

A Walk on the Wild Side – the Potential of ARL

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For five years I was programme director for Volvo Car Corporation's (VCC) Global Professional Manager's Programme (GPM), one of the leadership programmes developed by MiL and VCC in the mid 1990s. The role of the in-company programme director is what one makes of it. I had little experience of leadership training and during the first programme in 1996, I simply adopted the concept that Anita Beijer and Anders Lindberg had developed in VCC's programme for senior managers.

When the work with the programme staff began, it became apparent that the fundamental concept was a more serious matter than I had imagined. Anders Lindberg was the person at MiL responsible for my programme and assisting him were four of MiL's most experienced learning coaches. That they represented the same institute did not stop feelings from running high at the learning coach meetings, giving Anders the opportunity from time to time to make use of his eminent diplomatic talents. I understood that the MiL associates were not really like any other consultants I had encountered. They had a learning philosophy, Action Reflection Learning (ARL), that was not just a consulting concept or a theoretical perspective, but a personal way of relating on which they were not about to compromise. They took relationships and feelings very seriously and were unwavering in demanding that we reserve time to reflect on the way we worked in the programme staff. I experienced some of their learning methods as strange. I soon realized that the MiL concept would lead me a good way out of my comfort zone.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH MiL

I can still remember the first off-site meeting of the programme on the MiL Campus in Klippan, Sweden. It ran concurrently with MiL's autumn Knowledge Days. Of course, Anders Lindberg wanted us to take advantage of the opportunity, so in addition to our planned programme items, our participants had the chance to avail themselves of the rich and varied selection that the Knowledge Days had to offer. There was much to see and contemplate. In one of the buildings a workshop was in progress in which people let their managerial experiences take physical shape by forming little men out of clay. In the Annex, a number of senior MiL coaches queued up to consult a Russian healer. The VCC managers found this to be a bit exotic and yet quite exciting, and really no more curious than a number of the more conventional seminars that, in spite of it all, made up the greater part of the offerings.

I was probably the one who was the most shaken up by it all. My view of education, built up from my days back in elementary school in a small town, had gradually become an integrated part of the view I had of myself during fifteen years as a university lecturer. Now I was confronted with quite another way of thinking. The main theme of the first three-day, off-site meeting with Thomas Sewerin dealt with personal leadership. Suddenly, I realized that he and the other MiL coaches had a much more well thought out and radical view of learning than the one we had at the university. What I was doing in the traditional teacher's role was, from Thomas's perspective, nothing more than an organised theft of other people's opportunities to learn! For me, teaching from the podium will most likely always exist somewhere in the depth of my soul. But the encounter with Thomas and the MiL coaches has broadened my interest in other learning styles and has increased my tolerance for unconventional forms of understanding. More than anything, I have gained a new view of the relationship between the learning process and results. I learned that it is more important to create learning opportunities than to supply answers to questions that others have presented and solved. Thank you Anders, Thomas, Maria Delmar, Hans Fribergh, Janne Nilsson – not to mention all the other MiL coaches who participated in the GPM programme.

TIME FOR CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

To the same extent that I start to understand MiL's learning philosophy, I realize that there are learning opportunities we could have made better use of. It is time to reflect on what we have and have not done together.

A review of all programmes

It just happened that the invitation to contribute to this book on Volvo and MiL coincided with an assignment from VCC. After five GPMs with a total of a little under a hundred participants, VCC has taken a break since the autumn of 2001, pending a complete review of the entire range of programmes offered. My colleague, Tony Scott, and I are responsible for this audit. Our directive is above all to deal with the range of VCC joint management programmes, but the review has started a discussion that is broader than that. Thus, the invitation to write about the co-operation between MiL and VCC is very timely. I see it as an opportunity to reflect more informally about what we have done and what we could have done in the framework of the in-company management programmes. Examples are taken from the co-operative efforts of VCC and MiL in the Global Leadership Programmes, but many of the themes I examine are also of current interest in VCC's relationship to other external partners.

My questions

Since 1996, more than 200 managers and executives in VCC have participated in in-company programmes that were either partially or entirely run by MiL and in which the ARL philosophy was a fundamental idea. I would like to address the following questions as a point of departure in this discussion: What impressions have the programmes made on the participants? Did participants acquire working methods that they continue to use and develop back on the job? Is there any connection between programme participation and the participants' career development? And another question: Were the missed learning opportunities due to weaknesses inherent in the ARL concept or were they due to how the concept was applied and by whom?

