave more than one response

5). Another 15 percent were feeling nervous in the new environment amidst army and police and unknown people. Nineteen percent were confused and nervous because they were able to find their seats. Eight percent were worried about thinking how the invigilators and other examinees would treat them. A small group of examinees (6%), however, was not worried about these matters.

Regarding support in the examination hall, 75 percent of the examinees said that the invigilators were helpful and sympathetic. They allowed them to go out and also provided them hints or clues to the answers.

The forty-four percent agreed that invigilators helped them in cheating, obtaining chits, and in copying from others.

About 25 percent of the student respondents did not have positive experience about their examinations. For 30 percent, having a nice superintendent and cooperative invigilators was the best experience. There was no harassment, nor checking during entry into the hall. This was the best experience for 31 percent and getting opportunity to cheat was the best experience for another 30 percent. Similarly and 19 percent felt that the questions for supplementary examinations were easier than those for ones regular.

The students also had unpleasant experiences. Some 27 percent referred to favoritism in the examination hall. Some examinees got the help of invigilators, peons, and police in cheating whereas others did not. Some tried to cheat but were not successful. Another bad experience was frequent checking by different persons and the rough behavior of invigilators, security people, and DEO (25% examinees). Some of them got nervous and their hands shook due to the presence of the security people and other strangers in the examination room. Scarcity of

toilets and lack of water in the toilets, compulsion to use a common toilet, mosquito bites in the examination hall were bad experiences for 19 percent. Frustration, nervousness, forgetting and non-concentration, (due to noise) and the consequent inability to write were also examples of bad experiences. Forgetting to bring the Admission Card and not being allowed to use the calculator and formula sheets were other bad experiences.

Students sitting for supplementary examinations felt that the questions used for the same were easier than those used in the regular examinations, which they had attended a few months ago. Some DEOs and superintendents agreed that supplementary examinations were often loose and the test papers were easier compared to the normal papers. The examination environment was friendly for 63 percent and stiff for 25 percent. Fifty-one percent (51%) found the invigilators helpful and 41 percent strict. Forty percent (40%) said there was more cheating and unfair practice helping than in the regular examination, whereas 57 percent did not observe any incidence of cheating.

### **Disturbances in Examination**

Groups of people seem to disturb and threaten the students in examination halls. The police were complaining about media people who came to observe the examination. Similarly, people from outside, district officials, and policemen entered the room and disturbed students by searching their pockets and seats. This broke their concentration. Similarly, a crowd of people outside the boundary walls of the examination center was also a disturb source of once. Some of them even climbed the wall and got to the back window of the examination hall and hurled chits into the room.

### **Security in Examination**

Security people were deployed in the examination center on the request of ECC. The main problems of security people were intruders and crowds that mustered outside the examination building. They did not listen to the warning of the police. During the observation of examination centers the field researchers had to play hide and seek between the intruders and the police. Sometimes the situation got worse and the mob began to make noise calling names. Here is an example of the situation getting worse. It seems to be a common practice for the police to enter the examination rooms now and then. During observation it was found that policemen entered the rooms carrying walkie-talkies, which distracted and disturbed the examinees. Some invigilators said that police and army interference should not be tolerated. In some examination, the security people checked the students at the entrance, which the examinees did not like. They wanted the police and the army to stay out of the examination building, limiting their functions to security.

Going out while staying in a hotel or rented room was a problem for the girl students. About 20 percent of the female examinees experienced this problem. In Nepalgunj, a group of girl students staying together was escorted outside and guarded in the room by the brother of a girl student. The foreign faces of female students attracted local youths, who teased and harassed them. It was heard that even the security people entered the girls' room, in the name of search and sexually harassed them. Thus it was necessary that someone look after the girl students throughout the exam period.

## 2.7 Answerbook Marking and Scrutiny

The pass rate in SLC is about one-third, which invites regular criticism. SLC is an iron gate for students. It is said that the examination brings more frustration and depression to a large number of youths rather than help them in their career advancement. As soon as the examination is over, the answerbooks are dispatched to the answerbook marking centers by the respective DEOs, as directed by OCE. In total about 2,044,840 answerbooks in eight different subjects were marked by 10,224 examiners in 36 marking centers (regular examination 2003 AD).

### Background of Answerbook Markers

Altogether 83 examiners (74 males, 9 females) participated in the discussion sessions organized at eight marking centers in seven districts. The examiners were mainly of the six core subjects, i.e., Nepali, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Health, Population & Environment Education of the SLC curriculum. A majority (68%) of them possessed a B.Ed. or M.Ed. degree; the others held degrees in other areas. About 38 percent of the participants had more than one degree (mostly B.Ed. or M.Ed.). In general, most of the examiners were from community/public high schools. Similarly, it was found that none of the answerbook marking centers had all examiners from among trained teachers, except in Kathmandu (Table 4.6).

**Table 6. Answerbook Markers by Gender and Qualifications**

Center Category	Kathmandu.	Lalitpur	Nuwakot	Number of Examiners				Total
				Kaski & Pokhara	Nepalgunja	Janakpur	Sarlahi	
Male	10	8	5	28	7	9	7	74 (89%)
Female	1	-	1	1	6	-	-	9 (11%)
Total	11	8	6	29	13	9	7	83
B.Ed.	8	3	5	15	8	5	4	48 (58%)
M.Ed.	3	2	-	3	-	-	-	8 (10%)
Total	11	5	5	18	8	5	4	56 (68%)
BA., BSc., BCom.	1	3	2	16	5	3	6	36 (43%)
MA., MSc., MCom.	7	3	-	9	2	2	1	24 (29%)
DPA,	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1 (01%)
Dip. in Agri-culture	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2 (02%)

Note: In the counting of academic degrees, the number exceeds the total 83 because some participants held two degrees.

### Appointment of Examiners and Head Examiners

It was known that DEOs have lists of people who had worked as examiners and head examiners, on the strength of which they appoint examiners and head examiners. However, during the study it was found that there were other people who made this appointment. The general practice was that DEO would publish a notice and write to the schools to recommend the names of teachers and head teachers for examinership on the basis of their experiences and qualifications. In some centers, DEOs themselves invited teachers to participate in answerbook marking. In some cases, the teachers themselves contacted the DEO or Regional Education Director (RED) when they came to know about the need of teachers for the marking purposes. Some got information through their own colleagues and their own head teachers or when they visited the DEO and RED offices. In the case of teachers involved in marking along with their

regular teaching job, they had to go to the center for answerbook marking and come back to the school for teaching, which disturbed the work of both places. They got pressure from their head teacher to be in the school on time. Now and then they missed the class or arrived late for class. Even though they considered answerbook marking as a duty of the teachers, it affected their classroom teaching. But this was only for a short period of time. Actually, teachers were expected to adjust their time schedule so that they could do answerbook marking without doing any harm to their teaching in the school. For this reason, they were mostly selected on a local basis. Some examiners, who were from outside, were not able to walk the home to center distance every day and stayed at the marking center hoping to get deputation on duty (*Kaaj*) for the period of marking. In some cases, teachers who had stopped teaching, e.g., retired head teachers and teachers, were also found marking answerbooks. This helped to meet the need of teachers with long experiences in marking answerbooks. However, retired teachers and head teachers may also not be familiar with the on-going courses and so might not be able to do justice to the answerbook marking.

