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Webinar on

Career Pathways in Commerce

Date: 29th November 2025, Saturday

Organised By

Directorate of Higher Secondary Education (DHSE), Bhubaneswar

In Collaboration with

UNICEF Odisha

Technical Partner

IDENTITY FOUNDATION

About the Partnership:

The **Directorate of Higher Secondary Education (DHSE)**, under the School & Mass Education Department of the Government of Odisha, in collaboration with UNICEF Odisha and the Identity Foundation Trust, conducts specialised webinars for higher secondary school students. These sessions are designed to equip students of Grades 11 and 12 with essential life skills, psychological resilience, and emotional competencies required for academic success, career advancement, and overall well-being. The initiative focuses on developing students' capacity to understand themselves, manage their emotions effectively, and build meaningful relationships.

About the Webinar Series

The **Directorate of Higher Secondary Education (DHSE), Government of Odisha**, successfully organised the tenth (10th) session of the webinar series. The webinar focused on the topic "**Career Pathways in Commerce"**—a strategic pivot from prior sessions to illuminate dynamic opportunities beyond traditional Science streams. This session underscored that Commerce opens versatile gateways to finance, business management, entrepreneurship, chartered accountancy, economics, and corporate leadership, empowering students to pursue high-impact careers aligned with Odisha's economic growth.

Students from Classes 11 and 12, alongside faculty from schools across Odisha, participated with remarkable enthusiasm. They recognised that mastering these commerce pathways builds essential resilience, directly enhancing academic performance, peer-teacher relationships, and long-term professional prospects.

<table>
<tr><td>No. of higher-secondary schools / colleges attended the webinar session</td><td colspan="3">91</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of Class XI Boys students who attended the webinar session</td><td>1,515</td><td rowspan="2">4,085</td><td rowspan="4">7,865</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of Class XI Girls students who attended the webinar session</td><td>2,570</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of Class XII Boys students who attended the webinar session</td><td>1,348</td><td rowspan="2">3,780</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of Class XII Girls students who attended the webinar session</td><td>2,432</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of male faculties who attended the webinar session</td><td>283</td><td rowspan="2" colspan="2">536</td></tr>
<tr><td>No. of female faculties who attended the webinar session</td><td>253</td></tr>
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About the Resource Person:

Mr. Satyananda Routray is a distinguished professional holding prestigious qualifications as a Chartered Accountant (CA), Company Secretary (CS), and Bachelor of Laws (LLB) holder. With extensive expertise in GST and income tax, he previously served as Chairman of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) Cuttack Branch. His multidisciplinary background and practical acumen uniquely position him to navigate students through the intricate terrain of Commerce careers, from finance and business management to entrepreneurship and corporate leadership. Mr. Routray masterfully blends theoretical foundations with real-world strategies, empowering students not only to identify viable pathways but also to strategically prepare for and excel in them.

Welcome Note from the Moderator:

Mr. Jasobant Narayan Singhlal, Founder and Director of Identity Foundation Trust, moderated Session 10 of the Career Webinar Series by warmly welcoming students and faculty members from various institutions. He encouraged students to actively engage in the session by attentively listening to the resource person and thoughtfully absorbing the shared insights. Mr. Singhlal emphasised the importance of such sessions that help students make informed career decisions by understanding career pathways available for commerce graduates. The moderator also highlighted that gaining clarity about career paths requires curiosity and active participation. To that end, he urged students to not hesitate in asking questions during the session, as open dialogue is a key part of meaningful learning. His words set a positive tone for the session, aiming to inspire students to take charge of their future career choices.

The Core Problem: Why this session Matter:

Describing the need and importance of the session, Mr. Singhlal shared that students merely face critical challenges by selecting the streams without understanding their own fitment into the selected subject line. There's a significant gap, Mr. Singhal emphasised. "Students remain oblivious to their true capabilities and potential. They perceive Science as the sole prestigious pathway, unaware that Commerce offers equally bright, rewarding career prospects."