Evaluation of programme effects

Let us start with the first three questions concerning the effects of the programmes. Considering the great resources VCC invested in management development during this time, it is surprising to observe that we lack ongoing and thorough follow-up. Evaluations have been carried out, but they have dealt with what the participants experienced as beneficial and were based on their statements at the end of the programme or shortly thereafter. We have not established any routines for determining the presence of lasting changes in behaviour. Nor have we collected information on what the programme participants are doing or where they ended up after programme completion.

On the other hand, there is strong, indirect evidence of the programme's effects. There are many examples of participants taking more initiative in development issues for their own sake and for those of their co-workers.

In the first place, participants in GLP (Global Leadership Programme) and GPM seem to be more inclined than non-participants to support co-workers' continued development. Those who have participated in a programme have seen the potential and made use of the nomination process to advance their co-workers' development.

Secondly, portions of the programme networks are still operating. Participants have in many cases built learning groups in which they use each other as sounding boards and for inspiration. The project teams have continued using the work format they acquired from their learning coaches.

Thirdly, ideas based on ARL have been further developed on the local level in co-operation with line managers and HR. Examples are Lars-Göran Järvung and Anders Lindberg's *Catch Management*, described in chapter 8 and the MOD concept described in chapter 9. Similar ARL-based methods have been launched in local development programmes.

Fourthly, we know that the programmes have created crossover networks in company functions and sub-divisions, as well as a better understanding of the total VCC business picture. The project work has been of considerable significance in this regard.

In other words, there is a basis on which to maintain that the programmes did not just furnish new outlooks and valuable contacts but also provided the participants with a lasting ability to learn and to further develop their forms of learning, to consciously work with their leadership style and to support the development of co-workers. Learning is primarily centred on the individual. The ARL concept that was applied to the Global Programmes has chiefly been directed at individual self-understanding and personal development.

Using ARL to understand and develop the organisation

On the other hand, we have not succeeded in using ARL's critical potential to achieve an in-depth understanding of the organisation.

I will try to develop this further by connecting it to the question of VCC's understanding of itself and to the extent to which this has developed through our management programmes. Allow me to leave the programmes and the MiL-VCC collaboration for a while and instead outline some unique characteristics in VCC's development.

WHY VCC NEEDS CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

I maintain that VCC is a value-driven corporation. This does not mean that we do not focus on the business objectives, though. VCC is a corporation that historically has earned more money for its owners than most of its competitors in the overripe automotive sector. At our best, we have done it in a manner that has challenged mainstream thinking in the industry.

Core values in VCC's company philosophy

Our core values have high visibility and credibility and are the basis of our products' position in the market and for VCC's role in the Ford Motor Company. But what we deliver cannot be separated from how. What makes Volvo Volvo has to do with product characteristics but also with our work procedures, the organisation and management. Not many cor-

porations have a set of basic values for relationships between people in the company that is so well thought out and well formulated as is VCC's in its company philosophy. In spite of that, we often find it difficult to identify what is the truly specific, indispensable *and* visionary in our way of managing and co-operating. The problems with definition also entail problems with measurement. The product aspects of our core values, that is, quality, safety and environmental consideration are measured from criteria that are recognized in the entire automotive sector. But how can we operationalize concepts such as leadership and active and constructive co-operation?

Criteria for leadership behaviour

From this year on, we will be measuring our executives' management behaviour based on the 12 Leadership Behaviours that will apply throughout the entire Ford Motor Company. The differences from the criteria that were previously developed by the Hay McBer's consulting company are actually fewer than the similarities. Both the new and the old list have a basic validity problem: How do we measure the unique and specific in VCC's way and not just that which mainstream thinking looks upon as important in any corporation? The underlying premise in my questions are, of course, that VCC's contribution to Ford is qualitative rather than quantitative.

A long history of workplace changes

One difficulty is that our guiding star in the soft questions, that is, our company philosophy is pronouncedly idealistic. Abstract factors such as values, thoughts and attitudes are put forward as being crucial for what we stand for today and what we can do in the future. But the distinct features in Volvo's philosophy, that is, active and constructive co-operation, teamwork and leadership, would be empty words if they did not correspond to an organisational praxis. Such praxis exists and it has a long history.

