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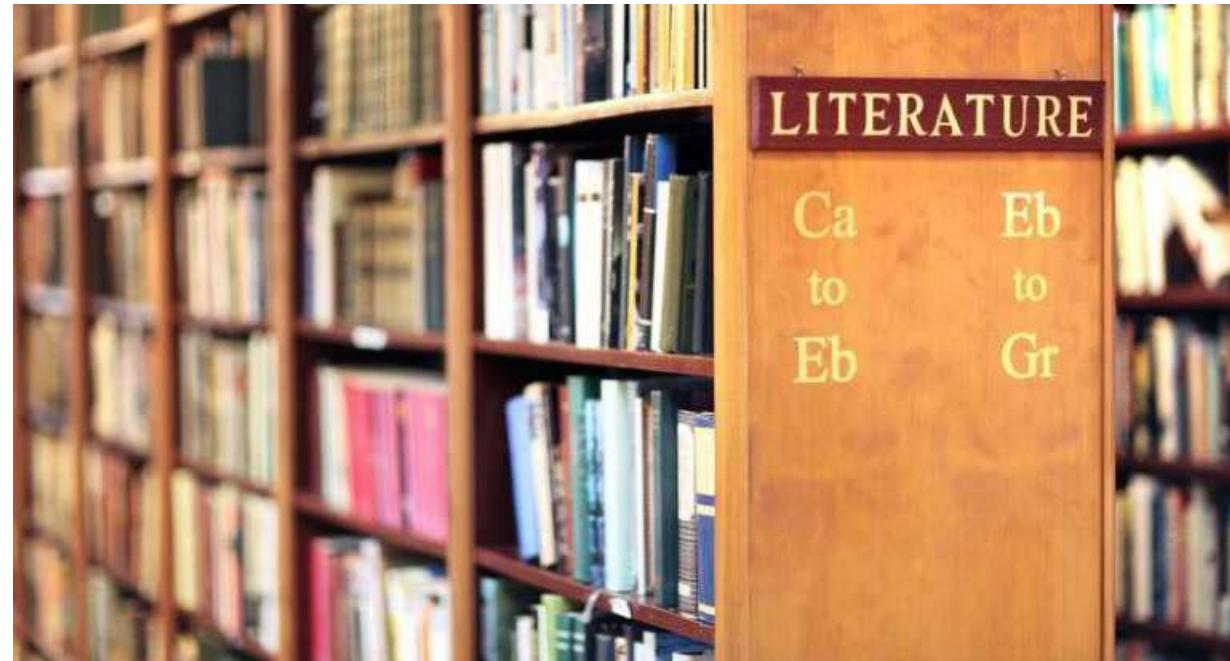
facebook.com/thehindutwitter.com/the_hinduinstagram.com/the_hindu**Sanil Raj Johnson**

Imagine you step into an undergraduate General English classroom at a college or university in India, anticipating a new, interesting blend of literature and ideas. Unfortunately, you discover that the syllabus is firmly linked to your major subject. As a Physics student, you read articles related to Science and lab-inspired short fiction. If you are a Commerce major, you will encounter lessons about trade and business. Meanwhile, Humanities students receive content that is more relevant to their field of study. This is the truth, particularly in Kerala's educational institutions under the new Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), where General English is increasingly structured to reflect the student's major specialisation.

Questions arise

On paper, this integration of language learning with subject knowledge seems logical. Yet, it raises a pertinent question: should General English, by definition, be subject-specific? Or should it remain a space for broad-based intellectual exploration, where students from different streams encounter the beauty and complexity of literature that transcends disciplinary boundaries?

Until fairly recently, General English syllabi in Indian universities were truly eclectic. Students



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

The literary disconnect

Should Literature in General English courses be subject-specific?

would read a Shakespearean and a modern play, analyse classic essays by the likes of Bertrand Russell or George Orwell, delve into an entire novel, and explore poetry across centuries. These classes offered a welcome break from the rigidity of core subjects and provided a common cultural platform where students from varied academic disciplines could debate, interpret, and appreciate texts together. Today's subject-specific approach, even when well-intentioned, risks narrowing students' horizons. It also fails to

prepare them for competitive exams and not only restricts imagination but also denies students the rare opportunity to explore literature's intellectual and emotional rewards.

