

The Greek-style open air amphitheatre of the Global Education Centre built by information technology major Infosys at Mysore is perhaps symbolic of the company's global aspirations. The Rs 2,055-crore mega campus, spread over 337 acres, is the largest corporate education centre in the world.

There are more such ventures. Retail giant Future Group has set up Future Inniversity, a corporate training facility, to groom managers and supervisors for retail outlets like Pantaloons and Big Bazaar. Future Inniversity has three campuses — in Bangalore, Calcutta and Ahmedabad — and some more are likely to come up soon. Says Muralidhar Rao, CEO, Future Inniversity, "Initially, we tied up with a few institutes to train new recruits. But when this didn't work, we decided to launch our own institute and run courses in retail business and entrepreneurship."

Welcome to the world of corporate universities. Every self-respecting corporate house today either boasts of an educational facility of its own or shares one jointly with other companies.

"A tidal wave of corporate universities has touched the shores of the developing world," says Annick Renaud-Coulon, founder and chairman of the Global Council of Corporate Universities (GlobalCCU), Paris. "There are about 4,000 such institutes in the world. The number has more than doubled in the last decade," she adds.

Mahindra Satyam, the IT business consulting services firm and also a member of GlobalCCU, has set up Mahindra Satyam Learning World (MSLW), a corporate university for its employees and associates. MSLW delivers 45 per cent of its lessons virtually and also uses a web radio and web-based TV channel for interactive learning. The institute has a tie-up with the Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences (BITS), Pilani, for a masters in software engineering, a work-integrated programme for those who want to study while working.



SKILL PILL: The Global Education Centre at Mysore, and (left) Annick Renaud-Coulon of the Global Council of Corporate Universities

Learning on the job

Many companies are setting up special training facilities to teach employees the skills they need. **Prasun Chaudhuri and Avijit Chatterjee on India's corporate universities**

Human resources experts say that corporate universities are increasingly becoming common as they bridge the gap between the skills with which fresh graduates come into industry and the skills actually needed.

"Most graduates of engineering colleges and B-schools do not pick up the necessary skill sets. Not just soft skills, they need to learn the nuances of new technology, strategy and logistics," says E. Balaji, director and president, Ma Foi Randstad, a human resources company. At Ma Foi Academy, Chennai, thousands of prospective recruits of big firms are trained in specific skills to make them "job ready". These could range from programmes equivalent to an advanced computer science degree to soft skills such as the right way to dress, or even write a proper email.

Corporate universities are also useful when it comes to upgrading the talent of employees — a key re-

quirement for survival in a fast-changing global market. "Nowadays, companies believe that it's better to groom and upgrade your internal talent rather than expect to pick them up from traditional educational institutes," says Sunil Rai, chief executive of Mumbai Business School.

According to a recent study by management consultants McKinsey & Co, only 25 per cent of fresh engineers, 15 per cent of fresh finance and accounting graduates,

and 10 per cent of college graduates are adequately prepared to work in multinational firms.

So, how exactly do these corporate universities make up the skill deficit in new recruits? "They offer a lot of activities (as opposed to old-fashioned chalk and talk lessons): seminars, workshops, conferences, collective publications and so on," says Renaud-Coulon. Adds Neha Anand, leader, marketing and communication, School of Inspired Learning (SOIL), Gur-

gaon, "Our lessons are more practice oriented and interactive. We lay a lot of emphasis on live case studies." SOIL's consortia of 33 members — including Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Bharat Petroleum, Infosys, Aditya Birla Group, Nokia, Dabur, Larsen & Toubro and ICICI Bank — are directly involved with curriculum design, student selection, live consulting projects and individual mentoring.

The concept of corporate uni-

versities is not new. The US-based conglomerate General Electric had begun "creating, identifying and transferring organisational learning skills" in budding managers at its Crotonville Learning Centre near New York in 1956. Clearly, it's a concept that India has taken to in recent years, so much so that even if a company does not develop its own in-house learning centre, it usually has a tie-up with one where its managers are brought up to scratch.