Teamwork, co-operation and similar ways of managing people were closely related to the 1970s developments in the Swedish Volvo factories, but this has been repressed in the official ideology. It involved the Kalmar

Plant and perhaps more than any Uddevalla's whole car concept that for the rest of the world came to symbolise the break with the past (Taylorism) and an alternative to the new (the Japanese production philosophy, "Toyodism"). But it also includes the Torslanda Plant's combination of Volvoism and Toyodism and Uddevalla's further development of continuity and renewal in relation to the socio-technical tradition.

Volvo dared to stand out and be different, take risks, learn from its mistakes and integrate its own experiences with the best practices of others. The workshop floor was the front on which change was taking place and the development was to a great extent labour market driven, that is, it was a way of dealing with the factory's problems in attracting and keeping manpower. At that time, the car factory assembly line was depicted as the classic example of soulless and physically destructive work, and compared to competing countries, the relative wages of the Swedish autoworkers were not particularly high. Volvo and SAAB were operating in the world's toughest labour market for blue-collar workers and Volvo took the lead in the attempt to find attractive and effective solutions.

During the 1990s the labour market and employees' demands as agents of change in management and organisation were replaced by the product market and customer demands. The greatest changes occurred in product development and purchasing. Platform thinking came from the outside but the experiences from teamwork metamorphosed into a cross-functional development as module teams. The same daring and novel thinking as the development on the shop floor during the '70s characterized the establishment of module teams in VCC's product development.

The imbalance between products and processes

Now again we face a restructuring of our product development organisation and with that, new conditions for management and co-operation. At the same time, labour market issues are again in the forefront. It is not only the product market that can be described as a battlefield, and we are quite aware that we are not the obvious winners in the struggle for the leaders and co-workers of the future. "Our brand is a promise," we declare in the policy document entitled *Soul of the Brand*, and that means that

we also have a vision for what is healthy and progressive work for the next generation of managers and co-workers. In my opinion, that promise should be more clearly formulated. In the current policy document, the focus is on products and customers, and so it should be, but there are good business reasons to also bring to the fore the people who make up VCC, the work and the work process. An imbalance exists here and it becomes even more apparent in the writing of our history.

That the Volvo Museum is a temple of nostalgia dedicated to the car as a technical object is understandable. The Museum's description of our product history is stimulating, but does not have much to say about what it is that makes Volvo Volvo. That is because it is both the product and the process – how people co-operate in order to develop, build and get it out on the market – that has created our corporate culture. Here we have problems describing the central theme in our growth. While we can rightly call attention to the continuity in our safety approach, we are notably without a history when it comes to work procedures and ideals of leadership.

WHY IS THIS PART OF OUR HISTORY FORGOTTEN?

How can one explain that we have turned our backs on this exciting and inspiring part of the history of Volvo? One reason could be the dominance of engineers and their alleged lack of interest in anything but the purely technical. "Smart guys with one-track minds," is how students in a suburban school characterized students from Chalmers University of Technology during a memorable consultant-for-a-day session in GPM 5.

Hostages of the researchers

Another reason is that the story of the development of labour practices in the factories was "kidnapped" by the academics who made it their own and, as it was interpreted by Volvo, used it for their own purposes. The researchers who described the Kalmar and Uddevalla Plants strongly identified themselves with the radical form of socio-technology and saw Volvo as a spearhead in the struggle against the Tayloristic system and above all, as an alternative to Toyodism (Ellegård 1991, Berggren 1994, and Sandberg 1995).

Several of the researchers who became interested in the new car factories belonged to the action research tradition and saw their research as a part of the work for change involving corporate-organisational and political objectives. One item they missed was that the prerequisite for being able to influence is provided by the opportunities for dialogue.

By the beginning of the '90s, researchers were considered to be dreamers and leftist radicals and thus out of the picture. While they continued to produce articles and books that put forward “Volvoism” as an alternative to the Japanese wave, executive management and unions remained silent. From Volvo’s side, we have never made any serious attempts to intellectually defend the path of development that was chosen for the new Torslanda, Gent or Uddevalla factories. Nor have we, as a corporation, specified what we believe to be Volvo’s DNA, that which carries on the essential in Volvo’s labour practices.