Similarly, only a limited number of teachers from the rural area schools were found participating in answerbook marking. It seemed that the teachers from private schools did not take much interest in answerbook marking activity because it was a low-paid job. Also, their school management did not permit them to be late or absent from their duty. The district education management does not seem to be in a position to put pressure on them to participate in the answerbook marking process. The participation of rural teachers in answerbook marking was kept in a low profile, for they could not walk every day to work in two places, i.e., the school and the marking center. The DEO offices did not invite them formally to participate in the answerbook marking work for fear of having to invite them on deputation for the work period. If they did, teachers would have to be paid daily allowances and schools would, on the other hand, suffer by their long absence.

### Orientation and Training for Examiners

The OCE organizes a three-day orientation/training workshop on answerbook (checking) for teachers in different places, when funds are available. The organizers provided teacher quotas to the districts and the districts sent teachers to participate in the workshop. The OCE had already trained two teachers from each of the marking center areas to work as master trainers, who were supposed to train other teachers recommended for answerbook marking. The orientation package focused mainly on the advantages



A view of answerbook marking in process

of using the marking schemes in specific subject areas as per the instructions given. However, the orientation/training program had not been organized on a regular basis because the implementation of the program depended upon the availability of funds. On the other hand, not all examiners involved could be exposed to the process or method of answerbook marking. Altogether 65 percent of the participants (examiners) were found to have participated in the orientation/training workshops (on one or another occasion) organized by DEO, SEDU, and OCE. It is only in the Banke center that all the examiners attended the training on answerbook marking. This means that in other districts either many teachers were untrained on marking

process or even the teachers who had attended the training did not participate in the answerbook marking.

On the other hand, the examiners who had no idea or training said that they started examining the papers on the basis of the marking scheme and the general instructions provided to them. However, not all the teachers followed the instructions seriously. Some of them were even found marking answerbooks in pencil rather than in red as instructed. Marking in the middle of, or in a wrong place in the answer was found to be a general practice. General instruction was provided to examiners who were without training but the marking centers usually did not organize any focused orientation on marking of answerbooks. The OCE claimed that two persons from each of the answerbook marking centers had been trained as master trainers, but this did not seem to have shown any result.

The examiners claimed that they should have been given on-the-spot orientation/training prior to their appointment. This would have helped in maintaining the standard eliminating the confusion regarding the marking schemes and instructions. It was suggested that only trained examiners should be appointed as far as possible. Similarly, the ex controllers, the present controller, and other officials suggested awarding certificates to the teachers trained in answerbook marking. This would help in identifying trained examiners easily.

Actually, the head examiners should be made responsible for all aspects of answerbook marking. However, a head examiner is there just for scrutiny of the answerbooks. But the teachers who had worked as head examiners could be used for training the examiners. As head examiners, they could also be used for providing immediate feedback to the examiners under them if the conference marking system is to be introduced. However, due to the lack of space facility this scheme is difficult to implement.

### **Atmosphere within Marking Centers**

From the very beginning of the SLC examination, answerbooks have been collected by the OCE from all examination centers and delivered to teachers door-to-door for marking. From the perspective of the examiners, this door-to-door system was comfortable. They could mark answerbooks in their convenient time at home. In this system, the answerbook marking activity was confined only to Kathmandu and around. Teachers living outside Kathmandu did not get any opportunity to participate in the marking process. The door-to-door marking usually delayed results since all the markers did not complete and submit marks to the OCE on time. Complaints were heard about negligence and carelessness in marking on the part of the examiners.

Considering cases of dishonesty and malpractice in answerbook checking, the home delivery practice was abandoned and the concept of conference marking was introduced in 1999 with the supplementary examination of that year. In this system, answerbooks are dispatched to the centers by the respective DEOs as directed by the OCE. There the in-charges of the marking centers manage security (of the center), coding and decoding, appointment of answerbook markers and head examiners, management of space maintenance of confidentiality, and so on.

In conference marking system, examiners are required to come to the answerbook marking center established by the examination committee of OCE. In this system, answerbooks are marked by a team of subject examiners (about 4). The head examiner supervises the works of examiners, scrutinizes answerbooks examined, and provides immediate feedback to the examiners. Since the answerbooks are not allowed to go outside malpractices in marking are

minimized and markers are obliged to complete their assigned task within the time given. This helps publish the results in about two months' time.

However, the spirit of the conference marking could not be maintained due to the lack of space. The examiners in all subjects worked at one and the same place. In most cases, they could not sit comfortably. In Pokhara, two marking centers were close to each other. Some examiners covered both the marking centers. Neither of the marking centers was found to have security facility.

The center at the regional office in Kaski had a room overcrowded with examiners, so the examiners had to be scattered in different offices of regional directorate. The marking centers, established in local schools, used classrooms and halls. Actually, no special provision was made for marking the answerbooks. In general, rooms were found crammed with bundles of answerbooks lying at sixes and sevens on the floor. Papers and sacks lay scattered here and there in the rooms. It seemed as if the rooms had not been cleaned for a long time.



*Examiners marking answerbooks sitting on the floor*

The examiners came and picked up the answerbook packets assigned to them and sat wherever they could e.g., verandah, chaur, floor, office rooms, and classrooms. The marking centers remained open from morning to evening so that the teachers could come and go at any time according to their convenience. In the Tarai, examiners faced difficulty due to the scorching heat. Rooms had no fans. The teachers who had to take classes in their schools came to mark answerbooks at their leisure time, morning or evening. Teachers who came on leave stayed whole day working.

In one of the centers of Dhanusha, one examiner was reported as using his students for posting the marks on the front cover page of the answerbooks so that he could devote more time to marking. This was done by evading the notice of the head examiner and the concerned officials. This shows that the answerbook markers either lacked information about their responsibility or failed to perform their duty with integrity.

**In one of the centers, two students were reported as helping an examiner by posting marks on the answerbooks.**

### **Marking and Scrutiny of Answerbooks**

Before the answerbooks are released for marking, they are first coded in the marking centers and then given to the examiners directly on an individual basis or through the head examiners of the respective subjects. Coding is done only in the six core subjects and Optional Mathematics and Computer Education. The main purpose of coding is to maintain anonymity of the examinee and confidentiality of the answerbooks. However, in 2059, it was noticed that some centers did not code the answerbooks.

