

**Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit Option in Higher Education: Boon Or Bane****Rashidi Roquiyia<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor Department of Teacher Education, Baikunthi Devi Kanya Mahavidyalaya Baluganj, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

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**Abstract**

NEP 2020 seeks to pave the way for flexible and lifelong learning and encourages students to choose their academic path leading to the award of certificate, diploma, and degree. Hence, Multiple Entry and Exit System (MEES) is the corner stone of the new National Education Policy in higher education. The system allows students to drop their course and resume it at a later stage as and when they desire or deem it worth pursuing. This arrangement will prove to be a boon for those students who cannot continue their studies due to financial, social or any other reason and desire to resume their studies when the conditions become favourable in due course of time. This kind of flexibility gives students adequate options in planning their careers, taking care of life events that may require them to discontinue their studies temporarily at any juncture. Though Educational institutions are likely to face a lot of glitches while implementing the MEES. MEES would not ensure entry according to the will of the students, but on the conditions of the institutions. One of the main problems would be determining the number of students to be admitted each year. will disturb the required teacher-pupil ratio and other infrastructural facilities available in the institution. Another concern that is bothering everybody is that a large population of the students who will leave the courses in between may not return back due to some trivial reasons. As a coin has two sides the MEES of NEP, 2020 has also both the advantages and disadvantages. It depends upon the vision how we look upon it. Implementation of each aspect of the policy in a proper way is necessary. Some changes in curriculum may be needed. Understanding the pros and cons of the multiple entry and exit system will provide a better perspective for the administrators to bring desirable changes into the institution and system. This paper brings to light both the aspects of MEES.

**Keywords:** Nep 2020, Multiple Entry, Multiple Exit, Academic Bank Of Credits, Benefits, Concerns**Introduction**

As we know, education is a thing that can make people attain the highest peak in their career. Education is a basic fundamental for achieving success and all human potential, the formation of a just society, and maximising national development. Quality education is a key to make a mark of the nation at the global stage. After Independence government made many changes in the education system and for these many policies were made and from this one is National Education Policy, 2020 which is made in the 21st century.

Quality innovation, education and research in every field will be the poles or bases on which India will become a '**Global Knowledge Super Power**'. So, for this achievement, a new policy on education is needed. **After the 34 years, on Wednesday, 29 July 2020**, Union Cabinet has approved National Education Policy. The NEP 2020 was announced by the Ministry of Education for the purpose that it will provide quality education to our nation. Previous National Policy on Education, 1986 was replaced by this new one. The main motives and aim of this policy are to provide quality education and maximum development of learners. All the major critical points have been addressed in this Policy which is called as **New National Education Policy, 2020**.

There are various things that this policy achieves and that is promised to the nation including providing of digital and technological education tools for differently-abled students, equitable and inclusive education online and digital education: ensuring equitable use of technology, re-imagining vocational education, renovation of course structure, etc. the focus of this policy is on education so it will bring long-overdue positive changes in society. As this policy was approved, every institution will adopt all the provisions and new policies which were provided by the central government for the welfare of the student. Under this policy, students will decide and choose their subject and course themselves. It provides freedom for students that they deserve.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers students the flexibility to leave a course after completing a year or two and get the corresponding certification. For instance, if a student leaves a course of four-year duration after one year they will get a certificate, for finishing it in two, they will get a diploma. While many academicians have welcomed the decision, some are not in agreement with it.

### **What MEES is all about?**

Multiple Entry and Exit System (MEES) is the corner stone of the new National Education Policy in higher education. The system allows students to drop their course and resume it at a later stage as and when they desire or deem it worth pursuing. As per the draft of the NEP 2020 the undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration with multiple entry and exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications — a certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, a diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year programme may also lead to a degree 'with Research' if the student completes a rigorous research project in the major area(s) of study as specified by the higher education institution.

For the Master's programmes, the HEI will have the flexibility to offer different designs: A two-year programme with the second year devoted entirely to research for those who have completed the three-year Bachelor's programme; A one-year Master's programme for students who are completing a four-year Bachelor's programme with Research; and An integrated five-year Bachelor's/Master's programme with an option to exit at the end of the third year with a Bachelor's degree, with an entry to a Master's programme in another HEI.