Top management perspectives

The third reason could be the attitude of top management. Pehr Gyllenhammar promoted the idea of “corporate citizenship” long before the concept was invented. From Gyllenhammar’s perspective, Volvo played a vital role in society; the corporation would inspire novel thinking in broad sectors of society in everything from infrastructure issues to industrial relations, work environment and ideas of healthy and progressive work. After Gyllenhammar, there was a quick retreat back to basics, not only by focusing on the automotive sector but also on a stricter corporate-economic approach. With Tuve Johannesson, an expatriate who had observed the Swedish scene from abroad for many years, VCC acquired a managing director who found it easier to identify the weaknesses than the strengths in the unique Swedish solutions in corporate and labour organisation. To accomplish the economic turn-around, the practices of the '70s was something to forget rather than to build upon. Tuve’s famous three priorities, *short-term profitability, short-term profitability and short-term profitability*, with emphasis on shareholder value as the company’s guiding star was actually launched at the same time as our company philosophy. It was also at that time, 1995-96, that Volvo and MiL entered into a closer collaboration in the design of the Global Leadership Programmes.

Mistrust of critical reflection

A fourth reason for resistance to learning about Volvo's history could be a special case of a more general mistrust of reflection and critical examination that permeates the VCC culture. There is data that can support such an interpretation.

I mentioned earlier that at the same time that Volvo launched the global programmes, they identified the most important dimensions of good leadership. The original list of criteria, which is now being replaced by a common one for the entire Ford Motor Company, was developed with the assistance of consultants from Hay McBer's. It was the basis for the extensive assessment efforts in identifying people with the potential to be the next generation of top leaders. The compilation of the results gave an interesting picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our high potential employees.

Teamwork and the ability to see the overall picture were areas where Volvo managers scored high. There were also a couple of pronounced areas of weakness. The will to learn from experience was the least prominent characteristic of the assessed managers. One conclusion was that the VCC culture did not value reflection and critical thought after the fact. In retrospect, I am not sure of the extent to which this influenced the choice of the ARL-based MiL as a partner, but there is a possibility.

Missing arenas for critical dialogues

A fifth reason for turning away from the company's history is that we lack the type of intellectual arenas that are needed for reflection to come to the surface. In contemporary societies – at least the western liberal democratic ones – institutions have developed for public debate, discussion and testing of conventional understandings, in short, a critical tradition and a critical general public. In the political arena, one speaks of the positive in the distribution of power, pluralism and a legitimate opposition.

One should, of course, not take the analogy too far. Corporations have another goal hierarchy and other stakeholders than political institutions.

Managers represent the executive management and need to be loyal to the decisions taken. Critical discussion can be tolerated early on in the decision-making process, but when decisions have been taken, there can no longer be any doubt or contradiction. Or as former CEO, Sören Gyll, expressed it: Volvo would profit from free and open discussion in the conference room but a lot less in the corridors. An intelligent executive management, however, knows not to strive for total consensus. Absolute power corrupts and absolute consensus blunts the intellect. How can one stimulate a critical discussion without it leading to anarchy and questionable loyalty to the decisions taken? This approaches the core question.

PROVIDING ARENAS FOR CRITICAL DIALOGUES

What is the purpose of having a knowledge partner? Is it possible to imagine that partners such as MiL, CHAMPS and Roffey Park could provide space for the equivalent of the political system's legitimate opposition? Leadership programmes could also be arenas for free and open reflection on collective/organisational experiences and not just on personal dilemmas. I am aware that this question should primarily be asked within my own organisation. But it should also be of interest for an organisation such as MiL, with its background and ambitions.

We VCC programme directors and our MiL partners, who have embraced the principles of analysis and reflection, have seldom succeeded in the leadership programmes in calling attention to the problems involved in important *organisational* experiences or dilemmas. One explanation can lie on the theoretical or conceptual level. The American sociologist, C W Mills, in *The Sociological Imagination* accused his colleagues in the 1950s of making social/organisational questions into individual problems. Unfortunately, the same kind of criticism could be directed towards VVC's HR cadre and MiL's professional associates.

ARL – too individualistic, here-and-now?

The MiL ARL concept I have encountered is based almost entirely on psychological theory. Or, more correctly, theories, because MiL associates

in general have been trained in different schools of psychology. They are, from my experiences in general, open and eclectic in nature. They also seek out dialogue from unconventional directions within psychology and general knowledge of people. However, I have seldom come across macro-oriented, historical and comparative methods and approaches.