In every center, the head examiners are supposed to look critically into the markings done by the examiners under them. They are required to sample and check 10 percent of the total number of answerbooks marked by the examiners. Now the 10 percent has been raised to 20 percent (OCE, 2060). The head examiners are also required to recheck the answerbooks with pass-fail margin marks and those with the highest scores. They are also expected to help and guide the examiners under them and supervise their work. However, this responsibility of the head examiners is not explicitly mentioned in the directives given to them. Their main job seems to involve checking, correcting, and reporting. The OCE has defined the responsibility of the answerbook examiners and head examiners. However, now and then the examination markers commit mistakes. In one case, an examiner in Mathematics awarded 24 to a student while the student should have secured 68. According to the head examiner, the examiner did not mark all the answers written by the student. This might have happened due to the examiner's haste in checking the answers.

It was found that the examiners allotted marks without going seriously through the answers written by students. A head examiner of Nepali in a marking center said, "The examiner turns over the pages to look at the length of the answer rather than go through the answer looking at its quality." In such a situation, the examiners award marks leniently considering only the length of answer, i.e., without considering the correctness, consistency, and relevancy of the answer.

Some head examiners had asked the examiners to recheck answers or retotal marks. But most of the examiners were found reluctant to do the work for which they were not paid. Besides, head examiners did not want to take the risk of incurring the displeasure of examiners who were from the same area or community. Khadka (2058) reports that head examiners were themselves involved in marking. Thus, they performed two jobs at a time. However, this was not considered bad. The rationale was that if the head examiner examines the answerbooks herself/himself, she/he would do his work better. If the head examiners themselves check the answerbooks, they will be familiar with the question papers and answerbooks in their respective subjects before starting to work as head examiners.

Most of the examiners from Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Nuwakot, and more than 50 percent of those from Kaski reported that they did not know who their head examiners were. One examiner from Kathmandu center said, "I do not know who my head examiner is; his unknown presence has no effect on my work."

In Banke and Sarlahi marking centers, examiners knew their head examiners and had good relationship with them because they belonged to the same community. Some of them had received feedback from their head examiners. One respondent from Sarlahi center said, "Since there is the head examiner, who crosschecks, the examiners become careful while marking the paper". On completion of marking, answerbooks are decoded and sent to the OCE through DEOs/REDOs along with two copies of the mark slips, Tab 1 and Tab 2.

According to the examiners, if the purpose of using the coding is to keep the identity of the examinees unknown, coding should be done in all subjects, not only in the core subjects. As the system has now adopted the conference marking system, the concerned officials feel that there is no need for coding. Kadka et al. mention, "There is an unnecessary expense of time and resources for coding in the conference marking system" (2058, p. 7). In conference marking, the examiners come to the center and mark the answerbooks which are not from their own area. This minimizes disclosure of students' identities and scores. Therefore, it is better to drop coding. The ex- and present controllers and other officials felt that coding did not make sense

and was irrelevant because direct observation by the head examiner was there. However, it was suggested that in sensitive areas, e.g., the Kathmandu Valley, where schools or individuals might try to use their influence, money, or nepotism, coding might be necessary for some time because the copies of the Valley are examined locally.

Similarly, according to the examiners, coding was not necessary because the copy numbers of the students are printed on the front cover page of the main and additional answer books which could decode the anonymity of students. Summarily, the process of coding and decoding is just a ritual; it does not help maintain anonymity.

### **Use of Marking Scheme**

Before the introduction of marking scheme, examiners were free to use their personal (subjective) judgments in the marking of answers. Since the examiners marked the answers on the basis of their own knowledge and discretion, differences (big or small) would appear in the markings. For the purpose of making the marking more accurate and reliable, attempt was made to develop a scheme that could guide examiners in scoring answers. The marking scheme introduced in 2000 tried to objectify scoring. The main purpose of the marking scheme is to minimize inter-examiner variability. The marking scheme became a guideline for examiners and head examiners. The scheme included expected answers. It also advised examiners and head examiners to give marks to a right answer even if the answer given by the student was not included in the scheme. If this is done, there is a possibility of marking variation due to subjectivity in the markings based on the discretions of the markers. Instead of this, emphasis needs to be given in specifying the marking scheme in detail.

Regarding the marking scheme, all the participating examiners felt that the scheme had made their work easier and helped maintain uniformity in marking. All of them found that the marking schemes were clear and helpful. However, the respondents noted some mistakes, which confused them about whether to follow what was stated in the scheme or not. They said that the scheme in English contained errors. Further, the examiners pointed out that the instructions given in the schemes were not enough. They found that some instructions given in the scheme were not fully relevant to the questions. However, they had to follow them. Even though the students were right in their own way, the marking scheme did not permit the examiner to give any mark. A close observation revealed that the instructions given in the schemes were not uniform for different subjects. In some subjects (language group), the instructions were found to be flexible and in some others (Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies) they were rigid. The examiners also reported that some answers given in the marking scheme were not complete. In some centers confusions were cleared up with the help of the center in-charge and the DEOs.

It was suggested that there should not be any mistake in the marking scheme and there should not be any confusion that could decrease its validity. The marking scheme *is* the guideline, directive. If the marking scheme is wrong, the examiner's marking will be wrong. They also suggested that the marking scheme needed a thorough checking before its finalization. There is a provision for the finalization of the marking scheme by the groups of subject experts at OCE. There is the need for a careful check-up with regard to the possible right answers too. The marking scheme is simply a guideline; it should not be taken as the word of God. On the basis of the general experience, the OCE has taken steps to revise them. Accordingly, OCE has revised the marking schemes for HPE, Social Studies, and Mathematics.

### **Maintenance of Confidentiality and Anonymity in Marking Process**

As mentioned earlier, there is a system of coding and decoding answerbooks in the six core (compulsory) subjects and in Optional Mathematics and Computer Education (in the regular examination) to conceal the identity of the student from the examiner. However, in other (optional) subjects and in the case of students using extra paper, this system is not there. Also there is no provision, for coding for the supplementary examination and in the case of exempted students. To add, the student's symbol number on the extra paper is not converted into code. The symbol numbers may work as clues to the student's identity. From the check-up of 10 sample answerbooks of a district from each of the marking centers (regular examination 2059/2002) it was found that the marking centers were not very serious in assigning code numbers to answer books. Five districts (Parsa, Nawalparasi, Sunsari, Rupandehi, and Makawanpur) did not code answerbooks even in Science, Nepali, Mathematics, and English.

In language subjects, generally, the test paper consisted of a question asked to write a letter as a part of the requirement. While responding to the question, candidates wrote their names, addresses, symbol numbers, and examination centers, which automatically disclosed their identity. In some cases, students even wrote in pleas to the examiners for helping them out in the exam. This automatically disclosed the identity. It was reported that some students even enclosed their photos, bills and telephone numbers in the answerbooks.

### **Pass Marks and Grace Marks**

The students are required to secure at least 32 percent marks in each of the six core subjects and two optional subjects for a pass. Although there is no rationale for fixing 32 percent as a cut-off point, the practice has been going on since the establishment of the OCE. In the beginning, a score of 30 percent was fixed as the minimum pass score, which was raised to 32 in the seventies. Considering this as an extremely low score, a committee had suggested that the pass mark should be raised to 40 percent (MOE, 1961). However, the suggestion did not materialize.

