

HÖGSKOLAN VÄST

Rethinking Competence:

on Performing Digital Transformation

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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Abstract

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With ever-increasing incorporation of digital technologies at work, a growing concern has been with the competence of the workforce. To capture the importance of competence in relation to digital technologies, Information Systems has traditionally employed the concept of “IT competence”. In recent years, the more contemporary concept of “digital competence” has made its way into Information Systems. However, regardless of whether these concepts refer to distinct sociotechnical phenomena, it can be said that they provide similar contributions and limitations. As a result, the focus in both the “IT competence” and “digital competence” literature has been primarily limited to the individual’s abilities to use specific IT artifacts to perform certain work tasks. These limitations have bounded our concept of how the incorporation of today’s digital technologies transforms entire work relations and therefore the plausible ways in which the workforce can adapt to these changes. By revisiting the theoretical value of these concepts through a Neo-Sociotechnical Systems approach, my research aim has been to provide an enhanced understanding of a) the implications of the digital transformation of work for competence, and b) digital competence as a theoretical concept that accommodates those implications. The dissertation provides a revised understanding of “digital competence” through a longitudinal and ethnographic study of two digitally transforming professions, i.e., communications and automotive engineering.