This is perhaps built into the ARL concept. The roots are to be found in Revan's *Action Learning*, that made a point of proceeding from the situation in the here and now and shunning questions of there and then. It is true that ARL has added the element of reflection. But the reflection loops are short and are a matter of the individual's own experiences. Participants are expected to create their own theory (just think of the book with empty pages that each participant receives) and the learning coaches do not provoke by offering a detached and systematic analysis of the corporation with which they are working. They avoid characterizing and labelling. This does not stop individual MiL associates from knowing us better than we know ourselves but then it is most often not a conceptually developed knowledge but, rather, more down-to-earth, anecdotal and based on their own life experience.

MiL – needs to keep secrets?

One can wonder about the lack of comparative analyses. One of MiL's hidden and unrealized assets should be its tremendous amount of experience and not the least, the contacts acquired over many years of co-operating with a large number of companies in different lines of business. To a certain extent they make use of this, primarily in the Partner Programmes. Here they invite four or five different companies to form a partnership and in this way create a natural platform for the exchange of experiences and establishment of contacts outside their own industry. But otherwise, none. Perhaps the role of consultant simply imposes this discretion.

VCC – resistance to critical reflection?

Perhaps we are not open to such attempts if they were to be offered and

I have already touched on this. There can be resistance based on other aspects of VCC's culture than those that are emphasised in the company philosophy. The desire for consensus, unwillingness to deal with open conflicts and lack of interest in discussing things that have already happened are factors that certainly, in their own way, are praiseworthy but that prevent learning and growth. I have already stated that it was unfortunate that we did not test the possibility of making the leadership programmes into arenas for open, critical and constructive discussion of events such as the whole-car concept's rise and fall in production, the KLE strategy's breakthrough, the establishment of module teams in production development and experiences from the attempts to build Volvo and Renault cars on the same platform (the P4 project).

Just being able to learn from the collaboration and alliance attempts of other companies would have been worth a more systematic analysis. If we had managed to take in those experiences we had in connection with PRV, Renault, Mitsubishi and TWR, we would be better prepared for the Ford/PAG (Premiere Automotive Group) integration. A flagrant example is the Renault study that was carried out after the breakdown of the alliance – at the initiative of Renault, of course – and which is now being recycled in Volvo Truck but not in VCC. The experiences of VCC engineers' more or less constructive reactions to Renault's hostile take-over (an attitude Frenchmen called "core value fundamentalism") should be of interest in the current situation. And above all, the research on the P40 project in Born, where by filming the process meetings one gained unique material on how cultural and organisational differences function in practice. The material was condensed into a format that can be used for in-company self-reflection, which, however, has occurred to a very limited extent.

Talk about missed learning opportunities! As a consequence, we let ourselves start from scratch and make simple mistakes over and over again in our way of dealing with non-Swedish partners, co-workers, customers and owners.

The main responsibility for this lies in our own attitudes. But perhaps MiL should have challenged us more on this point, given that they are based explicitly on a critical reflection ARL theory and because they,

through their network, must have access to considerable knowledge of how to tackle cultural conflicts in other Swedish corporations that were bought up or entered into alliances.

SOME SUGGESTIONS

I would like to conclude by pointing out some of the areas in which we in VCC need to develop our thoughts about learning processes and in which a partner like MiL could contribute.

Making tacit knowledge more explicit

One area concerns the relationship between ARL and the specific learning culture we have developed in VCC. I began this chapter by presenting several examples of how managers, due to the programmes, had started to establish the habit of systematic reflection and that it has much to offer us. What one should contemplate is the relationship between ARL and our way of building and conveying knowledge. Here I am not talking about management behaviours but more generally about all types of professional knowledge. Compared to Ford and Renault, for example, Volvo stands out as being dependent upon tacit and non-formalised knowledge to a great extent. We build co-operation between those involved in the car projects based on a fundamental confidence in the competencies of others. It is a way of relating that is well adapted to a relatively small organisation with limited mobility and long-standing associations between people. Difficulties arise when the organisation grows quickly, when mobility increases and when one starts to work together with “outsiders”, especially if they come from big organisations with a more formal structure. That was obviously the case with Renault and we see it today in relation to Ford.

We from Volvo Car have to become better at articulating, formalising and presenting our knowledge. This is one of our greatest challenges and it is accentuated by the virtual revolution we see in our product and process development, where physical-material knowledge is being replaced by that which is abstract. Here we need to develop new work procedures

and ways of thinking and in this we need external sparring partners. It is presumably a matter of complementing the individual learning-from-experience methods that have been developed in the ARL tradition.