### **OBJECTIVES OF MEES**

The guidelines of the proposed multiple entry and exit option will serve the following objectives:

- Remove rigid boundaries and facilitate new possibilities for learners.
- Curtail the dropout rate and improve GER Offer creative combinations of disciplines of study that would enable multiple entry and exit points.
- Offer flexibility in curriculum and novel course options to students in addition to discipline specific specializations.
- Offer different designs of the Master's programme.
- Enable credit accumulation and transfer along with provision of evaluation and validation of non-formal and informal learning for the award of a degree and encourage lifelong learning; and
- Facilitate encashing credits earned when the learner resumes his/her programmes of study

### **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)**

The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), a national-level facility will promote the flexibility of the curriculum framework and interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary academic mobility of students across the HEIs in the country with appropriate "credit transfer" mechanism. It shall be a mechanism to facilitate the students to

choose their own learning path to attain a Degree/ Diploma/Certificate, working on the principle of multiple entry and exit as well as anytime, anywhere, and any level of learning. ABC shall enable the integration of multiple disciplines of higher learning leading to the desired learning outcomes including increased creativity, innovation, higher order thinking skills and critical analysis. ABC shall provide significant autonomy to the students by providing an extensive choice of courses for a programme of study, flexibility in curriculum, novel and engaging course options across a number of higher education disciplines/ institutions. The multiple entry and exit options for students is facilitated at the undergraduate and Master's levels. It would facilitate credit accumulation through the facility created by the ABC scheme in the "Academic Bank Account" opened for students across the country to transfer and consolidate the credits earned by them by undergoing courses in any of the eligible HEIs. The ABC allows for credit redemption through the process of commuting the accrued credits in the Academic Bank Account maintained in the ABC for the purpose of fulfilling the credits requirements for the award of certificate/diploma/degree by the authorized HEIs. Upon collecting a certificate, diploma or degree, all the credits earned till then, in respect of that certificate, diploma or degree, shall stand debited and deleted from the account concerned. HEIs offering programmes with the multiple entry and exit system need to register in the ABC to enable acceptance of multidisciplinary courses, credit transfer, and credit acceptance.

### **Benefits Of Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit System**

This is a kind of stress-buster move. It is likely to reduce the pressure of pursuing a course with an opportunity of zero year loss in the academic journey. The move is likely to become a big boon for the students as they do not need to fear about losing a year or two if they have been studying one course for two years already when they plan to move into a different one. A large number of undergraduates quit the course after one or two year with zero benefit after paying huge fee and spending their valuable time. Awarding certificate or diploma after completing 1 or 2 years will have some worth in the long run. Students will have the greater flexibility and liberty to join a course or leave a course as they like, and they shall be also provided the opportunities to change the courses if they want to learn about a different sector as per their future career needs. Increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio at higher education is one of the objectives of NEP 2020. This move will reduce the drop-out rates of students especially for those who want to switch courses and desire to re-enter as and when they deem fit to resume their studies to earn full fledged college degree. The credits that the students obtain in their first and second year will be stored using the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) system. So, at any point of time, if students want to take a break and continue their course within a fixed period, they can utilise these credits for further education. The system will allow students to take a sabbatical and then join back their studies without losing any credits. The move will allow students to build their own degrees. Students shall be granted more autonomy than before to decide what kind of major and minor courses they want to pursue.

This is likely to revolutionise higher education system in India as only interested students will complete the degree through multiple entry and exit point system. Those who are not interested to pursue the course shall have no compulsion to complete the same by all means. This path breaking move will make our higher education system more like the global format with continuous reforms in this direction. In the light of above stated facts, multiple entry and exit system seems to be a very positive change. However, a more in-depth analysis of the concept raises few practical hitches as well. Hence, following concerns need to be addressed for the effective implementation of Multiple Entry and Exit System (MEES)