Exceptions

In the meantime, there are exceptions. Delhi University's B.A. programme, for instance, includes a blend of prose, fiction, poetry, and drama in its Part I English syllabus without any tailoring to the student's main discipline. Students – regardless of their major – study short stories by

writers such as Katherine Mansfield, poems by Keats or Yeats, essays by Aldous Huxley, and plays by contemporary dramatists. Similarly, Calcutta University's B.A. General English syllabus includes *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare and essays by C. E. M. Joad and G. B. Shaw, along with selected poems and a language component covering comprehension, précis, and essay writing. The inclusion of canonical works ensures that all students, whatever their background, engage with texts that have shaped the intellectual and cultural fabric

of the English-speaking world.

The philosophical foundation here is noteworthy. A broad-based General English course is not just about improving grammar or vocabulary. It is about cultivating the imagination, nurturing empathy, enhancing cultural literacy, and supporting the ability to think critically and communicate persuasively. These are not skills confined to the Humanities; they are vital in every field, from Engineering and Business to Medicine. Exposure to varied literary voices also builds emotional

intelligence, enabling students to relate to perspectives different from their own.

Less enriching

Aligning general English too closely with subject areas risks turning it into a mere extension of the major discipline. Undoubtedly, it makes the course more utilitarian, but less enriching. A well-designed general English syllabus should, instead, be a meeting ground for disciplines, cultures, and ideas where a future engineer might find joy in reading Wordsworth, or a budding economist might wrestle with the moral dilemmas in Shakespeare.

The Board of Studies in English across the country might do well to revisit the old, literature-rich models and see how they can be adapted for today. Practical communication skills – report writing, presentations, workplace correspondence – can certainly be included but should not overshadow the literary component. The aim should be a balanced course that equips students for professional communication and opens the door to the transformative power of literature. After all, literature in a general English course is not merely about mastering language; it is about expanding the mind, deepening the heart, and broadening the world within.

The writer is Dean of Student Affairs and Professor of English, Sahyadri College of Advanced Studies (Autonomous), Thrissur, Kerala.

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Word play

To celebrate World Dictionary Day (October 16), Oxford University Press (OUP) India has launched new editions of its bilingual and trilingual dictionary portfolio in mini and compact formats, covering languages such as Bengali, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, and Marathi.

These offer NEP-aligned resources that bridge English and Indian languages. By offering explanations in Indian languages alongside English, these resources help learners understand, retain, and apply new knowledge more effectively.

Each offers clear, simple meanings, bilingual pronunciation guides, and key grammar notes.

They ensure that learners not only know the words but use them with confidence.



OFF THE EDGE

Nandini Raman

What is your calling?

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help

pro-bono projects with a policy think tank, a legislative research body, an NGO working on policy, or a government department that can help you test the waters.

Consider a Master's in Public Policy or Public Administration in institutions such as NLSIU Bengaluru; IIT-Delhi; Indian School of Business, Hyderabad; Azim Premji University, Bengaluru; Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad; OP Jindal Global University, Sonipat; IIM-Bangalore or IIM Calcutta.

Post this, career opportunities are available in think tanks and research organisations. You can also look at an advisory or consulting role with government bodies, international organisations, NGOs, advocacy groups, CSR departments and so on.

I am a B.Com Finance graduate preparing for the CAT. I'm interested in entrepreneurship and in designing clothes and other stuff. But Design courses are mostly for four years. What else can I do? Arya

Dear Arya,
Why are you preparing for the CAT? If your heart is not in it, reconsider the investment of time and effort.

Try to combine Business and Design. A two-year Master's in Fashion Management or Business of Fashion is specifically designed for individuals who want to work on the business side of the fashion and lifestyle industry.

While the National Institute of Fashion Technology offers a Master of Fashion Management,

Symbiosis Institute of Design (SID), JD Institute of Fashion Technology, Amity School of Fashion Technology, Pearl Academy, MIT Institute of Design, Pune, offer varied courses in Fashion Business.

You could also consider an MBA in Entrepreneurship or Marketing or Operations or a PGD in Entrepreneurship or Start-up Management.