Official records show that the total pass percentage in SLC has never exceeded 50 percent even after the award of what is called grace mark(s). This means the number of SLC failures each year is colossal. Considering this, the SLC Board decided to award "grace." This helps marginal-case students to get through. The intent of this scheme seems to help the students, who would have failed as a result of not being able to obtain the pass marks in one subject or two in spite of the good marks secured in other subjects. In this context, providing grace marks seems to be reasonable.

There are two types of grace marks, informal and formal (or academic and official). The extra marks, which the examiners award as per the dictates of conscience or on personal judgment, are informal or academic. Official grace marks are given on the formal approval of the Board of Examination of OCE. Official grace marks are included in the result sheets sent to the schools.

According to the examiners of 2003, the practice of awarding grace marks indirectly pressurized them to add up to five marks to bring the total score to 27 so that the student could get an official grace marks of 5 and pass in the concerned paper. In such a case, examiners had to rethink and reexamine answers if the marks stood between 22 and 26. They took it as an unnecessary burden on them. One examiner expressed his dissatisfaction saying, "Stop giving grace marks on an ad hoc basis." Another examiner said, "This is a sort of thing we unwillingly do while we are marking answerbooks."

Some suggested the modification of the cut-off point for passing by taking into account the average score obtained by students in the previous year(s). Others suggested use of a standard score, a score altered to have means and standard deviations instead of the raw score assessing the achievement of students. Others wanted to wait for the result of study.

Failing in one subject should not be taken as fail. Suggestions were made for not declaring anybody as pass or fail. They suggested adaptation of the letter-grading system in which the average point and scores in the related subjects are considered. The letter grading allows grouping of students, minimizing errors in scoring. This gives a kind of relief to students.

Direct letter grading is not possible in large-scale examinations. For this reason, CBSE India has introduced what is called the indirect letter grading which converts the scores into nine groups on a relative basis. "Relative scores are the scores obtained by a student in his group and indicate his placement in the group" (CBSE, 2000, p.13). In the same way, some said that students should be permitted to take examination not in all subjects at a time. In this respect, Joshi (2004) suggests that students should be permitted to sit at the examination in any subject as they wish according to their ability and interest.

### Quality of Test Items

Most of the answerbook markers (participants) said that the responses did not come up to the level of their own teaching. They had found that the answers of students mostly resembled each other, which implies that answers were either based on rote learning or memorization from guidebooks or copied from each other. In general, the examiners felt that the levels of answers given by students were not very different from each other. They observed that some questions were a little bit difficult and had a higher level. In Nepali, some questions were not clear; in Social Studies the questions related to Geography and the Constitution were not clear to the students; in Optional Mathematics questions were of a higher level; and in Compulsory Mathematics questions matched the level of teaching-learning. Science mostly had knowledge-level or recall-type questions, which did not test their ability level. However, respondents found that students had not written as the question demanded. They complained that, in some cases, the questions meant differently in the Nepali and English versions. This created a problem for examiners. Most of the students might have written their answers after reading the Nepali version of question and the examiner might have marked the answers after the English version questions or *vice versa*. This would not do justice to the students. In both cases, students will be losers. For example, the examiners in Science gave an example from RE-511B, 2060BS (2004) of the central region. In the English version, Question Number 3Gha was about the density of water. The question was

*An example of different versions of the same questions in Nepali & English:*

**“Why is the density of water highest at 4° c?”**  
पानीको विशिष्ट तापधारण शक्ति ४° से. मा सबैभन्दा बढी हुन्छ किन?  
**(Why specific heat capacity of water gets highest at 4° c?)**

### “Why is the density of water highest at 4° C?”

The same question in the Nepali version was

पानीको विशिष्ट तापधारण शक्ति ४° से. मा सबैभन्दा बढी हुन्छ, किन ? (Why does the specific heat capacity of water get highest at 4° C?)

The examiners suggested that the questions in English and Nepali versions should carry one and the same meaning.

The participants also indicated that some questions with similar meaning were repeated in the same question paper. According to them, this was seen in the Economics paper of 2060 BS/2003 regular examination. Questions 13 and 26 carried almost the same meaning.

**Question 13: "Show marginal and total utility in the form of table."**

**Question 26 said: "Introduce the law of diminishing marginal utility with table and diagram."**

(For detailed information, refer to the report on "Technical Quality of the Test Papers").

In Health, Population and Environment (HPE), the examiners of Kathmandu center found the level of answers very low even though questions were easy and not difficult to answer. According to them, students seemed to be very weak in that particular subject. This was possibly because either the schools did not have the qualified subject teachers or the classes did not run regularly.

### Factors Influencing Marking

The examiners have their own styles of marking. A majority of the respondents said they went through the question papers and marking schemes and then tried to understand what answers the questions expected. They read two or three answerpapers as samples and started marking. Another practice among the examiners was to read four or five answerbooks at a stretch to form an idea about the general standard of students. Since in most centers there was no provision for orientation, the examiners now and then found themselves in confusion. They therefore discussed with their fellow examiners (in the room) to be clear about the marking scheme and the instructions given. The following factors were considered as positive in answerbook marking.

***Factors positively influencing marking***

- **Clean writing**
- **To the point answer**
- **Logical presentation**
- **Original language**
- **Argument**

- **Presentation:** Examiners were expected to follow the marking schemes. Their main basis for the award of marks was the directives given in the marking scheme. Clear and clean writing was the main thing that impressed them. Respondents felt that illegible writing and unnecessary details in the answers were a disincentive in the marking process. For most examiners, systematic or logical presentation was the main thing besides cleanliness (no corrections made). One examiner said, "Carefulness or negligence in writing leads to addition or reduction of about 15 percent marks."

To the point and precise answer was another factor mentioned by more than 80 percent of the respondents. Originality (in writing), logicity, good language (grammar and expression) were other things that impressed them most. Other factors influencing marking were margin left on each page, space left between two consecutive answers, and use of figures, graphs and tables, etc.

- **Remuneration:** Teachers devote their time to answerbook marking because they are given remunerations. However, they said they were paid very low. Low remunerations affected their performance. They were paid Rs. 9/- per answerbook. Four answerbooks marked in one hour on the average would bring them Rs. 36/ with a 15 percent tax cut. In some centers, they had made a rule that the examiners should finish marking 14 answerbooks in 90 minutes, which fetched them Rs. 107.10 after the tax cut. Recently

the tax cut has been removed. The head examiners, on the other hand were, paid Rs. 3/ for every answerbook they scrutinized. They were supposed to re-examine at least 10 percent of the answerbooks sampled from the total. If mistakes were found in more than 5 percent answerbooks, they were required to re-check all answerbooks, for which they were not paid. In this case, most head examiners tried to overlook the mistakes made in marking by the examiners so that they do not have to re-check. They suggested a doubling of the present remuneration.