## Concerns About Mees

Students can exit after one year with a certificate, after two years with a diploma and a Bachelor's degree after three years and Bachelor's with research after 4 years. Curriculum construction is a big challenge in implementing this system. What type of proficiency will be attained by a student after one or two year of a degree course? Thus, curriculum needs to be reworked in order to incorporate the specialised competencies, knowledge and skills required in a particular subject area. In the absence of proper guidance, confusions and doubts can arise in the minds of the students leading to a state of chaos. Student support services need to be encouraged and developed at different levels for students who are more likely to drop out due to personal, social, emotional, cultural, economic or any other reason. What type of opportunities will be available for the certificate and diploma holders in different sectors at the same time when degree holders are finding it hard to get jobs? Students may face difficulty to find employment on the basis of an early certificate or diploma unless it is technically specialised. Shall we be able to develop a pool of efficient entrepreneurs by awarding certificate and diploma after completing 1 or 2 years of a course through multiple entry and exit points? There is an apprehension of treating early exit certificates as a stamp of failure in the world of work.

Educational institutions are required to develop a hassle free mechanism of admissions while implementing this system. The situation is likely to become critical, suppose when the total intake of a degree course is fixed in a particular institution. How to tackle the situation when under this system suppose 15 students decide to exit in the second semester and about 25 students who left years ago are in queue for entry? Obviously, it will disturb the required teacher-pupil ratio and other infrastructural facilities available in the institution. Another concern that is bothering everybody is that a large population of the students who will leave the courses in between may not return back due to some trivial reasons. It is to be ensured that a large section of the students may not get deprived of higher education in the absence of strong motivation and proper guidance. The execution of this system in its true spirit needs to develop an impeccable mechanism of fees at the time of admission under multiple entry option. It is to be ensured that the system may not become a golden opportunity for private or other institutions to charge exorbitant fees from students who seek entry back to resume their studies. In short, Multiple Entry and Exit System (MEES) can be considered a major reform aimed at making the higher education system more student-friendly and equitable. The strategic execution of this path breaking move will provide seamless mobility to learners ensuring their zero-year loss with the opportunity of learning from anywhere, anytime.

Educational institutions are likely to face a lot of glitches while implementing the MEES. One of the main problems would be determining the number of students to be admitted each year. For example, suppose the total intake of a degree programme is 30 students per year for a college. If, by the second semester, 10 students exit and about 20 students who dropped out years ago are in queue for entry at the same time, it will upset the teacher-pupil ratio and infrastructural facilities available. What is likely to happen, naturally, is restrictions being imposed on the number of students likely to resume their studies each year. So, MEES would not ensure entry according to the will of the students, but on the conditions of the institutions. At the same time, multiple entry admission in government colleges and universities can be given only by following reservation policy. Private institutions, on the other hand, would deem this a good opportunity to charge exorbitant fees from those students who seek entry back to resume their studies. There are some dangers lurking in the glorification of the economically self-reliant studenthood. Education is a social responsibility. That is why governments undertake the responsibility of providing free and compulsory education to all. The 1990 declaration of the Jomtien Conference on 'Education for All' was warmly welcomed and sought to be implemented by the nations of the world, including India, with the conviction that education is a social responsibility.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen reminds us that money spent by governments on education is not an expenditure, but an investment. MEES may appear to be a student-friendly policy, but it implies that education is a private responsibility. While no child in a financially secure home will drop out of college due to the want of money, MEES, if implemented, will result in a distorted educational experience for financially disadvantaged students. At present, there are many schemes like scholarships in place to help students with higher education

## Conclusion

The NEP 2020 with flexibility and multiple exit-options, including a one-year master's programme and focus on digital education, will hold us in good stead in the times to come and positively impact future students. Even on exit without completing the full duration of the programme, students will have the option to re-enter the programme from where they had left off, at the same or in a different institution. This is a big boon for students and they don't need to think about losing a year or two if they have been studying one course for two years already when they plan to move into a different one. It will also allow students to study while they work in between and decide on-the-go what skills or topics they need to learn about. This kind of flexibility gives students adequate options in planning their careers, taking care of life events that may require them to discontinue their studies temporarily at any juncture. The plan for an academic credit bank which could collect credits in such cases goes hand-in-hand with this move.

Employment is a big issue in India and many students are forced to leave their dreams of higher education in order to get a job immediately after school and provide for the family. This problem eases out to a certain extent with the multiple entry-exit option in undergraduate courses.

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