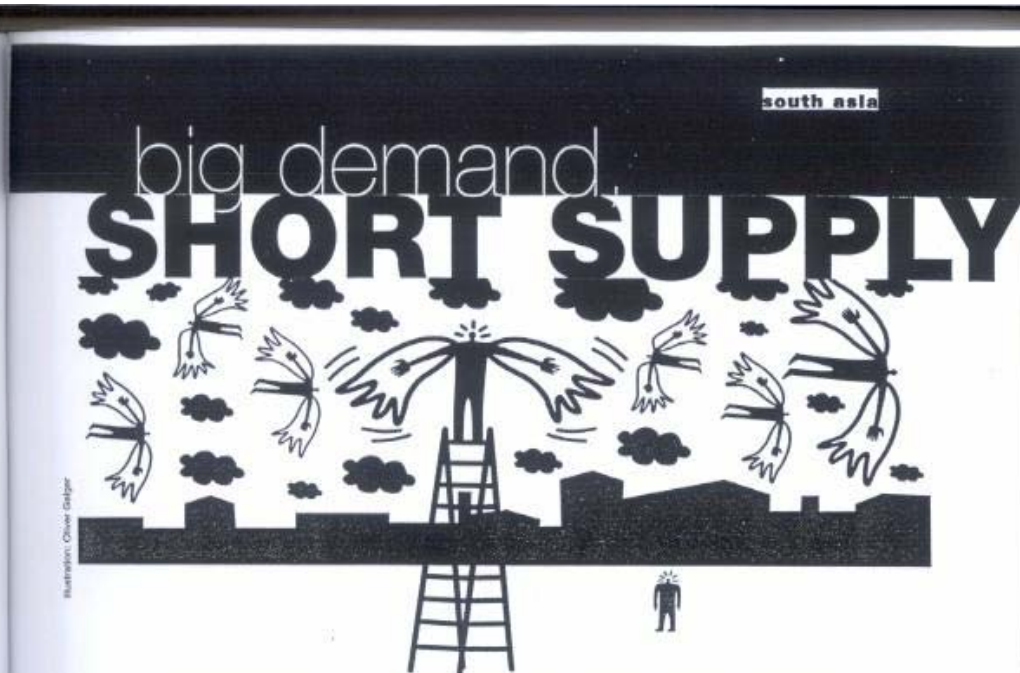


## South Asia: Big demand - Short supply

Publisher: HR World

Year: 1999



### INDIA IS THE **JEWEL** IN SOUTH ASIA'S DEVELOPMENT CROWN, BUT EMPLOYERS THERE STILL **AREN'T** INVESTING **ENOUGH**, WRITES **PATRICK MCCURRY**

**B**roadly speaking, India is the only country in South Asia offering any serious executive development options. Outside India, the availability of good, locally-based programmes is extremely limited. The highest of high-flyers may be sent to study for an MBA abroad, and some large, local employers and multinationals may jet in their own business academics. India, however, has an impressive cluster of business schools in its five Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

The IIMs offer very good MBA programmes and are extremely cheap compared with similar business schools in Europe or the US. All five are in the public sector and, so far, no private institutions in India have been able to compete. The only major drawback is that there are so few of them, says Professor Nirmalya Kumar of the Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Lausanne, Switzerland. "Demand far outstrips what they can supply."

However, others argue that while the IIMs provide good general teaching, there is a big gap in the area of tailor-made development courses for senior managers (which some Western consultancies are hoping to fill), and some management problems that are specific to the region.

According to PA Consulting's John Van Maurik, while executives in large multinationals in South Asia are often familiar with the latest management theories (many of the world's leading management academics are from the region), they do not know how to put those theories into practice. And

while managers and executives in the region are strong on sales and marketing, they tend to be weak on the "softer" people skills, and are often less comfortable working in teams or non-hierarchical settings than in a "command-and-control" environment.

IIMs aside, a small proportion of top managers are sent abroad to study, but the majority are sent on traditional three- or five-day courses at a hotel. One company is currently erecting what will be the country's first purpose-built conference centre for management training outside Mumbai. Another common route for multinationals is to fly in business professors from Europe or the US to run in-house management programmes. "This is straightforward in India because there are so many Indian professors of management working outside the country," Kumar explains.

**THE INDIAN INSTITUTES OF MANAGEMENT OFFER VERY GOOD MBA PROGRAMMES AND ARE EXTREMELY CHEAP COMPARED WITH SIMILAR BUSINESS SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US**

However, India's best hope is that employers will start to invest more in development as the economy continues to deregulate and modernise, and as competition increases. To date, deregulation and modernisation have seen huge competition for good staff, particularly those with experience of managing in a competitive environment, and the resulting high turnover has deterred employers from investing in staff. In Kumar's opinion, however, "It is becoming increasingly clear to the larger employers that they must invest in their people and have a clear management development strategy." 