Different formats for different purposes

The programme format's specific nature and its most significant contribution is another area for reflection. Looking at our entire range of programmes, including the local ones, we find a number of variations of experienced-based learning. On one end of the scale, we find the cases where learning takes place directly in the workplace, in real time, in the team, in working with ordinary assignments. At the other extreme, the participants are released from their daily work environment to be trained along with outsiders, for instance, in an international business school. In-company programmes like GLP or GPM are somewhere in the middle and have their strength in the mixture of a common base (cross-functional within the corporation) and a time-out, off-site situation that enables risk-free unmasking and trying out of roles and relationships. If one wants to build a network, broaden frames of reference, gain an overall view of the corporation and an in-depth and nuanced self-image, in short, *get out of the box*, such a format is ideal.

If the goal is to create lasting changes in leadership behaviour, I have become more and more convinced that we have to increase our efforts to support the manager in his or her daily work, with personal feedback, recurring over time. We already have examples of attempts in this area based on ARL in that the participants in the programme continue afterwards in learning groups under their own direction or with sporadic coaching support. Typically, they use the learning groups to understand and act in questions that are on the direct, personal-relationship level, that is, in the relationship "I/others" or the group's dynamics. There is no doubt that the leadership programmes in this regard have been of great significance in arousing interest in continuing the work back home on the job in one's own group. As I see it, neither MiL, we, nor any of our other knowledge partners have fully realized the need for follow-up support to the participants in the leadership programmes. We have all been entirely too programme fixated. Today we need a more differentiated approach.

Working in complex socio-technical systems

A third area concerns how we work with social systems. Programme participants are not only asking for individual support. The demand for methods for working with teams is on the increase, and team development, measured in economical terms, is almost as big a business as leadership development. In VCC, large resources have been invested in supporting cross-functional teams in our product development (the module teams).

But the module teams and their successors are not teams. Possibly, they can be described as aggregates of teams. They are large, complex systems with loose contours to the world around them. In spite of the idea of being located in the same place, they are in reality geographically spread out and are held together as much by electronic media as by face-to-face relationships. Prevalent team concepts and methods are applicable to the sub-teams, but the great challenge lies on another level. The methods for training co-operation in complex socio-technical systems are not as well developed, but we have with our MiL associates made an ambitious attempt to work at the system level. Along with Sven-Erik Borglund, Anders Lindberg and Janne Nilsson, among others, we stretched the communication exercise concept's possibilities to the limits when we carried out large group exercises for entire module teams of 70-110 participants.

Out of the box – in new ways

In the GPM Programmes we tried out several ARL mutations, among them one we called “consultant-for-a-day” as a complement to the classic MiL projects: Learning groups, with coaching support, go into previously unknown territory, in or outside of their own company, to analyse a business-related problem and deliver suggestions to the owner of the problem in a few days' time. We will probably develop the concept even further in the next generation of programmes for experienced managers. We will definitely retain the idea of the importance of getting out of the box and confronting the new and less known in our industry and in other areas, but that does not always need to involve trans-oceanic trips. As an alternative to the currently obligatory excursions to American

factory outlets and shopping malls “so that we can understand who the customer is”, we have in the last GPM Programmes also visited suburban Swedish schools, polytechnic high schools and universities to provide middle-aged executives with insight into where future co-workers and leaders will be coming from and how they view the car industry. It has been just as confounding. I am quite sure that our partners in the development efforts must be able to help us understand our own society and its inhabitants, not just as *brand addicts*, but also as critically selective consumers, citizens and co-workers.

Meritocracy strikes back

One final reflection concerns the value and the appraisal of knowledge. In the last few years, an increased interest for training that results in grades, certificates and academic credits has been observed. To a certain extent, this can be a response to the influence from Ford, but I have a feeling that it also reflects a general increased interest for what I would choose to call *convertible merits*. Earned qualifications can be cashed in and be valid in a larger labour market. It may be the case that this will increase the demand for internal courses that give academic credits or other corporate-neutral quality criteria. The development could be interpreted as the revenge of meritocracy and the educational society. Another interpretation could be that universities and colleges are now starting to see the implications of the realization that their premium market now consists of highly educated professionals in companies. For MiL's sake, it may just bring to the fore the question of how one can become better at building networks with internationally highly reputed universities.

However things eventually end up, I hope that MiL makes good use of its own legacy of ideas that make them distinctive. We at Volvo Car Corporation have far greater benefit of a partner who dares to suggest a walk on the wild side instead of a trip to the shopping mall.

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