- **Workspace:** The marking centers were supposed to be established at places with enough space for the storage of answerbooks and for the examiners to sit comfortably in while at work. In most cases local school buildings were used as centers. Schools were not in a position to provide the necessary facility due to their own need of running the classes. So the centers had to work within a limited space. Besides, most of the centers had no proper working environment owing to the lack of required physical facilities. In most centers, many examiners of different subjects worked in one room. Some of them found it difficult to concentrate on their work in a crowded room sitting in student-size-benches for a long time. This made them tired. The Nuwakot center had managed marking 50 percent of the subjects first, followed by the remaining 50 percent later for lack of space. The examiners felt it very uneasy to work in a small crowded room.
- In Sarlahi, the marking activity was conducted in the District Development Committee building where a big hall equipped with tables, chairs, and fans accommodated about 50 percent of the examiners. The other examiners used the adjacent room. Similarly, separate rooms were used for storage and administrative purposes. The Sarlahi center was found to be in a better position than other centers observed. One examiner suggested marking of one subject at a time. He said “Complete one subject first if the space available is not enough for all subjects at a time”. He further said, “ A provision for marking one subject at a time (in a group along with the head examiner) will help get clear of the confusions and facilitate give and take of feedback from each other.” This sort of conference marking practice will help minimize communication lacuna between examiners and maintain the standard and validity of answerbook marking. The center chiefs suggested separate rooms for storage, coding, and decoding and (if possible) separate rooms for the different subjects so that the spirit of conference marking could work properly.

**Time limit:** Since most of the examiners were teachers, their first priority was teaching. Marking answerbooks was the secondary work, which could be done in their spare time. They were able to spend only a part of the day for this purpose. According to them, if they were allowed to take the answerbooks home, they could mark them at leisure in the evening, at night, and in the morning. In the marking centers they were not able to devote as much time as they could do at home. However, there was another side of the picture, i.e., delay in submitting the answerbooks. At present, examiners try to mark as many answerbooks as possible within the given time. One examiner put his difficulty, saying, “ I come from Panga, a village far from Kathmandu. I arrive here at about 7 AM. I work here for about one and a half hour only because I have to leave for the class.” The pressure to finish marking within a limited time was another thing, which disturbed them mentally. They felt that this sort of pressure decreased their efficiency, which might have an effect on their marking. One examiner compared act of answerbook marking to

a horse race. In a stakeholders' seminar, a representative from the teachers' union said that he had seen an examiner marking 91 answerbooks within two hours.

Similarly, in one marking center, a teacher was found marking as many as 3,200 answerbooks. This over-speed in marking frequently led to unreliable marking and to mistakes in totaling and posting of the marks. According to a new OCE directive, an examiner should not be given more than 1000 answer books. It seemed that this rule was not followed.

The instance of error caused by carelessness indulged under time pressure and reported in the daily newspaper *Kantipur* daily, July 5, 2004 might just be one out of many. It was found that an examiner of Science and H/PE when copying the scores on the markslips Tab1 and Tab2, happened to post the scores of Science also in HPE. Though action was taken in time to correct the mistake, this caused tension to related schools, teachers, students, and guardians.

The examiners felt that they were not doing justice to their teaching by marking the answerbooks, for they very often missed the class or arrived at the school late. They suggested fixing a definite duration of time for marking answerbooks. Attention should be paid to maintaining the standard of marking rather than to completing marking within a short time. The OCE expected 14 answerbooks marked in 90 minutes, which means one answerbook is checked in six and a half minutes. They suggested full-time deployment of teachers for marking and use of retired teachers.

### **Mark Entry and Validation**

Two copies of markslips are forwarded to the OCE through DEO as soon as marking is completed (Annex A7). One is sent for data entry. The verifiers appointed by the SLC Examination Board verify the printout scores against the markslips. After this, the second printout is verified with the second mark-slips. Finally, the results are presented to the Board for approval and publication.

For making this process more reliable and faster, the ex-and present officials of OCE and a group of teachers suggested that two persons be employed to make score entry from both the slips simultaneously and verify the printouts of both slips against each other. Similarly, a discussion pointed out the possibility of computer networking of the answerbook marking centers through DEO. The officials liked the idea of networking of the centers with regions and OCE. They said that spot entering of marks and mailing entry direct to OCE would help improve the efficiency of results publication. The centers answerbook marking can use wireless mail to send the results and maintain secrecy and confidentiality. There was a suggestion for exploring the possibility of using modern technology for sending examination-related information from districts and answer-book marking centers to OCE and *vice versa*. A previous study suggested the use of computer network to send the examination results from each region to the OCE. The study says:

“Computer entry of markslips should be completed in the related Regional Education Directorate and they should be sent to the Office of the Controller of Examinations through computer networking in order to make the publishing of the results prompt and reliable” (Khadka, 2058, p.11).

The ex-and present officials of the OCE suggested the development of a core team of computer personnel at OCE to get the work done reliably on time and make information available when

needed. This, they said, would avoid dependence on one single person. At present, OCE has to depend upon one non-gazetted I level person with two computer typists for everything related to the OCE including SLC. The duty of the person is to perform the task of programming and data processing. But he handles virtually everything related to computer work. This person stores the data all by himself (as he said) for security purposes. This may, however, make the manipulation of data and information possible. Furthermore, processes at the OCE that depend on the computing system could come to a standstill if the person is absent due to any reason. Therefore, other persons should be trained to handle the data and information and make them easily available. The computer technician himself felt the necessity of a new provision handling the data. It was getting very difficult for him, a single person, to do so. He suggested that training should be organized at the regional level.

## 2.8 Publication of the Results

After check-up and verification of marks, the SLC Examination Board gives its approval to the publication of results, which get published in Kathmandu through a Government daily the *Gorkhapatra*. But for the students living outside Kathmandu timely access to information on the results is difficult. Even in Kathmandu, crowds gather in front of the Gorkhapatra office to get copies of the newspaper. There are instances of violence and feuds taking place in the office. In 2003AD a special provision was made, free of cost, by Nepal Telecom, for providing information on individual basis, through telephone, with the results also posted on the website. It was highly appreciated by students and parents and people are for regionalization of this process through networking.

## 2.9 Re-Totaling

According to rule, the students not satisfied with their results are allowed to apply for a re-totaling of marks awarded in a particular subject. In this process, the answerbook of the applicant is checked by a sub-committee at the OCE to see if there is any mistake in tabulation or totaling of the marks entered for different answers. In the year 2003, the number of applicants requesting for re-totaling was 4605. Similarly, 1,500 students who sat at the supplementary examination expressed their dissatisfaction over the marks assigned to them in different subjects by applying for re-totaling. This shows that the examinees are skeptical about the marks awarded to them. The process of re-totaling has proved helpful to the students who failed or got lower scores on account of the errors made by the answerbook markers or computer personnel.

