



Original Article

## Exploring New Dimensions in Commerce Education in India

Dr. Vidya M. Jirage

Associate Professor of Commerce, Government First Grade College, Khanapur

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Correspondence Address:  
Dr. Vidya M. Jirage  
Associate Professor of  
Commerce,  
Government First Grade  
College, Khanapur  
Email-  
[vidyajirage@gmail.com](mailto:vidyajirage@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Commerce education in India, traditionally centered around core disciplines like accounting, finance, business law, and economics, is undergoing a rapid transformation. Driven by globalization, digitalization, evolving business models, and shifting labour market demands, new dimensions are being added to commerce curricula ranging from technology integration, data analytics, and e-commerce to interdisciplinary programmes, vocational training, and entrepreneurship education. This article explores the historical trajectory of commerce education in India, identifies the emerging dimensions reshaping its landscape, analyses the implications for students, institutions, and industry, and argues for a dynamic, skill-centric, and future-ready commerce education system.

**Keywords-** Commerce education, India, digitalization, e-commerce, interdisciplinary learning, vocational courses, entrepreneurship, data analytics, industry-academia collaboration

### Introduction

Commerce education in India has a long and storied history. From the establishment of some of India's first commerce classes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, commerce has remained one of the most sought-after streams among students after secondary school. For decades, the Bachelor of Commerce (B. Com) and associated postgraduate courses have served as traditional gateways to careers in banking, accounting, auditing, finance, taxation, and business administration — roles essential for an expanding corporate and public-sector economy.

Yet, the world of business itself is changing rapidly and profoundly. Globalization, liberalization, advances in information technology, and the rise of digital financing and e-commerce have transformed how business is conducted. In parallel, the labour market is evolving: employers increasingly demand professionals with technological fluency, data-driven decision-making capabilities, soft skills, and entrepreneurial mindsets. The traditional commerce curriculum often criticised for being theoretical and narrow risks becoming obsolete in this changing global and domestic business environment.

Recognizing these shifts, educational institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders in India have begun reimagining commerce education. New pedagogical paradigms, flexible curriculum frameworks, and industry-aligned courses are emerging, aimed at producing graduates who are not just academically qualified, but practically competent, adaptable, and future-ready. This article examines these new dimensions in commerce education in India. It surveys the drivers of change, describes the new trends reshaping curricula, pedagogy, and learning outcomes, and reflects on the opportunities and challenges inherent in this transformation.

### New Dimensions in Commerce Education in India

Below we discuss the major new dimensions structural, curricular, pedagogical, and strategic that are redefining commerce education in contemporary India.

### Integration of Technology & Digital Tools

One of the most striking transformations in recent years is the incorporation of technology, digital tools, and data-driven approaches into commerce education. As commerce disciplines themselves increasingly intertwine with technology, business education must follow suit.

- **Digital Tools & Practical Software Training:** Modern commerce courses are beginning to teach students tools and software widely used in industry for example,

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spreadsheet software (e.g. Microsoft Excel), accounting packages (like QuickBooks or SAP), data-visualization tools (Tableau, Power BI), and business intelligence platforms. These tools help students analyse real-time financial data, generate reports, and interpret market trends equipping them with practical, employable skills rather than purely theoretical knowledge.

- **E-commerce, FinTech, and Online Business Models:** The rise of e-commerce, digital payments, FinTech platforms, and online marketplaces has altered the very nature of commerce and trade. Commerce education is adapting adding modules on e-commerce business models, digital marketing, supply-chain logistics for e-commerce, online retail management, and digital financial services. This equips graduates to navigate and contribute to a rapidly growing digital economy, rather than being limited to traditional brick-and-mortar commerce.
- **Data Analytics, Business Intelligence & Decision-Making:** With businesses increasingly relying on data for decision-making in finance, marketing, supply chain, customer relations commerce programs are integrating data analytics, business intelligence, and quantitative methods into their curricula. Students learn to interpret large datasets, understand consumer behaviour, forecast trends, and support strategic business decisions. This marks a shift from rote accounting or bookkeeping to data-driven business analysis.
- **Online Learning, Digital Platforms and MOOCs:** Another dimension is the increased acceptance and use of online education platforms, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and digital or hybrid teaching models. The emergence of institutions like National Digital University (NDU) under the framework of national education policy aims to broaden access and flexibility in higher education. Moreover, MOOCs and digital repositories often offered via government-backed initiatives provide opportunities for lifelong learning, upskilling, and credit transfer, especially beneficial for working professionals, non-traditional students, or those in remote regions. Thus, technology integration in commerce education is more than an accessory it is increasingly central, helping bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world business needs.

