

CHAPTER VIII: INSTITUTIONAL STUDY OF OCE*

1. INTRODUCTION

The SLC examination has come in for sharp criticism in recent years and there have been many calls for change. There has been strong public concern at low pass rates. A large number of reports have also pointed to the technical weaknesses in the SLC examinations, with poorly constructed questions, badly regulated marking, and poor management system. While the scope and contents of the SLC examinations have changed significantly over the years, many of the operational procedures continue to follow traditional patterns.

Notwithstanding the criticism it has received from various quarters, OCE has a secure place in Nepal's education system that currently caters to an annual cohort of about 300,000 candidates. Any reform of the SLC examination system must therefore begin with the strengthening of the OCE. It is in the interest of the entire education system to develop it as a strong national testing institution to enable it to cope up with the increasing number of candidates and the public demand for improvement in the examination system.

This chapter presents the findings of the Institutional Study of OCE conducted by the SLC Study team to assess the management capacity of OCE and recommend appropriate interventions for strengthening the possibility of developing OCE as an independent national testing institution that can effectively cater to the changing needs of Nepal's education system.

For details on the objectives and methodology, please refer to 'Institutional Study of OCE'.

2. INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT OF OCE

2.1 Policy Making on SLC

MOES is responsible for the smooth conduct of SLC Examination. It is also responsible for ensuring that majority of students appearing in the SLC examinations perform well. In other words, MOES is expected to manage educational institutions (schools) in a manner as the later would deliver high quality teaching. Examination is a system of testing how well students have learnt the prescribed curriculum. MOES has set up a School Leaving Certificate Examination Board (SLC Board) to make major decisions on conducting of the examination. The Board has 9 members with the Secretary of MOES as Chairman, and the Controller, OCE as Member Secretary. The Board is authorized to do the following works (as stated in the Education Regulations, 2059):

- Determine policy on conducting examination
- Determine criteria for setting up examination centers
- Determine the rates of Registration and SLC Application fees

* This chapter is based on the report 'Institutional Study of OCE' prepared by Dr. Madan Manandhar, Mr Tirtha Bahadur Manandhar and Ms. Renu Thapa for the SLC Study team.

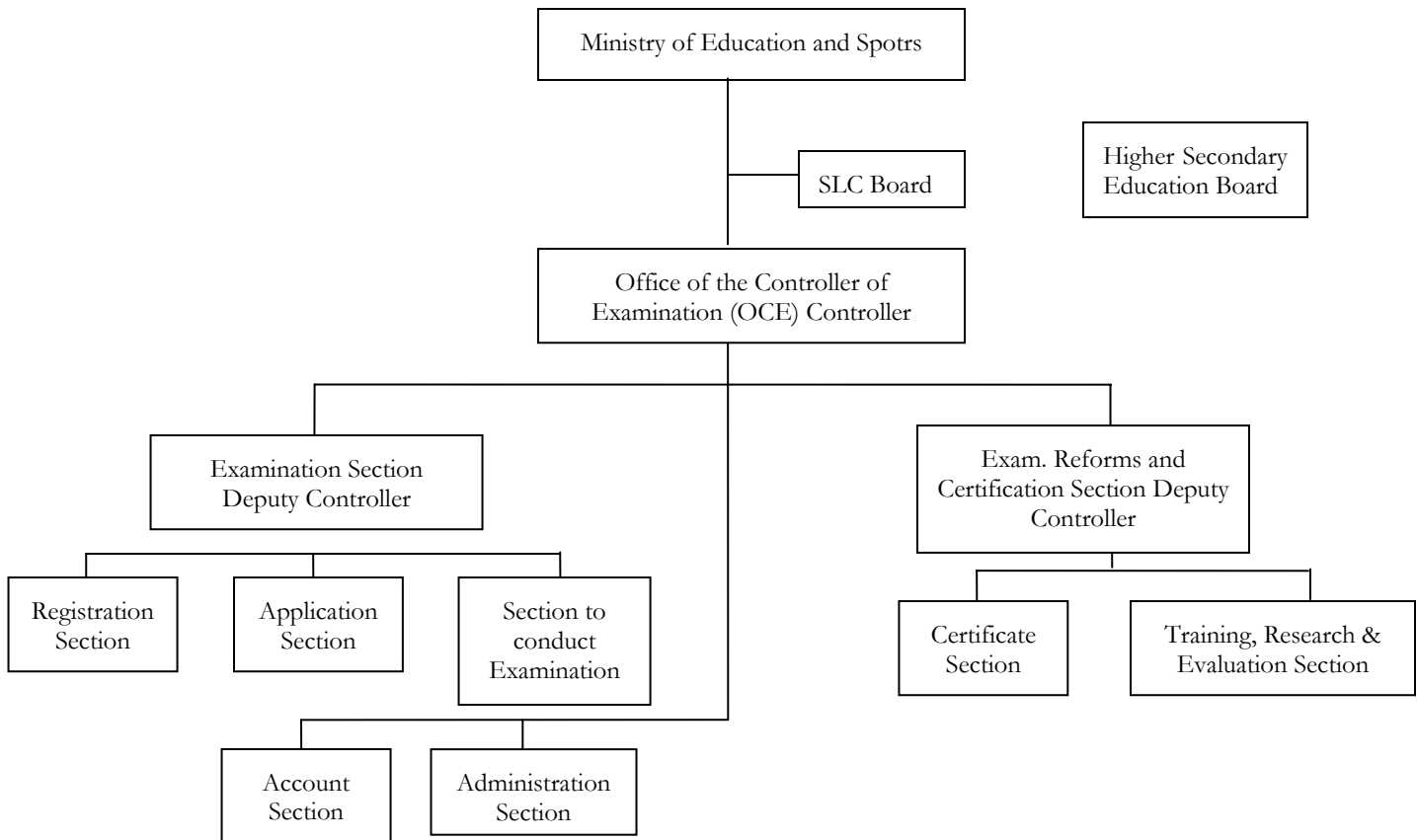
- Fix rates of remuneration for personnel engaged in SLC examination
- Take actions against teachers and personnel who break examination regulations.
- Order reexamination or close a center if there are irregularities
- Take decision on conducting examination in time of natural disasters
- Specify tasks of examiners, head examiners, and paper setters.

The Board is mandated to take discretionary steps (like awarding grace marks) in special circumstances. OCE closely follows the decisions of the Board. The Board gives its final approval to the results of SLC, before these are made public. The Board meets two to three times a year, or when there are crucial decisions to be made regarding the conduct of SLC examination. No SLC result is published prior to the approval of the Board.

2.2 Organization Structure of OCE and Staffing

OCE functions directly under the Ministry of Education and Sports as a full-fledged departmental organization. Under the organization structure mentioned in "Education Information of Nepal 2000(MOES)", OCE has two major sections (Chart 1):

Chart 1 Present Organizational Structure of OCE



- Examination Reform and Certificate Section with Sub-Sections for Certificate, Training and Research (Administration and Accounts).
- Examination Conduction Section with Sub-sections for conducting Examination Conduction.

OCE has a Controller, two Deputy Controllers, 14 Section Officers (including 12 officers of technical cadre), 13 senior assistant staffs (including 3 for accounts). Drivers and Peons together number 11. Altogether OCE has now 58 employees. It heavily depends on external specialists for carrying out various technical tasks like preparing test questions, marking of papers, and conducting assessment and examination training activities.