Differences are often found in the scores after re-totaling. While validating the score entry, the verifiers identified errors and they sent the entry back for correction. This sort of mistake has proved very devastating for students. Some students got alarmingly shocked at not getting the results approximate to their expectations and went to the extent of committing suicide without trying to find out whether the scores were correct. There is a ground to believe that all of the students who were declared failures or low scorers in one or more subjects may not be as such in reality. Many students whose real score might have been miscalculated do not apply for retotaling. Mistakes were also made during coding and decoding, which unlawfully penalizes the students. Due to the carelessness of the coder, the tabs of one subject may be placed on that of another subject. Recently, in the year 2003, regular examination's, this happened to one of the schools of Chitwan, where students were given the same score in two subjects, Science, and HPE due to the carelessness of the coder. Also, during the computerization of scores, mistakes

were made in entering numbers, e.g., 90 as 09. In the regular examination of 2003, the score of a student was totaled as 10 where it should have been 90. The mistake possibly owed to the number '9' in English taken as '1' in Nepali. Thus, sometimes good students fall victim due to the errors made in the processes of posting, totaling, decoding, and marks entry. The following table 7 shows the cases of re-totaling and their results.

**Table 7. Results of Re-Totaling: Regular Examination 2003**

Subject	Total applicants	Total valid	Range of difference	Average difference
509 Comp. Mathematics	1,344	62 (5%)	4 - 60	28
511 Comp. Science	822	29 (4%)	5 - 34	19
501 Comp. English	704	35 (5%)	4 - 60	17
522 Comp. Social Studies	405	25 (6%)	4 - 46	16
505 Comp. Nepali	261	27 (10%)	4 - 33	17
533 Comp. Health, Pop. & Env. Edu.	80	5 (6%)	10- 27	20
631 Opt. I Add. Math.	623	33 (5%)	-32- 60	24
643 Opt. I Economics	149	2	10 - 40	20
667 Opt. I Shukla Yajurved	1	1	8	8
701 Opt. II Office Mgmt. & Accounts	132	6 (5%)	3 - 30	12
734 Opt. II Computer Science	51	1	9	9
785 Opt. II H & PE	33	1	10	10
Total	4,605	227 (5%)	- 32 - 60	21

Of the 4,701 students who applied for re-totaling in 20 different subjects, they were found to be right in their claims in 12 papers mentioned in Table 7. The highest percentage of such cases (10%) was in Nepali and the lowest (4%) in Science. The range of differences between the reported scores and the results of re-totaling was highest in Compulsory Math (4 to 60) with an average of 28 followed by Opt. Add. Math (-32 to 60) with an average of 24.

A study of the list of errors made in the reported scores of the students revealed a mystery. OCE receives two copies of the scores known as Tab 1 and Tab 2 in each subject from all answerbook examination centers. Tab 1 is sent to the computer which enters and prints it. The printed copy is checked against Tab 2 by the checkers. If any mistake is found, correction is made on the computer. Even in such a situation, getting 5 percent errors seems to be a serious thing. A sample of five errors made in the reported scores is shown in Table 8.

The differences found between the posted and real scores might be due either to the errors made by the examiners during marking or copying marks on the tabs or to the computerizing process or even to the negligence of the checkers.

Voices have been heard about the need of replacing re-totaling with rechecking (Khadka 2058). A small number of teachers and students attending a seminar also expressed their opinion about the need of introducing a system of rechecking.

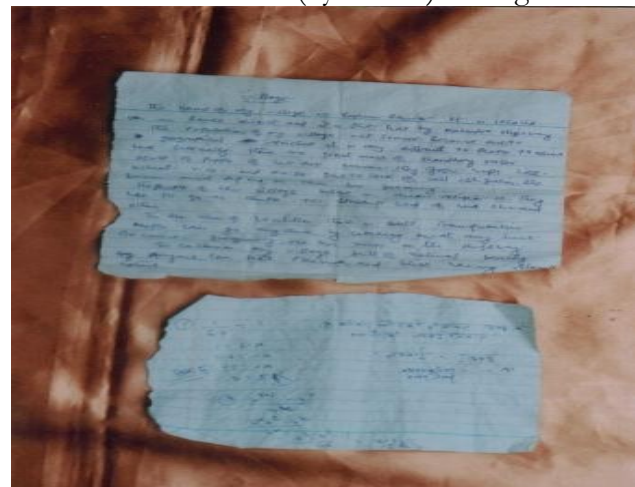
In this regard the ex- and present officials of OCE said it was not possible to introduce rechecking because SLC examination was subjective in nature. There was plenty of room for variation in the markings of two or more examiners in subjective questions. Therefore, if rechecking was introduced, it would invite further complication. Moreover, if rechecking is introduced, many more students would apply for this and OCE would require a separate section for taking care of this.

**Table 8. Error Made in Awarding Scores Difference between Reported and Corrected Scores**

Type	Reported Score					Corrected Score				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Subject										
509 Comp. Math.	34	6	35	3	20	94	66	85	63	51
511 Comp. Science	12	34	39	24	16	46	54	59	43	46
501 Comp. English	4	54	13	29	10	64	64	33	38	40
522 Comp. Social Studies	18	18	15	33	20	64	46	45	58	50
505 Comp. Nepali	33	37	42	27	18	66	67	63	51	49
533 Comp. HPE	14	35	34	25	25	41	55	54	35	46
631 Opt. I Add Math	34	32	18	17	93	94	92	81	71	-45
701 Opt. I Office Magmt. & Accounts	28	27	13	15	20	58	35	24	27	25

### 2.10 Certification

After the results are published, marksheets are distributed to students (by DEOs) through their schools. It seems that OCE is not serious in issuing certificates to the students. It was reported that OCE had not issued the certificates of regular and exempted examinees since 1989. Similarly, it had not issued certificates to students who had passed the partial, compartmental, and supplementary examinations. OCE always remains busy conducting examinations and publishing results. As the performance assessment of the OCE is mainly based upon the success achieved in conducting the examination and publishing the results, it concentrates its effort mainly on conducting the examination activities. It was said that OCE had not computerized the record of students from 1988 to 1998 (2045 to 2055 BS). If the office had to check the records, it would have to turn over the pages of ledger books. Somehow, the office started computerizing the record in 1999.



*Cheats used by the examinees*

### 2.11 Malpractice

SLC final examination is conducted at the national level at a same time everywhere, huge task for OCE every year. During examination, influence, inducement, and threats are the major challenges the superintendents, invigilators, and guards have to face. In this regard, a report from CERID writes:

“Cheating in examination is rampant. Mass cheating is so rigorously done that test has little meaning. Even teachers, parents and friends have been reported to help the examinees in cheating. The examinees were reported to threaten sincere and honest invigilators themselves and through their friends.” (Pradhan, et al., 2001, p.1)

Malpractice in SLC examination takes place in different forms: internal and external. Internal malpractice refers to those acts where the invigilators and administrators help the examinees by supplying answers slips or voluntarily ignoring change of answerbooks. And, external malpractice refers to acts where parents, relatives, and friends of the examinees supply answers from outside.