S. Sriram, executive director, Great Lakes Institute of Management (Glim), Chennai, says they regularly train executives from Godrej, which helped set up the institute. International Management Institute (IMI), Delhi, set up by the RPG Group, among others, also trains company executives. Himadri Das, admission chairperson, IMI, says RPG regularly sends personnel for training at the institute.

Says Bala Balachandran,

founder and dean, Glim, and professor emeritus at Kellogg Business School, "Corporate learning is need-based and experiential. It is customised, whereas traditional learning is commoditised."

But in-house corporate learning comes at a price. For example, Infosys has invested Rs 1,705 crore in education and training-related infrastructure at its Mysore centre.

Some companies have envisioned the corporate university concept somewhat differently. At Wipro's Azim Premji University at Bangalore, for example, the aim is to "prepare a large number of committed education and development professionals who can significantly contribute to meeting the needs of the country."

The company is already running a not-for-profit trust called Mission 10X which trains teachers of engineering colleges. Says Damodar Acharya, director of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, and an advisor to the project, "This approach educates the faculty of various engineering colleges in innovative teaching methodologies through workshops, active engagements and interaction through a portal."

Still, not everyone thinks that corporate universities are a good idea. Amitava Gupta, professor of power engineering, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, feels that corporate universities are nothing more than finishing schools that offer a restrictive knowledge suitable to a specific job, as opposed to the holistic education given in traditional universities.

Agrees Debashis Chatterjee, director, IIM, Kozhikode, "Corporate learning provides a kind of a tunnel vision to students as it caters to the particular needs of companies. They tend to gloss over the fact that learning is about creating a multi-dimensional human being rather than a money-churning robot."

But the naysayers are in the minority. Right now corporate universities are clearly the flavour of the season. And unless educational institutes keep up with changing times, more and more companies will resort to in-house education to provide employees with the competencies they need.

Company universities are catching on

■ Infosys at Mysore

■ Future Group's Future Inniversity has campuses in Bangalore, Calcutta and Ahmedabad

■ Mahindra Satyam

has set up the Mahindra Satyam Learning World in Hyderabad

■ Wipro's Azim Premji University in Bangalore is expected to open in mid-2011

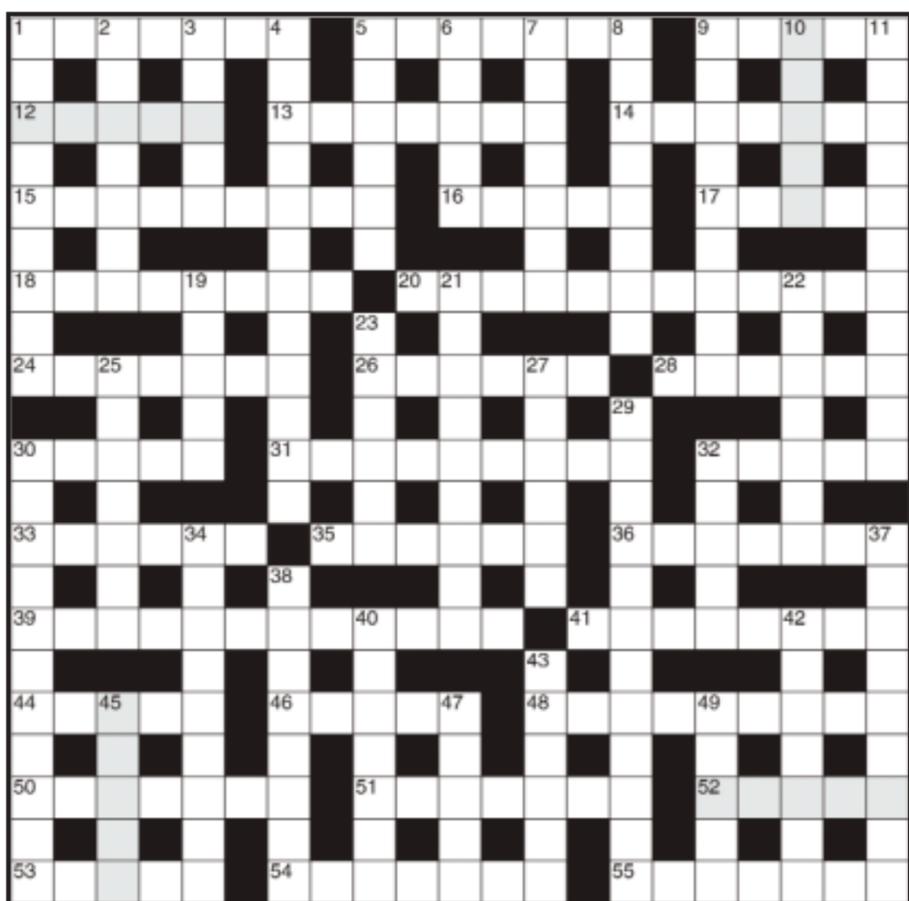
■ Ma Foi Randstad, the headhunter, has set up Ma Foi Academy in Chennai