2.3 Functions of OCE

As one of the major departments of the Ministry of Education and Sports, the main function of the OCE is to conduct the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination and publish results. It is responsible for carrying out all aspects of SLC examination including test construction (question paper preparation), distribution of question papers to examination centers, conducting examination, arranging marking of answer papers, marks processing and publishing results.

As mentioned in the Education Regulations 2059 BS, the tasks of OCE are:

- Carrying out policies and decisions of the SLC Board
- Conducting SLC examinations, publishing results, and awarding certificates
- Monitoring the marking of answer books at the Regional Education Directorates and District Education Offices
- Preparing specification grids and model test questions
- Disseminating statistical information of SLC examination
- Maintaining records of individual candidates of SLC examination
- Conducting research activities to make tests more reliable and valid
- Organizing seminars/workshops for further improvement in SLC examination.

OCE performs its major duties in close consultation with the Ministry of Education and Sports. Conducting SLC examination twice a year is its major function.

The organizational structure mentioned above indicates that OCE operations are predominantly influenced by the requirements of smooth conducting of SLC examination, processing of marks, and publication of results. OCE is also found to have been heavily engaged in maintenance of examination records of the past years, correction of age/birth dates of SLC graduates, and verification of certificates. Verification of certificates has recently become a major work of OCE, as an increasing number of people, estimated at 300 – 400, seeking to go aboard for employment, visit OCE per day to have their SLC certificates verified officially. The verification of certificates is a service rendered by OCE free of charge. Similarly corrections of names, age, and dates of birth consume a lot of time and effort of the OCE staff.

At present, research works occupy a low priority in OCE work program due primarily to the pressure of publishing results on time. In addition, OCE has no published plans and

programmes other than holding of SLC examinations twice a year. All the section officers of technical cadre are presently engaged in non-technical administrative works such as certificate distribution, record keeping, verification of certificates and marks, mark sheet distribution, etc. The computer processing of marks secured by the students who appeared in SLC is a crucial function done in the OCE. Three assistant-level computer personnel do it. It is observed that processing of data of over three lakh students is too heavy a task for this limited staff pool.

2.4 Planning and Funding in OCE

OCE is heavily involved all round the year in activities relating to examination (regular and exempted examinations followed by compartmental examination of a particular year followed again, immediately, by the examination cycle of the next year). OCE does not publish its annual program, though it is understood that it has a fixed schedule of activities. Its major operational activities are preparing question papers, printing of question papers, procurement of answer books, dispatch of answer books to districts and of answer question papers to DEOs, conducting examination, marking and publishing results. Over the years, the number of students appearing in SLC examination has substantially increased.

**Table 1. Number of Students Appearing in SLC (Regular) by Development Region
(The dates are in BS, unless specified otherwise)**

Year Region	Students Appearing (Regular) in SLC						Growth Rate			Average (3 years)
	2055 (1999 AD)	2056BS (2000 AD)	2057 (2001 AD)	2058 (2002 AD)	2059 BS (2003 AD)	2060 (2004 AD)	2054/58	2058/59	2059/60	
Eastern	38,998	58,098	36,271	41,859	41,433	47,933	15.4	-1.0	15.7	10.0
Central	47,552	69,679	46,336	53,130	61,314	62,444	15.1	15.4	1.8	107.
Western	31,066	46,108	29,372	33,713	38,333	40,412	14.8	13.7	5.4	11.3
Mid-Western	11,846	18,244	10,080	10,916	11,633	13,715	8.3	6.6	17.9	11.9
Far Western	9,740	13,410	9,430	10,791	11,151	10,914	14.4	3.3	-2.1	5.2
Nepal	139,202	205,539	131,489	150,409	163,864	175,418	14.3	8.9	7.0	5.2
Kathmandu District	10,373	15,248	11,504	13,599	15,585	24,990			60.0	
Kathmandu Valley	16,509	24,276	17,901	21,992	15,585	24,990				

Source: OCE, October, 2005

**Table 2. Budgetary
Allocation for OCE**

Year	Amount in Rs. 1000
2056/57	48,731
2058/59	52,862
2060/61	85,656
2061/62	99,914

Source: MoF, Annual Budgets

OCE receives annual budget from the Government. The budgetary allocations for the OCE in recent years are as follows:

The budgetary allocation for OCE has increased with increase in the number of SLC candidates. The money is used for paying staff salaries, remuneration for specialist services, providing paper materials, printing of examination papers, transportation of materials for conducting examination in over 900

examination centers, and funding of SLC examination related works done by REDs and DEOs.

OCE collects a large amount of money every year from various fees such as Registration fees (Rs. 100 per person), SLC Application fees (Rs. 200 per person), Mark sheet fees, Duplicate Certificate fees, and Migration Certificate fees. Most of these fees are collected at the district level. The total amount raised from various fees annually is estimated to be about Rs. 120

millions (according to OCE estimation). OCE cannot use this money as it goes directly to HMG's Treasury as revenue.

2.5 Work Flow Relating to The Conduct of SLC Examination

Main highlights of the sequence of principal activities are:

- The SLC Examination Board determines the policies relating to examination.
- Question papers are prepared at the central level and sent to districts through the involvement of Regional Directorates.
- DEOs are responsible for conducting SLC examination in the designated examination centers. Regional Directorates are responsible for supervising the conduct of examination in each center.
- The District SLC Coordination Committee provides support for conducting examination (determining centers, appointing supervisors, invigilators, and arrangement of law and order).
- As per the directives of OCE, answer books are sent to specified marking centres for examination. Marking schemes are forwarded (by OCE) to the REDs for examiners' use.
- The corrected answer books along with markslips (Tab 1 and Tab 2) are forwarded to OCE directly from all the marking centers.
- Mark entry work takes place at OCE.
- The compiled mark sheets are processed at the computer facilities of OCE.
- Completed results are presented to the SLC Board before being announced.
- The mark ledgers and original marksheets are then sent to DEOs for distribution through schools.
- Schools distribute the original marksheets to students.

The massive work of conducting SLC examination all over the country simultaneously is accomplished by OCE with the involvement of RED and DEO offices. District SLC Coordination Committee provides crucial support. The schools, where examination centers are located, provide vital assistance as well. The District Police Offices provide security services.

2.6 OCE Linkage with Central-level Institutions

Various central-level organizations under the MOES are related to conducting of SLC examination and student performance in this examination. The relationship of the OCE with the other MOES organizations is discussed below.

i. OCE and the Curriculum Development Center (CDC)

The OCE and the CDC are closely related. CDC prepares the curriculum of the secondary level (as well as of the lower levels), and textbooks and other related reading materials. OCE conducts SLC examination based on the curriculum and textbooks of Grades 9 and 10. At present, the interactions between two organizations of the MOES, despite their close physical proximity, are

not frequent. OCE is in a position to find out how well or poorly students perform in various subjects in the examinations and to identify issues concerning student performance in various subjects. This information can be of great value to the CDC in making improvements in curriculum and textbooks.

ii. OCE, CDC, and HSEB

The need of good coordination between OCE, HSEB, and CDC has been well recognized. HSEB caters to SLC graduates and the curriculum it has for Grade 11 and 12 are built on the secondary school curriculum. Despite this, the relations between these organization are very tenuous.

iii. OCE and Ministry of Home Affairs

MOES enjoy good cooperation from the Ministry of Home. Police security arrangement in over 900 examination centers requires a large deployment of police force during the entire examination period. At the district level, the CDO, who is an official of Home Ministry, acts as the chairperson of the District SLC Coordination Committee.