The webinar aimed to dispel the misconception that Commerce is a second-choice stream. Mr. Routray clearly showed that Commerce actually offers excellent opportunities in finance, business management, entrepreneurship, and many other fields.

Why Commerce? The Foundation:

Mr. Routray began by sharing a personal story. Like many students, when he finished class 10, he was also attracted to science. "Science is one path," he explained. "When a child chooses Commerce, it feels like doors are closing. But that's not the reality."

Commerce graduates with foundational knowledge never remain unemployed.

Here's why. Commerce graduates with foundational skills like Tally entries and basic accounting & bookkeeping knowledge are getting decent employment on the market. Similarly, the commerce graduates with developed knowledge and skills such as artificial intelligence, GST, and advanced Excel are not only cracking the job demands in the market but also grabbing high-paying jobs.

The GST Revolution changed everything. When the Goods and Services Tax was introduced in July 2017, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that a chartered accountant's signature would be "as powerful as my signature," the perception of accounting professions shifted. Suddenly, people became aware that these weren't just technical, boring jobs—they were positions of real authority and responsibility.

"Even many toppers are now turning towards Commerce," Mr. Routray pointed out. "The trend has changed. Commerce no longer means settling for less. It means choosing a path with genuine opportunities."

Understanding Your Fit: Do You Actually Belong in Commerce?

One of the most relevant questions raised by students was, “*My mathematics is not very strong. Should I take Commerce?*”

Responding to this, Mr Routray clearly explained that Commerce does require comfort with numbers, but this should be considered as a direction, not a strict barrier. If a student completely dislikes numbers, Commerce may not be the right fit. However, if they have some interest in Maths, even if it is not their strongest subject, they can still do well in Commerce with effort and support.

He further highlighted that many successful commerce professionals and chartered accountants were not outstanding in mathematics during school or graduation. What helped them succeed was curiosity, consistent hard work, and genuine interest in the field. The key deciding factor, he emphasised, is a student’s core strengths and whether they enjoy the type of work involved in commerce.

During the session, Mr Routray imparted a powerful guiding idea: one should choose a career in the same manner as choosing a life partner. Your career will last most of your life, so it should be something you love and can do for hours without noticing time passing. To explain this, he referred to the film Taare Zameen Par and emphasised that every child is unique and has a special talent. He gave the examples of Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli, noting that they became successful because they followed their passion for cricket. If they had been forced into careers like chartered accountancy, they would likely not have achieved such success, simply because it was not aligned with their interests.

He encouraged students not to limit their thinking to questions like, “Am I good at Maths?” Instead, he urged them to ask deeper questions: “What makes me happy?”, “What kind of work do I enjoy?”, and “In which areas do people encourage me to keep trying?”

Mr Routray concluded that if students in Class 11 or 12 can start identifying their core strengths and interests now, they are already ahead of many others. This is the right stage to reflect seriously on one’s abilities and passions and to begin aligning them with future career choices.

Two Paths: Commerce with Math vs. Commerce Without Math

One of the most practical questions the moderator asked was about the difference between these two pathways. Mr. Routray provided clear guidance:

If you've taken Commerce with Math, you've signalled that you have interest in numerical work. This opens these doors:

- Chartered Accountancy (CA)
- Cost Accountancy (CMA, formerly Cost and Works Accountant)
- Actuarial Science
- Certified Financial Analyst (CFA)
- Certified Public Accountant (CPA)

If you've taken Commerce without maths, it indicates you're less interested in heavy numerical work. But doors are still wide open:

- Master of Business Administration (MBA) – particularly HR specialisation
- Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)
- Business Management Studies (BMS)
- Bachelor of Laws (LLB)
- Company Secretaryship (CS)
- Certified Information System Auditor (CISA)
- Diploma in Information System Audit (DISA)

"The thing is," Mr. Routray emphasised, "there's no barricade. Whether you take maths or not with Commerce, many more courses are open to you. The point is that if you haven't taken maths, you probably have less interest in maths. But you have other doors."

