

Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik

# Food for Thought

Communication and the transformation of work experience in  
web-based in-service training

av

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## Abstract

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The background of the present study is an interest in the use of digital technologies for in-service training activities in industry. Globalization, international competition and transnational production are elements that currently transform work practices and work organizations. In the food industry, which is the empirical context of this study, globalization has resulted in a number of changes including new forms of production, new international regulations and an increase in quality control of food and food production. These food quality initiatives and the new regulations, in turn, have resulted in a need for in-service training of staff. By analyzing how people actually engage in and use web-based environments as part of in-service training efforts, the overall aim of the research is to contribute to our understanding of the kind of communication and agency that emerges in web-based environments, and how such environments constitute contexts for communicative socialisation and learning for people employed in industry. The focus of the present study is on the nature of activities that unfolds when using digital media and learning resources in such settings. Analytically, such a focus is pursued employing a sociocultural perspective on communication and learning. Empirical material has been collected from archived chat log files from web-based in-service training courses. The results from this study, as outlined and discussed in four empirical articles, show that the participants accommodated rather smoothly to the affordances of the technology. They also managed to increase their skills and exert agency when engaging in communicative activities mediated by chat technology. Through chat interaction with other participants and experts, the course participants gradually appropriated some of the analytical tools and practices of quality assurance. Put differently, they literally wrote themselves into a different understanding of their current work practices. One of the productive features in these training activities is that they constituted hybrid contexts for learning. For instance, they are hybrid in the sense that practices of instruction, on the one hand, and practices of production work on the other, were salient resources for participation. From a pragmatic point of view, this study indicates that these activities supported by web-based technologies seem to offer feasible models for organizing distance learning in both further and in-service training.