Work on developing practical design skills. Look for short-term courses in specific design areas that interest you from credible institutions. Apprentice or intern at a design house for hands-on learning, industry exposure and networking opportunities. Create a portfolio of design ideas, sketches, mood boards, or even small prototypes.

I'm in my first year of MBA. If I opt for Finance as a specialisation, what kind of certificate courses should I be looking at? Nikes

Dear Nikes,
Certifications often depend on the specific area of finance that you wish to enter such as investment banking, corporate finance, wealth management, risk management, fintech, and so on.

Work on enhancing your foundational skills first. Next, identify and align with your career goals. This will help shortlist courses that will benefit you long term. Also, identify the time you can commit. Some courses are rigorous. Also identify what they cost.

Shortlist courses that involve hands-on projects, case studies, and practical application, and speak to your mentors at college for their assessment of your skills before you sign up.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to edplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge.

Longer-term global certifications, such as CFA, FRM, CFP and CMA require significant dedication.

Other short-term industry specific and practical certifications include Financial Modelling and Valuation Analyst (FMVA), Investment Banking Certificate (CIB), and Data Analytics for Finance or Financial Analytics.

Also, research emerging future-oriented certifications like Fintech and Blockchain, Environmental, Social, and Governance or Sustainable Finance.

My daughter is Class 12 (Commerce stream) with Accountancy, Economics, Basic Mathematics and Business Studies. She is interested in careers such as investment banking and financial analysis but does not want to do B.Com, Economics or study for CA exams. What can she opt for in UG? Nanda

Dear Nanda,

While B.Com and Economics are traditional routes, she can consider a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) with specialisation in Finance or Financial Services or Banking. Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS) or Bachelor of Business Economics (BBE) or Bachelor of Financial Investment Analysis (BFIA), BBA in FinTech (Financial Technology).

Most of these, especially at top universities, require specific entrance exams.

So ask her to identify what she would like to explore and then research the colleges and the universities of her choice and start applying.

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Lakshmi C Akshay Bapte

Sixty-six billion-dollar companies in the U.S. trace their roots to India-born founders. While the world continues to benefit from India's innovators, it's worth asking: how are we nurturing that talent at home, especially among students dreaming of building something big?

A recent report by the Campus Fund revealed that 35 out of India's 109 unicorns were started by students during college or within three years of graduating. These young founders often see problems with fresh eyes. They're not burdened by 'how things have always been done.'

Instead, they imagine freely and often pursue ideas that more experienced entrepreneurs might overlook. Even so, student startups are often an exception, not the rule.

They are born not out of a supportive infrastructure, but despite the lack of one. Despite more student-focused incubation programmes, entrepreneurship-embedded educational courses, and youth-centred investment funds, our mainstream education system is still de-

signed to create 'knowledge workers' rather than 'business leaders'.

What's missing

In the past decade, top Indian academic institutions have produced around 550 startup founders. In comparison, leading global universities have launched two to three times as many. Subsequently, startups in India only contribute to 5-8% of our GDP, much lower than most developed countries.

We are 39th in the Global Innovation Index. Not because Indian students lack ambition or ideas.

What's missing is the right kind of support and backing, especially in the critical early stages when there's still peer pressure and parental pressure to seek a stable job instead of pursuing entrepreneurship.

Consider this: over the past two years, a student-focused incubation programme received nearly 800 applications from across 26 states and 150 towns. This shows that entrepreneurial energy isn't just concentrated in big cities, it's everywhere. However, while talent is widely distributed, opportunities are not.

Take two students: one from Mumbai and one

from Jaipur. Their ideas may be equally strong, but the student from Mumbai is twice as likely to be able to access to an entrepreneurship cell or early-stage funding.

Geography shouldn't determine destiny, but, in India's startup ecosystem, it often does.

Proximity and exposure

Beyond formal and structured support, just proximity and exposure to entrepreneurial mindsets and action matter. Academics and researchers like Prof. Saras Sarasvathy have proposed that, while our education teaches us to 'predict the future' (causal logic), entrepreneurs often need to 'control the future' (effectual logic).

Entrepreneurs need to start with what they have, talk to customers, and co-create realities and even visions that did not exist before.

