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Organisations in turbulent flow: Bringing competence into view in decentralisation

Organisations, in particular professional organisations, are being modified and renewed rapidly. Units are merged, and, after some time, decentralised. Today, organisational decentralisation can take place several times during an individual worker's career. Individuals work far from each other because the offices can be highly scattered locally, regionally, or even nationally. These changes often have a strong impact on both the worker's motivation and satisfaction at work; at the same time, these factors are relevant to the individual's competence and its development (Ollila 2006; Laine & Ollila 2016). This article focuses theoretically and empirically on the issue of ensuring competence as an organisation becomes increasingly decentralised. The research questions are the following: How do professionals experience decentralisation? How do their skills and self-determination manifest in decentralisation? The research material consists of 11 themed interviews with personnel at a decentralised, public-sector professional organisation. The physical workplaces of the interviewees are located in different locations in Western and Central Finland. The material obtained for this case study was analysed by content analysis using the NVivo program. The main findings revealed the workers' positive experiences related to the versatile use of digital tools as instruments of interaction, their strong desire and motivation to ensure their own competence in a decentralised organisation, and, under certain boundary conditions, their ability and need to act in a self-determined manner.