One particularly exciting opportunity he highlighted was the Certified Information System Audit (CISA). This is a worldwide recognised course with minimum starting packages of 20 lakhs or more. It's unique because while Chartered Accountants can do DISA (the Indian equivalent), any graduate can do CISA. The scope within India may be concentrated in metro cities, but the worldwide scope is excellent.

The Big Three: CA, CS, and CMA—What Do They Actually Do?

Here's what Mr. Routray explained about CA, CS, CMA:

Chartered Accountant (CA)

A Chartered Accountant has certain exclusive domains where only they can sign:

- Tax Audit (Income Tax Audit under Section 44AB)
- Statutory Audit (auditing company accounts)
- Various Certifications that only CAs are authorized to provide

When you look at any company's annual report, you'll see a CA's signature at the bottom. That signature has legal authority. No one else can sign there.

If a CA does independent practice, they audit company accounts, provide consultancy, and increasingly, they practice in GST—which has become a massive area. When Cost Accountants (CAs) transition into a job, they typically take on roles such as Account Heads, CFOs, or team leads, where they manage the accounts department, analyse losses and profits, and make recommendations to upper management.

Cost Accountant (CMA)

Cost Accountants have their own exclusive domains:

- Cost Records and Cost Certificates only they can issue
- Cost Audit only they can perform
- Other certifications in their specialized area

If they do independent practice, they focus on cost auditing and consultancy. If they go into a job, they're particularly valued in Public Sector Units (PSUs) and Public Sector Banks. Organisations such as NTPC, Oil India, Indian Oil, and Coal India employ Cost Accountants in top positions. Their work is similar to CAs', but with emphasis on cost management, cost effectiveness, and how costs can be reduced through techniques like time study and motion study.

Company Secretary (CS)

Company Secretaries ensure that all company activities comply with regulations. They have exclusive authority to:

- Issue Compliance Certificates that no one else can issue
- Maintain company governance and legal compliance

For companies above a certain turnover and paid-up capital, it's mandatory to keep a full-time Company Secretary—no CA or CMA can fill that role.

If they do independent practice, they manage compliance issues, director changes, share allotments, company mergers and acquisitions, company name changes, new company incorporations, and all related documentation. If they go into a job, they attend board meetings, prepare minutes, handle AGMs and EGMs, and ensure everything remains compliant.

The "One Stop Shop" Concept

Modern accounting practice is evolving towards a "one-stop shop" model where professionals provide comprehensive services. A CA firm, while specialising in their field, increasingly offers cost accounting and company secretarial services as well. This broadens the scope and value of professional practice.

Overcoming the CA Hurdle: One Question at a Time

Students raised a key concern about pursuing Chartered Accountancy (CA): the multi-stage entrance process and low success rates. One student asked, "The CA programme has Foundation, Intermediate, and Final exams. Many clear the Intermediate but fail the Final due to low pass rates. Should I do graduation alongside CA for safety or commit fully without a backup? What if I get stuck at Intermediate?"

Mr Routray responded with clear, practical advice. He shared positive news: the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) now permits students to pursue CA alongside graduation. He likened the move to "playing international cricket after domestic matches"—a smart progression. "If you study CA with graduation," he explained, "you'll skip overlapping basics from your degree and score well overall. But success demands full commitment. Treat it seriously, not as a side activity."

Addressing the fear of failure, he noted ICAI's solution: those who complete Intermediate but don't reach Final now receive a Professional Degree certification. This certification helps in getting decent jobs in the market, and however it is not full CA status but a valuable effort. You gain real skills and employability."

On timing, Mr Routray stated that starting early reduces risks. If you find that CA is not a good fit after trying, consider pivoting sooner. "Yesterday was ideal to begin," he urged. "Today is the next best time."

He emphasised determination over perfection. CA's rigour weeds out the uncommitted, but structured preparation—regular study, mock exams, and coaching—boosts chances. Graduation serves as a safeguard, enhancing CA knowledge and preventing the "all-or-nothing" mindset. Many successful CAs faced setbacks but persisted through resilience.