For instance, anyone with common sense will tell you that it's impractical to expect people to go sleep in strangers' houses; even more so to expect people to open up their homes to strangers. This is what our education systems reward.

However, effectual or entrepreneurial thinking is when an Airbnb asks

"What can I do to get people to trust strangers and share homes?" Of course, bold experiments like Airbnb, Urban Company, and Zerodha did not happen overnight. Each took lots of iterative experimentation, and resilience; not qualities that the Indian mainstream education system prepares or even exposes students to. We're expecting innovation and risk-taking to emerge from a system that rewards perfection and risk-aversion.

Often, when successful student founders display an appetite and ability for experimentation, co-creation, and resilience, it is through their passion, willingness and courage to go against the grain and long bouts of brute force and self-sacrifice. This is neither a sustainable nor a scalable model of entrepreneurship. If we are to become a nation of builders and thinkers who lead the world with cutting-edge innovations and a resilient economy, we need to meet our student founders not just with funding and infrastructure but with more holistic education, trust, and the space to experiment and fail safely.

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EDUCATIONPLUS

GREEN CAREERS HUB

An artistic bridge

Wildlife artist and designer Sudarshan Shaw on how he blends traditional Indian art forms with scientific accuracy to depict India's biodiversity

The next in the monthly series by WWF-India that highlights niche and unconventional green careers through the stories of well-known personalities from the field of environment and conservation

Growing up in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, art and nature always spoke to me in ways that words couldn't. While others saw letters on a page, I was drawn to the vibrant world of Pattachitra, the traditional palm-leaf paint-

ings that told stories through intricate lines and colours. Those motifs of birds, forests, and mythical creatures became my first lessons in storytelling, long before I knew I'd become a designer.

Early days

After graduating in Communication Design from the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), New Delhi, I began my career at an art and design studio. But my heart was still wandering through forests. Whenever



I could, I'd escape to the foothills of the Himalayas. I began sketching wildlife between deadlines – tigers on my desktop, hornbills

in clay – as a way to stay connected to what truly moved me.

In 2020, I took what many might call a leap of



Sudarshan Shaw (above) and his work (left). SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

faith. I left my full-time job to create my first Wildlife Map of Odisha. It was a passion project that blended my love for natural history, traditional Indian art, and contemporary design. That one experiment became a turning point. Commissions, collaborations, and recognition followed and, soon, my art began finding its place not just in galleries but in conservation spaces too. It helped me discover my own visual language, which I call FolkIndica, an

artistic bridge between India's folk traditions and its living biodiversity.

This journey wasn't a sudden shift but the culmination of years of curiosity, observation, and awe. I still remember my first visit to Ranthambore and Keoladeo National Parks during my graduation project. It opened up a world I had only read about – the symphony of bird calls, the stillness of forests, the stories carried by the wind. Later, in nearby villages, I saw how these experiences were reflected in local art and folklore.

At work

My workdays usually begin with research, poring over field photographs, scientific papers, folk paintings, and historical accounts of animal sightings. My workspace often looks like a map of chaos: papers, rough sketches, and colour tests scattered everywhere. I let ideas unfold slowly, moving from sketches to textures, until the final form begins to emerge on canvas.

The most exciting part of my work lies in sourcing stories. Research often takes me into a maze of references where I lose track of time. But that's also what keeps me going; the thrill of discovery, of piecing together fragments of art, ecology, and culture into one coherent frame.

Art practice demands patience but, even more so, observation. To draw life, you must learn to see, not just look. The tilt of a heron's neck, the curl of a leaf, the way a tiger melts into its surroundings ... all these details teach you how interconnected life truly is. Beyond technical skills, I've learned that humility and listening are crucial, especially when working with local communities whose wisdom often holds the key to understanding the land.

Some of my greatest teachers have been the forest communities I've met; people whose lives are intertwined with the rhythms of the wild. Their wisdom, born of centuries of coexistence, continues

questions in 95 minutes) and a descriptive (write one of the three essays in 40 minutes); both are conducted online.