#### Interdisciplinary & Holistic Curriculum

Traditional commerce education often confined itself to core subjects: accounting, finance, business law, economics, taxation, etc. The new generation of commerce programmes, however, is embracing interdisciplinarity and holistic learning.

- **Cross-disciplinary Courses:** Recognising that modern business problems are rarely confined to a single domain, institutions are offering cross-disciplinary courses that combine commerce with economics, data science, management, law, business analytics, and even social sciences. For instance, a commerce student might also take courses in supply chain management, digital

marketing, business law, data analytics, or sustainability. This gives a broader perspective, making graduates more versatile. supply-chain logistics, and more into traditional degree programmes. This vocational orientation ensures that students are not just academically trained, but job-ready, often with industry-relevant skills.

- **Soft Skills, Communication and Business Etiquette:** As businesses globalize and workplaces become more collaborative and virtual, soft skills communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability are becoming as important as technical knowledge. New curricula recognise this: instituting group projects, live case studies, internships, presentations, and experiential learning to develop these non-technical competencies.
- **Global Perspectives and International Business:** With globalization making markets more interlinked, commerce education is also expanding to cover international business, global trade, cross-border taxation, global supply chain, and international financial regulations. Such global orientation prepares students to operate in multinational firms and respond to cross-cultural business challenges.
- By adopting interdisciplinary and holistic approaches, commerce education becomes more relevant to the complex, multifaceted demands of the contemporary business world.

#### Emphasis on Experiential Learning, Industry-Academia Collaboration & Employability

- One of the persistent criticisms of traditional commerce education is its theoretical orientation, often detached from the realities of business operations. The new paradigm seeks to bridge that divide by embedding experiential learning, industry collaboration, and real-world exposure into education.
- **Internships, Live Projects, Industry Tie-ups:** Many institutions are building tie-ups with industries inviting practitioners for guest lectures, offering internships, live projects, cooperative programmes with companies enabling students to gain hands-on experience, understand workplace dynamics, and apply theoretical concepts to real business scenarios.
- **Vocational & Skill-Oriented Modules:** As noted earlier, vocational courses integrated into commerce programmes (retail management, e-commerce, supply chain logistics, digital marketing) make graduates job-ready and industry-relevant. In some cases, distance education or open learning platforms make these available to working professionals, thus widening access.
- **Flexibility and Stackable Credentials:** New education models emphasise flexibility — using credit-based systems, allowing credit transfer, and offering stackable credentials. This helps students tailor their studies to their interests and career goals, switch specializations, or combine multiple skill-sets over time.
- **Bridging Academia and Industry via Policy & Governance:** The push from national policy



frameworks like National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) underscores the need for integrating vocational education, collaborating with industries, and adapting curricula to evolving employability demands.

- These shifts enhance employability, align educational outcomes with labour market needs, and reduce the gap between academic learning and industry requirements.

#### **Rise of Entrepreneurship, Start-up Mindset & Self-Employment Orientation**

The traditional commerce route employment in banking, accounting firms, corporate finance is still relevant. But with India's growing start-up ecosystem and shifting employment patterns, commerce education is increasingly emphasizing entrepreneurship, self-employment, and small-business management.

- Many institutions are introducing modules on entrepreneurship, start-up planning, business management, venture finance, and lean business models. Students are encouraged to think of commerce education not just as a path to employment, but as an enabler to create their own ventures.
- Vocational and flexible education models including part-time programmes, open/distance learning options, and modular credits make it feasible for working professionals, self-employed individuals, or aspiring entrepreneurs to reskill or upskill.
- The broader business environment with rising digital commerce, e-payments, startup support, and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) growth further incentivizes entrepreneurship among commerce graduates. Additionally, exposure to business analytics, data-driven decision making, and digital business models prepares them better to launch and manage modern enterprises.