The smooth operation of OCE in examination work owes much to the police protection.

iv. OCE and JEMC

The Janak Education Materials Center (JEMC) is the press complex owned by MOES. Although it has latest printing technologies, OCE does not used these facilities for its printing purpose, fearing that they might have to make compromises on security and confidential matters if printing is done in Nepal.

2.7 Aspects of OCE Operations

i. Quality Control Measures

OCE has been effortful in improving test construction. For instance, it has prepared a Specification Grid on all subjects for all question setters to follow. OCE also held orientation programs for question setters and moderators some years ago. Such orientation sessions have not taken place in recent past. In the process of implementing quality control measures, OCE also develops marking schemes and instructs all examiners to follow them while checking SLC answer books.

OCE also spends time and efforts in coordinating with the Nepal Police Force for the protection of examination centers so that no outsiders could indulge in unfair practices of helping students to cheat.

ii. Marking Center Arrangement

One main criticism of OCE operation has been the long delay in publication of examination results. In the past, the gap between examination date and announcement of results was as long as 4 to 5 months. OCE has addressed this problem by decentralizing the checking of answerbooks and introducing the system of checking answerbooks in marking centers in various districts. This has greatly helped to reduce the time lag between the completion of SLC exam and publication of result. The result is being now published within two months from the date of completion of examination.

iii. Supervision and Monitoring

OCE works under specific deadlines – examination dates and the time frame for publishing results. This requires OCE to closely supervise and monitor all its activities and processes. The question papers and examination materials must reach the designated places at appointed time. Personnel must be in place to conduct the tasks specified. Answer papers must reach OCE within set times. These outcomes can be achieved only through constant monitoring of the operations by OCE, RED, and DEO staff. Further, regular supervision of the examination centers is expected to be done when the examination is in process. This work has to be done by the RED and DEO personnel. Again, the marking centers should be supervised to ensure that proper marking is being done.

iv. Management of 'Outside' Manpower

OCE makes generous use of external specialists, teachers, and other personnel at the central and district levels for various tasks such as developing question papers and marking schemes, conducting examinations, managing the marking centers, final checking of marks/results, and computer processing of final results.

At the central level, the preparation of question papers is done by external specialists. School teachers are hired to do the work of marking of answer-books at the marking centers. At the central level (in OCE offices), large numbers of personnel (teachers and others) are engaged for several days in a row to complete checking of the results fast enough so that the results are published in time.

2.8 Issues Related to Institutional Development of OCE

OCE suffers from numerous problems as an institution. Some of them are: continued heavy pressure of work despite devolution of several works to Regional Directorates, shortage of fund for taking care of essential functions like repair and maintenance of buildings and equipments, irregularity in conducting orientation sessions for superintendents and invigilators, heavy pressure in publishing SLC results within two months from the date of completion of exam, limited and inadequate computing facilities, nonfunctioning of the technical unit with technical staff bogged down in administrative and logistic matters, virtual absence of any staff training program, inadequate furniture, equipments and facilities, incapacity of in-house expertise to analyze SLC results and conduct exam-related training programs, its weak linkages with central level organization, with CDC in particular, and absence of a concrete program for strengthening examination-related sections or units in RED and DEO offices.

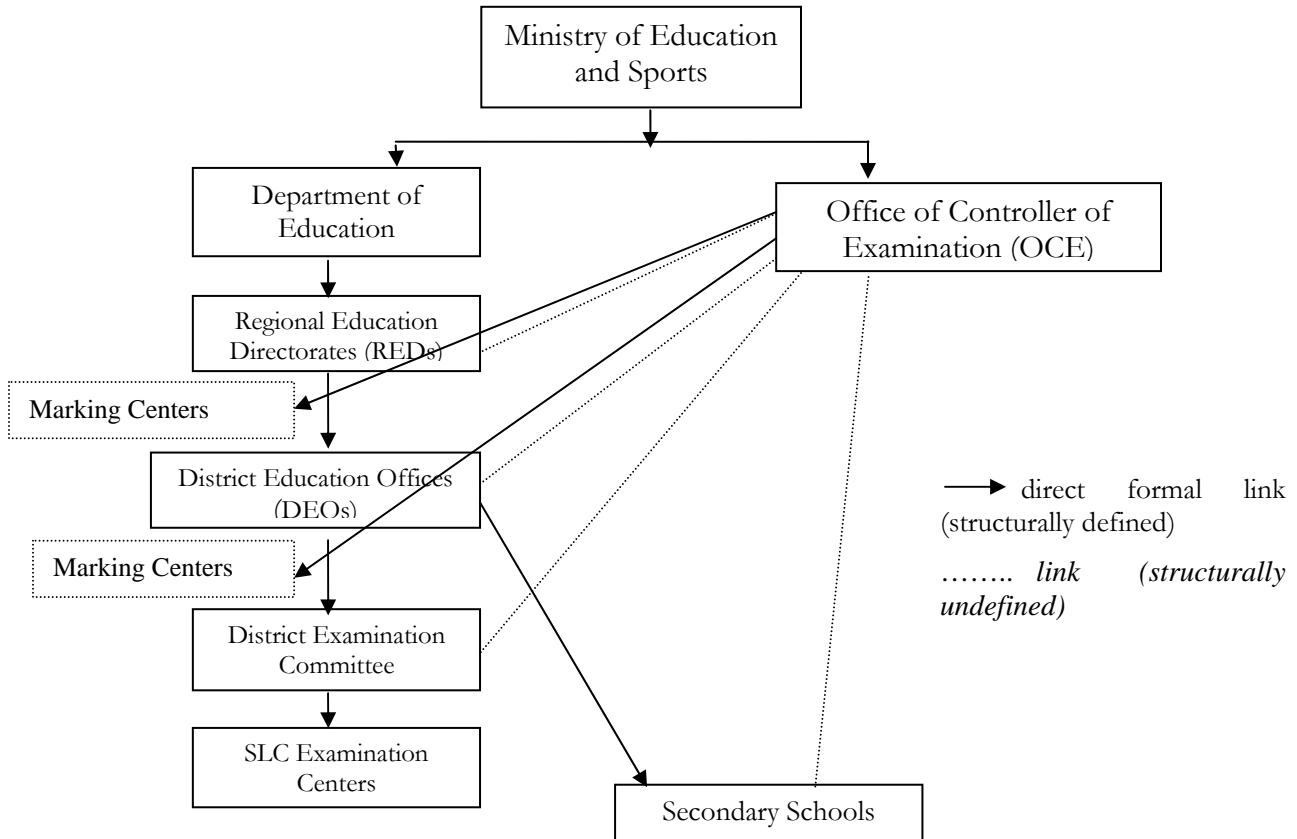
3. DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS

3.1 Present System

OCE fulfils its responsibility of conducting SLC examination with the support of REDs, DEOs, and schools along with help from local administration and police.

With increase in the work burden of OCE due to increasing number of students appearing in the SLC examination every year, various functions of OCE are now being delegated to the REDs and DEOs. The present system of authority delegation is shown in the chart (Chart 2).