Benefits: LNAT builds and sharpens critical skills such as analytical thinking, argumentation, and writing. Students learn to respond quickly, adapt arguments, and communicate clearly. Regular reading and essay writing boost confidence, curiosity, and mental agility. With exposure to global issues like human rights and international law, LNAT opens doors to roles in global firms, UN bodies, or policy think tanks.

Make your choice
CLAT suits students aiming for NLUs and legal careers in India like litigation or corporate law. CUET fits those interested in multidisciplinary studies, civil services, or research. LNAT is ideal for those targeting global law schools and careers in diplomacy or human rights.

Both are MCQ-based, testing comprehension and reasoning. LNAT adds an essay, focusing on critical thinking and writing. Knowing the purpose and possibilities of each exam allows students to choose wisely and gives educators a clearer path to guide them.

The writer is the founder and CEO of Maansarovar Law Centre.

A fair shift?

Will the creation of Brownfield universities reform or deform the higher education system in Tamil Nadu?



WIDE ANGLE
Albert P' Rayan



Recently, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly passed the Tamil Nadu Private Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2025 (TNPU Bill 2025), allowing the conversion of existing private or government-aided colleges into new entities known as "Brownfield Universities."

The difference between Greenfield Universities (GUs) and Brownfield Universities (BUs) is that the former are newly established institutions built on previously undeveloped land, whereas the latter are existing colleges upgraded to university status.

But is it truly necessary to upgrade private and government-aided colleges into private universities? Is this so-called "reform" a step toward the commercialisation of education? Will this move reform or deform the higher education system in the state?

To understand the implications of this amendment, it is important to look at the broader context of higher education in Tamil Nadu.

It is widely believed – and often reported – that the quality of higher education in Tamil Nadu surpasses that of most other states in India. This claim holds true in some respects. Graduates from Tamil Nadu who have made their mark across the world, many rising to top positions in globally renowned organisations, often attribute their success to the strong educational foundation they received, particularly in the state's government-run/aided colleges.

The past was indeed remarkable but can the same be said of Tamil Nadu's higher education system today? The state now has a growing number of privately managed institutions that produce thousands of graduates every year. But how reputable are they? Is access to these universities truly within reach for students from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds? How fairly are teachers treated?

Back to the basics
Before evaluating whether the TNPU Bill truly reforms higher education, it is worth considering how the

quality of a higher education system is assessed. Some might argue that accreditation and top rankings define an institution's greatness. However, certain institutions that appear impressive on paper – through their vision and mission statements or quality policies – often fail to translate these noble ideas into practice. Yet, they still manage to obtain accreditation and proudly proclaim themselves as numero uno in various parameters.

In my view, an institution that imparts cost-effective quality education, prioritises inclusivity and diversity, upholds social justice, values academic freedom, and prepares students not just for employment but for life by instilling strong values and a sense of purpose truly deserves to be called an institution of eminence. But how many institutions in general, and private institutions in particular, truly qualify for that distinction?

This brings us back to the TNPU Bill 2025. When the Bill was debated on the floor of the House, Tamil Nadu Higher Education Minister Govi Chezhiaan stated that if aided colleges were converted into private universities, they would lose their aided status and no longer receive government grants. He further remarked that the proposed amendments could pave the way for taking higher education in Tamil Nadu to the next level. The question, however, is whether this "next level" would have a positive or negative impact on the state's higher education system.

Beyond the issues of student access and affordability, the amendment also raises serious concerns about the welfare of staff. While this itself is troubling, the larger concerns lie in the commercialisation of education, the erosion of social justice, and the dilution of academic standards. The shift from greenfield to brownfield cannot be considered a fair one.

Views expressed are personal.

The writer is an ELT resource person and education columnist. Email rayanal@yahoo.co.uk

Snigdha Gupta

Entering the realm of legal education involves taking entrance exams such as CLAT, CUET, and LNAT. Each of these is designed to align with various strengths, goals, and professional aspirations. In a landscape where law intersects with careers in litigation, civil services, policy, and international law, understanding the structure and benefits of these exams is essential for students.

CLAT

The Common Law Admission Test is the most prestigious and competitive law entrance exam in India and its score is accepted by 26 National Law Universities. It also provides a gateway to Delhi University and IP University. It emphasises Legal Reasoning, English, Current Affairs, Logical Reasoning and Quantitative Techniques. Students have to attempt 120 questions in two hours and the pattern of the exam is comprehension-based along with a negative marking of 0.25 marks.