*Guess papers & Exam tips used by the examinees*

Malpractice takes place in the initial stage in the form of paper leakage through question-setters, related authorities, press/printers, proof-readers, moderators, etc. Similarly, in the test administration stage, it takes place in form of fake candidates attending examination, invigilators helping the examinees in writing answers by dictating, supply of worked-out answers and supplying of ready-made answers from outside the examination building. Similarly, materials are smuggled in pants, shoes, bras, and saris or written on part of the body (e.g., palms).

Nowadays, dozens of notes and keys are available in pocket size, which the students stealthily bring into the examination hall. Here are some example of keys, notes, exam guides, guess papers, and exam tips published by different commercial agencies. Demands have been raised for banning such publications. These materials are sold openly in the market and are very popular among the students. Of the 64 examinees attending the supplementary examination in 10 centers, 70 percent said that carriage and use of chits, guess papers, guides, etc were practiced on a massive scale. Besides, copying or reproducing work of a peer sitting next with or without her/his permission was common at the examination centers. Twenty-five percent of them said that invigilators helped by providing answer clues, and 14 percent reported that even peons and security people passed chits on to their people writing their examinations. In one of the centers

#### Some Observed Cases

- One examinee had hidden a small guidebook inside clothes, which was discovered by an invigilator after a search.
- An invigilator snatched the ID paper of an examinee helping a friend copy from his answerbook.
- An invigilator was found helping a student to copy from a friend's answerbook by standing beside her to protect her.
- An invigilator was found helping an examinee by dictating the answer.
- There were three examinees sitting on one bench while there was a bench without anybody sitting on it.
- An examinee was consulting a guidebook for solving a question related to map even while the invigilator was standing in front of him.
- Two young people climbed over the back compound wall, got up to the window examination room, and passed ready-made answers to an examinee. When the police came, they climbed down and ran away, shouting bad words.

even teachers were suspected of working on answers (outside) a short while after the test papers were smuggled out and passing photocopies of the answers to the students on contract. They charged fixed amounts of money for the answers. Further, a candidate might be placed under special protection from the examination officers under the pressure of local authorities. This was suspected in one of the centers.

Finally, malpractices can occur during the marking stage where the examination-related officials deliberately alter the original marks. In this context, Khadka quotes from a study made by Maharjan 2003. The study suggests, “The code of conduct should include to the authority take action on the personnel involved in...” (Khadka, p. 12, 2058 BS). There is an act which mentions a fine of one hundred thousand rupees and/or six months' jail, but this has never been enforced nor does any body believe in it. The act is only in paper.

Nepal (1991) reported an event that took place in the regular examination of 1989. A student failed the examination because he failed in English. Upon inquiry, he found that the front cover page of his answerbook was replaced with that of the sister of the invigilator. Nepal reported a case of change of the photograph on the admit card and temporary smuggling out of the answerbook for getting the answers written outside the examination hall. In 1996, the police had to resort to blank firing in Siraha district to control the mob of guardians who were protesting the ban on the use of unfair means in the examination. In the same year, a nationwide cancellation of a question paper and postponement of the examination took place because of a suspected leakage of the questions (CERID, 1996).

During the regular examination of 2060 BS / 2003 several malpractices were recorded. In Lahan of Siraha district, an elder brother was discovered substituting for his brother in the Math exam. One report from Dailekh said that teachers, parents, even journalists were taken into police custody for supplying chits to students. In Dhading, teachers were arrested for passing answers to students. An extreme case was reported from Parbat district where seven superintendents were squashed for their exam-related misdemeanor. Similarly, one superintendent was also dismissed from Jumla for his misbehavior in the examination (*Kathmandu Post*, March 28, 2004). Another form of malpractice is the sale of fake certificates. Even teachers and administrators have been found involved in this business. *The Space Time daily* (May 29, 2004) had news about a police raid in the home of a teacher who was involved in such a business. The teacher charged 15 to 40 thousand rupees for one fake certificate.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The analysis done above allows a number of conclusions and recommendations.

#### **3.1 Student Registration**

The practice of double registration started long time ago when the country lacked transportation and communication that took time to pass messages from one place to another. It was necessary to start planning far ahead of time. Today, as a result of the advancement and availability of information and communication technology, it has become far easier to contact and communicate. So, retaining the old practice of registering twice for the same purpose can hardly be justified. It leads to wastage of time, energy, and resources, which could be used otherwise. Therefore the recommendation:

Consider doing away with the age-old practice of double registration and make it a one-time process to take place at the beginning of Grade X so that students do not have to register twice. This will save time for other purposes.

### 3.2 Test Development

Much remains to be done to enhance the quality of test papers. The parallel sets of test papers that are used to minimize cheating are actually not parallel in terms of their coverage and level of difficulty. The variations and differences in contents and standards in the test papers used across the different regions can create inequity. Tests are developed by school teachers from Kathmandu. Test developers do not appear to be fully trained in the technique of test development. In that context:

- A question bank should be established under OCE in order to facilitate retrieval of standard question items in the time of need.
- Two or more parallel sets of test papers should be developed for each subject. (not only for Compulsory Mathematics and English) and the same sets of test papers should be used throughout the country instead of using different sets in different regions.
- Best teachers should be selected from different parts of the country for test construction. This will minimize the urban and Kathmandu bias in test.
- Training programs should be organized for test developers to expose them to skills/technologies pertaining to curriculum, textbook, taxonomy of educational objectives, testing, test construction, and validation of the tests before assigning work to them.
- The test items stored in the question/item bank should be validated.
- Software should be developed for the purpose of question bank.

### 3.3 Printing

Though Nepal has developed a lot in the field of printing, the OCE still prints the question papers in India. There is no reason for doing so. Nepal has developed the necessary expertise and sophistication in printing business. JEMC seems to have experience and expertise enough for running a security press. The paper used for printing question papers does not seem to be of quality or standard. Since all the papers are printed on white paper, it is difficult to separate them by region and by subject. In that regard:

- An education security press should be established within the country that should be used for printing the test papers and other materials related to examination
- Test papers should be made attractive in look. Papers of different colors should be used for different sets and quality paper should be used for quality printing on both sides.
- Let the test papers have not more than one fold. When there is more than one fold, the students may get confused and lose some of their precious time.