This guidance empowered students, turning anxiety into actionable steps. It highlighted CA as demanding yet achievable with strategy, not just talent. By blending academics with professional pursuits, students can test their fit early, secure credentials even if not completing all levels, and enter the job market stronger. Mr Routray's insights demystified the path, reinforcing that informed starts lead to better outcomes than endless hesitation.

The key is to start, measure yourself, and adjust if needed. Don't let uncertainty paralyse you.

A Crucial Warning: Trading is Not a Profession

The moderator's insights reveal a growing interest in stock market trading among students, especially those with scores between 60% and 70%. There are instances where students have lost their parents' hard-earned money in trading, believing it was a sustainable career option. Upon which, Mr. Routray (RP) responded that "Trading isn't a profession."

He explained the harsh reality. Many people trade and lose a lot. Trading can only be something you do with surplus money: money you can afford to lose without personal impact. And it requires extensive research, not just hope.

If a student genuinely wants to work in financial markets, the right path is to become an Equity Research Analyst. You can do this through CFA (Certified Financial Analyst) from an American organisation, or through Indian institutions offering similar courses. The NSE (National Stock Exchange) also offers relevant courses. He also advised not to set a career goal to become a trader; instead, a student must set his/her career goal to become a market analyst.

Actuarial Science: The Mysterious Path

Mr. Routray addressed the enquiries of students who are intrigued by the lesser-known career of an Actuary, seeking to shed light on this enigmatic profession even within the realm of commerce. He asked students to consider how insurance premiums are determined for life, health, motor, or other policies. These are not set arbitrarily but calculated scientifically by Actuaries. These professionals analyse vast data sets to assess risks, factoring in variables like age, health, life expectancy, and disease probabilities. Using advanced statistical methods, they establish fair premiums for health insurance, term plans, hybrid policies, and motor coverage. Actuaries also manage corporate gratuity funds and pension schemes, determining sustainable contribution rates.

To pursue Actuarial Science, strong proficiency in Mathematics and Statistics is essential, beyond what Commerce typically demands. Unlike CA, which suits those with moderate Math interests, Actuarial Science attracts top performers. Mr. Routray noted it is open to both Commerce and Science students. He also shared that many senior Chartered Accountants in Odisha (aged 50+) hail from science backgrounds.

He drew parallels to powerful career combinations: just as IIT + IIM creates exceptional leaders, CA + MBA forms a “dangerous combination”, meaning highly capable and marketable. This insight highlighted Actuarial Science as a high-reward path for analytically gifted students, blending precision with real-world financial impact.

The Myth: "Only Guptas and Agrawals Can Become CAs"

The RP Mr. Routray responded to the moderator's question about the societal belief that only certain communities, such as the Gupta and Agarwal, can become CAs, explaining that these communities are the Marwaris, who have business in their blood. Since commerce is synonymous with business, these communities naturally tend to excel in business.

He stated that commerce is the most practical subject compared to other domains because individuals practice it in their daily lives. Like getting an invoice from a shop, calculating your budget, etc. So there is no caste or community barrier in reality; it’s all about interest and determination.

Mr. Routray (RP) further highlighted that communication skill along with writing, drafting and the ability to prepare financial reports, are the major skills required to become a successful CA. Since you have to work with the corporates, and the corporates prefer English, hence English language proficiency is required. However, it doesn't mean Odia-medium students can't become CAs. They need to develop their English communication, but that's learnable. The real foundation is concept clarity.

Short Certification Courses:

Upon the query of the moderator regarding the substitutional pathways for the commerce students who don’t want to pursue professional courses or an MBA and want to get immediate job placement, the RP, Mr. Routray, responded that there are many short-term courses available for the graduate and undergraduate students that can help students to land in a decent job after their graduation.