Chart 2 Decentralization of SLC Examination



3.2 Regional Level Management

Functions and Activities of RED

The Regional Education Directorate (RED), an intermediary educational administration organization, is placed between the center and the districts. REDs were originally established to assist MOE in carrying out administrative functions at the regional level. Since the central offices, including OCE, directly deal with DEOs and vice versa, REDs are left with only peripheral functions.

Despite this, REDs play an important role in the smooth conduct of SLC examination and distribution of certificates and marksheets. REDs also occasionally conduct small studies and workshops on SLC performance in the districts.

Some of the important SLC-related functions of REDs include implementation of SLC examination activities as directed by the SLC Board, including determination of SLC exam centers and supervision of examinations, distribution of provisional SLC certificates and marksheets, amending of names, caste and birth dates in the certificates and distributing migration certificates to students who have passed the examinations.

3.3 District-level Management

Functions and activities of DEO

The DEO office has a number of functions specified in the Education Regulations. These functions include implementing educational programs, supervising schools, monitoring educational progress in the concerned districts, conducting short-term training, conducting district-level examination and conducting SLC examination in a sound manner. The SLC examination-related tasks specified for the DEOs by the Education Regulations 2059 include conducting; SLC examination in a regular and smooth manner, inspection and checking of records, question papers, and answer books of the final school level examination; making changes in names, caste, and age of students in the registration forms; and monitoring the implementation of annual educational programs in the schools.

District SLC Examination Coordination Committee headed by the CDO plays an important function in planning and supervising the conduct of SLC examination. The major functions of this committee include determining examination centers and appointing superintendents and other staffs for the examinations.

Issues in District-level Management

Some of the issues at the district-level management include limited staff and computer facilities, inadequate facilities, space and furniture in many marking centers, low remuneration for those who invigilate the examinations, inadequate physical facilities in exam centers, heavy pressure from CDOs and local bigwigs on DEOs for opening new centers, and difficulties in preventing outside help to students to cheat in the exam hall.

3.4 Rationale for Further Decentralization

Considering the huge operation of OCE, it is imperative that it adopt a decentralized system of management, particularly since there is a rapid growth of students every year appearing in SLC examination and OCE is finding it extremely difficult to cope up with the management of examination. Decentralized management system will ease the difficulties currently being faced by OCE in conducting SLC examination and make the organization more efficient. It will also make OCE students friendly in the sense that many boys and girls living in remote districts do not have to travel to Kathmandu for such minor work as getting duplicate copies of certificates and marksheets.

Effective decentralization of OCE works, however, requires careful planning at the regional and district levels. Larger staff needs to be mobilized and trained and more physical facilities and equipments need to be arranged for at the district and regional levels.

3.5 Conditions for Further Decentralization

Further decentralization of OCE functions can be done only when certain conditions are fulfilled. Both the human and other resources and capability of REDs and DEOs are very limited that need to be strengthened so that they can handle the added responsibility of SLC examination without cutting down other functions of school supervision and training. Decentralization of function should be accompanied by fiscal decentralization. OCE should transfer a certain portion of its budget resources directly to the REDs and DEOs offices to

execute the devolved functions. Optimal use of digital mode of communication (emails and internet) for intra- and inter- office communication and for dissemination of information to REDs, DEOs, schools, students, guardians, and local community also need to be assessed and introduced. This will not only save time and energy but will also make the operations more very efficient and cost-effective.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Introduction

OCE is, at present, working under several constraints to fulfill its main responsibility of conducting SLC Examination, and publishing results. It has several problems related to management and finance. Several studies on secondary education have recommended granting of autonomous status to the body. The recommendation has been made in order to (i) give greater financial independence; (ii) enable OCE to undertake developmental functions such as research and training; and (iii) take up repair, and maintenance of physical facilities and equipment and further enhance its facilities.

An independent autonomous organization means an organization that has the freedom to plan its own program for work and development and to take necessary steps to realize its own freely decided aims and objectives. In the context of Nepal, an autonomous testing organization should have the power to develop and implement program for improving school-level examinations and assessment systems, and to fulfill the basic responsibility of conducting the S.L.C. examinations smoothly and fairly. Besides, an autonomous organization is also expected to be financially self-sustainable and capable of making the best use of its resources. This means OCE must have full access to the resources it generates from various fees. Importantly, it should also have the authority to explore other sources of income.

The granting of autonomy has several implications. As an autonomous organization, OCE needs to be staffed by its own personnel. The Government staff can be retained only on secondment and a fixed period of time. On financing matter, OCE will receive only block grant from HMG, a grant that could be much smaller than the present budget allocation. More importantly, an autonomous OCE can be established only by an Act of parliament.

4.2 An Independent OCE Model

There are three organizations that can be considered as a possible model for OCE: Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC), Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB), and Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT). NASC was established under NASC Act, 1982; HSEB was established under HSEB Act, 1989; and CTEVT was established under the CTEVT Act, 1988.

All these organizations have autonomous status and they can all develop and implement their program keeping in view the national development priorities. All these organizations receive annual grants from the Government, which are not tied to staff salaries and allowances and are meant to support part of the costs of program. These organizations have their own staff and personnel regulations and they generate incomes from fees and other sources.

As the organizational structure of CTEVT is relatively complex (due to its wide scope and areas of functional coverage), CTEVT is not preferred as a suitable model future OCE. For the purpose of developing OCE as an independent organization, HSEB and NASC models are considered more appropriate.

Three options and creating Secondary Education Board (SEB)

Three options are offered for the future organizational and institutional development of OCE. The first option foresees no change in its structure and status, except for the addition of some sections. OCE will continue to remain as an organ of the Government bureaucracy but will have a certain financial autonomy so that it can make use of the resources it generates for conducting SLC examination and carrying out other developmental activities. However, the strengthening of a full-fledged Government department has its limitations and, given the deficiencies inherent in the present OCE, one cannot expect drastic improvement in delivery of quality SLC examination while OCE continues to function as a Government entity.

A second option is therefore recommended to create a new independent body responsible for secondary level examination for the country by combining OCE and HSEB (minus its curriculum unit). This body, which can be named the Secondary Examination Board (SEB) can be established by suitably amending the existing HSEB ACT 2046. This body will have the authority, standing, and competence to manage and deliver quality public examinations from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Apart from addressing the problem of coordination now prevalent between secondary and higher secondary level examinations, a problem reflected by a large number of failures in Grade 11 examination, this arrangement will create a strong and financially viable national testing body at the level of the secondary education. Such an organization once set up, can not only manage and conduct all secondary level examinations with greater efficiency, but will also carry out and promote research and training in evaluation and assessment. Along with this arrangement, it is also recommended that the curriculum unit of HSEB should be merged with CDC so that there is a body to look after the curriculum of all levels of school education.

Under the third option, the secondary curriculum unit of CDC will be combined together with HSEB and OCE into the proposed SEB. Since this arrangement will prevent the Ministry of Education and Sports from having a holistic and complete picture of school-level curriculum, it is recommended that the second option, with HSEB (minus its curriculum unit) and OCE merging into the new SEB, is desirable. Along with this arrangement, it is recommended that the curriculum unit of HSEB be integrated with CDC so that all school-level curriculum and textbooks would be handled by one agency. This will be in tune with the MOES' policy of viewing Grades 11 and 12 as an extension or part of the school system.