■ 33 companies, including ABB, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints,

Bharat Petroleum, ICICI Bank, and Johnson and Johnson, have set up the School of Inspired Learning (SOIL), Gurgaon in Haryana

PUZZLES

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 157



ACROSS

- 1 Marine molluscs and the main constituent of moules marinières (7)
- 5 The mythological Greek goddess of curses and healing, daughter of Aesculapius (7)
- 9 Leg of lamb for roasting (5)
- 12 Tree planted to shelter tender or slow-growing plants and trees; also the bee that feeds the worker bees producing royal jelly (5)
- 13 Letter of the Greek alphabet between Xi and Pi (7)
- 14 Surgical implement used to remove foreign bodies from the oesophagus (7)
- 15 Large auk which spends its life at sea, travelling inland to nest only; vulnerable to oil spills (9)
- 16 German-Swiss novelist who wrote The Glass Bead Game, awarded the 1946 Nobel Prize for Literature (5)
- 17 Device which employs the use of electromagnetic waves to detect, locate and identify distant objects (5)
- 18 Variable opening on a camera used to regulate the amount of light admitted (8)
- 20 Layer around 31 miles above the Earth's surface, generally cloudless with low air density (12)

- 24 Loyal and trusted friend of Hamlet, present during the gravedigger and mousetrap scenes (7)
- 26 Highly reactive chemical element which makes up around 65 per cent of the human body (6)
- 28 Common name for a stenographer (6)
- 30 The playing area in modern fencing, generally in the form of a 14 metre-long rubber mat (5)
- 31 Genus of plants with a poisonous milky sap, commonly called spurge (9)
- 32 Frontierswoman, sharpshooter and lover of Wild Bill Hickok, nicknamed Calamity Jane (5)
- 33 Decorative or sculpted section between the two triglyphs of a Doric frieze such as the Parthenon Marbles (6)
- 35 US film actor whose most recent role was in the thriller Valkyrie, set in Nazi Germany (6)
- 36 The --: British group who released The House of the Rising Sun in the 1960s (7)
- 39 Percussion instrument similar to a vibraphone, also called orchestral bells (12)
- 41 Town in Belgium where Napoleon met his final defeat (8)
- 44 The most abundant of the noble gases, discovered by Sir William Ramsay and Lord Rayleigh in 1894 (5)
- 46 US actress who starred in the 1966 remake

- of One Million Years BC (5)
- 48 British Liberal statesman who served as prime minister four times and established the secret ballot in the Ballot Act of 1872 (9)
- 50 Deficiency of haemoglobin in the blood, generally caused by a lack of iron-rich foods (7)
- 51 Genus of around 500 species of plants, more commonly called morning glory (7)
- 52 The position of professor (5)