Immediate Opportunities After Class 12:

- DICA courses
- Tally courses
- NSIM courses (National Stock Exchange)
- GST Practitioner enrollment

Mr. Routray also explained that Goods and Services Tax (GST) has emerged as a strong career option in the current market. While it may not always be considered highly lucrative at the local level, he highlighted that, as a GST Practitioner, someone can work where skills are valued more than just a formal degree.

The Resource Person also revealed that the most affordable yet challenging professional courses in India are CA, CMA, and CS. The total expenditure over 4–5 years is around ₹50,000–₹70,000. A major advantage is that during the mandatory articleship period, a fixed stipend is provided as per the Institute's norms. In this way, students are able to earn while they are still studying.

For students with strong knowledge, high IQ, and determination but limited financial resources, these courses were described as very suitable, since income can be generated alongside learning.

MBA and LLB: The Alternative Paths

Mr. Routray provided comprehensive insights into promising pathways for students pursuing careers in management and law, emphasising accessible entry points and long-term potential.

He began with undergraduate options, noting that a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) after Class 12 serves as a viable alternative to traditional degrees like B.Com. or B.A. and that many of the subjects in BBA overlap with those in B.Com. However, he cautioned that it may not offer the same breadth of job opportunities as conventional programmes.

Transitioning to postgraduate prospects, Mr. Routray highlighted the Master of Business Administration (MBA) as open to any graduate. Entry into premier institutions requires clearing competitive exams like CAT, with admissions based on rank. "Fees can be substantial, but banks offer loans for eligible candidates," he said. Success at top institutes like IIMs promises exceptional placements and high salaries. He also introduced Integrated MBA programmes—spanning 4-5 years post-Class 12—as an efficient blend of BBA and MBA, saving time for ambitious learners.

Shifting to law, Mr. Routray described LLB as "the most remunerative profession", underscoring its prestige. He vividly illustrated, "Picture a lawyer arguing in the Supreme Court; the nation listens". Top advocates command fees of ₹50-60 lakh per hour, surpassing earnings in medicine or other fields, provided they hone exceptional skills. Accessible to all graduates, LLB enables practice at local courts, High Courts, or the Supreme Court. Odisha boasts strong institutions, including National Law University, Madhusudan Law University, and Utkal Law University, making quality legal education attainable locally.

Career Building After B. Com: What Now?

Mr. Routray offered clear advice to final-year B. Com students that all the courses we've discussed are open to you now. As a graduated student, you have a strong foundation. The key question is: which career path will you choose? That's your decision."

He outlined clear options: "Go for direct jobs; advertise your skills, apply widely, or prepare for bank PO exams and other recruitments. Alternatively, you could pursue professional qualifications such as CA, CS, or CMA, which would build on your B. Com foundation.

Aim for higher studies like an MBA. Alternatively, you could develop practical skills by starting with data entry or basic accounting and then advancing from there.

"All trains reach their destination," Mr. Routray added with a metaphor. "Some are fast express trains; others move slowly. The point is, board one. Whether you start from basics or climb through professional courses, success is achievable with consistent effort."

Addressing the Resource Gap: Rural and Remote Areas

The moderator highlighted a key challenge: "Students in remote areas like Kandhamal, Koraput, and Malkangiri lack access to coaching centres and mentors. How can they become CAs? How can they self-study?"

Mr. Routray responded optimistically yet practically: "Those days are over when we thought, 'We're too remote to study.' Today, the biggest factor is interest. Every student watches YouTube reels. There is no doubt now; you can clear CA through YouTube resources."

The Resources Available Now:

- The Institute: When you register for CA, all course materials are available free—previous year questions, answers, everything on the portal. Lectures are on YouTube.
- Free and Paid Options: Free classes are available on YouTube for most courses. Paid courses are also available at reasonable rates.
- Institute-subsidised Courses: CA Institutes provide courses at subsidised rates for those with financial constraints.
- Distance Education: All major professional courses now offer distance programmes—CA, CMA, and CS—all available online.
- NSE Courses: The National Stock Exchange offers various courses for those interested in market-related careers.
- Mentorship: Organisations like the Identity Foundation's Odisha Career Guidance Initiative provide free career counselling programs where children can interact with professionals.