An autonomous Secondary Education Board as recommended under Option 1, has many merits, the most important one being its ability to give professional leadership in bringing overall improvement in secondary public examinations, as well as the assessment and evaluation practices at schools.

Many reports and documents support the argument for integration of OCE and HSEB. Both the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) and Tenth Plan (2002-2007) documents, for instance, have taken higher secondary education as a part of school education. By implication it means, it is better to have one single examination body rather than two separate entities for managing Secondary and Higher Secondary examinations. The SEDP report also recommended that HSEB and OCE

should be merged into a new structure responsible for all public examinations from Grades 8-12. SSESP PPTA (ABDTA-3526-Nep) feels that a single coherent structure is capable of dealing with Grade 8, 10, and 12 examinations. Experience from SAARC countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka also tell us that a single board for both secondary and higher secondary examinations would be desirable

It is recommended that, instead of creating a brand new statutory body for conducting school level public examination by an Act of Parliament, it would be wise to establish SEB by amending certain articles and clauses in the HSEB Act, 2046. It is recommended that the OCE and HSEB be combined into SEB with minimum structural change.

4.3 Role of Independent SEB

The SEB proposed will be an autonomous, independent organization and with authority, standing, and competence as a financially sustainable National Secondary School Examination Board. It is envisaged that it will

- a. provide professional leadership in school level assessment and evaluation.
- b. continue fulfilling all the works currently being done by OCE (SLC Examination and other functions) and HSEB (except the work related to, curriculum and text book development part which will be transferred to CDC).
- c. decentralize many of its functions to REDs and DEOs in stages. Accordingly, Regional Examination Offices will be established in REDs, and will be made responsible in a phased manner for conducting regional Grade 10 examinations.
- d. develop training program for the key Regional and District Examination Office personnel and work with them to establish training program for teachers who will be examination paper setters, editors, and markers.
- e. make increased efforts to mobilize cooperation of REDs, DEOs, and schools in effectively conducting Grade 8, 10, and 12 examinations.

4.4 Sources of SEB Funding

The major source of funding for SEB will be Government grants. SEB will also generate income from various other sources such as fees it raises from students for various services. The other sources of fund will be fees from participants of seminar and other courses it will organize from time to time and publication of various exam-related materials, exam rules and guidelines, model answer sets, tips for preparing for exam, research reports and so on.

4.5 Grade 12 as School Leaving Examination

With the establishment of SEB, it is envisaged that Grade 12 examination will eventually be the school leaving examination. It will be conducted by SEB the same way as SLC examination conducted by OCE at present, with support from various regional and district level offices and committees. Once Grade 12 examination is introduced as school leaving examination, Grade 10 examination will be decentralized to the regional level and Grade 9 and 11 examinations will be treated as school-based examinations. Certification of secondary/higher secondary school completion will be on the basis of Grade 12 examination only.

When the regionalization of Grade 10 examination happens, the role of the new SEB, in relation to Regional Examination Boards should be redefined. SEB needs to maintain its regulatory function to oversee the quality and effectiveness of exam conduct and provide necessary staff and technical support to REBs.

Regionlisation of Grade 10th exam should, however, introduced, be phasewise. For the first two years (starting from 2007), the Secondary Education Board (SEB) Office will arrange setting of question papers, distribution, and publication of examination results. Regional examination boards based at Regional Education Directorates would handle the local delivery of these examinations, a role similar to that used for SLC at present. Also, considering the large number

Table 3. Level-wise Secondary / Higher Secondary School Examinations

Grade	Level-wise Status	Responsible Examining Organizations and Agencies
Grade 8	Regional	RED
Grade 9	School	Individual schools
Grade 10	Regional	RED
Grade 11	School	Individual schools
Grade 12	Central	SEB

of schools and students to be served in the Kathmandu valley, it will be desirable to have a separate controller of exam for Grade 10 for the Valley.

Based on the findings and opinion of officials interviewed, it is also recommended that Grade 8 examinations should continue, but should be conducted from DEO Offices, supervised by REOs,

operating in a new role. Regional Examination Boards will arrange question papers setting and publication of examination results. District education offices would handle the local delivery of these examinations, in a role similar to that used for SLC at present. For the time being, schoolteachers would continue to conduct and mark examinations in their own schools, but with substantial improvements in quality control, and with the long-term possibility that conference marking could be introduced. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that Grade 8 examinations are free from bias, and that students from deprived backgrounds are not put at a disadvantage by the examination formats used.

4.6 Administrative Arrangement for SEB

There will be a full-time Vice-Chairman, Controller General, and a Director General appointed, compensated, and removed according to SEB service rules. The states and rules will prescribe their responsibilities and authorities. The Controller General shall manage the examination and general administration related functions, while the Director General looks after academic affairs and development tasks of the board at the direction and advice of the Vice Chairman. Both of them will report to the Vice-Chairman who will be the leader and chief executive of the organization.

The post of Vice-Chairman will be made equal to the post of university Vice Chancellor, while those of Director General and Controller General will be equal to Rector and Register respectively.

4.7 Recruitment Through Public Notice

Recruitment for the posts of Vice-Chairman, Controller General, and Director General will be based on free competition (through public notice) from among individuals with the minimum specified qualification and experience. Candidates for these posts will be hired on contract on the basis of four year performance. The incumbent executives, however, may apply for the position again.

A three-member selection and recommendation committee appointed by the Cabinet at the recommendation of the Minister for Education and Sports will be constituted to select and recommend candidate for the position of Vice-Chairman. Candidates for the position of Controller General and Director General will be selected and recruited by a committee headed by the Vice-Chairman.

4.8 Staffing

As far as the permanent employees of HSEB are concerned, they can continue to work with SEB. But in relation to the Government employees of OCE, they will be given the following options:

- to work on deputation without giving up their HMG job for the interim period of 2 years (enjoying all the benefits and incentives of the proposed SEB)
- to join SEB on permanent pay role as per SEB personnel rules and conditions of services, by resigning from HMG
- to seek transfer to other places in HMG including MOES or other agencies and offices under it or
- to seek gratuity/pension (based on the number of service years) from HMG and join the SEB service in an appropriate position. A special career incentive package could be developed for those permanent OCE staff (only) joining the SEB.

In the case of HSEB staff working under the Curriculum and Training Division, it is expected that only the staff belonging to Curriculum and Textbook Section would be affected. They could be given the following options:

- to transfer to other sections of SEB
- to work on deputation to CDC upto 2 years
- to seek gratuity/pension based on the number of service years from HSEB and seek early retirement from service.

4.9 Legal Issues

From the legal viewpoint, it would be easier to redeploy or readjust OCE staff into SEB service rather than HSEB staff into a fully Government agency, such as OCE. The Public Service Commission (PSC) would not allow it. There are many merger instances in Nepal, where employees from Government organizations are given options to join the newly formed board or authorities. As in the case of HMG employees that joined the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and Civil Aviation Authority after the merger, the HMG employees of OCE, with more than 10 years of service, joining SEB permanently by a certain date could be given one level automatic promotion from their current positions. Also, those HMG staff not willing to join the new board service will have options, either to continue working on deputation or to return back to HMG for necessary transfer and placements. It is important that there will be an attractive SEB service entry package for the HMG staff. If an employee of the OCE and HSEB are no longer interested to work in the newly established SEB, they may be given an opportunity for voluntary retirement (a golden handshake!) or gratuity as per SEB rules within 90 days of the approval of their resignation.

5. THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND OF THE PROPOSED SEB BOARDS, ITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE¹⁹

The proposed organizational chart shows the SEB Board, its Executive Committee, and various functional discipline division under it. The line and functional managers reporting to the Vice-Chairman and Member Secretary can be organized in a manner that most suits the needs and operations of SEB.

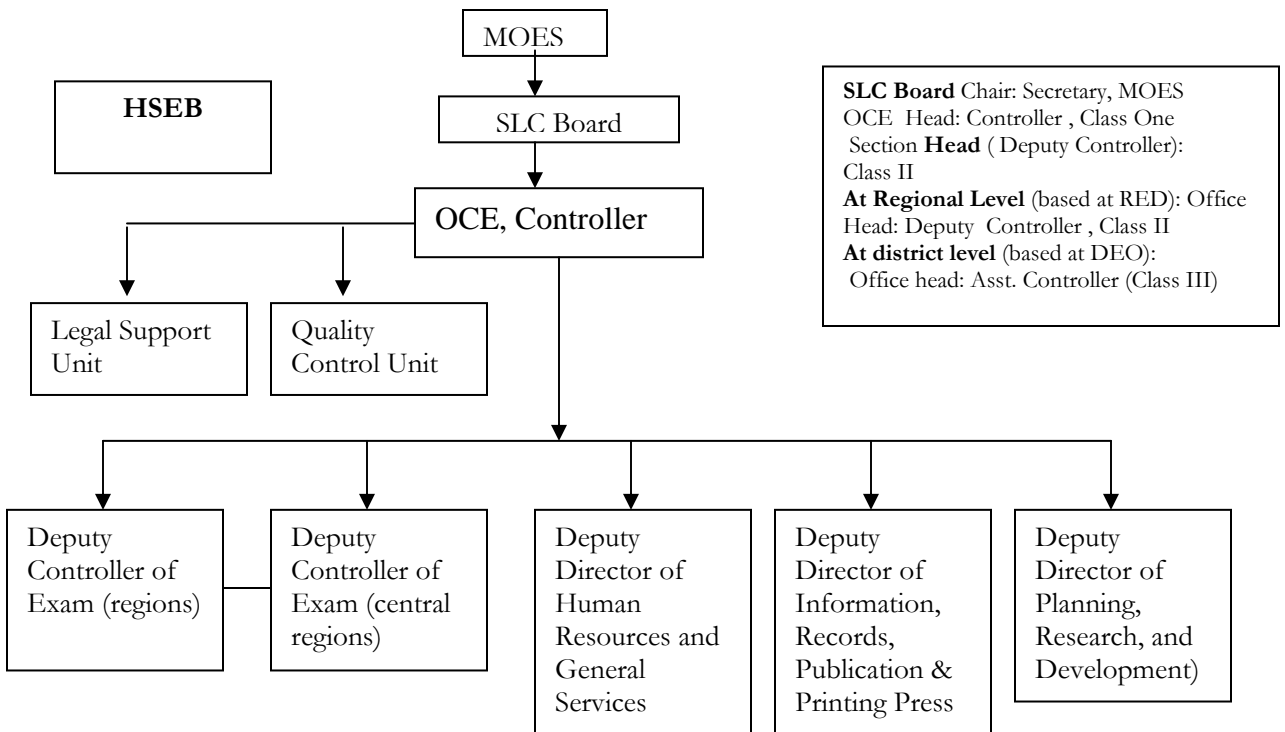
As has been illustrated below, the three primary disciplines of experts required to run smoothly SEB are – examination, curriculum, and research - with support of IT, HRM and Finance, Information, Publication, and Security Press.

The organization of SEB should be such as to facilitate an effective response to each need as it arises. The organizational design may follow functions or disciplines. The key is to make arrangements so that the roles and responsibilities of each professional and staff are understood by managers and staffers alike. Specific job descriptions, job specifications (qualifications), and a clear line of authority for each functional unit and person, with flexibility to change responsibilities, as circumstances require, are important.

5.1 OCE with Some Autonomy (Option 1)

This option envisages no major change in the present structural set-up of OCE except for addition of a few sections. Under this arrangement, OCE will continue to function as an organization of the Government, but will have a certain financial autonomy

Chart 3 Proposed Organizational Structure for OCE (Option 1)



Please Note: The terms `he` and `his` may mean `he and /or she` and his and /or her`.

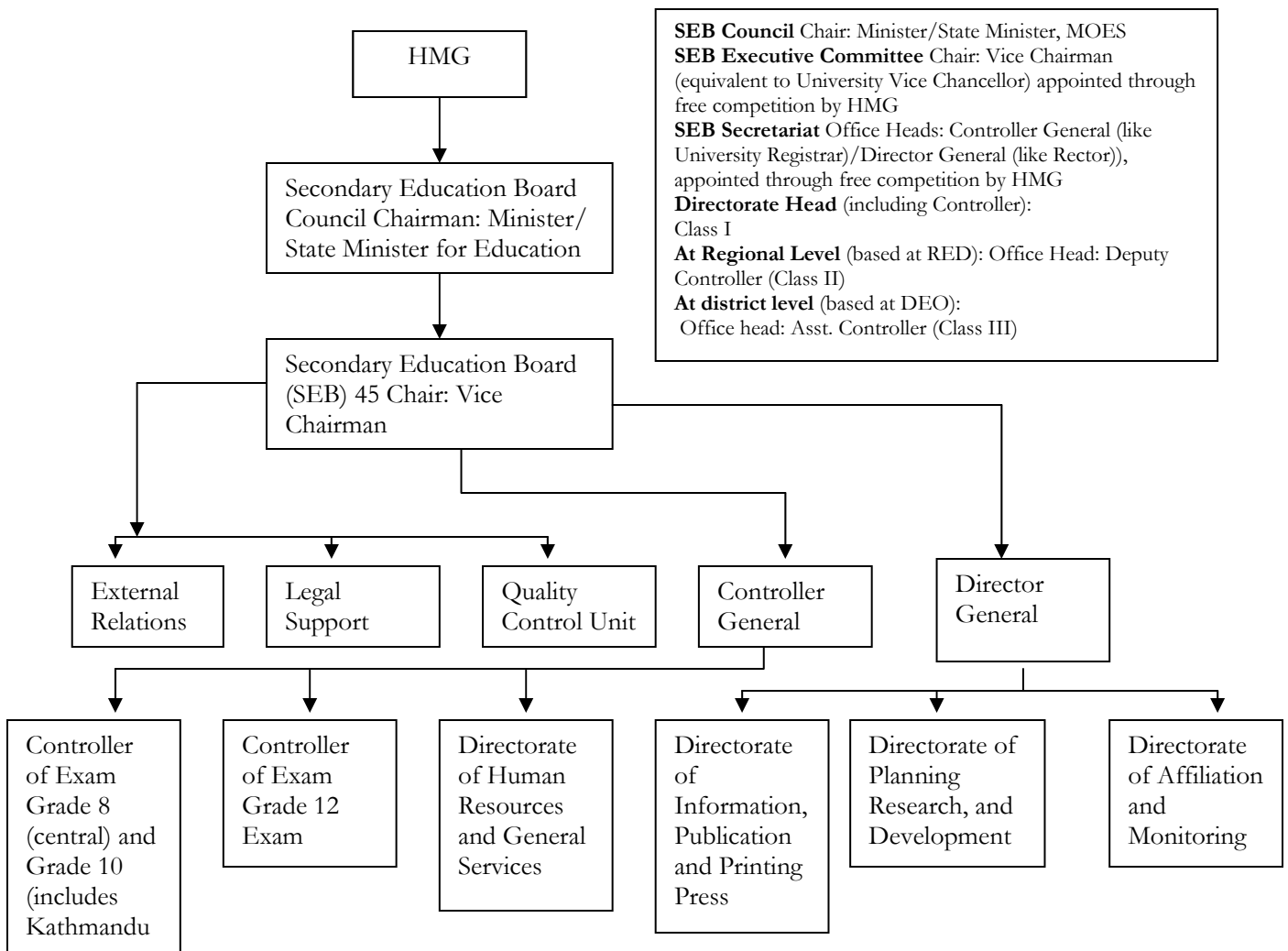
Possible Limitations of Option 1

Experiences from full-fledged Government institution suggest that strengthening a Government department has its own limit. In particular, following are the possible drawbacks one could foresee if OCE is continued as a Government department, albeit with some autonomy on financial matters.

- It will have less autonomy and flexibility concerning curriculum, examination management, planning & programming, income generation, staffing and other matters pertaining to the issue of management of school assessment and examination
- There will be the possibility of direct political interference in OCE's operation, including appointments to executive positions.

5.2 Secondary Education Board (Option 2)

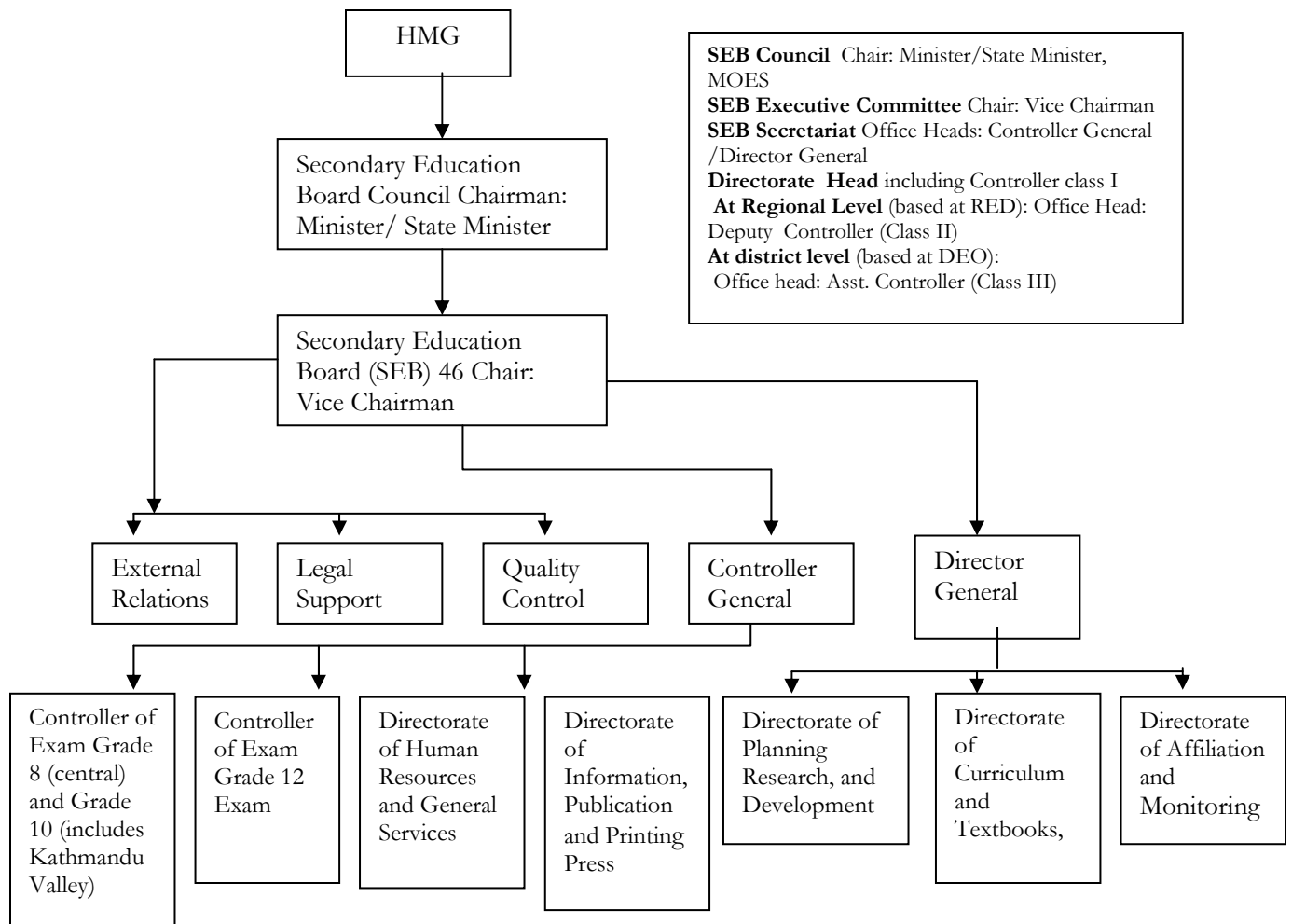
Chart 4 Proposed Organizational Structure for an independent testing organization of SEB (Option 2)



Here, both OCE and HSEB are proposed to be reorganized together into a new Secondary Education Board (SEB) by amending the HSEB Act, 2046, 2049 (2nd amendment). However, the responsibility of the curriculum and textbook section (currently under the Curriculum and Training Division) of the HSEB at present will be transferred to CDC. This is the most desirable of the three options presented here, the proposed SEB Option 2 will be a semi-autonomous, independent organization with the authority, standing, and competence to function as a financially sustainable National Secondary School Examination. In other words, it will enjoy greater more financial independence, will be able to undertake development functions, and operate as a business, like public organization. As an autonomous organization, SEB will also be staffed by its own personnel. The Government staff can be retained only on secondment and for a fixed period of time.

5.3 SEB with Curriculum Unit (Option 3)

Chart 5 Proposed Organizational Structure for an independent testing organization of SEB (Option 3)



This option has almost the same feature as Option 2, except that a part of the CDC dealing with secondary section will be combined together with OCE and HSEB into the proposed SEB. The

rationale for this arrangement is to help develop a better learning link between Grades 10 and 11 and between Grades 11 and 12. One disadvantage of this system would be the end of the holistic view of the entire school curriculum from Grade 1 to 12.