This orientation reshapes commerce education from being a mere feeder to corporate roles to becoming a platform for building future business leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators.

#### **Emphasis on Lifelong Learning, Flexibility, and Digital/Distance Education**

In an age where business cycles, technology, and skill demand evolve rapidly, the traditional notion of a "once-for-life" degree is becoming less relevant. Commerce education is adapting by embracing lifelong learning, flexibility, and digital/distance modalities.

- With the launching of digital institutions like National Digital University, students now have more flexibility to learn remotely, mix courses, and even combine degrees with work or other commitments.
- MOOCs, online courses, and open learning platforms are gaining traction. Such platforms provide upskilling opportunities, micro-certifications, and flexible learning pathways to students, working professionals, and lifelong learners.
- The introduction of credit-based systems and modular courses, as envisioned under NEP 2020, allows students to build custom learning trajectories: combine commerce with data science today, maybe marketing

tomorrow, or take a vocational short-term course alongside a degree.

This flexibility makes commerce education more inclusive, accessible, and adaptive to individual needs essential in a fast-changing economic environment.

#### **Globalization, Internationalization, and Global Business Orientation**

As Indian businesses increasingly operate globally, and Indian commerce students aspire for international careers, commerce education is opening to global perspectives.

- Courses cover international business, global supply chain management, cross-border trade laws and regulations, international finance, global economics, and foreign exchange management preparing students for global commerce and multinational firms.
- Interdisciplinary combinations (commerce + data science, commerce + law, commerce + international business) produce globally competitive graduates with a broad outlook.
- Exposure to global business models, e-commerce, multi-national operations, and cross-border financial systems helps students adapt to international standards, making them suitable not only for Indian industry but also for global employers and opportunities.

#### **Quality Assurance, Curriculum Reform & Policy Push**

Shifting the structure of commerce education requires systemic reforms in curriculum design, credit systems, institutional frameworks, and national policy. India has witnessed several such efforts in recent years.

- The introduction of the choice-based credit system (CBCS), Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), and vocational integration aims to make higher education more flexible, student-centric, and modular.
- Policy frameworks under NEP 2020 encourage vocational education, industry-academia collaboration, and the use of digital technologies in teaching.
- Given the rapid expansion of higher education institutions in India with tens of thousands of colleges and hundreds of universities there is immense potential for scaling these reforms.
- At the same time, quality assurance mechanisms, accreditation standards, and periodic curriculum revision become crucial to ensure that new courses remain relevant, rigorous, and aligned with industry needs.

These structural reforms ensure that the shift in commerce education is not ad-hoc, but systematic, sustainable, and geared toward long-term relevance.

#### **Implications of These New Dimensions**

The evolving landscape of commerce education in India with its multiple new dimensions has significant implications for various stakeholders: students, educational institutions, industry, and broader society.

#### **For Students**

- **Greater Employability:** Students graduating from modern, technology-integrated, interdisciplinary commerce programmes are better equipped for the



contemporary job market not only in traditional roles (accounting, auditing, banking), but also in data analytics, e-commerce, supply chain, digital marketing, and business analysis.

- **Entrepreneurial Opportunities:** With exposure to entrepreneurship education, vocational courses, and flexible learning pathways, students have more choices: corporate jobs, self-employment, freelancing, start-ups, or even hybrid careers combining multiple streams.
- **Flexibility & Lifelong Learning:** Modular courses, online/distance learning, MOOCs, and credit-based systems enable students to learn at their own pace, reskill, or upskill crucial in a rapidly changing job environment.
- **Global Readiness:** A curriculum with global business focus, international trade, and cross-border finance prepares them for international careers, multinational firms, or global entrepreneurship.
- **For Educational Institutions**
- **Curriculum Relevance & Differentiation:** Institutions can differentiate themselves by offering innovative, industry-aligned, interdisciplinary programmes making them more attractive to students and employers.
- **Industry Collaboration & Partnerships:** Tie-ups with industry for internships, live projects, guest lectures enhance institutional relevance and improve placement outcomes.
- **Scalability & Flexibility:** Through digital/distance education and modular courses, institutions can expand reach beyond traditional classrooms accommodating working students, remote learners, or those seeking continuous education.
- **Need for Faculty Development & Resource Upgradation:** To deliver technologically and industry-relevant content, institutions must invest in faculty training, software tools, infrastructure, and partnerships shifting from traditional teaching towards more dynamic pedagogy.