Benefits: Staying updated on current issues builds strong general awareness, essential for any legal career. CLAT preparation also instils discipline, time management, and the ability to handle pressure. As stu-

dents tackle tough questions, their confidence grows. They also grasp legal basics, sharpen their judgment, and improve their decision-making.

CUET

The Common University Entrance Test is computer-based. The pattern varies by university but it is most commonly taken for admission to Banaras Hindu University (BHU). The exam typically includes two sections: Language (English) and a General Aptitude Test. Each section has 50 questions, and the duration for each is 60 minutes. The test assesses candidates on top-

ics such as language, reasoning, mental ability, and general awareness. Candidates receive five marks for every correct answer, and one mark is deducted for each incorrect response.

Benefits: CUET preparation builds broad thinking and academic flexibility. Exposure to subjects like Economics, History, and Current Affairs helps students develop skills useful in Law, civil services, journalism, or policy. It sharpens awareness, reasoning, and communication. With interdisciplinary options and affordable access, CUET is ideal for those aiming at

research, public-interest law, or exams like UPSC and Judiciary.

LNAT

The Law National Aptitude Test is an international exam required for admission to top foreign universities for undergraduate law programmes. It is an aptitude test based entirely on Analytical Reasoning, Logical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension. It doesn't test your knowledge of law or any other subject but helps universities assess your aptitude for the skills required to study law. There are two papers; an objective (42

What's the verdict?

CLAT, CUET and LNAT ... choose the law entrance test that aligns with your academic goals, financial plans, and long-term vision.



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

S. Santha Kumari

While traditional courses such as MBA and CA are still preferred in India, the changing world of finance has given rise to newer courses such as M.Sc. Finance and Control. However, students often wonder whether it is meant only for commerce students, how it is different from an MBA Finance and, most importantly, the kind of career it offers.

M.Sc. Finance and Control is a two-year Master's degree that combines theoretical finance with practical control mechanisms, including budgeting, risk management, financial forecasting, and strategic analysis. It is not only about numbers but also involves understanding how financial systems are utilised in decision-making and management.

In contrast to an MBA, this programme focuses on various areas in corporate finance, investment strategies, and regulatory controls. This course will be of interest to students who enjoy working with numbers, financial models and investments, are curious

For the number cruncher

How does the M.Sc. Finance and Control course differ from an MBA in Finance?



are for two years and focus on finance, the approach, structure, and outcomes are different. While the MBA offers a broad understanding of overall business functions, with finance as one of the core areas, the M.Sc. takes a deep dive into financial theory, tools, and systems. The former is more for aspiring managers, entrepreneurs or corporate executives. The M.Sc. is more suited for those looking at analytical, research-oriented academic careers. The M.Sc. is research intensive and heavily quantitative, while the MBA focuses on case studies and managerial decision making with a multi-disciplinary approach.

Career options
Post this course, career opportunities encompass handling budgets, forecasts and financial planning in corporate finance departments, analysing markets and managing

about how financial data influence markets, investment portfolios and corporate decisions and are aiming for roles such as financial analysts, investment managers and so on.

Education

While criteria may vary across institutions, common factors are a Bachelor's in Commerce, Business Administration, Economics or a related field. Some institutes also accept B.Tech, B.E., or B.Sc. graduates with strong Maths or finance aptitude.

How does this programme differ from an MBA Finance? While both

portfolios in investment banking, ensuring adherence to financial regulations in risk and compliance departments, offering data-backed strategies in financial consulting, and working in planning commissions or auditing bodies in the government or the public sector, or doing a Ph.D. to get into academia. Job roles may range across financial analyst, risk consultant, investment manager, budget controller, or finance research associate.

The programme is offered in collaboration with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), enabling students to pursue the globally recognised Chartered Accountant qualification. This integration provides enhanced career opportunities in big accounting firms and other reputed companies worldwide. While the programme may not have the glamour of an MBA, it is ideal for those who want to build a career based on precision, logic and strategy.

The writer is HoD, Department of Commerce, KLEF Deemed-to-be University