- 53 Fluorescent dye used as a water tracer because of its visibility at very high dilution levels (5)
- 54 British composer and conductor whose major works include the ballets Romeo and Juliet, Pomona and Horoscope (7)
- 55 Daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë who helped Theseus find his way out of the Minotaur's labyrinth (7)

ANSWERS

- 1 Monograph 2 Sardine 3 Ewell 4 Stormtrooper 5 Pointe 6 North 7 Canasta 8 Aplitude 9 Geography 10 Gland 11 Tiger Beetle 19 Title 21 Thyroxine 22 Fritta 23 Hopper 25 Risotto 27 Emblem 29 Taramasalata 30 Pomegranate 32 Balze 34 Pekingman 37 Smokerette 38 Snowball 40 Pallium 42 Leotard 43 Egmont 45 Glass 47 Hooke 49 Sochi 51 Ipomoea 52 Chair 53 Eosin 54 Lambert 55 Atradrine 59 Glockenspiel 41 Waterlo 44 Argon 46 Welch 48 Gladstones 50 Anaemia 39 30 Pistle 31 Euphorbia 32 Burke 33 Melepe 35 Cruise 36 Animals 16 Hesse 17 Radar 18 Aperature 20 Stratosphere 24 Horatio 26 Oxygen 12 Nurse 13 Omicron 14 Probang 15 Guillemot 9 Gigt 12 Nurse 13 Omicron 14 Probang 15 Guillemot

SUDOKU

313 MODERATE

		1	2	5				
4								
8		3		1	2			
5	4			6		9		
8	6		4	3				
5	3		4	2	6			
					3			
2		8	1					

314 DIABOLICAL

	3			6	1			
1	7	2					4	
8				2				9
2		3	1					
	8					5	7	6
7				3				6
	9					8	1	5
		8	5					7

HOW TO PLAY

Fill in the 9X9 square grid with the numbers one to nine. The numbers should be arranged in such a way that each row, column and mini grid contains one of each number. The solutions are below and upside down.

DOWN

- 1 A detailed written treatise on a specific specialised subject (9)
- 2 A young pilchard (7)
- 3 Epsom and --; district of Surrey (5)
- 4 Imperial --; soldier in the Star Wars universe (12)
- 5 Dancing on the tips of the toes in ballet (6)
- 6 Tory Prime Minister at the outbreak of the American War of Independence who resigned from office after a vote of no confidence in 1782 (5)
- 7 Card game based on rummy, played with two decks (7)
- 8 English physicist whose studies of the ionosphere led to the development of 17 across (8)
- 9 The study of Earth and its inhabitants (9)
- 10 Secretary structure of an animal (5)
- 11 Fast-running predatory insect of the subfamily Cicindelineae (5,6)
- 19 Status of being a champion (5)
- 21 Hormone which regulates the metabolism (9)
- 22 Former Ethiopian province that became a sovereign country in 1993 (7)
- 23 US realist painter of both rural and urban scenes, known for Automat and Nighthawks

- (6) 25 Dish traditionally made with Carnaroli or Arborio rice (7)
- 27 Heraldic device or symbolic object used as a distinctive badge of a nation or family (6)
- 29 Greek meze made from fish roe, olive oil and seasoning (12)
- 30 Aril fruit native to south-west Asia, dubbed a superfood in recent years (11)
- 32 Felt-like material used for covering card and billiard tables (5)
- 34 Homo erectus fossils found around 1923-27, lost during the Second World War (6,3)
- 37 Shrub with feathery plume-like panicles, related to sumacs (5,4)
- 38 Pig which leads the revolt in Animal Farm (8)
- 40 Woolen vestment worn around the shoulders by the Pope (7)
- 42 Gymnastic garment named after a French trapeze artist (7)
- 43 1788 play by Goethe and incidental music by Beethoven composed for the play (6)
- 45 Substance made by fusing sand with soda and lime (5)
- 47 English natural philosopher who formulated the law of elasticity around 1676 (5)
- 49 Russian city which is set to be the host of the 2014 Winter Olympics (5)