#### For Industry & Economy

- **Skilled Workforce for Emerging Needs:** As businesses evolve embracing data analytics, e-commerce, supply-chain optimization, digital finance there will be a growing demand for professionals trained in these modern commerce disciplines. Education that integrates these skills helps fill that demand.
- **Entrepreneurship & MSME Growth:** A commerce education system oriented toward entrepreneurship, digital business, and self-employment can fuel growth in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), startups, and contribute to economic dynamism.
- **Adaptability & Innovation:** Graduates with interdisciplinary, data-driven, and globally oriented training are likely to become innovators capable of adapting business models, embracing technology, and leading in a rapidly changing global marketplace.
- **For Society & Policy Makers**

- **Inclusive Access & Lifelong Learning:** Flexible, modular, online/distance commerce education democratizes access, enabling learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, geographies, and life stages to participate.
- **Alignment with National Goals:** Commerce education that emphasizes vocational training, employability, entrepreneurship, and skill development aligns with national priorities for economic growth, employment generation, and global competitiveness.
- **Quality and Standardization Needs:** As the commerce education landscape diversifies, there's an increased need for regulatory frameworks, accreditation, curriculum standardization, periodic review, and quality assurance to maintain educational standards across institutions.

#### Challenges & Considerations

While the new dimensions offer immense promise, they also bring challenges. Some of these include:

1. **Resource Constraints** Many institutions, especially in rural areas or underfunded colleges, may lack infrastructure, trained faculty, or industry linkages needed to deliver modern, technology-rich commerce education.
2. **Quality Assurance & Uniform Standards** With so many institutions and varied curricula, ensuring consistent quality across the board becomes difficult. There's a risk of fragmentation.
3. **Faculty Training & Mindset Shift** Teaching commerce with integrated technology, data analytics, digital business models require faculty to adopt new pedagogical skills, which may need time, training, and incentives.
4. **Bridging Academia-Industry Gap** While many courses claim industry alignment, actual partnerships internships, live projects, mentoring may still be limited or superficial in many cases.
5. **Accessibility & Digital Divide** Digital/distance education presumes certain levels of internet access, digital literacy, and device availability which might exclude students from disadvantaged backgrounds or remote regions.
6. **Keeping Curricula Up-to-date** With rapid changes in technology, business trends, regulations (e.g. in fintech, e-commerce, global trade), curricula need periodic revision demanding institutional agility which many may find hard.

#### Conclusion

Commerce education in India stands at a pivotal juncture. Traditional paradigms centred around accounting, finance, and theoretical business studies are giving way to an expansive, dynamic, and multifaceted system. The integration of technology, data analytics, digital business models, interdisciplinary learning, vocational training, entrepreneurship orientation, and flexible education pathways heralds a new era for commerce education.

This transformation is not merely cosmetic. It aligns education with evolving business realities, labour market demands, and national economic aspirations. For





students the primary beneficiaries it offers broader career choices, enhanced employability, and opportunities for entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. For institutions it offers a chance to remain relevant, innovate, and contribute meaningfully. For the nation it promises a workforce equipped for global competitiveness, innovation, and sustainable growth.

However, realizing this potential requires concerted effort. Infrastructure, policy support, quality assurance, faculty development, and bridging digital divides are critical. Without them, there is a risk of uneven development, quality gaps, or exclusion.

Therefore, stakeholders from government and regulators to educational institutions, industry, and civil society must collaborate to ensure that commerce education evolves in a structured, inclusive, and sustainable manner. Only then can commerce education in India truly embrace its new dimensions and contribute to shaping the business leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals of tomorrow.

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