### 3.4 Test Administration

Poor administration of tests, unsuitable environment, uncooperative invigilators, and a host of other factors can contribute to lower student performance in examination. There is a need for

improving the administration of SLC examinations. The following recommendations have been made in this regard:

- The responsibility of the Board should be taken further beyond making administrative decisions. It should include more professional people who are experts in the related field.
- A clear job description should be prepared for the superintendent and her/his major tasks and line relationship with related agencies should be defined. Overlapping and interference should be stopped in the work of superintendents.
- The police and military personnel should be deployed only for security purposes. No armed guards should be kept within the examination premises and no police should be used to enter the examination building unless it is very essential or unavoidable. No unrelated persons, i.e., social or local leaders, party people, journalists, police or military personnel and Government officers should be authorized to enter the examination premises even on passes received from the DEO or CDO. No security people should be used for checking students at the entrance and inside the rooms unless the superintendent finds it very necessary.
- Both male and female invigilators should be appointed in each room as far as possible.
- Use male as well as female staffs to check the examinees before they enter the examination hall or building. Let the invigilators advise the examinees to leave their books, chits, and other unpermitted materials outside.
- Necessary training should be provided to the teachers on evaluation, assessment, and examination and testing procedures and make it mandatory for them to assess their students periodically.
- Seat plan notices should be posted at different places to make it easy for the examinees to find their seats.
- Remuneration should be provided also for pre-examination work (preparation) and post-examination work. The rates of remuneration/allowance for serving in the examinations should be fixed at least on the basis of the regular salary drawn by an equivalent status of the concerned person to be used. The budget required to meet the needs of the center for the necessary stationery, tea, hiring of cleaners and helpers to arrange furniture, and remunerations for officials involved in the examination should be enough.
- A provision should be made for reading out the examination rules and regulations to the examinees prior to the distribution of the question papers.
- At least half a meter's distance should be maintained between one bench-desk set and another. A line should be drawn between the two examinees sitting on the same bench not to allow them to cross the line. The furniture in the examination room/hall must be comfortable to the examinees.
- The students' symbol numbers should be written on each page of the answerbook so that unlawful change of front cover page could be discouraged. However, this would not work for the coding system. An alternative to this has, therefore, to be sought and used.
- The schools should assume the responsibility of orienting and training their students on the rules and procedures of examinations. They should train their students in writing

neatly, correctly, and to the point. Creativity is another thing students should be trained in. Students should be trained to read the questions carefully, form an idea of what answers are actually expected, and mentally prepare the major points to be covered in the answers. Training in the planning of time according to the marks allocated to the questions is also very necessary.

### 3.5 Answerbook Marking

The study has pointed out a number of gaps and inconsistencies in answerbook marking. Marking centers do not have sufficient space. Marking schemes are not completely error free. The practice of coding does not make much sense in the changed context. There is no satisfactory answer to why a score of 32 percent has been made the cut-off point for passing in the SLC examinations. The current arrangement for availing the services of teachers for marking answerbooks is ad hoc in nature. The existing rules on the number of copies one should be examining are not strictly followed. In order to address these and other problems associated with answerbook marking, the recommendations are:

- The existing training course should be reviewed for the examiners and it should be an integral part of the examination system.
- The existing training package should be modified as per the practical needs of answerbook marking.
- A supplementary package should be developed for head examiners so that they could help and guide the examiners better.
- A roster of trained examiners (for each district) should be maintained and used whenever necessary.
- A subjectwise marking strategy should be introduced. The marking of one subject should be completed first before starting the marking of another.
- Provision should be made for the best use of the locally available facilities for establishing a marking center.
- A process of reviewing the marking schemes should be made by a technical committee of the related subject experts and technical experts and the scheme should be made error-free in terms of language and presentation.
- The existing practice of coding of answerbooks should be dropped.
- The management of marking centers should be improved and strengthened by using the conference marking scheme. Encourage the process of marking subjectwise by establishing separate centers or providing separate space.
- The cut-off point should be fixed on the basis of the average achievement of students using standard score in a given subject.
- The practice of giving grace marks should be stopped.
- Letter-grading scheme should be introduced for the SLC examinations.
- Answerbook marking should be scheduled for longer vacations so that capable teachers could participate in the process or they could be invited to participate making it a necessary provision.

- The time shift should be fixed in such a way that all the examiners of a particular subject could work together in a group.
- Considering the issue of efficiency, one should not be allowed to mark more than 25-30 answerbooks a day.
- A fixed number of answerbooks should be given to each examiner at a time, not 250 to 450 as at present.
- A location should be selected for marking that meets requirements including a suitable work environment.
- The remuneration structure should be revised, considering the average time spent on marking the answerbooks in proportion to the salaries the examiner-teachers receive from their schools.
- Either the number of answerbook markers should be increased by recruiting new ones or the duration for completion of the work should be stretched longer.
- Schools should educate and train their students in the skills of writing in the examination as an essential part of their instructions.
- Make a provision for the entry of scores by two persons simultaneously from the twin markslips, (tab 1 and tab 2). The two printouts should tally fully with each other.

### 3.6 Publication of Results

At present, the main outlet of the SLC results is the Government newspaper *Gorakhpatra*. Attempts have been made to disseminate information also through telephone and internet. However, these are not enough in a country where access to telephone and internet is minimal. The following recommendation is therefore made:

- The results should be available in the districts through networking; a provision should be made for posting the results at DEOs on the same day. Further, other prominent newspapers should also be utilized to publish the result of SLC.

### 3.7 Re-Totaling and Rechecking

There is no provision for re-checking the answerbooks. Even if a student doubts the intention or ability of the examiner, s/he is helpless. Re-totaling is limited to seeing if there is any mistake made in marking whereas rechecking involves a thorough re-examination of the answerscript by a different examiner. There is some difficulty in permitting re-check. In a subjective test, variations may appear in the marking done by different examiners. However, if tests and marking were made reliable, the variation could be minimized. This invites two suggestions

- Re-totaling should be made effective, taking particular care of the negligence found in the marking of answerbooks.
- Rechecking of answerbooks should be introduced, if a student wants it.

### 3.8 Supplementary Examinations

Students who pass SLC through supplementary examination are not awarded their performance ranks or divisions. Even if they score first division marks, they are simply given a pass. This is not fair. We recommend the following:

- A provision should be made to treat the graduates of supplementary examinations as regular graduates in respect of awarding divisions.

### 3.9 Malpractices

Malpractice and misdeeds seem to be rampant. Though it is difficult to eradicate or stop such acts altogether there are several ways to minimize or discourage them. Making rules and regulations alone would not be enough. Both long-term and short-term measures should be adopted to curb the incidence of malpractices. Some of these measures are listed below:

- Checks at the entrance of the examination site should be made more strict.
- Seating arrangements should be made conducive to the students by providing enough space and distance to move comfortably.
- Intruders/visitors should be kept away from the examination site.
- Immediate and strong actions should be taken as permitted by the 'Education Act and Rules' against persons involved in misdeeds and unfair practices.

### 3.10 Certification

OCE has not been able to issue certificates to the students for a long time. For want of certificates students have to satisfy themselves with their marksheets. There is a huge backlog of certificates at OCE which have not been issued for the last several years due to lack of funds. This simply indicates inefficiency on the part of the OCE. To address this:

- OCE should develop a plan for issuing SLC certificates (original) to students who have not yet received their certificates.