6. MAIN DIRECTORATES OF THE PROPOSED SEB

There will be a full time Vice-Chairman, Controller General, and a Director General in the SEB Executive Committee, who will be appointed, compensated, and removed according to SEB service rules. The Vice-Chairman will be the chief executive officer of the SEB executive committee. The statute and rules will prescribe their responsibility and authorities. The Controller General shall manage the examination and general administration related functions, while the Director General looks after academic affairs and development tasks of the board at the direction and advice of the Vice-Chairman. Both of them report to the Vice-Chairman. The Directorate will have the following main divisions:

i. Controller of Examination: Grade 12 Examination

Main Functions: conducting examination (Grade 12) and publishing results

Sections:

- Registration Section
- Application Section
- Certificate Section
- Curriculum & Textbook Section
- Examination Section
- Computer Section
- Record Section
- Student Relation Section

ii. Controller of Examinations (Centre): Grade 8 and Grade 10 Examinations

Main Functions:

- Conduct Grade 10th Examination of the Kathmandu Valley
- Assist REDs in conducting Grade 10th Examination
- Assist DEOs in conducting and publishing results of Grade 8th Examination

Sections:

- Grade 8 Examinations Section
- Grade 10 Exam Section (Kathmandu Valley)
 - Registration Section
 - Application Section

- Question setting (for the whole country)
- Examination Section
- Computer Section
- Record Section
- Student Relations Section
- Marksheet distribution (for Kathmandu valley)
- Result Publication and Certificate Section (for the whole country)
- Region-based Grade 10 Exam (except for Kathmandu Valley)
- Other projects related to Grades 10 and 8
- Records Section
- Curriculum & Textbook Section
- Computer Section
- Certificate Section
- Student Relations Section

iii. Directorate of Information, Publication & Printing Press

Main Functions

- Management of Printing Press²⁰
- Management of Publication
- SEB Publication Sales Section
- Public Relations (including press/ media)

To make the exam-student friendly and transparent and also as a source of income generation:

SEB should publish sample question papers, sample /model answer papers, answer paper copies (with editing, if required) of the top ten students, marking schemes (to encourage schools to prepare and practice in Home Examinations (classes x xii) and performance analysis of students to help acquaint the students and teachers with the system of examination to make it learner-friendly and transparent. For example, CBSE in India also generates a huge amount of income through the sale of exam-related materials, including sample questions and sample answer papers.

²⁰ It was learnt that a small printing press, established 3-4 years ago at HSEB, Sanothimi is being operated externally under the supervision of an examination staff for printing exam-related papers. There is a scope to expand it so that HSEB officials may not need to go to India for printing question papers.²⁰ It was learnt that SESP is also in the process of funding the establishment of a printing press in the OCE. There is also a possibility for this purpose of entrusting and using JEMC that functions under MoES control.

To make availability of printed marking schemes to Head Examiners and Examiners as well to make objectives uniform and reliable and evaluation consistent.

iv. Directorate of Planning, Research & Development

Functions:

- Plans and program for improving assessment and examinations
- Research and Study Programs on Testing & Measurement
- Other Development Projects
- Regularity in management of exam-related statistics regularly
- Data bank of SEB for exam related activities
- Seminars and workshops
- Library (also digital library where possible and appropriate)
- Liaison with national and international institutions/agencies for professional, technical, and financial cooperation.

vi. Directorate of Curriculum and Textbooks (under Option 2)

- Curricula and textbook materials.
- Seminars and workshop.

vii. Directorate of Affiliation and Monitoring

- Affiliation to schools (Grades 8th to 12th)
- Monitoring of secondary education program.

viii. Directorate of Human Resources and General Services

Main function

- Personnel Administration
- Financial Administration
- Training & Development
- ICT Support Unit
- Security

6.1 Composition of The Executive Committee of The Proposed Secondary Education Board (SEB)

Composition of SEB

- SEB will be governed by a Council.

- The composition of the Council will be set out in the legislation that establishes the examination authority. The nature of election of representatives to the Council is important in that it determines, to a large extent, the degree of direct political or Government influence on examinations.
- While the decision of the Ministry of Education and Sports should be usually required to appoint Council members, the number of direct appointees will be kept minimum with the rest nominated from specified organizations and / or elected as ex-officio members.

Table 4. Composition of SEB Executive Committee

	As per Present HSEB Act	Study Group's Recommendation
Chairman	Education Minister	1: Vice-Chairman of SEB
Tenure	4 Years	4 Years
Members	Four members nominated by Chairman	1: Director General, SEB
Tenure (for non-ex-officio members)	(i.e., Education Minister) among the members of HSEB Assembly	1: Director General, CDCC 1: Controller General
Present tenure: 4 years		1: Joint Secretary, MOES
Recommended Tenure: 2 years		
Member Secretary	Member Secretary of SEB	1: Controller General
Tenure	4 years	(4 years)
Total	7	5

6.2 Suggested Phasewise Implementation Strategy for SEB Option 1 and Institutional Development

A 3-Phase Implantation Plan of the Merger is proposed.

A phasewise implementation strategy should be adopted for the establishment of SEB. Assuming that the plan period starts from 2007, it is proposed that the implementation schedule should spread over the period of 4 years.

- **Phase I: Year 2007-8 (Interim Period)**, primarily for consolidation and capacity building of concerned agencies)
- **Phase II: Year 2008 onwards** (starting year of Nepal's 11th Plan and beginning of the SEB Operation)
- **Phase III: Year 2010** (Performance Audit of Phase II and execution of backstopping support activities to further consolidate and strengthen the work performance of SEB)

Phase I: Year 2007-8 (Interim Period)

- During the Transitional Phase I period, (i.e., between 2006-2007), OCE, CDC and HSEB will continue to function as now, but with certain planned improvement (or changes) in their work activities.
- During this first phase, all the preparatory works needed, including the required amendment of certain articles and clauses of HSEP, 2046, structural readjustment of OCE, RED, DEO, and CDC should take place to establish a new organizational set-up,

Secondary Education Board, by amending HSEB Act, 2046 and by combining the staff of HSEB and OCE and transferring the bulk of the responsibility of curriculum and textbook affairs of Grades 11 and 12 of HSEB to CDC.

Phase II:

- The second phase (i.e., the beginning of the year 2008) is the phase where we expect the completion of the task of combining HSEB, OCE into the newly formed Secondary Education Board (SEB) to start the proposed institutional reform process of Grades 8, 10, and 12 examinations. The planned beginning of the operation of the newly set up SEB takes place in this phase.

Some of the important works to be initiated or introduced during this period include:

- Regionalization of Grade 10th (present SLC) Examination
- Holding of Grade 12 (only) nationwide Examination
- Formulation of SEB Governing Council and Executive Committee
- Making Grade 9th Exam and Grade 11th Exam school-based and revision/changes in the curriculum of Grades 9 and 10.

The tasks of question paper setting, and publication of the result of Grade 10 examinations of all regions in the country, including the Kathmandu valley, will be retained by the Central office of the SEB.

Phase III: Year 2009

- A performance review study of operation of the newly formed Secondary Education Board (SEB) by an independent team will be done.
- SEB will be fully responsible for planning and managing all secondary/higher secondary level examinations.

Experts believe that a sound examination system can have a major influence in reforming school education. A sound examination system, however, is only possible when a strong institution is in place not only to conduct public examination in a fair and impartial manner but also to play a leadership role in the country in research and further development in testing and measurement and in bringing about improvement in assessment practices at the school level. A strong institution presupposes freedom from excessive Government control, freedom to generate resources, and freedom to use the resources it generates for its own development and capacity building. It is believed that a semi-autonomous national institution for managing secondary level public examination in the name of Secondary Education Board along with continued decentralisation of the conduct of examination and the strengthening of zonal and district-level structures will significantly contribute to bringing about much needed reform in Nepal's school level public examination system.