Practical Steps for Students:

The moderator and Mr. Routray emphasised these practical actions:

Immediate Steps:

1. Identify your core competency: What makes you happy? What do people tell you to keep trying?
2. Download resources: The PPT with syllabus details for CA, CMA, and CS has been shared. Download it.

3. Visit Odisha Career Guidance website: www.odishacareerguidance.com for all details about Commerce courses
4. Ask questions: Use the feedback section on the website. Questions will be answered within 48 hours.

For Those Taking Commerce Now:

- Simultaneously pursue your graduation and a professional course if you're aspiring for CA
- Don't wait to "see" if you like it—start now and adjust if needed
- Remember: B. Com serves as your safety net if your professional course becomes challenging

For Those Completing B.Com:

- Don't just look for jobs passively
- Consider professional courses even after graduation
- Develop specific skills that make you marketable
- Remember: any graduate can pursue most of these courses

Resources and Support are available:

Online Platforms:

- Odisha Career Guidance: odishacareerguidance.com (all Commerce course details available)
- Sikhya Jyoti Portal: All webinar recordings available in the publications section
- YouTube: Odisha Career Guidance channel for all webinar videos
- WhatsApp/Email Support: Course materials and PPTs shared in groups; 48-hour response time for questions

Institutions to Research:

- Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) – for CA
- Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI) – for CMA
- Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) – for CS
- National Stock Exchange (NSE) – for market-related courses
- Various universities for BBA, MBA, LLB programs

The Final Message:

As the session concluded, Mr. Routray left students with this thought: "Don't be tempted by salary packages and quick money promises. Choose what you enjoy. Don't think it's easy. That much dedication, discipline, and passion are required. There's nothing impossible. What's required is interest. If you have interest, you can do everything."

The moderator reiterated, "Don't focus on shortcuts. Define your goals, understand your resources and timeframe, and commit to genuine hard work. Within that commitment and consistency, your entire life will be successful."

And perhaps most powerfully, Mr. Routray's final advice to all students was, "Just like my organisation brought me through mentorship, your role is to access these resources. Search, do research, and reach out. No doubt you have not been cleared through YouTube or the internet. Bring interest. Bring career determination. The platform is there. Now it's on you."

Attendance Details:

District Name	Grade 11		Grade 12		Faculty Members	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Male	Female
Total	**1,515**	**2,570**	**1,348**	**2,432**	**283**	**253**
Angul	19	46	13	23	2	0
Balasore	68	119	27	68	7	8
Baragarh	128	217	181	229	19	8
Bhadrak	56	35	32	26	5	4
Bolangir	58	201	47	198	17	10
Cuttack	123	224	66	112	23	19
Deogarh	15	20	12	32	1	2
Dhenkanal	66	83	58	66	17	19
Gajapati	28	30	26	50	4	4
Ganjam	202	275	132	284	36	19
Jagatsinghpur	14	119	26	119	12	39
Jharsuguda	50	57	66	68	4	8
Kalahandi	46	54	46	55	9	5

Kandhamal	58	276	70	308	9	10
Keonjhar	51	63	33	52	11	6
Khurda	134	164	111	140	27	27
Mayurbhanj	40	68	54	92	17	14
Nabarangapur	37	41	39	48	3	0
Nayagarh	21	19	27	24	6	1
Nuapada	7	23	13	31	5	1
Puri	40	43	24	38	7	11
Rayagada	12	24	21	27	2	0
Sambalpur	32	134	18	146	10	9
Sonepur	75	82	67	54	16	3
Sundargarh	135	153	139	142	14	26
Total	**1,515**	**2,570**	**1,348**	**2,432**	**283**	**253**
Class-wise Total	**4,085**		**3,780**		**536**	
Grand Total	**7,865**				**536**	

Photos from the Ground: