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CONFIRMATION WORK IN EUROPE: EMPIRICAL RESULTS, EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

A Comparative Study in Seven Countries

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Preface

This volume contains the results of the first international-comparative empirical study on confirmation work in seven European countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland). It is the result of an extensive international collaboration between researchers from these countries. Through this, it has become possible to put together the experiences with research on youth and religion as well as on young people's relationship to institutionalised forms of Christianity that previously have only been available at a national level.

Doing justice to the national histories and situations as well as to the many differences between the countries and Churches involved, the confirmation work in each of the countries is described theoretically and empirically in parallel chapters, with information about the current situation as well as about the different models of confirmation work and practical experiences. Comparative chapters focus on core questions of confirmation work, concerning didactic issues and methods but also the meaning of confirmation work for church and society at large. Readers with limited time will find a brief summary of the main results in part 5. The tables with the detailed results are printed only partly in the respective chapters of the book. A complete list of results for all countries involved can be found in the appendix.

The approach of the study follows the insights of contemporary education as well as recent developments in theology and the Churches. It pursues the interest in pupil-oriented learning that treats young people not as objects but as active and creative subjects. This is why the study is based, in the first place, on interviews with the confirmands themselves. Moreover, since confirmation work has turned into a major field for volunteers, it also includes the workers – ministers as well as others. In addition to this, at least in some of the countries, the parents were addressed as well.

The present volume is part of the emerging field of international comparative research in the field of religious and Christian education. Through this, the book opens up new horizons for thinking about confirmation work. It raises questions that go beyond the traditional national contexts and offers innovative perspectives for the praxis and theory of confirmation work in Europe. In this respect, the study can also be seen as a contribution to ecumenical dialogue. By

bringing together data from seven countries or Churches it allows for mutual understanding and for learning from each other in new ways.

The book is written by a team of authors from all of the participating countries who have created the *International Network for Research and Development of Confirmation and Christian Youth Work* founded in 2007. It is based on an empirical study with more than 28000 adolescents, parents and workers, most of whom answered questionnaires at two points in time. This empirical basis places it on the level of the largest studies available in this field. Throughout the study, the researchers have followed the most current standards of social scientific research, aiming for representative data and valid procedures. The ample interpretations, however, also make reference to theological insights and to the discussions on the Church as well as on the tasks of Christian education.

The Editors

Introduction

1. Introduction

FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER, WOLFGANG ILG, AND HENRIK SIMOJOKI

This volume presents the results of the first international empirical study on confirmation work in seven European countries. Its international character as well as its empirical methodology make this study an innovative contribution not only for the practise of working with confirmands but also for the research on young people in Europe. Participating countries are Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland (Zurich). Religious educators and researchers from universities and research institutes of the Protestant Churches in these countries have formed an international network – the *International Network for Research and Development of Confirmation and Christian Youth Work* – in order to carry out this collaborative study and to have an institutional basis for future work. The seven countries are not the only countries in Europe or around the world where confirmation work plays an important role. Other countries or Churches, for example, in Hungary or Iceland or even in the United States could have been included as well – an idea that was not realized because the study would have become too large. Moreover, the seven participating countries or Churches represent an area where confirmation work is of special interest, traditionally but also in the present.

The focus of this publication is confirmation work with young people. More specifically, we are interested in the expectations and experiences of the adolescent participants but also of those who are responsible for such programmes, as pastors or other full-time workers of the Church but also as volunteers. Confirmation work is a vital field of educational activities that the Protestant Churches make available to young people. Increasingly, at least in theory and in the official guidelines, the participants are considered not the objects of this work but as active subjects who share the responsibility for shaping the programmes. In this respect, the present study is closely related to an ongoing renewal of confirmation work that is taking place in most of the participating countries. Through this, the traditional models based on the idea of instruction are giving way to more open and flexible forms of working together with young people by forming partnerships between the generations – a process that, according to our findings, has been successful at least to some degree. We are interested in finding out about possibilities for making the programmes even more attractive to young people.

While our focus is clearly on confirmation work and while the book will consequently be primarily of interest to those who are in charge of this work,

our study can also be of interest to other audiences. The following aspects can give readers a better idea of what the study has to offer:

- Our primary concern is about how the Churches are working with young people, specifically in the context of confirmation. In this sense, our study is about Christian youth work, not in the narrow sense of this term that only applies to certain organisations but in a broad sense that also includes working with confirmands. Traditionally, preparation for confirmation and Christian youth work were two different fields. In our understanding, the connections and parallels between these fields make it necessary to consider them together. Consequently, our results should be of interest to all those who are interested in youth work and in the relationship between the church and young people as well.
- With its emphasis on young people's expectations and experiences in relationship to programmes offered for confirmands roughly between the ages of 13 and 15 years, our study also contributes to the more general research on religious attitudes in adolescence, especially in relationship to the Church or institutionalised religion. In many of the countries involved, confirmands account for a great proportion of the respective age cohort. Therefore our results also offer insights into the worldviews of young people in general.
- The responses of the pastors and of the other workers responsible for the programmes in preparation for confirmation included in our study allow for insights into how institutionalised religion presents itself to young people and to their parents or, to put it in a more general manner, into the intergenerational dynamics of institutionalised meaning systems.
- The inclusion of volunteers in our study relates it to the research on volunteerism and on the motives or preconditions of social commitment in society.
- With its international scope, the study contributes to the emerging field of international comparative research in religious education.

While these interests form the theoretical backbone of the present volume and will be addressed throughout the various parts and chapters, we have organised the book itself along the lines of its main theme – confirmation work as it can be found in the participating countries.

In this introduction, we want to give readers some general information on confirmation, point out the wider background of our research and describe the rationale of our study, including our research questions.

1.1 What is Confirmation and Confirmation Work?

Confirmation and the preparation for confirmation are often seen as a core characteristic of the Protestant Churches. And indeed, as the present study shows, they play an important role for the Protestant Churches in all seven countries that participate in this study. This is not only true for Church officials or pastors but also for the adolescents and their parents as well as for the many thousands of volunteers who are involved with this programme in most of the countries. Today, about 500000 adolescents per year participate in confirmation in the seven countries of the present study. Participation rates are very high, in some countries up to 90 % of the adolescents of the total population. In most of the countries, it is the majority of Protestant youth living there.

Historically, confirmation goes back to the baptismal rites of the early Church. It then was part of the rites that were conducted in the immediate context of baptism itself. Confirmation was not practised separately. Only with time, during the Middle Ages, confirmation turned into a separate ritual of its own and took on sacramental meaning. Until today, confirmation is one of the sacraments in the Catholic Church. It was this meaning as a sacrament that Reformation theologians like Martin Luther could not accept. In their view, there is no biblical basis for this understanding. Only baptism and the Lord's Supper have been accepted as sacraments in the Protestant tradition; the Catholic confirmation rites were rejected and discontinued.

The main aim of the Protestant reformers was that all members of the Church should understand the Christian faith. The faith of the Church was no longer considered sufficient. This is why catechetical instruction, most often based on Luther's catechism or on the Reformed Heidelberg catechism, was introduced. Already in the sixteenth century, individual reformers, most of all Martin Bucer of Strasburg, also introduced a new ritual that came at the end of this instruction – the rite of confirmation that included catechetical elements as well as a personal blessing. Bucer is often called the father of confirmation. Yet in many places, depending on the country and on the region, confirmation was actually not introduced as a general rite before the eighteenth century. The decisive influence for this general break-through came from two directions, from Pietism as a movement of Christian awakening and from the Enlightenment with its impulses for individual maturity and autonomy.

Ever since, participation rates have remained high in the respective Churches and countries, even if the theological understandings have changed repeatedly. In the countries participating in the present study, the last 50 years have been an important period of renewal for confirmation work. The term itself – confirmation work instead of instruction or catechesis – refers to these changes. The

basic model no longer is some kind of dated teaching and rote learning but is much closer to the ideas of youth work, with creative methods, pupil-oriented, and with possibilities for active participation. The typical age of the participating adolescents – called confirmands – is about 14 or 15 years. In the past, confirmation work used to be the sole task of the minister. In the meantime, others have come to share this responsibility, full-time workers as well as volunteers of all ages but mostly younger people under 25 years. This is why we speak of workers as the group of those responsible for confirmation work.

The duration of confirmation work varies from country to country. Yet in any case, the common effort is to have enough time for serious work and for a prolonged introduction to the faith and life of the Church for the younger generation. In addition to the Christian content, this is one of the characteristics that distinguish the Protestant confirmation from so-called secular rites of passage that are organised, among others, by Humanist associations especially in eastern Germany or in Norway.

One of the questions pursued in the present study is how far the efforts of renewing and of modernising confirmation work have been successful. In any case, it can be said that confirmation work is a very intensive educational programme that reaches more young people than any other programme outside of mandatory schooling.

1.2 The Background of Our Study: The Changing Place of Religion and Confirmation Work in Society

In most countries of the Western world, one of the recurring themes of public and academic debates has been the role of religion in »modern society« or, more recently, in »postmodern society«. Especially since the early twentieth century, many observers have been concerned about what they perceived as the dwindling of religious influence, especially on adolescents. In their interpretations of this challenging situation, most analysts, in the social sciences but also in theology, made use of the theory of secularisation. In fact, this theory can be called one of the most widespread explanatory tools for the interpretation of religion in modern society during most of the twentieth century.

For religious education, secularisation has an additional meaning that goes beyond the more general effects of cultural and social change. In many of the countries involved in the present study, the twentieth century also was the time when the legal separation between church and state took place. One of the immediate effects of this separation was the transformation of school religious education that has turned into a subject related less and less to a sponsoring

Church. Even if there are differences in the legal regulations concerning religion in the different countries – some of them still have something like a state church – and even if the involvement of the Churches with school Religious Education has continued after the separation between church and state in some of the countries, there can be no doubt that the distance between the state school and the Churches has grown markedly throughout Europe. Consequently, the school no longer fulfils the task of introducing young people to the Church, especially not in terms of personal encounters or experiences, of liturgical participation and introduction to the sacraments.

More recently however, the theory of secularisation has lost much of its credibility. Many social scientists no longer consider this theory »academically useful« (Luhmann 2000, 278), some even prefer to speak of »desecularization« (Berger 1999) or of a »postsecular time« (Habermas 2001, Ziebertz/Riegel 2008) and of a »return of religion« (Riesebrodt 2000) in order to characterise the contemporary religious situation or landscape. Still others challenge such notions because they doubt that religion has ever been absent (Joas 2004, 122-128). Even those who have been in favour of the theory of secularisation (Pollack 2003) agree that the scope of this theory is limited and that a loss of religion cannot be expected equally for all parts of social life. In any case, the current situation presents itself much too multi-layered and multi-faceted for making it fit with only one theoretical concept. The religious attitudes of young people in Western societies appear to be influenced by religious pluralism and by individualisation, by privatisation but also by the new public role that the religions have come to play, be it in terms of ethical and political involvement (Casanova 1994) or in terms of political conflicts often of a global scale. In short: it has become quite difficult to forecast the future of religion. This difficulty is one of the reasons why empirical studies on particular topics and specific aspects – like confirmation work – have gained in importance while more general theories like secularisation theory have lost much of their influence.

Yet while the future of religion most likely looks much brighter than the widespread expectations of an irrevocable process of secularisation or loss of religion would have it, it is also easy to see that the work of the Churches has not become easier. This is especially true for their work with adolescents. The expected return of religion does certainly not imply a revitalization of the Churches. The renewal of the interest in religion does not imply a similar interest in formal church membership. An increase in personal religion or – to use the term which, due to another turn of the present time, is becoming more and more common – a new openness for spirituality does not bring about a turn towards institutionalised religion and the Churches. This is another reason why educational programmes like confirmation work that intentionally introduce young people to the Church, have gained additional importance.

Yet confirmation work does not only matter to the Churches. Religious pluralisation and individualisation also have consequences for society at large. There are several reasons for this. First, religion has always been a source for values because religions shape our understanding of the world as well as our understanding of social relationships. The Churches as well as so-called independent Christian associations have been very effective in nurturing the motivation for voluntary activities and the commitment to the welfare of others or even to the common good. It is difficult to imagine that individualised forms of religion that are not connected to any institution or that tend towards an avoidance of formal association and membership altogether, have the same effect in this direction. As the data from our study presented in this volume indicate, confirmation work is an important field for young people to learn about the meaning and potentials of such work. Moreover, it gives them a chance to become volunteers themselves after confirmation. Yet voluntary work is not the only result of confirmation work in respect to society. The second reason for society to be interested in confirmation work has to do with the tenuous nature of shared values. In societies with a high degree of individualisation, common values tend to become scarce. Christian youth work is one of the few places where a continued and systematically oriented encounter with a clear value basis can take place across different segments of the population, for example, across the dividing lines of social background and educational tracking. Moreover, it provides adolescents with the opportunity to encounter people who have a clear personal commitment and to engage in discussions on issues like social justice.

Since we consider it important to make the contribution of confirmation work to society more well known and more visible, we have included a special chapter on civil society (cf. chapter 4.7). This will give us the opportunity to further pursue the questions concerning the ways in which confirmation work supports values and orientations of the common good.

The changing shape of confirmation work and the growing awareness of its meaning for society at large also correspond to changes in theology and in the Churches. This is not the place to review the international discussion in theology or to consider different theological positions. However, two changes concerning theology and the church are of special importance in the present context and readers should at least be aware of their general direction. The first change concerns what can be called a new appreciation of the needs and personal interests of individual church members in general and of young people in particular. The data reported in the present volume indicate that there is a growing openness in church and theology for the questions and views of the individual believers. Traditional dogmatics and the church as an institution no longer are the decisive starting points for thinking about confirmation work.

While confirmation work remains an important access to the church for young people, the task of confirmation work is not understood as adapting young people to the church. Instead, at least in some ways, the church is willing to adapt itself to the younger generation. In any case, the relationship between the church and the faith of the church on the one hand and the younger generation on the other must be dialogical. This corresponds to a theological understanding of the church as an institution for the people, with the purpose of supporting them in their faith. This understanding also implies a new openness for pluralism not only in society but also within the church itself.

This point of view is also in line with the role of the church in relationship to the state and to society, after the separation of state and church which is the second change to be considered here. The state Churches of the past often tended to act like bureaucratic state agencies. They defined their relationship to the people by applying set rules and routine procedures. Compared to this kind of institution, the Churches of today are trying to be much closer to the people and to their needs. The shape of contemporary confirmation work clearly reflects this new understanding of the church.

The separation between church and state has additional implications that are of importance for confirmation work. Sometimes the church is now considered as part of the private sphere, just like religion is often treated as a purely private matter in modern society. For confirmation work, this would imply that it should be seen as a private activity as well. From a theological point of view, such a privatisation of confirmation and confirmation work would, however, not be acceptable. Not only would it overlook the fact that confirmation work does contribute to civil society and to the maintenance of a value basis for society at large. It would also be in tension with the understanding of the public nature of the Christian faith itself. The Protestant tradition has always emphasised that this faith should be accessible publicly and that it should also be allowed to find its public expression, in the ethical field no less than in the life orientations of the people. This is why we consider it important to maintain the claim to the public meaning and importance of confirmation work.

1.3 The Need for Empirical Research on Confirmation Work

The social and religious changes referred to in the previous sections entail a number of reasons for empirical research on confirmation work. This work is itself part of the changing religious landscape and, consequently, it is of interest in terms of the forms of the religion transmitted there. Neither the traditional forms of doctrine nor the traditional assumptions of wholesale secularisation

are likely to yield a sufficient picture. Pluralisation and individualisation make it necessary to find out about the forms of religion that are actually realised, for example, in confirmation work.

As pointed out above, the need for empirical research also results from changes in theology and the church, in education and religious education. For the present purposes, a common theme of these changes is of special importance. There is widespread agreement in all these respects that the individual person – the child, the learner as a subject – must play a much more central role than in the past. This is especially easy to see in religious education, including theories and conceptualisations of confirmation work. In the past, this work consisted almost exclusively in the transmission of a Christian understanding in the sense of catechetical knowledge as a unidirectional process. As mentioned above, rote learning used to be its main characteristic, and this understanding corresponded to a view of the church as an authority and as an institution into which the individual person should be incorporated and to which he or she had to comply. In recent times, the emphasis has become quite different, at least in most of the countries. Instead of incorporation and compliance, the leading ideal has now become a church and a faith that can support the individual person's own ways of finding meaning in life and of finding their way in life. This is even true for countries where the aims of enculturation and socialisation continue to play an important role. The so-called children's theology or the theology of the child is a good example for the new openness for children and youth (cf. Schweitzer 2005, Bucher 2002, Sagberg 2008). It is obvious that such approaches inherently entail the need for empirical research. Confirmation work will hardly be able to accommodate the needs and orientations of today's children and youth without making use of the insights offered by empirical research.

While many theories of religious education have come to at least include this perspective of the central importance of the individual person which may also be seen as a heritage of the Protestant tradition with its emphasis on individual faith, it should not be overlooked that there also are approaches geared to the institutional or communal aspects of Christian faith and also to the role of the contents of the Christian tradition in its integrity. Yet it is easy to see that, given the contemporary situation of religion, even more traditional approaches do not escape the need for empirical research. Since it cannot be presupposed anymore that institutional affiliation and content will actually be accepted by young people, the effects of confirmation work have to be evaluated empirically. The need for empirical work does not ensue only from a liberal theology but also makes sense to a more conservative point of view. This is not to say that different theological positions within the church have lost their meaning and influence – which would clearly be a mistaken assumption – but the effects of

the social and religious changes described above are a challenge to the Churches on the whole, not only to certain groups within the Churches.

Even if we cannot go into the details here, it should be clear that the changes in theology, the church, and in confirmation work also correspond to changes in education. It is probably fair to say that the schools in all countries participating in the present study have come to follow an approach that is much more child-centered and learner-oriented than was the case before the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. More recent developments have added to this by including, for example, didactical approaches based on constructivism. According to this understanding, learning always proceeds by way of individual constructions of reality. Consequently, the traditional models of transmission and inculcation have lost much of their influence.

However, education has not become a purely subjective matter. While child-oriented approaches have gained in influence, other tendencies have clearly become more influential as well. Especially in recent years, educational testing and the interest in the actual results or outcomes of teaching and learning have turned into hallmarks of contemporary schooling. In this respect, the objective demands on education as defined by society and, even more so, by the economy set benchmarks for teaching and learning.

Another new phenomenon in this context is the introduction of evaluation. As individual schools have become more independent in their ways of working with their students and of adapting to local or regional needs and potentials, they have also become subject to evaluation processes aiming at the maintenance of common educational standards. The introduction of special agencies for standards in education in many countries illustrates this development quite well. Evaluation in education also is associated with new ideals like transparency and responsibility and with quality control or reporting to the public.

Confirmation work is part of the Churches' work and, consequently, not attached to the educational activities of the state or to the state school. The demands of the government do not apply to confirmation work. Yet it is easy to understand that the educational work of the church will always be perceived within the general educational climate of a society. Therefore confirmation work is not exempt from the demands of learner-centeredness and also not from those of evaluation and transparency or quality control. In this context, the changing role of the church also has to be taken into account. The authority of the church that traditionally may have been sufficient to warrant the legitimacy of its educational procedures in the eyes of most people, no longer is sufficient to convince parents or the general public. The need for empirical research on confirmation work corresponds to such demands.

In sum: there are a number of different reasons why there is a growing need for empirical research on confirmation work. This need arises out of internal

developments in this field itself but it also results from changes in church and society. The empirical approaches used in the field of confirmation work must be open to these different aspects.

1.4 International Comparative Research in Religious Education

The idea of international comparative research in religious education is based on a number of different reasons and experiences. In general, it can be said that international contacts, exchange and collaboration have become an important dimension in this field especially since the 1970s. Since that time, a number of international conferences have played an important role in the religious education discussion and several international associations have been founded – like ISREV (International Seminar on Religious Education and Values), IAPT (International Academy for Practical Theology) and ISERT (International Society for Empirical Research in Theology). The activities of these associations have been an important presupposition for the present project. At the same time, integrated international projects like the present one clearly go beyond the traditional scope of international meetings and conferences. They do not only entail some kind of general exchange or collaboration but an integrated study carried out jointly in several different countries at the same time. As can be seen from parallel studies, for example, in the area of school Religious Education in Europe (Jackson et al. 2007, Ziebertz/Riegel 2009), such approaches are very promising. They offer insights that cannot be reached without international comparative research.

Another reason for international comparative research in religious education has to do with the Christian idea of *ecumene*. This idea implies the need of bringing the different Churches closer together, among others, through better knowledge of each other and through mutual understanding. While this has been understood mostly in terms of doctrinal issues, the practical fields and theological disciplines, including empirical studies, entail important potentials for mutual understanding as well. Moreover, the empirical approach brings us much closer to everyday practises of confirmation work. In this sense, international comparative research in religious education can be seen as an outgrowth of the idea of *ecumene* and as one of its contemporary forms of realisation. In the present context, our joint work has brought together researchers and church representatives from seven European countries and Churches. It has also stimulated international exchange at different levels, for example, with study trips with a focus on confirmation work in another country and Church.

Today, there clearly is a new openness for stimulating ideas not only from

within one's own national or regional context but also from other countries. This openness corresponds to more general developments of internationalisation or, in the case of Europe, of European unification. We have not reached a level, however, that would allow for speaking of religious education as an integrated international field of study – like, for example, in medical research where findings in one part of the world may have an immediate effect on the medical practice in another. Most likely, this kind of integrated research is not possible in fields like education and religious education where presuppositions specific to only one region or country or to one religious tradition and church will always play a decisive role. Yet it has also become clear that international collaboration in religious education research can be most helpful and interesting.

One of the areas for which comparative research can be recommended concerns questions at a system level. The ways in which confirmation work is done in a particular Church or country can be considered a system that is composed of certain typical elements like certain classroom settings, outings, camps, placements as volunteers, etc. Moreover, the families of the confirmands and the ways in which their views and needs are addressed, play an important role that has often been overlooked. Other characteristics like the duration of the confirmation time or the age of the confirmands may also be seen as constitutive of a particular system. Especially in situations in which one's own system seems to be failing, for example, because the numbers of the participants are dwindling or because the confirmands seem to terminate their (active) involvement with the church right after confirmation, the question arises if a different system might be more effective. Yet it is often not possible to base the decisions necessary for a system change on experiences with a different system within one's own church or country, simply because there is only one such system in use there. International comparisons may offer at least additional possibilities for finding a basis for such decisions, even if – as pointed out below in more detail (see chapter 4.2) – the interpretation of international comparisons remains difficult and even if, consequently, much caution is to be recommended with any immediate use of empirical results for policy making.

Again we observe that there are many different reasons that speak for international comparative research on confirmation work. These reasons refer to academic interests as well as to practical needs. They arise from theological considerations as well as from the wish to have a better basis for new policies within the Churches.

1.5 The Aims of the Present Study

Corresponding to the potentials of international comparative research in religious education, the aims of our study can be explained at several different levels. The following three are especially important:

(1) We expect the results to be helpful and stimulating for the practise of confirmation work. The study brings together insights and experiences from different countries and Churches that have not been available before. In this respect, common tendencies and different developments are of equal interest. They may trigger a new understanding of confirmation work as a whole but also of the different ways of doing confirmation work in the different locations included in our research. Moreover, the research may provide a better basis for confirmation work, draw additional public and ecclesial as well as academic attention to it and, through this, become itself a motivating factor for the field.

(2) We hope to establish a new international field of research in an area that has been neglected in the past. While international research on schools has become quite common, at least in the sense of international comparative testing and international educational standards, education and learning beyond formal education has not received similar attention. This may be considered surprising and in any case it is not justified because, in theory, informal and non-formal ways of learning have long been recognized to be highly important, especially in respect to social and moral learning.

Given such tendencies, it is no surprise that most of the international comparative research in religious education available so far has been limited to the context of formal schooling and to religious education in school (Jackson et al. 2007, Knauth et al. 2008, Ziebertz/Riegel 2009, also cf. the overview: Larsson/Gustavsson 2004). The broader context of religion and society, of international politics and of European unification (cf. McLeod/Saarinen/Lauha 2006), however, suggests that we should also broaden our views of religious education in order to include, among others, parochial settings like in the case of confirmation work.

While the present study is the first of its kind in terms of international research, it clearly draws upon earlier research on confirmation work in the participating countries and beyond (see the annotated bibliography on www.confirmation-research.eu). Respective studies can be found especially in Finland (Niemelä 2002; 2008) but also in Sweden (Pettersson 2009). In Germany, Switzerland and also in Norway, a number of smaller studies on confirmation work have been conducted (overview: Ilg/Schweitzer 2009, Schlag/Voirol-Sturzenegger 2009, Leganger-Krogstad 2009; for a historical and systematic perspective from the United States cf. Osmer 1996).

(3) As pointed out above, the present study may also be seen as continuation of ecumenical efforts. In this respect, as shown in more detail elsewhere (Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009), the present study takes up the lead of activities of the LWF (Lutheran World Federation) concerning confirmation and provides them with new directions. In the 1950s and 1960s, the LWF pursued the interest of finding, identifying or developing a shared Lutheran understanding of confirmation work and of confirmation. This attempt was based on academic consultations of church historians, systematic theologians and religious educators. By the 1990s, the interests and strategies of the LWF had clearly changed (cf. LWF 1995; for discussion and additional references cf. Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009). The consultations of that time no longer were about a shared understanding in terms of Christian doctrine. Instead they focussed on the different contexts of confirmation work that were characteristic of the situation in different countries. Moreover, pedagogical perspectives were given much more attention than in the past and the confirmands themselves were no longer seen as people with deficits that should be overcome through confirmation preparation but as persons with gifts of their own that can be of value to the whole community. It is in line with such interests that the LWF consultations of the 1990s included representatives from different Churches and that the meetings were preceded by extensive interviews with experts in the field of confirmation work. This was clearly a step towards using empirical research as a new basis for ecumenical exchange – a lead that our own study has taken up in its own ways.

Consequently, the study presented in this volume should also be seen as a contribution to the ecumenical efforts not only of the LWF but also of the CEC (Conference of European Churches) or of the WCC (World Council of Churches). Empirical research can be of use not only for the social sciences but also for theology and for the church.

1.6 The Research Questions: A First Orientation

A detailed account of our research questions will be given in part 2. At this point, we will limit ourselves to a general overview that may be of help to readers in finding their way through the book.

Our main questions refer to the expectations and experiences of the confirmands, i. e., of the young people participating in the programmes offered by the Churches in preparation for confirmation. What do they want to know and what do they hope to gain from such programmes? What are their motives for participation? What religious and social attitudes do they bring to the pro-

grammes? Are their expectations matched by their experiences? If not, what disappointments appear in their responses and what impulses do they entail for future improvements of such programmes?

Another set of questions refers to those who are in charge of preparing and leading the programmes at a local level. This includes ministers, deacons, youth workers or other church employees but also volunteers who often are adolescents themselves or young adults who have gone through the programmes as confirmands a few years earlier. Again we are asking about expectations and experiences, yet this time not of the confirmands but of the workers. We are interested in what they bring to the programmes and in how their attitudes influence the programmes as well as how they relate to the experiences of the confirmands. Moreover, their responses allow for an additional perspective on the confirmands.

The third group of people included in our study are the parents. We have not been able to give them as much attention as the confirmands and the workers and they were included in the study only in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Norway. Yet we are also interested in how they perceive confirmation work and how they feel about their children participating in such programmes. Does it matter to them that their children are doing this? Are they satisfied with what the Churches have to offer to their children?

While the expectations and experiences of those involved in confirmation work, be it as participants or be it as workers or parents, certainly are of prime interest for this work, the shape of the actual programmes is crucial as well. Given the general tendencies in education and religious education described above, we were interested in finding out to what degree the respective reforms have actually changed the practice of confirmation work in the parishes. What kinds of organisational models are in use there? What methods are dominant? Which contents play a role? New models of confirmation work often make reference to the parish as a special place of learning and personal encounter, of liturgical experiences and of voluntary commitment. This is why we also wanted to know about the actual role of such aspects in confirmation work. In these respects, our results contribute to the evaluation of confirmation work as well as to efforts of further improving the quality of such programmes.

The international character of our study clearly gives our results additional meaning. Comparative evaluations offer new insights and impulses that go beyond one's own national context. They also allow for working with more general questions for analysis. What tendencies, for example, in the responses of the confirmands can be attributed to the model in use in one particular country or Church, and which ones turn out to be very similar in different locations in spite of the different ways of doing confirmation work? International collabora-

tion opens up new possibilities for learning from each other but also for deciphering common tendencies across different Churches and nationalities.

All of our research questions follow a twofold general interest in finding possible improvements for future conceptual work by taking young people seriously on the one hand and in making visible the possible meaning of confirmation work for society at large on the other. The first motive corresponds to the educational demand for respecting young people as subjects rather than treating them as objects of instruction; the second motive corresponds to what can be called public theology or public church. The work of theology and the Churches is public in the sense of their contribution to society at large and to the common weal.

1.7 How Our Research Project Has Developed

An international study on confirmation work carried out by an international team of researchers from seven European countries – this is a new development that may well raise questions concerning the origins of this unusual initiative. As often is the case with new developments, it is helpful to know about their history. In the present case, however, it is more accurate to speak of several different histories because the project goes back to different roots that can be found in each of the participating countries and Churches. What is new simply is the fact that the activities of people working independently of each other in different countries have been brought together and have been combined in order to create an innovative framework. To different degrees yet with similar directions, research institutes of universities and Churches in the participating countries had pursued research interests in the field of confirmation work.

The first encounter of a number of the researchers who eventually have joined the project took place at a symposium in Tübingen/Germany in March 2007. This symposium was organised by the Tübingen research team (Friedrich Schweitzer, Colin Cramer, Wolfgang Ilg) together with the Comenius Institute (Münster/Germany, Volker Elsenbast, Jutta Pfannkuch, Albrecht Schöll). The idea was to bring together the different research projects on confirmation work going on in Germany and to broaden the focus of this research by inviting colleagues from other countries. Moreover, the German teams in Tübingen and Münster had begun thinking of the idea of starting a nationwide study on confirmation work, something that had never been tried before. In this way, they were hoping to expand their previous research that was either limited to a certain region (cf. Cramer/Ilg/Schweitzer 2009) or to small samples and qualitative approaches (Schöll 2009).

Unexpectedly yet very fortunately, the Tübingen symposium eventually became the starting point for an international research project. Together with additional materials, the contributions to the symposium have been expanded into substantial chapters of a volume on researching confirmation work (Schweitzer/Elsenbast 2009). Starting in early summer 2007, the international team took up its collaborative work giving shape to the research project documented in the present volume.

As can be expected, electronic means of communication have proven to be quite indispensable for the cooperation across the various countries. Yet it also became clear that this kind of exchange cannot replace the process of working together in person. Consequently, a number of meetings – graciously hosted by the local members of the team – took place in Tübingen, Järvenpää/Helsinki, Uppsala, Birmingham (on the occasion of a conference there), Berlin, Vienna, Zurich, Santiago de Compostela (also on the occasion of a conference) and Loegumkloster (Denmark).

Many people have contributed to the present study. Members of the research team that met in different places were:

Austria: Dieter Bergmayr (Lutheran Evangelical Church of Austria, University College of Teacher Education, Vienna), Dr. Gerhard Harkam (Preacher Seminary of the Lutheran Church of Austria, Vienna), Dagmar Lager (University College of Teacher Education, Vienna)

Denmark: Leise Christensen, Ph.D. (Theological Pedagogical Centre, Loegumkloster), Rie Frilund Skårhøj (Center for Youth Studies and Religion, Copenhagen)

Finland: Dr. Tapani Innanen (University of Helsinki), Dr. Kati Niemelä (Church Research Institute, Tampere), Jouko Porkka (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Järvenpää)

Germany: Wolfgang Ilg, Prof. Dr. Friedrich Schweitzer, Dr. Henrik Simojoki (University of Tübingen), Volker Elsenbast (Comenius Institute, Münster)

Norway: Dr. Ida Marie Høeg (Centre for Church Research, Oslo), Dr. Bernd Krupka (Northern Norway Education Centre for Practical Theology, Tromsø)

Sweden: Dr. Per Pettersson (University of Karlstad)

Switzerland: Prof. Dr. Thomas Schlag (University of Zurich).

More detailed information about the authors of this study can be found in the appendix.

Methodology

2. Methodology

WOLFGANG ILG AND FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER

The emergence of the international research project is described in part 1. The present chapter specifies the methodological aspects concerning the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

2.1 Background of the Study

Our study is the first international empirical study on confirmation work that goes beyond the limited scope of small-scale – often qualitative – research. It was carried out in seven European countries and is based on a quantitative approach and on national sub-samples that come as close to the ideal of representative sampling as possible. The most important aim of the study was to gain a general picture of confirmation work in the participating countries and to make possible a comparative analysis of the data. Consequently, we had to keep the data as standardised as possible. At the same time, our study had to be sensitive to the different presuppositions in the different countries and regions, which means that we had to adapt our questionnaires to the country-specific settings as much as necessary. The focus was not only on winning comparable individual descriptions of confirmation work for the seven countries involved but rather on combining the data in such a way that we could compute correlations or differences on a statistical level »country by country« as well as »item by item«. This required a high level of uniformity concerning issues like the definition of the answering scale, layout of the questionnaires, order of the items, etc.

The international research project has profited from the extensive methodological preparatory work in some of the countries. Especially the ongoing support from *GESIS – Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences* proved to be very valuable for the whole process. In some countries (especially Finland, Germany, Sweden and Norway), expertise from earlier research projects has been integrated into the preparation of the international study. The German team (located at the University of Tübingen, in cooperation with the Comenius Institute in Münster) administered the survey on a general level, brought together the different experiences and suggestions, provided the data base and recorded the decisions for all procedures of the study in an internal manual.

By involving nearly 20000 confirmands and several thousand workers, the main methodological approach could only be a quantitative one. Only the items with set answers to choose from were included in the international comparison. On the national level, open questions were added and the answers were transcribed for content analysis. Thus qualitative and quantitative approaches were combined in the study but only the quantitative results will be presented here. The results of the qualitative parts of the study in the different countries will be published in national publications.

As our focus is on presenting empirical data, we restricted the bibliographical references to a minimum. Most of the literature cited is in English or (more seldom) German. Texts in Nordic languages are only cited in special cases.

2.2 Samples and Timing

Table 1 displays the sample sizes for the countries involved.

Table 1: Number of persons questioned in the countries

country	TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
units/groups	943	635	29	39	34	107	65	34
confirmands	19445	11513	540	598	1193	2176	2343	1082
workers	2386	1601	118	64	46	212	130	215
parents	6909	5788	240	246	–	–	635	–
confirmed in 2006	467195	262194	3169	4075	50452	58624	42587	46094
comments				only Zurich		+ 429 YCVs		

The number of confirmands in the year 2006 was used as basis for the weighting factors. The number of confirmands in Switzerland only refers to those confirmed in the Canton of Zurich, which was the regional Church that cooperated with the international study (details see chapter 3.3).

The column »confirmed in 2006« additionally holds the number of confirmands per year which also was the basis for computing the weighting factors for the statistical analyses. In addition to weighting factors that were applied to the German data to balance the number of involved confirmands in the different regional Churches, a »total weight« was applied for computing analyses with the whole datasets as they are reported in part 4 of this book. With this weighting procedure the proportions of the number of confirmands in the study to the number of confirmands in a country were balanced. This procedure assures that the results resemble the picture that would have been gained if one had asked all confirmands in all countries. As Table 1 shows, the German

confirmands account for 56 % of all confirmands in the seven countries. Thus the international results are more strongly influenced by the results of Germany than of the other countries. This also explains the effect, that in the comparison between country results Germany is always close to the total.

The number of interviewees involved in the study differs from country to country. In some countries, one aim was to keep the results representative for smaller units as well (for example, the regional Churches in Germany), so the number of interviewees had to be higher. For other countries it was enough to include only 500 adolescents (like in Austria). The crucial point is that the integrated data are representative for the respective region. It was the task of the research teams in each country who know about the respective structural characteristics of the country (urban – rural, different church regions, but also regions with ethnic minorities, etc.) to guarantee this. In all the parishes selected for the representative study, the questionnaires were filled in by the groups that were confirmed in 2008.

The selection of the people to be interviewed in addition to the confirmands was more difficult than expected. In Denmark, it is usually only the minister who is responsible for confirmation work. In other countries, however, there are special workers involved in the confirmation time who may even carry the main responsibility. The person who confirms the adolescents is, therefore, not always the main person in the preparation for confirmation. In many places, volunteers increasingly play an important role in confirmation work. The solution we found for our study was the following: each worker who was involved in the work with the confirmands of the respective year, not only sporadically but on a regular basis, was asked to complete a worker's questionnaire. In addition, there were special questions in t_0 , t_1 and t_2 , which were only answered by the person with the main responsibility (in the following called the »leaders«). Finland added a special survey for the »Young Confirmed Volunteers« (YCVs) whose results were not counted as part of the general results for the Finnish workers (for details see chapter 3.5).

2.3 Topics

We designed our research as a general study on (almost) all relevant aspects of confirmation work. The preparation phase for the questionnaires included interviews with confirmands, workers and experts in order to find out which topics seemed to be relevant. We examined published literature on confirmation work and former studies undertaken in this field. In addition, we profited from consultations on national and international levels with researchers and

practitioners. Cognitive pre-tests of the questionnaires were conducted individually in most of the countries.

Exemplary questions are:

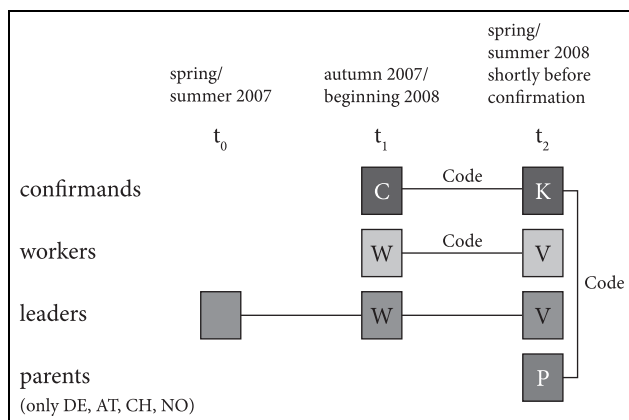
- motivation of the confirmands for taking part (t_1)
- changes of attitudes of the confirmands concerning belief, church and confirmation (t_1 and t_2)
- effects of the confirmation time from the point of view of the confirmands (i. e.: cognitive, spiritual, social) (t_2)
- church services during the confirmation time (attendance obligation, attractiveness, active participation, etc.) (t_1 and t_2)
- aims of the workers for confirmation work (t_1)
- methods and materials in confirmation work (t_2).

Since we have been working with a broad scope of topics, no in-depth answers to all the topics included should be expected. The limited scope of the present study is evident, for example, with the results concerning church services. Our data clearly prove that services that are attractive to adolescents and that include their active participation have a positive effect on their perception of the services. However, *how* the participation should be and *how* exactly services can become attractive to adolescents cannot be specified on the basis of the present data alone. The data create something like a »map of confirmation work« which opens up wide perspectives. Yet while it helps to identify possible paths, a map does not specify which one should be chosen.

2.4 The Questionnaires

Questionnaires were filled in at two points of time by the confirmands and by the workers. In some countries, structural information on the parishes was collected beforehand (t_0). Parents' questionnaires were added in Austria, Switzerland, Germany and Norway. Figure 1 shows the general design of the study. In some countries, deviations from the general timetable or other special adaptations were inevitable. For example, most parishes in Finland did not fill in t_1 before the beginning of 2008 because some of the parishes had not started their confirmation work before this time.

Figure 1: Questionnaires in the international study



There are two different numbering systems for the items:

Each questionnaire has an ascending *question-number*, mainly for the use of those who complete the questionnaires. As the questionnaires differ slightly in each country, these ascending numbers could not be kept standardised for all countries.

The *item-names* that are used for the interpretation of the data, consist of two letters and a two-digit number, e.g. WB07.

The first letter indicates the questionnaire (cf. Figure 1):

C = confirmands t₁

K = confirmands t₂

W = workers t₁

V = workers t₂

P = parents (only t₂)

The second letter indicates the section within the questionnaire. Sections with the same second letter in t₁ and t₂ correspond with each other, e.g. CE01 corresponds with KE01. The section-letters between confirmands and workers, however, are independent from each other. In the appendix (p. 332) there is a correspondence list that shows »pairs« of items, i.e. the combination of workers' aims and confirmands' reports.

All data (confirmands, workers, parents) have been computed in such a way that they can be linked to the respective group. So it is, for example, possible to relate the methods named by the workers to the feedback of the adolescents. In some countries, the parish is not always the appropriate framework for describing a local confirmation work setting. The setting can also be a camp where confirmands come together from different regions (as it often is the case in Sweden). Thus, in the international context, the framework for one coherent confirmation work group (i.e. workers and »their« group of confirmands) is

called a »unit«. This is relevant especially for the analysis at the group level, for example, if effects of confirmation time on the confirmands are analysed against the influence of methods or structures (Is a camp included in confirmation time? Are there voluntary workers cooperating with the staff? etc.).

2.5 Translation: Country-specific Particularities

A typical problem of international studies are semantic differences in the translation of the items. Qualitative studies face particular challenges in respect to the meaning of individual expressions while their contextual nature supports additional interpretations. Quantitative studies have the advantage of working with a limited number of questionnaire items that can be discussed in detail and coordinated internationally – a task that was carried out in a number of consultations during the preparation phase of the present study. Nevertheless, mistaken interpretations can only be avoided by exerting additional care for linguistic pitfalls.

All questionnaires were printed in German, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish. Because all members of the team speak English, this language was chosen as the language for common communication. This allowed for direct communication within the team but the translations always required an intermediate step from English into the vernacular. A certain validation of the various questionnaires could be achieved through a member of the Tübingen team (Henrik Simojoki) who understands all the languages involved and who helped with the final adjustments of all six versions of the questionnaires. This guaranteed a maximum of semantic proximity of the questionnaires.

In the process of developing the questionnaires, English templates were defined by the research group (in meetings and online). Experts in each country translated the questionnaires into their language, also making sure that confirmands could understand the wording. Some items turned out to be not appropriate for specific countries and consequently were left out. For example, questions about volunteers in confirmation work made no sense in Denmark where confirmation work lies almost exclusively in the hands of pastors. For some areas of special interest, the four Nordic countries agreed to incorporate additional items for their context. Altogether, the questionnaires in the different countries share more than 80 % of their items. They are identical concerning the layout and the order of item-sections.

An English version of all questionnaires is available on the internet (www.confirmation-research.eu). One exemplary questionnaire (confirmands t₂) is printed on pages 333-336 of this book. Although the English versions of

the questionnaires are the ones that were discussed throughout the project and their wording is used in this book, it is important to keep in mind that these English versions have never been used as such. They merely function as the basis for the questionnaires in the respective languages of the countries.

In order to ensure a coherent way of reporting the data, the group made a number of linguistical decisions. For example, we consistently use »confirmation time« for the whole of the process, »ministers« for the pastors, theologians, etc. These words were translated into the terms that are most commonly used in the respective languages.

2.6 Handling and Reporting of the Data

In each parish, the confirmands were asked to fill in the questionnaires, usually during a group meeting. Completing the questionnaires was voluntary for the confirmands as well as for the workers and parents. All of them were assured that the results would be anonymous. The respective codes of ethics and judicial guidelines were observed.

All questionnaires were recorded either manually or by a scanning system into the software SPSS. Plausibility analyses were performed, for example, to exclude questionnaires in which a confirmand had ticked the same box for all answers. These analyses, but also the feedback from workers in the groups, affirm that most confirmands were indeed very open to the questions and felt taken seriously by the questions about their experiences and opinions. When asked how they felt completing the questionnaire in t_2 , only a minority of confirmands answered »it annoyed me« (total 18 %, range from 14 % in Germany to 30 % in Norway; not asked in Sweden), most confirmands said »it was okay« or even »I liked it«.

Technically, all data were stored in three different SPSS-data sets. A data set for the confirmands, a data set for the workers, and a data set on the unit level storing structural data for each unit as well as the mean values of all confirmands' and all workers' items for the unit. Where there was only one leader per unit, his or her answers on the leaders' questionnaire were taken as structural data for this unit. In a unit with several leaders, a mean value of their answers was computed for the unit level data set.

Most of the items in our study are listed with their detailed results in the appendix of this book (p. 305 ff.). Due to the large number of items, though, we decided to document only the items with the (usually 7-point) Likert-scales typically used in the study. This means, that results of items like »How did you feel filling in this questionnaire? 1 = I liked it; 2 = it was okay; 3 = it annoyed me«

are not reported in the appendix, whereas item sections like the question on satisfaction with different aspects in confirmation time are fully reported (which account for about 90 % of all items). Wherever the item-name is given in the text, this item can be found in the appendix. Example: »most of the confirmands are satisfied with camps (77 %; KN11)«. Additional items, that were used only in selected countries, are not reported in the appendix.

2.7 t_1 - t_2 Comparisons

For confirmands, workers and leaders, the study worked with two questionnaires. One in the beginning of confirmation time, the second one shortly before the day of confirmation. While it was possible to do the second round of interviews at the same time in all of the locations, the different durations of the confirmation time (between one and two years) created a problem concerning the first round of interviews that could not be solved. Had we done all of the first interviews at the beginning of the confirmation time, the interval between t_1 and t_2 would have been very different. This is why t_1 was set for about 9 months (if possible) prior to t_2 thus mirroring the situation in the beginning phase of confirmation time for some parishes and the situation »half way through« confirmation time in others.

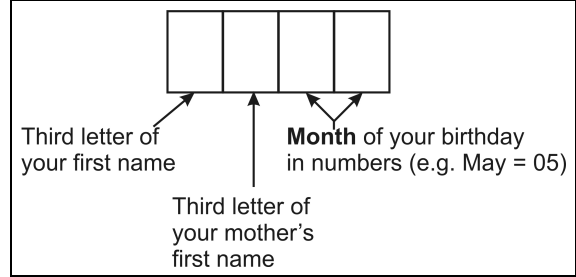
There are two kinds of correspondence between t_1 and t_2 :

- Items concerning personal attitudes towards faith and church have exactly the same wording in t_1 and t_2 . The difference between both indicates a change of attitude during confirmation time. These items can be found mainly in sections CE/KE, CF/KF, CG/KG and CH/KH.
- Other items relate an expectation (t_1) to an experience (t_2), like »During confirmation time it is important for me ... to have a lot of action« (CK05) – »During confirmation time ... we had a lot of action« (KK05). These items can be found mainly in CB/KB and CK/KK for the confirmands and WB/VB, WC/VC and WD/VD for the workers. It is noteworthy that not all of the expectations are matched with a respective experience and vice versa. For example the item »I registered ... to be allowed to be a godparent« (CB05) is important for asking as a motivational factor in t_1 but cannot be mirrored by a respective t_2 -item.

The individual matching of the questionnaires of t_1 and t_2 was based on an anonymous code which remained the same over time (cf. Figure 2). This method makes it possible, for example, to analyze, on an individual level, the statements of those adolescents whose interest in youth groups increases strongly against those with whom it decreases. Depending on the procedure in the re-

spective country, it was also possible to match the individual parents' questionnaires to the ones of the confirmands. Altogether 13455 pairs of t_1 - t_2 confirmands' questionnaires could be matched, accounting for 74 % of all 18191 t_2 -questionnaires. The exact percentages of questionnaires matched are given in the respective country reports. The use of the anonymous code has proven to be a very helpful technique. Most of the confirmands were able and willing to fill it in. As the code is invariant over life-time, it is one of the easiest methods to match questionnaires individually without asking for the person's name.

Figure 2: Anonymous code (in some countries the layout was different)



As the matching rates certainly do not reach 100 %, the existence of matched and non-matched questionnaires allows for two ways of presenting data. On the one hand, it is possible to compare the overall results in t_1 and t_2 for all questionnaires. On the other hand, the comparisons between t_1 and t_2 become more precise if only matched cases are used because this guarantees for the same data base in t_1 and t_2 . In this book we usually print results for all questionnaires. Only when it comes to specific questions about changes from t_1 to t_2 (for example in chapter 4.5), the results are based on »matched cases only« and can thus deviate slightly from the overall values. Practically, the difference between using all questionnaires and only the matched ones is small as Table 2 shows for an exemplary item.

Table 2: Comparison between results of all vs. »matched only« questionnaires for CE10/KE10.

CB10/KB10: »It is important for me to get money or presents at the day of my confirmation.«	N all	Mean all	N matched only	Mean matched only
CE10 (t_1)	18922	4.44	12876	4.50
KB10 (t_2)	17655	5.09	12876	5.13
Difference of mean values		(0.65; not used)		0.63

2.8 Indexes

Indexes are computed in order to facilitate analyses and comparisons and to improve the validity of interpretations. Our indexes were created using a factor analysis (Varimax with rotation). They are computed as the mean values of all the items enclosed in the index. We only use indexes with Cronbach Alpha > 0.7 for the whole dataset and additionally restrict us to use only those indexes where Cronbach Alpha is > 0.6 in each of the participating countries.

The index-name starts with an »i«, followed by two letters indicating the relevant item-section and a number (e.g., iCA1). The complete list of all indexes is given below. The overall Cronbach Alpha is stated in brackets. Cronbach Alpha for the individual countries is reported in Table 3. The results of the indexes of each country are printed in the appendix (p. 306).

iCA1: Social orientation and activities (0.71)

- CA08: because I had been told that confirmation training is fun.
- CB02: to experience community in the confirmation group.
- CB06: to meet and get to know friends.
- CK03: come into personal contact with the leaders and workers.
- CK05: to have a lot of action.

iCB1: Religious interest (0.78)

- CB01: to learn more about God and faith.
- CB03: to come to my own decision about my faith.
- CB08: to be strengthened in my faith.

iKB1: Experience of growth in faith (0.78)

- KB01: I have learnt more about God and faith.
- KB03: I have been enabled to come to my own decision about my faith.
- KB08: I have been strengthened in my faith.

iCE1: Christian Beliefs (t_1) (0.87)

- CE01: God created the world.
- CE03: God loves all humans and cares about each one of us.
- CE04: Jesus has risen from the dead.
- CE08: Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.
- CE09: I believe in God.

iKE1: Christian Beliefs (t_2) (0.87)

- KE01; KE03; KE04; KE08; KE09 (wording: cf. iCE1)

iCG1: Adherence to the Church (t_1) (0.71)

- CG01: It is important for me to belong to the Church.
- CG06: If I should have personal problems, I would turn to a minister.
- CG07: Our church building means a lot to me.

- CG08: I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.

iKG1: Adherence to the Church (t_2) (0.72)

- KG01; KG06; KG07; KG08 (wording: cf. iCG1)

iCH1: Religious practice (high value = strong) (t_1) (0.73)

- CH01: I think about God.
- CH02: I pray by myself.
- CH03: I pray together with others.

iKH1: Religious practice (high value = strong) (t_2) (0.73)

- KH01; KH02; KH03 (wording: cf. iCH1)

The values in iCH1 and iKH1 have been reverted (1 = 5 etc.), because in the questionnaires the answer »never« was coded 5. A high value in the index thus goes along with high religious practice.

iCK1: Orientation for life in faith (0.71)

- CK01: to find my own point of view concerning my own life.
- CK02: to learn central Christian texts by heart (e.g., to a Creed).
- CK03: to come into personal contact with the leaders and workers.
- CK11: that my questions concerning faith will play a role.

iKK2: Ethical learning (0.81)

- KK44: I have experienced that my commitment to other people is important.
- KK45: I have become (more) conscious of my responsibility for ecological problems.
- KK46: I have experienced that my commitment to peace is important.

iKK3: Experienced openness of the parish (0.76)

- KK03: I came into good personal contact with the leaders and workers.
- KK04: I was allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands.
- KK05: we had a lot of »action«.
- KK11: My questions concerning faith were addressed.
- KK25: I got to know our parish better.
- KK30: I experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (e.g., youth church services).
- KK37: In our parish, I feel welcome and accepted.

iKN1: Satisfaction with group experiences (0.79)

- KB02: I have experienced a good community in the confirmation group.
- KN02: [satisfaction with:] having fun
- KN04: [satisfaction with:] feeling of community
- KN11: [satisfaction with:] camp(s)

iKN2: Satisfaction with liturgical experiences (0.83)

- KN10: [satisfaction with:] church services
- KN13: [satisfaction with:] prayers in the group

- KN14: [satisfaction with:] music, songs and singing

Workers:

iWA1: Importance of Christian dogmatics (0.77)

- WA03: Baptism
- WA04: The Lord's Supper
- WA06: A Creed
- WA07: Jesus Christ
- WA08: Holy Spirit

iWA2: Importance of topics related to the life-world (0.79)

- WA12: Ecology and preservation of the Creation
- WA14: The meaning of life
- WA15: Justice and responsibility for others
- WA16: Friendship
- WA17: Body and sexuality
- WA18: Violence and crime

iWC1: Importance of relating to the parish (0.73)

- WC05: get to know our parish better.
- WC06: get to know what the youth work of the church offers to them.
- WC07: be won for continuing as voluntary workers in the church.

iVM1: Workers' satisfaction (0.71)

- VE06: I would like to be relieved of working in confirmation training. [*values have been reverted*]
- VM01: How satisfied are you with the confirmation work in your parish?
- VM02: How do you like doing the confirmation work?

Table 3: Cronbach Alpha for all indexes for all countries

Index	Cronbach Alpha	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
iCA1: Social orientation and activities	0.71	0.64	0.69	0.70	0.61	0.76	0.64	0.77	
iCB1: Religious interest	0.78	0.76	0.73	0.78	0.78	0.82	0.84	0.78	
iKB1: Experience of growth in faith	0.78	0.81	0.84	0.80	0.74	0.72	0.75	0.75	
iCE1: Christian Beliefs (t ₁)	0.87	0.85	0.85	0.89	0.83	0.91	0.88	0.87	
iKE1: Christian Beliefs (t ₂)	0.87	0.86	0.84	0.89	0.85	0.91	0.88	0.90	
iCG1: Adherence to the Church (t ₁)	0.71	0.70	0.69	0.71	0.70	0.76	0.77	0.72	
iKG1: Adherence to the Church (t ₂)	0.72	0.69	0.70	0.75	0.73	0.72	0.78	0.77	
iCH1: Religious practice (t ₁)	0.73	0.69	0.61	0.72	0.68	0.78	0.77	0.73	
iKH1: Religious practice (t ₂)	0.73	0.70	0.63	0.70	0.72	0.76	0.79	0.79	
iCK1: Orientation for life in faith	0.71	0.71	0.67	0.66	0.69	0.79	0.77	0.68	
iKK2: Ethical learning	0.81	0.81	0.83	0.84	0.75	0.86	0.79	0.80	
iKK3: Experienced openness of the parish	0.76	0.75	0.79	0.70	0.74	0.82	0.78	0.75	

Cronbach Alpha	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
Index								
iKN1: Satisfaction with group experiences	0.79	0.79	0.83	0.76	0.65	0.81	0.75	0.86
iKN2: Satisfaction with liturgical experiences	0.83	0.79	0.81	0.79	0.79	0.84	0.81	0.88
iWA1: Importance of Christian dogmatics	0.77	0.76	0.77	0.70	0.75	0.67	0.75	0.80
iWA2: Importance of topics related to the life-world	0.79	0.79	0.71	0.75	0.81	0.80	0.77	0.71
iWC1: Importance of relating to the parish	0.73	0.71	0.66	0.83	0.70	0.74	0.67	0.64
iVM1: Workers' satisfaction	0.71	0.71	0.67	0.72	0.79	0.66	0.70	0.71

2.9 Prospect for Further Interpretations Using Multi-level Analysis

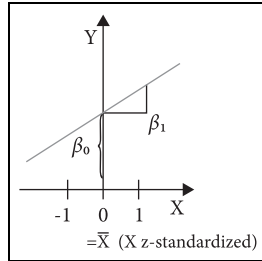
Our study with nearly 20000 confirmands involved allows for a great variety of possible statistical procedures. In this book we limit our analyses to the common methods in order to make the results easily accessible for the reader.

One method of further scrutinising the dataset will be applied in an ongoing doctoral dissertation by Wolfgang Ilg (Ilg 2010). This will be done using multi-level analysis, a way of evaluation that is used in large-scale studies with nested structures (confirmands nested in parish-groups, groups nested in countries, etc.), for example, the PISA-studies. As the results of these analyses are highly complex, they cannot be part of this book. Nevertheless, the following section tries to give a short insight into the rationale of multi-level analysis.

The multi-level analysis is a statistical procedure that analyses the influence of parameters on an individual and on a group level simultaneously. An example can be given assuming that certain confirmands gain a more positive attitude towards the church during their confirmation time while others become more distant from the church. Maybe the rising proximity is particularly true for those who have rather religious parents. Effects like this can be computed by common regression analysis predicting the degree of change in attitude by predictors describing the religiousness of their home. However, there might also be further variables of influence. One can imagine that confirmands develop a positive attitude towards the church especially in those parishes in which volunteers are involved in confirmation work. Perhaps there are also correlations with the duration of the camp, etc. With the common statistical methods (correlations and linear regression), all of this can only be calculated in a way that assumes a coherent correlation for all groups of confirmands involved. Figure 3 renders a typical regression line for the relation of a predictor variable X (for example, the religiousness of the parents) and the criterion variable Y (for example, the adherence to the church). The regression line is determined by a

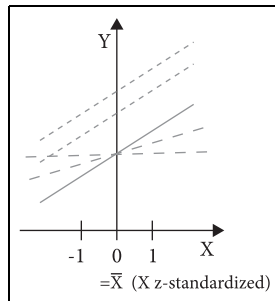
fixed intercept β_0 and a fixed slope β_1 with the respective mathematical formula: $Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + e_i$.

Figure 3: Linear regression on level 1



But what happens if the interdependence of X and Y is not the same for the different groups? One could assume, for example, that the relation is on a higher level according to the length of the time period spent at a camp. Or the relation could possibly be different in big cities, towns or villages. Figure 4 shows further regression lines that are possible for certain subgroups.

Figure 4: Possible linear regressions for different groups

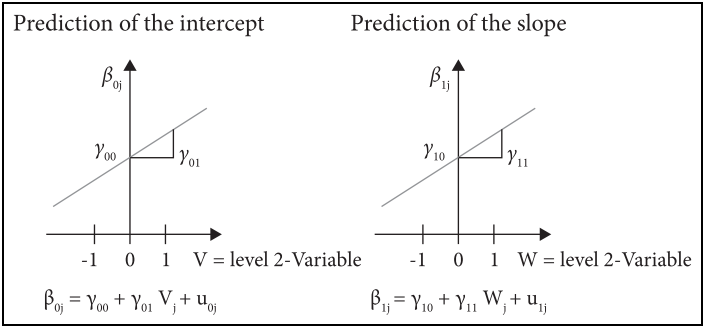


The dotted lines show alternative regression lines with different intercepts (β_0 varies). The dashed lines show alternative regression lines with different slopes (β_1 varies).

If the individual regressions (or level 1-regressions) are different for every group without any identifiable system, no analysis of influence factors is possible. But it is fair to assume that structural variables can be identified that determine the way of interdependency between level 1-variables. Those structural variables are called level 2-variables because they do not describe individuals but group-settings. Multi-level analysis tries to find regression equations that predict the respective level 1-intercepts and level 1-slopes by level 2-variables. Figure 5 displays the regression of level 1-intercepts and level 1-slopes by pos-

sible background variables (here called V and W). The advantage of those multi-level analysis models is that influences on an individual level (level 1) and on group level (level 2) can be computed at the same time.

Figure 5: Prediction of level 1-intercepts and level 1-slopes by level 2-variables



W and V are level 2-variables, for example, the duration of camps or the aggregated aims of the workers.

In the dissertation mentioned above, research will focus on one specific influential factor on the group level, namely the aims of the workers. The question is, whether and to what degree the aims of the workers predict the outcomes of a group process, e.g., the learning effects, the social cohesion and the change of attitudes of the confirmands. Although the aims of the workers and the mentioned criteria variables are all on an individual level, there is no way of computing a correspondence between level 1-results of confirmands and workers. Rather the mean value of all workers of a group can be seen as one determining level 2-variable amongst others. In preceding studies in other fields of youth work (Ilg 2008), the aims of the workers proved to be quite influential variables for predicting group processes for some areas of interest (especially concerning Christian teaching), whereas only little influence could be detected for other areas of group processes, for example, the emergence of a good sense of community within the group of adolescents. Surveys like the international confirmation study entail one of the rare opportunities to research these questions, as the number of comparable groups (in our study nearly 1000) allows for reliable analyses on the group level.

2.10 Recommendations for Improvements

One of the major outcomes of a pioneering study is the discovery of methodological potentials, possibilities and challenges when researching a new field. By pre-testing our questionnaires, we could avoid a lot of possible problems. Nevertheless, we discovered some issues that could be improved upon when further research is planned, as the following two examples show:

- Some items in t_1 were introduced by the wording: »I registered for confirmation time ...« followed by an item expressing possible expectations like »to meet and get to know friends« (CB06). In our study, we interpret the results from this item as the cofirmands' expectation or wish to meet or make friends. One can, though, argue that there is a difference between the reason for taking part and one's expectations regarding confirmation time. According to our experiences with young people and their way of filling in questionnaires, we expect that the introductory sentence does not affect their answers to a high degree because they regard every item individually. Nevertheless, we would recommend using an introduction like »It is important for me during confirmation time ...« for further studies.
- Relying on the matching of t_1 and t_2 some of the countries included basic questions only in one of the questionnaires, for example, the item asking for the profession of the worker (minister, volunteer, etc.). For those workers in t_2 where the corresponding t_1 questionnaire could not be identified, there is no information about their profession. This is only a small group, but the effect could be avoided in a next survey by asking those central issues in t_1 as well as in t_2 .

Additional needs for further research are summarised in the conclusion (part 5).

2.11 Explanation of the Terminology

For most of the items, the answers were measured by a scale of 1 to 7, with wordings given in the questionnaire like 1 = »not applicable at all« and 7 = »totally applicable«. In order to reduce the complexity of the tables in this publication, the answering levels 1, 2 and 3 are summarised as »No«, 4 »Middle« and 5, 6 and 7 as »Yes«. In computing the data (e.g., for correlations), the original answering levels have been kept. When reporting results, we usually report »percentages yes« which is easier to understand than mean values. If differences t_1 - t_2 are reported, then mean values are reported.

The following statistical abbreviations will be used throughout the book:

- *Items* are the questions within a questionnaire.
- *Percentages (%)* refer to valid percent. The number of missing answers is only about 1-4% of all answers and will not be stated for every item. Rounding accounts for deviations of percentage sums not equalling 100%.
- The *scale level* of the Likert-scales (rating scales) is metric.
- *Sample size (N)* stands for the number of valid answers to a certain item.
- *Mean value (M)* is the average of all answers for a certain item.
- *Standard deviation (SD)* indicates the spread of the answers to a certain item.
- *Level of significance (p)*: In this book a level of 5% ($*=p < 0.05$) or 1% ($**=p < 0.01$) or 0.1% ($***=p < 0.001$) is used. Due to the large number of questionnaires, not all significant differences can be considered relevant. Therefore, it was agreed to focus on differences > 0.4 for the interpretations. As the sensitivity of the significance test is connected to the sample size, even small differences become statistically significant in Germany, where our study had by far the largest sample size. All differences reported are significant at least on a 0.05-level. Statistical details (F-values, degrees of freedom, etc.) are not reported in order to make the book more accessible to readers without statistical training.
- *Correlation coefficient (r)* states the degree of interdependence of two variables. It ranges from -1 to +1. The closer it is to 0, the smaller the interdependence between the variables.
- *Cronbach Alpha (α)* measures the degree of internal consistency of the items in an index.

When presenting data, we always use the following order of countries, which is no more than a technical convention, German-speaking countries, and then Scandinavian countries: Germany (DE), Austria (AT), Switzerland (CH), Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), Norway (NO), Sweden (SE).

Country-specific Articles

3. Country-specific Articles

In this part of the book, the results of each individual country are presented. As far as possible, the country chapters follow the same outline and thus are easily comparable. Nevertheless, the chapters can deviate from this rule if special issues demand in-depth analyses of specific questions. Items that were only asked in some of the countries, are not reported. Here again, exceptions were made depending on country-specific issues.

In order to keep the country reports to a reasonable length, we decided not to print all of the item-results in every country chapter. The complete results in a country-comparison are given in the appendix. Thus it is highly recommendable to verify the interpretations of the country chapters by looking at the detailed results in the appendix tables.

3.1 Confirmation Work in Germany

WOLFGANG ILG, FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER AND HENRIK SIMOJOKI

Katharina is 13 years old and lives in northern Bavaria. Her confirmation time started after Easter with a special Sunday service in which the new confirmands were introduced to the congregation. Although Katharina regards the church as something that is far away from her everyday life, she really looks forward to the confirmation time, especially because there have been some remarkable changes in the confirmation work of her parish recently. The period of preparation was cut down from two years to one year. Even better, there are now two weekend outings on the plan. For Katharina, these outings are the true highlights of the whole confirmation time, even more so since some older adolescents will participate as camp-helpers. The regular instruction on Wednesday afternoon lies solely in the hands of the local minister. Although the lessons are nothing that Katharina yearns for after a long school day, it is good to know that her fellow confirmands will be waiting there. For Katharina, the confirmation time has a lot to do with friendship – making new ones and refreshing old ones. And the final highlight, of course, will be the big celebration on confirmation day, with not only spiritual blessings. As her older brother put it: »On this day, being a Church member really pays off.«

3.1.1 General Overview

The Socioreligious Context of Confirmation Work

The situation of confirmation work in Germany is characterised in many respects by the fact that there is no single Protestant Church of Germany but a plurality of regional Churches that goes back to the post-Reformation territories. The former state Churches in these territories ended in 1918 with the separation between church and state but the individual Protestant Churches maintained their regional character. Given this plurality, we can only offer something like an outline of the average kind of confirmation work that one might find in many parishes. At the same time, readers will have to keep in mind that there are enormous differences in the German religious landscape, most of all between the western and the eastern parts of the country, that is, between what used to be the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR) with its tradition of state induced atheism, and former West Germany with a system that has been much more open for religion, among others for Religious Education in state schools. In the light of recent statistics, the persistence of these differences becomes evident. Almost 20 years after the German reunifica-

tion in 1990, today 15 % of the west Germans but 68 % of the east Germans belong to no religious denomination.

Another important feature regarding the wider socioreligious context of confirmation work in Germany is the coexistence of two dominant denominations, with the Protestant Churches and Roman Catholicism both comprising a little more than 60 % of the overall population. Finally, it has to be taken into account that Germany, with the largest Muslim population in Western Europe after France (estimated at 5 %), is more and more turning into a multireligious society.

Confirmation Work in Transition

Confirmation classes or catechetical instruction in Germany go back to the time of the Reformation (Frör 1959). The celebration of a special confirmation service, however, was not necessarily part of the process and, at least as a general rite, was established in many places not before the 18th century, under the influence of pietism and the Enlightenment. The most popular catechisms in use were Luther's Small Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism (in the Reformed tradition).

The traditional German term used for the educational preparation for confirmation is *Konfirmandenunterricht* – instruction for those who want to be confirmed. It is no coincidence that this term makes school instruction the model for the Church. The minister-teacher followed a traditional model of teaching and learning based on the catechism, on rote learning, and on questions posed to the class followed by brief predefined answers from the confirmands.

The traditional model has often been criticised for training parrots rather than helping young people to understand their own faith. Yet only during the last forty years has this model been replaced, at least to some degree, by a different setting that is closer to youth work than to traditional school teaching. The most current term *Konfirmandenarbeit* – working with and for confirmands – is expressive of this new understanding, especially with its allusion to *Jugendarbeit* (youth work) that now serves as its model. Many methods from youth work have been taken over for working with confirmands. Moreover, the general attitude of this work has changed from instruction to more creative and youth-oriented ways of working and being with young people.

The most common way for organising confirmation work today addresses young people at the age of 13 or 14. It comprises regular meetings once a week for one or two years. Most often, these meetings take place in the afternoon of a set day of the week. They typically last 90 minutes and are taught by the local minister. In the last twenty years, a new programme for children of the age of eight or nine has been introduced in some of the regional Churches (cf. Cramer/Ilg/Schweitzer 2009). In this case, preparation for confirmation includes

two phases – a first one in childhood comprising approximately ten meetings in small groups led by parents or other volunteers and special church services, with an emphasis on the introduction to the sacraments, and a second phase in adolescence with a more general introduction to the Christian faith and to the life of the Church.

During their confirmation time, the confirmands have to attend worship services for a set number of times, for example, twice a month. Following the new understanding of confirmation work, a number of additional elements have been introduced. Overnight outings of two or more days are very popular. Confirmation camps bring together young people from different locations in large numbers. Internships within the congregation are another new idea, with the confirmands as temporary volunteers in youth work, Sunday school or diaconical work. Sometimes, the confirmands can also participate actively in the preparation of worship services and are allowed to play an active role in them as well. Additional elements of the current model include:

- different time structures, for example, meeting for half a day or even for a whole day on weekends;
- different contents beyond the traditional catechism, for example, topics related to the personal life of teenagers, to ethical issues (peace and justice), or to youth culture;
- creative and active methods like games, working with art, movies, computer animation;
- additional personnel, for example, youth workers, deacons, or volunteers from the congregation;
- process-oriented introduction to the Eucharist, for example, by celebrating the Eucharist during a special outing and in special settings;
- special youth services with again active participation of the confirmands and some times under the direction of young people;
- new liturgies for the celebration of confirmation that are in line with the more recent understanding of working with young people.

Participation

About 90 % of all Protestant 14-year old adolescents are confirmed, amounting to about 250000 confirmands every year. The rate of participation has been very stable over the years with about 30 % of all adolescents of this age in Germany or more than 90 % of the adolescents who have been baptised. This stability is also mirrored by the interview surveys carried out regularly by the Protestant Church in Germany / *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD) at ten years intervals (see Huber/Friedrich/Steinacker 2006). The survey data indicate that many people appreciated their time as confirmands, even if they have forgotten most of the contents offered to them.

But there are some indicators, that this stability might be challenged. The number of the unchurched in Germany has clearly increased throughout the last decades. Demographic developments also speak against the assumption of stability. Birth rates are way down with the traditional (non-immigrant) German population, and this part of the population includes most of the Protestants. Among the children between the ages of 3 and 6 years, more than 30 % have an immigrant background (most of them are non-Protestant, cf. Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006, 143). The »greying of the pews« due to demographics is well under way in most of Germany. In addition to this, some parts of eastern Germany as well as some urban locations in western Germany suffer from a special loss of young people, mostly caused by social and economic depression. Confirmation work in such places has to face very difficult circumstances, for example, with not being able to put together workable groups or not being able to celebrate confirmation every year due to the lack of adolescents in the congregation.

It is probably fair to assume that the increasingly multicultural and multi-religious character of the general population allows for more flexibility in everyone's attitudes. Multiculturalism may work against the maintenance of traditional patterns. Yet contrary effects cannot be excluded either. Multiculturalism may have polarizing effects and may thus motivate young people – or their parents – to more clearly claim what they perceive as a Christian identity.

Equivalents Outside the Protestant Churches

There is a secular equivalent – or at least a parallel – to confirmation that has received a lot of attention recently. During the 19th century, the so-called *Jugendweihe* (a ceremony of dedicating young people) was introduced independently of the Church by so-called »enlightened people«. In the 1950s, this tradition was reactivated by the socialist GDR government as part of their anti-church policies. Young people were pressured into taking part in this secular or pseudo-religious ceremony organised by the state and charged with socialist ideology. After the end of the GDR in 1990, the ceremony remained in place although it had lost its support from the state. Until today, a certain number – estimates run up to more than 50 % – of adolescents in eastern Germany take part in it. Participation in the ceremony is less demanding than confirmation since there only is a very short period of preparation. Given the low rate of church membership in the respective regions, the *Jugendweihe* may be perceived as the only access open to young people longing for some kind of initiation rite. In western Germany, though, the *Jugendweihe* has not found many adherents, so it is in fact restricted to the former GDR-region.

In western Germany, it is the Catholic version of confirmation (*Firmung*), celebrated at the age of 15 or 16 years, that parallels the Protestant confirma-

tion. Within the Catholic tradition, the *Firmung* appears to be less important than the celebration of First Communion at the age of 9. Consequently, participation is lower than with the Protestant equivalent. This is why confirmation is often considered a defining characteristic of the Protestant Church.

Other rituals celebrated, for example, by Muslim youth in Germany have not gained much visibility. This is also true for the Jewish Bar Mitzwah, mostly due to the small number of Jews living in Germany after the Shoah.

Official Aims for Confirmation Work

The aims for confirmation work authorised by the regional Churches reflect the changing approaches to working with confirmands. Traditionally, the appropriation of the Christian faith clearly took priority over all other aims. The faith was presented and explained in the catechism that also served as the basis for a catechetical exam held during the confirmation service. In some cases, the confirmands were expected to speak a formal oath testifying to their personal willingness to accept the Christian faith.

Contemporary aims stated by the Church are much more likely to stress the need for the Church to open up for young people. At least to some degree, Church and ministers are expected to take the perspective of the confirmands as opposed to the confirmands having to take over the expectations of the Church. The time of preparing for confirmation is seen as a chance for young people to encounter the congregation as a place that is hospitable to them and that allows them to meet people and activities that might be of interest to them.

References to the official aims stated in Church documents, however, are of limited validity in Germany. There is very little supervision and German ministers like to follow their own personal objectives. Consequently, the reality of confirmation work is reflective of a much broader scope of different aims that only roughly follow the official guidelines.

From the confirmands' perspective, the aims of participation have also changed within the last decades. In former times, participation in confirmation training was often motivated by a sense of social or family pressure. Nowadays, most of the adolescents feel less urged by traditional motives. The expectation of a big family party on the day of confirmation and the usually very attractive presents have become important motives. Because children are now invited to participate in the Eucharist in many of the parishes, one traditional motive for confirmation, admission to the Eucharist, is no longer that important. Moreover, the right to get married in the Church or to receive a Christian funeral is not premised on confirmation anymore, at least not in a strict sense. Confirmands often mention their full membership in the Church as an important motive but also the right to act as godparents.

Preparation of the Personnel

Confirmation work is one of the basic responsibilities of most ministers in Germany. This is why the first question in this context must be about ministerial education and training. The study of theology in Germany includes practical theology and religious education. Confirmation work, however, is not always an explicit part of the general programmes in this field. Since many ministers also have to teach religion classes in state schools, they have to be prepared for a whole spectrum of pedagogical tasks. After the time at the university comes a second phase with approximately another two years of practical training (*Vikariat*), partly in a congregation and partly in a specialised training institute. Both educational contexts regularly include some exposure to confirmation work.

Additional full-time personnel like youth workers or deacons study in special church-related schools or college-type institutions (now typically leading to a Bachelor degree). Depending on their interests, confirmation work may or may not figure explicitly within their training. Although deacons and Christian youth workers are the ones who have a professional emphasis on working with young people, they are often not involved in confirmation work in the local parishes.

In theory, ministers and elders share the responsibility for confirmation work in the parish. Yet in common practice, the elders are often only involved to a small degree. The training of volunteers is a task left to the individual congregation or, more realistically, to the individual minister.

Research

Theories and models for working with confirmands have been a topic of theology in Germany since the Reformation (Schweitzer 2006, 26 ff., 239 ff.). The continuous production of catechisms testifies to this as does the continued search for improving the methods of instruction. German 17th and 18th century pietism was very productive in this direction and the educational approaches of the time of the Enlightenment also added their new ideas. Since the 19th century, there has been a prolonged discussion on the ideal time for confirmation (mostly at a later age) as well as on more holistic models of what was called the »comprehensive catechumenate« integrating the family as well as the congregation.

The academic discussion on working with confirmands has been especially lively since the 1960s, the time when the current reform era started (overview: Domsgen/Lück 2008). This was also the time for the first empirical approaches to confirmation work (Ilg/Schweitzer 2009). The Church surveys mentioned above include a small number of questions related to confirmation work. Other studies, for example, on how young people can develop positive relationships to the church, made reference to confirmation work as one of the possible factors

in play (cf. Feige 1982). Larger studies focussing exclusively on confirmation work have remained rare (cf. Elsenbast 2009). Moreover, they tended to work with interviews administered to the ministers, thus looking at the confirmands exclusively through the eyes of adults and church professionals.

Theology and Ecclesiology

It is easy to see that no single theological or ecclesiological position can be responsible for the current shape of confirmation work in this country. German Protestantism is characterised by its plural nature that includes a whole spectrum of theological viewpoints. Yet such differences should not make us overlook that there also are common tendencies that are characteristic for the understanding of confirmation work in the German context.

The tendency not to focus on the institutional needs of the church is an important example for a shared characteristic. Theologically it is based on the contemporary theological understanding of human dignity based on the creation in the likeness of God (Gen 1). It can also be supported by an interpretation of the justification by faith that emphasises God's appreciation of the individual person in this process. Correspondingly, the church is not considered an authority that makes demands on children or on parents but is seen as a place of open communication based on participatory structures. The church is supposed to serve the people within the church and beyond by being a welcoming community that is open for different needs and for new ideas.

Ecclesologically, the separation between church and state is another important background. In Germany, this separation took place more than 90 years ago. Yet until today, the process of finding a new place in society has not come to a final end. Most recently, the idea of civil society has started to become influential in this process (Huber 1998, 267ff.). According to this idea, the church should not allow itself to be limited to the private sphere but should strive to become an intermediary structure that can operate as a mediator between the state and the individual citizens, for example, by supporting attitudes of commitment to the common good, solidarity and other values.

Concerns About the Future in the German Discussion

As has become clear above, the impression of continuity and stability is probably not as well-based with confirmation work in Germany as it appears on first sight. General social and cultural developments like pluralisation and individualisation may have their effects on the adolescents' willingness to participate in the programmes offered by the Church. Recent reports from the different *Landeskirchen* (regional Churches) show that the future of confirmation work is currently an urgent topic for many ministers and youth workers (cf. Ilg/Schweitzer/Elsenbast 2009).

Not surprisingly, the demographic change is one of the most troubling issues linked with the future of confirmation work. As mentioned above, this is especially the case in eastern Germany with its increasingly one-sided age-structure and in addition, with its dominant unchurched culture. The long-term effects of this development on confirmation work could indeed be dramatic. In the *Evangelische Landeskirche Anhalts*, for example, the number of young people being confirmed declined in 2006 to an average of one person in each parish per year. Under such circumstances the traditional parish-based forms and settings of confirmation work are becoming more and more obsolete.

Another major concern expressed by the persons in charge, is the future of confirmation work in urban contexts. With the accelerating process of detraditionalisation, the understanding of confirmation as an integral part of the individual biography is increasingly losing its plausibility, also because the identification with the local parish is much lower here than in rural areas. There seems to be an ongoing need for future improvements that keep confirmation work in line with the specific requirements of today's urban youth and lifestyle.

Moreover, the fact that so many of the adolescents do not participate in any church programme after confirmation is a worrisome issue for many ministers and youth workers. Creating more connections between the different programmes offered by the church is therefore regarded as an important task for the future.

The last concern to be mentioned here seems to be of particular urgency. At the present time, many schools in Germany are expanding their school hours in order to develop programmes covering most of the day. Consequently, there will be more competition for the remaining hours of the day that are left to the adolescents' individual disposal. Therefore the question, whether confirmation work can and should cooperate with schools, is currently being intensely discussed in Germany. Half of the German federal states (*Bundesländer*) have regulations that guarantee one school-free afternoon per week for grades 7 and 8 in order to provide the necessary time for confirmation classes. Whether these regulations will continue or not is an open question which is of central importance for the future of confirmation work.

3.1.2 Description of the Study

The German study (*Bundesweite Studie zur Konfirmandenarbeit*) was the first empirical survey conducted at a national level. It was led by the University of Tübingen (Friedrich Schweitzer, Wolfgang Ilg), the Comenius Institute (Volker Elsenbast) and the Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany / EKD (Matthias Otte). A board consisting of members with scholarly background, church

officials and others with regional responsibility for confirmation work accompanied the study. The aim of the study was to gain insights into the reality of confirmation work. Representative results were gathered for every *Landeskirche*. The detailed results are published in Ilg/Schweitzer/Elsenbast 2009, additional information is available on www.konfirmandenarbeit.eu.

Procedures

The aim of the study was to conduct a complete survey of randomly selected parishes. In every participating parish the questionnaires were given to all confirmands and to those workers who were active at least three times during the confirmation year. In parishes that ran several independent confirmation groups, questionnaires were filled in only by the largest group. In addition to this, the parishes were invited to distribute additional questionnaires to parents. 62 % agreed to this optional possibility and distributed the parents' questionnaires at the beginning of one of the meetings offered for parents of the confirmands shortly before confirmation.

The sample of parishes was selected by an independent institute that specialises in social sciences (GESIS – Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences). This selection was done on a random basis to assure that the selected parishes are representative for the respective *Landeskirche*. In June 2007, 1148 parishes were invited to take part in the study. 635 parishes (= 55 %) had the questionnaires filled in by workers and confirmands. Those parishes that declined to participate, often indicated that, at the present time, there were no confirmands in the parish. Others did not want to take part because the minister's position was vacant or because of other obvious reasons. Only a few refused the request to participate due to general unwillingness. For computing the overall results, weighting factors were applied according to the number of confirmands in each *Landeskirche*.

The questionnaires follow the general scheme described in part 2. Additional questionnaires looking back to the first phase of confirmation time in childhood and about the perceived relation of Protestant confirmation and civil confirmation (*Jugendweihe*) were given to the parishes in which this was applicable. The results of these questionnaires will not be reported in this chapter.

The confirmands' questionnaires were filled in at the beginning of a regular confirmation lesson. The confirmands placed their questionnaires into an envelope which was then closed and sent to a data analysis company. Intensive checks on plausibility were performed. The acceptance of the study was high. Most leaders reported that the confirmands liked working on the questionnaires and that they appreciated being taken seriously with their opinions in the questionnaires. When asked how they liked filling in the questionnaires in

t₂, only 14 % of the confirmands said it annoyed them, 64 % thought it was »okay« and 22 % said they liked filling in the questionnaires.

Overview on Data

Table 4 gives the number of valid questionnaires collected.

Table 4: Number of questionnaires (Germany)

	t ₀	t ₁	t ₂	percentage matched
units	635	634	613	100 %
confirmands		11513	10961	79.9 %
workers		1601	1444	78.7 %
parents			5788	83.9 % with confirmands

3.1.3 Setting of Confirmation Work

Most of the Protestant parishes in Germany have one or two confirmation groups per confirmation period. On an average 16.5 confirmands form a confirmation group (18 in western; 9 in eastern Germany).

The framework for confirmation work is determined by every *Landeskirche* individually. The main difference lies in the duration of the confirmation time, that spans either over one year (which is the case in most southern *Landeskirchen*) or over two years (which is typical for the northern and eastern *Landeskirchen*). An average German parish has 45 hours (SD=21!) of normal instruction plus three special days with the group, one or two outings/camps (altogether three nights) and one day trip. Especially the camps have become widely used, and only a small minority of parishes (8 %) do not offer any camp during confirmation time.

One can wonder about the low frequency of some other activities. Only 38 % of the parishes have their confirmands take part in internships in the parish, only 42 % undertake joint activities with Christian youth work in the parish. This shows one of the major problems of confirmation work. In itself it often seems to be a successful programme, but too often it is not linked to other church activities. Although the interest in a Christian youth group rises during confirmation time (cf. chapter 3.1.4, p. 64) the confirmands often do not get connected to an adequate youth group in their parish or region because of a missing concept to connect both fields.

3.1.4 Confirmands

General Characteristics and Background Information

49.6 % of the confirmands are male, 50.4 % are female. German law states that at 14 years of age, a person reaches religious maturity. Confirmation takes place in the year when confirmands turn 14. The data show only few exceptions from this age (6 % younger than 13; 2 % older than 14 in t_1). 6 % of the confirmands were not baptised when asked about it in t_1 . In most parishes they are baptised during confirmation time (43 %) or in the last weeks before (25 %) or on the day of confirmation (31 %).

In Germany, the special situation of young people with a migration background (i. e., no German citizenship, or a confirmand or one of the parents not born in Germany) has received quite a bit of attention. 10 % of all confirmands match at least one of these criteria. Half of them (5.1 % of the total) can be characterised as *Aussiedler* (ethnic German repatriates from the former Soviet Union and its successor states).

Germany still divides the students at the age of ten into three different tracks or types of school. 43 % of all confirmands attend the *Gymnasium* (qualifying for university admission), 29 % attend the *Realschule*, 13 % attend the *Hauptschule* (the term *Hauptschule*=main school is no longer appropriate; only between 20 % and 30 % of the ten year olds attend this type of school), the other confirmands (14 %) attend other schools. Valid comparison data for the distribution of school types among Protestant 14 year olds are not available, but one can assume that the rate of those who do not join in confirmation training is higher among the less educated.

Concerning Religious Education in school the situation differs between the different federal states. The legal guidelines are drawn up by the German constitution where Religious Education is defined as a regular subject that is to be taught in accordance with the principles of the religious communities. Usually a confirmand starting confirmation time will have experienced seven school years of RE with two hours per week. In the study, 73 % of the confirmands state that they are currently taking part in Religious Education in school. 71 % say that they were in contact with Christian children's groups or church-related events at least four times since they turned 5 years old. The assumption, that the confirmands nowadays have had »no prior acquaintance with the Church«, that can sometimes be heard, does not hold true according to these data.

Motivation for Participation

The reasons for participating in confirmation time vary. Only a few of the items in section CA and CB gain more than 50 % approval. An important factor is confirmation itself. The items related to this event rank highest. It is interesting

to see that the importance of the three different attributions to confirmation changes during confirmation time. While the family party, money or presents, and the blessing in church have nearly the same rate of consent in t_1 , the family party and the blessing are stressed more than the motives of money/presents in t_2 . The financial aspect is much more important for male than for female confirmands and also in the West a lot more than in the East. Female confirmands emphasise the right of becoming a godparent as a motivational factor more than male confirmands.

Expectations and Experiences

The two items with the strongest consent in the whole German survey are CE12 and KE12 (both 96 %): »By the end of the confirmation time I definitely want to be confirmed«. This shows that the confirmands come to the programme with a clear intention that, with almost every one of them, has been formed before the programme itself has begun. This implies that almost none of them starts confirmation training with the intention to »check out what the church is like and if I want to be confirmed«. The decision for or against confirmation is made before registration.

The expectations (as asked in section CK in t_1) indicate that, at least in the beginning, many confirmands do not consider the confirmation time as a matter of fulfilling the conditions for being confirmed. Their most important aim is »to take part without too much stress« (77 % approval; CK10). They consider it important that confirmation time offers youth-work-like activities, especially camps (67 %; CK06) and »action« in general (57 %; CK05). Learning Christian texts by heart (20 %; CK02) and coming into personal contact with the leaders and workers (21 %; CK03) are not in their focus when starting their confirmation time.

Looking back, only 19 % state that their confirmation time was stressful (KK10), although 80 % report having attended the group meetings regularly (KK08). The reported effects of confirmation training show that confirmation time motivates many of the young people to think about the Christian faith and their own attitude towards it. 70 % agree that they learnt more about God and faith (KB01), 55 % say that they were strengthened in their faith (KB08). The difference in these numbers show, that confirmation work is not perceived as an instrument of indoctrination. It is possible to go through confirmation work and to learn about its contents, but still to withdraw oneself from faith. This fact and also the result that 16 % of the confirmands explicitly tick a negative box when asked whether they believe in God (KE09), makes one wonder, if it is a wise idea to have confirmands confess their faith publicly during the confirmation ceremony. There is always a minority of confirmands who want to be

Table 5: Satisfaction with different aspects in confirmation time (Germany)

To what extent are you satisfied with ... (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied)	M	SD	satisfied (5,6,7)
KN01: the whole confirmation time	5.04	1.42	67 %
KN02: having fun	5.27	1.63	72 %
KN03: content/topics of lessons	4.42	1.31	49 %
KN04: feeling of community	5.23	1.54	71 %
KN07: minister / person primarily responsible for confirmation work	5.28	1.68	72 %
KN08: other teachers/workers	5.12	1.64	69 %
KN10: church services	4.29	1.56	47 %
KN11: camp(s)	5.40	1.72	73 %
KN13: prayers in the group	4.27	1.50	43 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	4.44	1.77	51 %

N = 9009-10772. Option 8 »we didn't have that« was used as a filter.

confirmed but do not identify with the Church's belief. How can it be avoided that they publicly have to confess something their heart does not support?

Many of the results stress the importance of personal relationships. 73 % say they experienced good community in the confirmation group (KB02), 49 % say they came into personal contact with the leaders and workers (KK03). Both experiences are more frequent than the respective expectations in the beginning. The positive feedback concerning the parish is probably connected to this feeling; 63 % felt welcome and accepted by the local parish (KK37).

The items in t_2 support the assumption that confirmation time enhances competences and motivation for social engagement in society. More than half of the confirmands became aware of their social responsibility for others (52 %; KK44) and for peace (52 %; KK46), and some percent less also for ecological problems (43 %; KK45). 23 % say that during confirmation time they became motivated to help in church as a voluntary worker (KK27). This is certainly only a minority – but definitely more potential volunteers than actually do take part as workers in the parishes.

A clear disappointment, comparing expectations and experiences, lies in the way the confirmands are treated as relevant partners in giving shape to the confirmation time. Only 29 % had the feeling that they were allowed to decide about the topics (KK04) – this is clearly less than the 40 % that had expected to do so (CK04). With this result in mind, it is understandable that the percentage of confirmands who do not ascribe the Church the potential to answer their important questions rises from 34 % in t_1 to 37 % in t_2 . Confirmation work needs to prove that it deals with topics that are relevant for the adolescents.

Asking them about what they would like to talk about is an indispensable first step. Which topics might turn out to be of greater interest can be seen in chapter 3.1.6.

The critical issues mentioned above should not make one overlook the overall result, that confirmation work can generally be regarded as a very successful way of accompanying young people. Table 5 shows that the evaluation of most aspects by the confirmands is positive. Two out of three are basically satisfied with confirmation time in general. The most attractive aspects are camps, fun and community but also the minister and the other workers. The least satisfying aspects, church services and prayers in the group, are dealt with in chapter 3.1.7.

Attitudes towards Religion and Church

Compared to the other countries, German confirmands show slightly stronger religious attitudes, both concerning religious beliefs and religious behaviour (cf. appendix p. 308). Especially the confirmands in eastern Germany show much higher values for religious answers than the ones in the west. The reason is, that in eastern Germany the confirmands come almost exclusively from families with a church background, whereas in western Germany confirmands represent the whole variety of lower or higher church adherence. As expected, girls are more religious than boys and personal belief and religious behaviour is highly correlated with religiousness of the parents.

Table 6: General questions on faith and Church (Germany)

How would you describe your current attitude in general towards ...?	very negative	rather negative	neither negative nor positive	rather positive	very positive
CF01: ... the Christian faith (t ₁)	2 %	4 %	36 %	47 %	10 %
KF01: ... the Christian faith (t ₂)	2 %	3 %	29 %	52 %	14 %
KF02: ... the Protestant Church (t ₂)	2 %	3 %	30 %	52 %	13 %

N = 10023-10563. The German questionnaires did not include CF02.

The results of the general items (Table 6) show that only a few confirmands are really »against« church and faith. Most of them tick the box »rather positive« or »neither negative nor positive«. They might be described as standing at some kind of »friendly distance« to the church and its creed. The comparison of CF01 and KF01 shows a slightly positive shift concerning the Christian faith.

Concerning attitudinal changes (sections CE and CG) from t₁ to t₂, the strongest shifts show up in the following items (mean values specified for matched cases; N ≥ 8293; criteria: difference > 0.25):

DIFF_CE10: I know what the Christian faith entails. (+0.49)

DIFF_CG08: I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation. (+0.41)

DIFF_CG01: It is important for me to belong to the Church. (+0.26)

DIFF_CG04: Church services are usually boring. (+0.26)

It is not surprising that knowledge about Christianity grows over time, as the confirmation courses emphasise cognitive learning very much. The fact though that there is a growing tendency to join Christian youth groups is remarkable. The share of confirmands who tick box 5, 6 or 7 on the scale for the item CG08 / KG08 significantly rises from 18 % (t_1) to 26 % (t_2). The rising attractiveness is not restricted to youth work in general but relates to the church on the whole (DIFF_CG01). There is only one exception; church services are perceived to be boring by 49 % of the confirmands in t_1 . This attitude does not turn out to be a prejudice which would be proved wrong over time. On the contrary, the longer the confirmands experience services, the more they express their frustration about them (54 % agree with item KG04 in t_2).

Data from the Confirmands' Parents

It was a speciality of the German study to include parents in the survey. Some of the results are given in Table 7.

Table 7: Answers from the parents' questionnaire (Germany)

	M	SD	pos. (5,6,7)
PA01: How satisfied are you with confirmation work here overall? (1 »not satisfied at all« 7 »totally satisfied«)	5.51	1.44	77 %
PA02: How satisfied is your child with confirmation work here overall? (1 »not satisfied at all« 7 »totally satisfied«)	5.30	1.42	73 %
PA03: Did you feel adequately informed by the parish about what was going on during confirmation training? (1 »not adequate« 7 »adequate«)	5.47	1.66	73 %
PA04: Did your attitude towards the parish change during the confirmation training of your child? (1 »negative change« 7 »positive change«)	4.96	1.20	55 %
PA05: How much did your child tell you about his/her experiences in confirmation training? (1 »very little« 7 »very much«)	4.38	1.68	49 %
PA06: How important is it for you personally, that your child will be confirmed? (1 »not important« 7 »very important«)	6.05	1.33	87 %
PA07: How important is faith in God for you personally? (1 »not important« 7 »very important«)	5.77	1.42	83 %

N=5338-5427.

The results show a high satisfaction with confirmation work in general. However, it should be taken into account that the answers are not representative for all confirmands' parents but for those who come to the parents' meetings with the minister. 84 % of the questionnaires were filled in by mothers, 16 % by

fathers (not taken into account some questionnaires that were filled in by a couple).

The most remarkable result from the parents' questionnaire deals with the estimation of confirmation. When asked »How do you celebrate the confirmation day in your family« the answers were: 0 % »not at all«; 11 % »rather a small party«; 13 % »a party like others, for example birthday parties«. 77 % ticked the answer »one of the most important events in the life of my child«. The strong support of the families surely is an underlying factor for the stability of participation in confirmation work over the last years.

3.1.5 Workers

Background Data

Among the workers there are different types of employees and volunteers: 636 ministers, 20 ministers-in-training, 103 deacons / employed youth workers, 37 other full- or part-time workers and 746 volunteers. Altogether, they form the data base of the workers. These numbers show that the cooperation with volunteers has become part of confirmation work in many parishes. However, this is not true for eastern Germany (excluding Berlin). In the East, the proportion of ministers to volunteers is 10:1.

Among the ministers the share of women is only 24 %, among the volunteers it is 63 %. The mean age of ministers is 46.4 years, that of the volunteers 22.9 years. 58 % of the workers are younger than 18 years old (usually called: the »teamers«).

Compared with the workers' situation in countries like Finland, it is surprising that only in a minority of German parishes employed youth workers are involved at least selectively in confirmation work. In fact, it is quite frequently the case that a youth worker is responsible for youth groups, special youth services or camps in a parish or a Church region but does not have any personal contact to the confirmands of this region. One reason for this paradoxical situation (the people who are especially trained for working with young people are excluded from the largest field of work with young people) lies in the self-concept of youth work which emphasises the voluntary character of the participation as well as the independence from the »official« Church administration.

Motives of the Employed Workers

Concerning the topics they consider to be relevant in confirmation time (section WA; cf. p. 319 in the appendix), the ministers focus strongly on classical topics related to the catechism: Jesus Christ, Holy Communion and Baptism receive an average of more than 6.6 on the 7-point-scale. Least importance is assigned to »other religions«, »body and sexuality« and »violence and crime«

(all below 4.0). The strongest difference in the rating of ministers and volunteers can be seen in the answer to item WA16 »friendship«. This item reaches a mean of 4.30 with the ministers and 5.59 with the volunteers.

The ministers thus comply highly with the traditional agenda of confirmation lessons, whereas the volunteers' interests go along with those of the confirmands.

Motivation and Qualification of the Volunteers

When asked about previous experiences of working in church groups (children's clubs, Sunday school, etc.), 73 % of the volunteers stated at least some experience of this kind. Nevertheless, only half of the volunteers have gone through a special training course for youth work. And no more than 19 % were especially trained for working with confirmands. There is certainly a high need for training in this field to be developed within the next years. One indicator for the lack of training is the question WE01 »I know the official guidelines for confirmation work«. 89 % of the ministers, but only 48 % of the volunteers affirm this statement. The emergence of young volunteers in German confirmation work somewhat parallels the situation in Finland, with two important exceptions. First, the number of volunteers is much lower, and secondly, there is no systematic education or institutionalised training programme on a supra-regional level. Each parish develops its own training programme or (more often) prefers to qualify their volunteers on a »learning by doing« basis.

Surprisingly, the share of those who consider their pedagogical competence (WE09) as inadequate is higher among ministers (9 %) than among volunteers (8 %). This is different with inadequate theological competence. Only 1 % of the ministers, but 18 % of the volunteers tick one of the disagreeing boxes for the corresponding item WE10.

Expectations and Experiences

Comparing the aims and the self-estimated outcomes of confirmation work, the data indicate that many confirmation workers – ministers and volunteers alike – follow conventional patterns more frequently in their actual practice than they would really like to. The following items from t_1 and t_2 give an impression of this gap between aims (t_1) and perceived reality (t_2) of one's own pedagogical practise:

- 62 % want the confirmands to be involved in the selection of topics for the confirmation time, but only 22 % report that this in fact happened (WB09/VB09).
- 88 % perceive it as important that confirmation time supports confirmands in their personal and social development, but only 72 % state that this was the case (WC04/VC04).

- 87 % think in the beginning of confirmation time that confirmands should experience forms of worship adequate for young people, but only 69 % affirm in t_2 that special services of this kind have happened in fact (WB04/VB04).
- 85 % aim at letting confirmands know what the youth work of the church offers them, but only 69 % say that this was the case (WC06/VC06).
- 61 % perceive it as important that confirmands should learn central Christian texts by heart (already a much higher share than, for example, in Austria and Switzerland), but 82 % say that this has happened in the end (WC03/VC03). No other item had such a gain from t_1 to t_2 in the workers' estimation.

These exemplary results show that the theory of confirmation work, which the workers hold, is ahead of the practical implementation. As will be shown below, this is also true for active participation of confirmands in church services and cooperation with schools. Many workers know about the importance of involving youth and their perspectives but in their practical work, they fall back to traditional settings.

3.1.6 Didactics

Methods and Materials

When asked about the pedagogical measures they use in their teaching, the following measures received the highest values: discussions, working with biblical texts, group work, prayer, lectures/narrations, singing and stories/narratives. This indicates a focus on methods that often are typical for traditional school lessons. 59 % of all leaders never use individualised forms of learning, 43 % abstain completely from talking with external experts in the group, 28 % from experiential methods. Certainly there has been a shift from earlier classroom settings to more open, experience-based learning, but these modern ways of teaching have not yet been introduced in all parishes (details: see section VH in appendix p. 329).

This is also mirrored by the material being used. The Bible is used »often« in 59 % of the parishes and »sometimes« in 34 % – no other material or media reaches this importance. Worksheets and material produced by the leaders themselves are also widely used. Concerning the use of an exercise book (many of them are on the German book market, the favourite one is called *Kursbuch*, Lübking 2005), there are two groups of parishes. Those who have an exercise book mostly use it regularly. On the other side, there are 42 % of the parishes that do not use such a book at all. The options »seldom« and »sometimes« were ticked only by a few leaders (VI05). New media is only used by a small minority.

When confirmand groups sing, they use the traditional church hymn books as often as modern Christian songs (details: see appendix p. 330).

Topics

Table 8 compares the importance of topics stated by workers and confirmands in t_1 . The two lines at the top of the list (marked light grey) show the topics where the interest of confirmands exceeds that of the workers. The lines at the bottom of the list (marked dark grey) are the topics that are emphasised much more by workers than by the adolescents.

Table 8: Comparison of importance of topics in t_1 (sorted by difference between workers and confirmands) (Germany)

Importance of topic	workers	confirmands
Friendship	67 %	88 %
Other religions	37 %	44 %
Violence and crime	49 %	48 %
The meaning of life	78 %	68 %
Justice and responsibility for others	84 %	65 %
Baptism	92 %	60 %
Jesus Christ	95 %	56 %
Course and meaning of Sunday services	79 %	34 %
The Lord's Supper	90 %	43 %

N = 1580-1596 (workers); N = 11270-11373 (confirmands). For details cf. sections WA and CL in the appendix.

The assumption that confirmands would only be interested in »non-church-related« topics is not supported by these results. Topics like baptism and Jesus Christ receive more interest than, for example, violence and crime, although this interest is not as high as the workers' aim of teaching about these topics. The biggest difference between workers and confirmands is related to the Sunday services and (not independent from this) the Lord's Supper. It may well be said that a difference in interest between confirmands and workers is natural for an educational setting. The striking result actually lies in the upper part of the table. There are two topics, which the confirmands are more interested in than the workers. For both topics it is easy to imagine how they could be dealt with in the framework of confirmation work. Friendship is a topic that may well be linked to issues of Christian faith. It has a lot to do with major Christian values like faithfulness and loyalty, patience and altruism. In confirmation work this topic could not only be spoken about, but rather be connected to experiences by using games where it is important to rely upon each other, etc. The topic »other religions« is not yet dealt with in many parishes (which is confirmed

by the fact that only 33 % of confirmands in t_2 report that they have learnt more about other religions during confirmation time; KB15). Ministers often state that this topic is sufficiently discussed in Religious Education in school. Although RE does in fact include the topic of other religions, it might well be a task of confirmation work to deal with the question how the Christian faith relates to other religious convictions. In a pluralistic situation, where, for example, Muslim faith is not something to simply know about in the sense of knowing about countries far away, but rather a reality in everyday life in Germany, confirmation work should face the challenge of a multireligious society and enable young people to reflect about their faith in relation to the faith of others.

Effects of Confirmation Time

The self-reported effects of confirmation time show that confirmation time, in general, is a positive experience for young people. Most of them experience a good sense of community in the group (73 %; KB02) and feel enabled to come to an individual decision about their faith (60 %; KB03). The relation to the parish, in general, is positive (63 % feel »welcome and accepted; KK37). It is probably related to these experiences of good relationships that a good proportion of the confirmands become more sensitive to social issues in society during their confirmation time. More than half of the confirmands affirm the experience that their commitment to other people (52 %; KK44) as well as to peace (52 %; KK46) is important. Almost every fourth became motivated for voluntary work in the church (23 %; KK27) – a much higher percentage than the number of those who actually turn out to help as volunteers and also a considerable number in terms of commitment in society in general.

On the other hand, the data show that the claim of introducing a change of perspective into confirmation work (*Perspektivenwechsel*) has not yet taken place in many parishes. Only 34 % of the confirmands state that their questions concerning faith were addressed (KK11), only 29 % had the feeling that their opinion was taken into account when the leaders decided about the topics (KK04). Almost one out of two confirmands states that what was learnt in confirmation time has little to do with one's everyday life (47 %; KK35).

3.1.7 Church Services

Church services turn out to be one of the most problematic factors in German confirmation work. The obligation to take part in Sunday services is kept up in nearly all parishes. Usually a confirmand has to attend church about 20 times during the confirmation period. 93 % of the parishes have invented ways to check the fulfilment of this duty, usually by church attendance cards that have

to be signed by the ministers. As shown in chapter 3.1.4, the mere presence in the services does not seem to impress confirmands a lot. The share of those who consider services as boring rises over time.

It is evident that an improvement of church services seems to be vital for the future of confirmation work. Not only by theologians but also by young people is the Sunday service seen as the hallmark of the Church. If this hallmark is experienced as a boring event, one must not wonder why many confirmands turn away from the Church after confirmation. Correlation analysis shows however, that boring services are not a God-given fate. If services, at least in some parts, take on a youth cultural style (for example concerning music) and if confirmands are allowed to take part in the preparation of services, satisfaction with Sunday services is much higher than the average. Thus, there are possibilities to enhance satisfaction of confirmands with worship. Or as a girl put it on her questionnaire: »I find it unfair, that church services aim at the elderly people. In our parish, the confirmands account for 50-60 % of all churchgoers. Some more pep, like in a youth service, wouldn't harm anyone, would it? Please do something about it, before we all fall asleep!«

3.1.8 Conclusions and Challenges

In conclusion, we want to describe three challenges that arise from the empirical findings. Confirmation work obviously still needs to do more in order to realise the conceptual promise of youth orientation. The institutionalized preparation of the personnel has to be adjusted to the greater involvement of voluntary workers. A major challenge – if not threat – arises from new developments in the school system that leave only very limited space of time for an activity like confirmation work.

As mentioned above in this chapter, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more subject-related and youth-oriented understanding of confirmation work in the German discussion in the last decades. But how does this broad conceptual agreement relate to the perceptions of the confirmands themselves? The results of the German study, including more than 11000 confirmands, show a high degree of satisfaction with activities in confirmation work. But still only a third of the confirmands felt that their own questions about faith were addressed, and almost half of them stated that what they learnt during confirmation time had little to do with their everyday life. Church services were, as seen above, perceived as particularly frustrating and boring. So there seems to be a certain gap between the theory and praxis of confirmation work at this point. There are clear hints that the problems with implementating the pupil-oriented turn have much to do with the didactics in this field. The methods that

are currently practiced in German confirmation lessons are still in many parishes quite close to those used in school, and the choice of topics does in many cases not meet the interests of the confirmands.

Although, in the beginning, the motives for participation are very much linked to the ceremony of confirmation and its implications (family celebration, gifts and blessing), the confirmation time is cherished by many of the adolescents when looking back on it. One important reason for this is the fact that some central elements of youth work have been introduced into confirmation work, especially outings and camps. Volunteers, many of them only slightly older than the confirmands, support the ministers in large numbers (especially in western Germany). They mostly get involved in extra meetings outside the weekly confirmation lessons and are enthusiastic about their experiences in confirmation work. Yet a system of training such volunteers has not been established on a wider scale, which leads to a situation in which one out of two volunteers has not undergone any special course for confirmation or youth work.

In an open question, the leaders had the possibility to write about their experiences with the effects of changes in the educational system on confirmation work. The answers show that, as presumed above, this question is indeed of great urgency for the parishes. After the reform of high school education in Germany, which has reduced the total time by one whole year, many confirmands attending the new *Gymnasium* face a heavier school workload, which leads to a decreasing willingness to invest time and effort in additional activities like confirmation work.

But still only one third of all workers stated in t_1 that »our confirmation work should cooperate with the school« (WD06). And even in these cases, this general aim almost never leads to concrete action. Only 5 % of all workers affirm in t_2 , that there has actually been cooperation between school and confirmation work in the ongoing confirmation period. One obvious reason is a structural problem. Each confirmation group is composed, on an average, of pupils from 5 to 6 different schools. It is hard to imagine how cooperation on such a basis should look if confirmation work does not want to give up its claim of bringing together adolescents from different school types. In light of this, confirmation work has to put more emphasis on its positive contribution to society at large. Only a strong profile in the public sphere will obtain and secure the time resources that are needed for doing good work with the adolescents.

This leads us to a final observation. In a competitive society like Germany with increasingly uncertain employment prospects, the question asked by many confirmands in respect to confirmation work »What do I get out of it? Why should I go there?« takes on an additional meaning. At least implicitly, they are not just asking about the meaning of this activity but also about its palpable

implications for their personal and professional future. Convincing answers will have to address such questions. This being the case, it causes additional concern that so many German confirmands feel that confirmation work is out of touch with their daily life. The high popularity of ethical themes with the confirmands seems to indicate as well that the church has to consider possibilities for broadening its work with young people by not focussing exclusively on matters of faith but also on matters of mastering one's life in other respects.

3.2 Confirmation Work in Austria

DAGMAR LAGGER

Daniel lives in a small town in Upper Austria. He is a 14 year old boy and he started his confirmation time last October. Next week, the whole group of six confirmands of his parish will join with a group from another parish which is a bit bigger than Daniel's. He hopes to make new friends who also belong to the Protestant Church of Austria.

Being a member of the Lutheran Church is not so common in Austria. Daniel's parents belong to two different Churches, his father was baptised a Roman Catholic; for the past two years he has been active in the Church Council, the board of the Catholic parish. Daniel's mother is a member of the Protestant Church; after Daniel's birth she wanted him to be baptised in her Church. Being prepared for confirmation is now the last part of the decision to be baptised in the Protestant Church.

Although Daniel's confirmation group is quite small, each confirmand has the deep wish to finish the confirmation time because confirmation is a good Protestant tradition in family and church life. Daniel had also heard about confirmation preparation in former days from his grandparents who tried to motivate him to memorise Bible verses and catechism texts. Daniel himself looks forward to Ascension Day, for on this day he will receive the confirmation blessing and then take part in Holy Communion with his friends and his whole family.

3.2.1 General Overview

Protestants in a Minority Situation

The Protestant Church of Austria consists of the *Evangelische Kirche A.B.*, i. e., the Church of the Augsburg Confession in the tradition of Lutheran Protestantism coming from Germany, and the *Evangelische Kirche H.B.*, the Reformed Church or the Church of the »Helvetican Confession« in the tradition of the Swiss Reformation with Zwingli and Calvin. Beginning in 1781, when the *Toleranzpatent* (Edict of Tolerance) was issued by the Habsburg Emperor Joseph the Second, Protestant parishes could be founded. Only since then, Protestantism has been allowed. Prior to this Edict, during the time of *Geheimprotestantismus* (secret Protestantism), Protestantism could only be practiced illegally. The Protestants presented themselves in public as Roman Catholic and kept their faith secret by reading in the Bible and in devotional literature. After the *Toleranzpatent*, Austrian Protestantism was influenced by the ministers who

came from Germany, mostly pietistic Württemberg. The next step of acceptance came with the *Protestantenpatent* (Licence for Protestants) in 1861; the Protestants then gained nearly the same rights as the Roman Catholic Church. There were two major movements of conversion from the Roman Catholic to the Protestant Church. At the turn of the 20th century, the *Los-von-Rom-Bewegung* (Away-from-Rome Movement) saw many converts and again, between 1934 and 1938, especially people affiliated with Social Democracy became »political Protestants«. The period after World War II saw the final increase in new Protestant Church membership as a result of German-speaking immigrants from the newly emerging East Block migrating to Austria. The *Protestantengesetz* (Protestant Law) of 1961 defines the Protestant Church in Austria as a »free Church in a free State«. In the year 2008, the two Protestant Churches had 328346 members, which represent 4.3 % of the Austrian population. About 13784 of these belong to the Reformed Church. The Protestant Churches are minorities in Austria although in two of nine federal states, Burgenland and Carinthia (*Kärnten*), the percentage of Protestants has risen to over 10 %. However, most Protestants live in a state of extreme Diaspora. Nevertheless, the small Protestant Church frequently raises its voice in the media to comment on questions concerning society as a whole, the European Union, homosexuality, refugees, medical ethics, and others. However, the Church is worried about its disproportionate number of older members, its financial situation and the position of religious communities and Churches in civil society as a whole. The Protestant Church of Austria, consisting of the Lutheran and the Reformed Church of Austria, has been a member of the World Council of Churches since its founding in 1948. Its role as a founding member of *Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen in Österreich* (Austrian Ecumenical Council of Churches) as well as in the Lutheran and the Reformed World Federation and the Concordance of Leuenberg, and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe with its administrative office in Vienna, demonstrates the international involvement of the small Protestant Church of Austria.

The following report refers solely to the Lutheran Church of Austria.

Participation

The number of male and female confirmands per parish varies between 3 and 50, depending on the demographic situation of the parish. In Austria around 3000 young people are confirmed every year. The membership reports from 2005 to 2007 show that numbers are constant (Amtsblatt 2005–2008: 2996 in 2004, 3028 in 2005, 3169 in 2006, 3041 in 2007) – in contrast to continuously falling membership numbers. Thus the confirmation work obviously does reach a high percentage of the young church members. Usually they are confirmed between the ages of 12 and 15 with the majority being confirmed at the

age of 14. This may be due to the fact that in many places teachers of school religious education explicitly invite their pupils to come to the confirmation classes, or at least support their participation during the 8th grade. Some very small parishes do not offer confirmation work every year, due to the small number of confirmands.

According to Austrian law, young people are regarded as mature enough to decide upon their own religious affiliation once they reach the age of 14. This is also the age at which they may choose to be confirmed. However, this new religious independence is only rarely used to leave the Church. Examples of children leaving the Church are generally very rare and cases in which young people leave at the age of 14 only occur occasionally in Austria. Yet those who were not satisfied with the confirmation work they experienced mention this as one of the reasons for their decision to leave the Church at a later age. Most of the young adults who leave the Church, are not confirmed (according to the observations of Church treasury official Roland Weng).

Preparation of the Personal

According to the Austrian Church constitution, the person in charge of preparing young people for confirmation is the minister. This responsibility falls within the minister's standard range of duties as part of his or her spiritual leadership of the community (*Kirchenverfassung* 1947, article 22). In many parishes, confirmation classes are closely linked to the work of youth ministry. Thus it is very common for voluntary helpers to actively engage in the work of preparing young people for confirmation and for them to be partially or fully responsible for their teaching.

Where a parish employs its own teaching staff, the members are frequently entrusted with preparing young people for confirmation. This enables them to establish personal contacts which help them to build bridges to the Church's youth work. Amongst others, the Protestant Youth of Austria also offers further training for full-time and voluntary helpers in confirmation work. During this training the Church strives to offer a programme of study which is designed to appeal to young people of this age, and which incorporates recent advances in teaching methodology. This training also demonstrates that confirmation work is regarded as an integral part of the Church's youth work.

About ten years ago, a group of theology students initiated a project which gave helpers of the confirmation preparation the opportunity to exchange experiences and to undergo further training for their work. Since then there has been an annual meeting and training day which has always been documented and published under www.koku.at. In addition, the theological journal of the Protestant Church, *Amt und Gemeinde*, has published two models of up-to-date confirmation work. These models have been tested and suggest a step-by-step

approach to teaching about Holy Communion and a project based on four pillars. These pillars include teaching on four weekends and on individual afternoons, active involvement in the life of the parish, special events such as a Welcome Service for young people starting their confirmation time, and preparatory meetings for the staff responsible for this work (Schwimbersky 2001, Stark 2001).

Content and Form

The content and organisation of the confirmation work are decided upon by the individual parishes. Hence there is a multitude of different programmes for confirmation classes. Some parishes offer one hour classes every week which are supplemented by mandatory church attendance on a certain number of Sundays. Other parishes will have longer sessions on set weekends, e.g., the first Saturday of the month or in Wien-Hetzendorf, for example, two weeks in summer. Sometimes these classes put an emphasis on projects which focus on social issues such as the church and people with special needs or dialogue between the religions. This preparation period frequently includes one or two weekends which the helpers and young people spend together. During these weekends they can also get to know each other better and can carry out an in-depth study of certain topics, such as the sacraments. In other parishes it has become a tradition to take a trip to the places where Martin Luther lived to trace his past. Due to the state of Diasporas, many girls and boys do not know each other before their confirmation preparation. They may well be the only Protestant pupil in their school class. So apart from their Religious Education at school, where they are taught in a group of students assembled from different classes or even schools, their confirmation classes enable them to experience for the first time that they belong to a larger community.

It is also popular to include the young people in organising special worship services. These services are either designed to appeal specifically to their age group or the young people take over the reading of a Psalm or the weekly Scripture reading. A few parishes prefer to take up offers made by Protestant organisations as a basis for their own programme. In these cases, all the members of a confirmation class usually spend time at workshops offered by the Protestant organisation on their premises.

Parental involvement varies according to the offerings of the parish. These range from a single information evening to a series of information and further education events for the parents, and to voluntary involvement in confirmation time of their children.

In rare cases, so-called »final exams« are still held in which the confirmands are required to prove their knowledge of the catechism or the lyrics of hymns in a special service. In other parishes, the findings about educational methodology

have been incorporated, which means that instead of a public exam the young people are required to present the results of projects in a service or during special events (e. g., a talents-feast in Klosterneuburg).

Throughout the Church in Austria a number of phenomena which are also known in our neighbouring country, Germany, can be found.

Confirmation

According to the Order of Church Services of the General Protestant Church Law, confirmation takes place »through teaching, partaking in the life of the parish and the service in which the young people are blessed« (*Amtshandlungsordnung*, 1994, III 7).

The time of this blessing service, which concludes the preparation for the actual confirmation, varies within Austria. Confirmations are held between Palm Sunday and Thanksgiving (in early autumn) though most parishes prefer the Ascension of Christ Service. The central aspect of this service is the blessing of the young people. Here the young people, most of whom were baptised as babies, publicly confess their faith in the blessings of God. The growing importance of the act of blessing in our Protestant Church – which has traditionally put its main emphasis on the Word – gives young people the chance to have their need for spiritual experiences met and marked on a special occasion (Adam 2001).

In official Church texts, the term »confirmation teaching« or »confirmation class« was exclusively used until 1996. However, since then the term »confirmation work« has been used and can be delineated by the following documents. The paradigm shift was introduced by the synod that focussed on education, the *Grazer Bildungssynode* in 1996. In addition to the youth ministries in parishes and Religious Education classes in Austrian schools, the synod determined that »confirmation work« is one of the basic educational duties of the Protestant Church for adolescents.

With regard to its educational duties, the General Synod of the Lutheran and the Reformed Church of Austria ratified a written statement of the Theological Committee on the confirmation promise. It contained six aspects: God's promise of loyalty, the obligation of the parish, the conscious and independent acceptance of one's baptism and the willingness to take Holy Communion, the supervision of the confirmands during a critical period of their lives, abolition of the traditional confirmation vow and a meaningful connection »between the theologically justified requirements and the actual reality, and the world around us« (*Amtsblatt* 1996). Finally, the parishes were encouraged to continue looking for suitable new forms of confirmation preparation, as the present state was not ideal.

Only two years later in 1998, the Lutheran Synod decided to accept a detailed

statement on confirmation work which appealed to the parishes to actively assume responsibility for their obligations to their confirmands. This statement included three impulses for a promising future:

- to convey experiences of faith;
- to work out the tenets of our belief;
- to help young people find a home within their parish.

It added more detailed suggestions about how to implement these goals (such as the Welcome Service at the beginning of the confirmation preparation) and it contained basic considerations about how to ensure that the Church's obligations towards young people would be heeded. (Amtsblatt 1998)

The Confirmation Agenda published by the VELKD, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, for the German Churches and parishes, was amended with Austrian contributions. It was accepted and authorised by the Austrian Lutheran Synod in October 2002. However, the extent to which these aids for ministers and lay people who are involved in the confirmation preparation, actually serve their purpose cannot be verified.

Previous Research and Future Perspectives

During the school year 1987/88, the Protestant Youth of Austria engaged minister Herwig Hohenberger to conduct a survey amongst 13 to 16 year old students about their confirmation experiences. The questions were aimed at obtaining feedback on the organisation, the course and the content of their confirmation preparation as well as on their personal experiences. 8000 questionnaires were distributed and 2358 were filled in, returned and statistically analysed. The results were sorted into three categories: villages in the country, towns and cities (Hohenberger 1989). However, until now the official Church has made no further use of this survey. One reason for their reluctance may be that the survey was not carried out within a professional scientific framework. According to the author, the meaningfulness of the collected data was repeatedly questioned.

Before the present study, a university-based scientific investigation of Austrian confirmation work using statistical research had never been conducted. What has been tried, however, is a theoretical examination by the Institute for Religious Education at the Protestant Theological Faculty of Vienna University (Gottfried Adam) from the standpoint of religious education. Their publications have also made their way into journals and the public church media. In May 2001, *Amt und Gemeinde*, the official theological journal published by the Austrian Lutheran Bishop was dedicated to issues dealing with confirmation. And in the autumn of 2005 *Amt und Gemeinde* published the article »Der Pfarrer im Arbeitsfeld Konfirmandenunterricht (The minister in the field of confirmation work)« (Adam 2005). In this article, the author deals predominantly

with the groups of people involved in this work, the objectives and the forms of work.

Participation in the current European study on confirmation time opens up the possibility of deciding upon future programmes based on local findings and to use the impulses coming from other countries. The challenges faced by the Protestant Church of Austria with its state of Diaspora will remain. A young person's best friend will continue to play a decisive role, especially between the ages of 13 to 15 – and in the majority of cases, these friends will not be Protestants. How can young people be addressed in a way that attracts them, even if it means that they belong to a minority?

The alignment of confirmation work with the objectives of the official Church, which the Lutheran minister Ernst Hofhansl regarded as the prevailing aim over the last ten years (Hofhansl 1998), appears to be on the decline. In the best case, parishes succeed in integrating young people into their parish as active members or even as more-or-less regular church-goers. However, in the worst cases, the young people withdraw from the fellowship of their Church for good after their confirmation time, even if they do not end their membership immediately. How can traditions be meaningfully upheld if they do not mean anything to the parents of young church members?

Due to the broad theological spectrum of the Austrian parishes, it is difficult to design a concept or programme that can be universally applied. Perhaps this is the real reason why no further documents have been published since the declaration in 1998.

The official texts of the Church laws concerning confirmation need to be revised. The *Amtsblatt* of 1996 still refers to the confirmation service as the first time at which children are allowed to take Holy Communion. Actually all the parishes celebrate Holy Communion with children. This change in practice should be officially acknowledged in the Church documents.

3.2.2 Description of the Study

The study in Austria was linked closely to the study in Germany. The same questionnaires for workers, confirmands and parents were used, with only some minor changes (e. g., school types). The research team at Tübingen University organised the survey and got into direct contact with the parishes. A small Austrian team consisting of Dieter Bergmayr, Gerhard Harkam and Dagmar Lagger managed the local concerns. Dieter Bergmayr was busy in the support of the parishes and contributed to this article in chapter 3.2.1. Gerhard Harkam gave valuable advice for the selection of the parishes and created the portrait of Daniel, a typical Austrian confirmand.

Procedures

In Austria 29 parishes (of 205) took part in the international study. A parish has between 500 and 3000 members. The criteria for the selection aimed for a representative distribution concerning the following characteristics:

- diaspora and non diaspora situation;
- members of the parish in relation to the area;
- rural and urban areas;
- historical background: Edict of Tolerance–parishes, Away-from-Rome Movement, many immigrants after World War II, young parishes in suburban settlements.

The sample of parishes was selected by the Austrian team. In a letter from the Tübingen team, 63 parishes were invited to take part in the study. 36 agreed to receive t_1 . In the end, 29 parishes – 46 % of the parishes which were originally invited – had the questionnaires filled in by workers and confirmands (29 in t_1 , 28 in t_2). Just one parish dropped out.

The sample of the confirmands is highly representative in relation to the number of confirmands of the same year; 487 of 3001 took part. All the categories of parishes are represented in the sample. No weighting factors had to be applied for computing the results.

The schedule for the procedure was similar to the one in Germany:

- t_0 : questionnaire for leaders describing the structure of the parish: June 2007.
- t_1 : confirmands and workers: around September 2007 (when the 1-year-groups were about to start).
- t_2 : confirmands and workers: in spring / early summer 2008 (in every parish about 2-6 weeks before confirmation).
- March 2009: information about results was sent to every parish by the Tübingen team.

The questionnaires were filled in at the beginning of a regular confirmation lesson. On a voluntary basis, the parishes were invited to distribute additional questionnaires to parents. These questionnaires were administered in all the parishes that agreed to use the parents' questionnaire at the beginning of one of the meetings offered for parents of the confirmands.

Overview on Data

Table 9 gives the number of valid questionnaires collected.

Table 9: number of questionnaires (Austria)

	t ₀	t ₁	t ₂	percentage matched
units	29	29	28	100 %
confirmants		540	487	79,3 %
workers		118	98	71,4 %
(parents)			240	73,1 % with confirmants

3.2.3 Setting of Confirmation Work

The number of meetings and normal instruction hours compared with the other European countries appears small. An average of 13.71 meetings (VQ01) and 21.89 instruction hours (VQ02) show that there exist numerous monthly groups. Also the number of special days for the confirmation group (at least 3 hours) is very low (VQ03= 1.96). The preferred days for confirmation classes are Friday 41 % and Saturday 41 %, but also on Sunday 22 % of the parishes have confirmation preparation. On Monday and Tuesday there are in each case 7 % of the group-meetings, on Wednesday 11 % and on Thursday 19 %. During the week the young people are busy with school or other activities like sports or music. 54 % of the confirmants sometimes had problems finding free time for confirmation work (VN06). The organisation of special activities by the parishes seems to be difficult in light of the fact that the confirmants attend different schools. The locations for the meetings are in 75 % the parish community centres. They use the churches in 43 % or the minister’s house in 39 %. The workers use different rooms for the confirmation classes, so that the confirmants get to know more places of church activities.

3.2.4 Confirmants

General Characteristics and Background Information

The majority of the confirmants expressed the opinion that it was okay filling in this questionnaire (17 % = I liked it; 62 % = It was okay; 22 % = It annoyed me).

51 % of the confirmants are male; 49 % are female. In t₁, 72 % are age 13, 22 % are 14 years old, 4 % are 12 and even 2 % are already 15. Most of the confirmants have one or more sisters or/and brothers, only 16 % have no siblings. Almost 15 % have an immigration background, for the most part from Germany. Just 1 %, i. e., 5 confirmants were not baptised when they started with

confirmation work. They were baptised before the confirmation service (2 more than 4 weeks before, 2 about 1 to 4 weeks before, and the fifth on confirmation day).

About half of the confirmands attend *Gymnasium* and the others attend a *Hauptschule* or *Kooperative Mittelschule*. The Austrian school system divides the pupils into different school types after the 4th grade. Statistically, one third of Austrian pupils attend the *Gymnasium* (to qualify for university admission) and two third the *Hauptschule*. Regarding this fact, the Protestant pupils are over-represented in *Gymnasium*. 97 % take part in Religious Education in school, 2 % withdraw and for 1 % there is no Religious Education in their school, perhaps due to the extreme diaspora situation.

Motivation for Participation

The three most important factors of motivation are the own baptism (58 %; CA04), the outlook for having fun (51 %; CA08) and the personal invitation by the parish (50 %; CA02). 62 % expect to meet friends or to get to know new friends (CB06) and are interested in the experiences with the confirmation group. Compared with other European countries, the Austrian confirmands look forward more to taking an important step in growing up (55 % compared to 38 % in the total; CB04). It also should be mentioned, that the blessing on the day of confirmation, the money and/or the presents on this day and a beautiful celebration with the members of the family and friends scored rather high (50 % for CB11; 51 % for CB10; 51 % for CB09). After some months of active confirmation preparation, the confirmands emphasise in t_2 first the good community (72 %; KB02) and then the confirmation celebration (67 %; KB09) and also the money and the presents which they hope to get plentifully (60 %; KB10)!

Expectations and Experiences

The young people seem to be serious in their faith. 68 % believe in God (CE09) and two thirds think that God takes care of each of us and loves all humans (CE03). 57 % believe in the resurrection of Jesus (CE04). At the end of confirmation preparation they know more about the Christian faith (DIFF_CE10: +0.27) and talk more about God with other people (DIFF_CE06: +0.23). In t_1 , 8 % of the confirmands are ashamed to tell their friends about confirmation work. This share rises to 13 % in t_2 , which is the highest value of all seven countries involved (CE07, KE07). This could be due to the minority situation and the missing opportunity to reflect on faith in their peer groups apart from the parish. 92 % – in t_1 as well as in t_2 – definitely want to be confirmed at the end of the confirmation time (CE12, KE12).

No stress and a lot of action and fun count as the strongest expectations of

the confirmands (CK10, CK05). On the lowest position of the scale, the item about learning Christian texts by heart can be discovered. The confirmands do not expect to do this rather old-fashioned method in confirmation classes (CK02). High in relation to all other European confirmands, the Austrian confirmands wish to decide about the topics dealt with during confirmation time and to come into personal contact with the workers (CK04, CK03). Austrian confirmands have high expectations; the percentages are higher than the European averages (cf. Table 10).

Table 10: Expectations of confirmands (Austria compared to total results)

During the time of my confirmation training it is important for me ...	all	AT
CK10: to take part without too much stress.	72 %	77 %
CK05: to have a lot of action.	58 %	63 %
CK04: to be allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands.	35 %	45 %
CK01: to find my own point of view concerning my own life.	39 %	40 %
CK11: that my questions concerning faith will play a role.	39 %	34 %
CK03: to come into personal contact with the leaders and workers.	20 %	32 %
CK07: to sing or make music together.	34 %	30 %
CK02: to learn central Christian texts by heart (e.g. the Creed).	21 %	15 %

N = 522-525.

After some months of more or less intensive confirmation preparation, only 22 % had too much stress (KK10). 51 % had a lot of action and probably some fun time (KK05). One third was allowed to decide the topics of confirmation preparation (KK04). The contacts between the young people and the helpers developed quite well (54 %; KK03).

The experiences differ insignificantly from the European results. Only the attendance at worship services is a bit lower (53 %; KK09). The confirmands took part in group meetings regularly (70 %; KK08). The young people felt very welcomed and accepted in their parishes (63 %; KK37). Regrettably, only a low percentage became motivated to help in the church as voluntary workers (18 %; KK27). They got to know some people to whom faith is important (53 %; KK32) and had good contacts to the workers (54 %; KK03). But 51 % mentioned that confirmation work hardly has anything to do with everyday life (KK35). A minority of one third would prefer to be confirmed without the preceding confirmation time (KK41).

The general satisfaction with confirmation work is high. Prayers and musical topics, however, are at the bottom of the list of positive experiences (40 % for KN13, 48 % for KN14). The confirmands are most satisfied with the minister or the primarily responsible person (76 %; KN07). The contents of the lessons do

not meet the expectations of the young people (48 %; KN03). This result is surprising because they had the opportunity to decide about the topics. The aspect of the experience within the community in having fun and attending camps scores relatively high (76 % for KN02; 69 % for KN11).

Attitudes towards Religion and Church

The negative attitude towards the Church is low and is outweighed by the positive view. Confirmation preparation contributes to the individual development of the young people. But what about their religiosity and their attitudes towards church in general and the official Church? Their thinking about the Christian faith in general changes little as shown in Table 11. The confirmands were asked in t_1 only about their general attitude towards faith and in t_2 also about their attitude towards the Church.

Table 11: General questions about faith and Church (Austria)

How would you describe your current attitude in general towards ...?	very negative	rather negative	neither negative nor positive	rather positive	very positive
CF01: ... the Christian faith (t_1)	3 %	6 %	30 %	47 %	13 %
KF01: ... the Christian faith (t_2)	3 %	4 %	29 %	49 %	16 %
KF02: ... the Protestant Church (t_1)	2 %	3 %	28 %	47 %	21 %

N = 419-494. The Austrian questionnaires did not include CF02.

In the questionnaire sections CG and KG the confirmands gave their opinions referring to characteristic matters of church and faith.

Table 12: Change of attitudes between t_1 and t_2 (Austria)

Share of consent (5, 6, and 7)	t_1	t_2	Share of consent (5, 6, and 7)	t_1	t_2
It is important for me to belong to the Church.	38 %	44 %	The church does a lot of good things for the people.	64 %	67 %
The church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me.	38 %	43 %	If I should have personal problems, I would turn to a minister.	11 %	14 %
If I will have children, I want to have them baptised.	91 %	89 %	Our church building means a lot to me.	27 %	26 %
Church services are usually boring.	47 %	60 %	I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.	12 %	20 %

N = 465-530. Item names are CG01-CG08 (t_1) and KG01-KG08 (t_2).

Regarding the results in Table 12, two points appear questionable from an educational point of view – the significance of the minister as an adviser and the

interest in youth work. As mentioned above, the ministers play an important role in confirmation work. They succeed in getting into contact with the boys and girls and the confirmands are satisfied with the work of the ministers. But they do not succeed in becoming a pastoral counsellor at this time. Perhaps there will be a long-term effect and when the confirmands are grown up, they will turn to the minister if they want advice. Normally, confirmation work is intended as an introduction into youth work. At the end of confirmation only one out of five confirmands showed interest in taking part in a Christian youth group (KG08). Probably there exist different reasons for this result. The home-parish has no special youth work or it is not attractive for them. Or they do not know of any youth work because the confirmands should attend the diocesan youth work, which is too far away.

Another important item needs attention as well. Confirmands regard worship services as boring, in t_1 not as much as in t_2 . What happened in the time of confirmation preparation? This topic is dealt with in 3.2.7. The young people were asked about their attendance at various programmes in parishes before confirmation time, like children's services, choir, church children's groups. 50 % took part more than three times from the age from 5 to 9 and 45 % after the age of 10 years. This shows that with increasing age the parish-activity decreases. The young people, who are intensively engaged in parish-work, are an exception.

Data from the Confirmands' Parents

The same questionnaire as in Germany was used for the Austrian parents. 240 parents filled in the questionnaire: 79 % female and 21 % male. They were asked for their actual marital status. 79 % are married, 10 % are divorced, 6 % are single but living in a partnership and 5 % are single without a partner. In 2007, Austria had a divorce rate of 49.5 %. This means that nearly half of the couples dissolve their partnership: 32 % after 0 to 5 years, 58 % after 5 to 25 years and 10 % later in marriage.

When asked about their satisfaction with confirmation work overall, 86 % of the parents stated that they are satisfied (PA01). They themselves consider the confirmation of their children as very important (88 %; PA06) and have positive memories of their own confirmation (69 %; PA08). The mothers and fathers say that faith in God means a lot to them (84 %; PA07). Their interest in church work grows during the confirmation time of their children and they attend Sunday services more frequently (54 %; PB01). Half of the parents think that the celebration of confirmation day is one of the most important festivities in the life of their son or daughter. The rate of participation in different activities in the parish, however, is rather low. More than two thirds of the parents were not asked to participate in such activities. The involvement could be more

intensive. Parishes should give some more attention to the (wo)manpower of the parents. The average age of the parents is about 43 years. This means that they are probably people with a lot of professional obligations. Their time for private activities might be rather limited. But all in all, the parents are a reliable factor in confirmation work.

3.2.5 Workers

Background Data

The largest group of workers are the volunteers with 73 persons. Just 28 of the workers are ministers, 3 are ministers-in-training, 6 are deacons or youth workers and 2 are other employed workers. The number of volunteers under 18 years is higher than in the nordic countries except for Finland, where a special programme for young volunteer workers exists. Nearly a third has no previous experience in church work, 39% have done confirmation work up to 3 years and 31% have been workers for more than 3 years. Most of the volunteers (63%) have had no special training for their activities in church work in general. A smaller group (13%) has no special training for the work with the confirmands and the others (24%) attended special training for confirmation work. An interesting fact is that most of the workers have little experience in other fields of church work, like Sunday school or Christian youth groups. The average age of the volunteers is about 20 years. The quota of women is 56% of the volunteers and 29% of the ministers. A few persons are not members of the Protestant Church, and 10% are citizens of other countries. At the beginning of confirmation training in autumn, half of the workers do not know any of the confirmands at least by name and at the end, 63% know the names of nearly all.

Motivation and Qualification

The ministers and the other workers think that they have similar aims in confirmation work. The ministers claim to know the official guidelines better and also comply with them more than the other groups of workers. High scores can be discovered in the importance of being together with other workers (93%; WE04) and confirmands (90%; WE05). 80% want to be a role model for the girls and boys (WE07). The value of individual faith in God is more important for ministers than for the other workers but 82% of all workers agree with this (WE08). In the European context, the self-estimated competences are remarkably low. The pedagogical and theological competences of the workers score not so high. One third of the workers feel not competent enough, maybe the considerable number of volunteers is the reason for this result. The theological competences of the ministers are obviously higher (Table 13).

Table 13: Competences of workers (scale from 1 to 7) (Austria)

	M ministers	M workers	SD
WE09: I consider my pedagogical competence for confirmation work as adequate.	5.63	5.53	1.31
WE10: I consider my theological knowledge/competence for confirmation work as adequate.	6.52	5.12	1.64

N = 113-116.

All workers are rather highly satisfied in general (85 %; VM01); they also like the confirmation work (96 %; VM02). Teamwork has an acceptance of 93 % (VM04). Even 74 % think that the financial resources are adequate (VM05). All Austrian average values in this section of the questionnaire are higher than the European except for the financial issues. At the end of confirmation time in late spring, only 5 % of the workers would be happy to be relieved of their work in conformation classes. In the beginning a little more (with 7 %) thought so (Table 14).

Table 14: I would like to be relieved from working in confirmation training (t₁, t₂) (Austria)

	Min	M	SD	No (1,2,3)	(4)	Yes (5,6,7)
t ₁ : WE06	1.93	1.63	1.42	92 %	1 %	7 %
t ₂ : VE06	2.13	1.66	1.28	89 %	5 %	5 %

N = 95-116.

The number of workers per parish who regularly contribute to confirmation time seems high according to the European comparison (M = 4.54 compared to 2.83 in the total). The workers and their enduring and reliable way of working with the confirmands are an important part of confirmation work in Austria.

Expectations and Experiences

The Bible is not as important (61 %; WB11) as camps or meeting other people (93 %; WB07). The workers expect participation in church work especially in worship service. Confirmands should have the possibility to take part in church services (WB02; WB05). Confirmands should have the chance to cooperate with the workers concerning the selection of the topics. But in the end, this has not really been achieved (70 % consider this an important aim, but only 9 % report that it happened; WB09/VB09).

The opinion about what confirmands should learn during confirmation time is in some items remarkable in comparison with the European confirmation models. The workers' interest in having the confirmands learn Christian texts by heart is with 42 % lower than in Germany with 61 %. At the end of

confirmation time, 55 % of the workers report that the confirmands did learn texts by heart (WC03; VC03). As a comparison, the results from other countries: FI 98 %, DK 97 %, DE 82 %, NO 54 %, SE 45 %, CH 8 %. The reason why the confirmands have to learn those texts in several parishes can be seen in their traditional orientation.

The Austrian workers intend to encourage the creativity of the young people more intensively than the other European workers (77 %; WC08). A very important point is the support of personal and social development (92 %; WC04) and the aid in developing a personal point of view concerning their own life (91 %; WC01). Youth work as an interesting part of church work does not reach the interests of the confirmands as intensively as expected (87 % of the workers aim at acquainting the confirmands with youth work, but only 64 % report that this was the case; WC06/VC06). The cooperation between parish and school seems to be difficult. Only 6 % report about cooperation in t_2 , whereas 37 % aimed at it (WD06/VD06). One reason might lie in the minority situation of the Protestant pupils in their schools. The confirmands come together from different schools (average 6.2 schools). This fact emphasises the Diaspora situation of the Protestants in Austria.

The experience of community in the confirmation group scores rather high with 93 % (WD03). Little interest can be stated in special gender-related activities for male and female confirmands (34 %; WD04). The workers place less effort on satisfying their presbyteries (36 %; WD09) and on missionary effects (43 %; WD02). The importance of community focuses on the confirmation group more than on the parish and Christianity in general.

The confirmation workers offer the young people individual support and personal accompaniment. But they give away the chance of democratic decision making about the topics. Maybe the workers are too open in their preparation or they prefer to do what they did the year before.

3.2.6 Didactics

Methods and Materials

Altogether the methodical spectrum shows a wide variety. All possible items were chosen by the workers. The tendencies towards group-orientated and experience-based materials and methods are obvious. The most frequent methods encourage on the one hand, the group relations (VH15, VH02) and on the other hand, central Christian methods like praying (VH09) and working with the Bible (VH10). The rarest pedagogical measures are the internet or text messages (VH14). If musical methods are used, the workers prefer singing (VH13). Playing music seems to be not so attractive for them (VH25). Self-created materials

play the most important role; surprisingly not the Bible or Luther's catechism. But working with other texts like worksheets or a special book for confirmation classes is also widespread. The computer-based materials are ranked last.

Table 15: Pedagogical measures (mainly responsible person) (Austria)

How often did you use these pedagogical measures in your teaching? (1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often)	M
VH15: Group work	3.32
VH09: Prayer and meditation	3.18
VH02: Discussion	3.14
VH10: Working with biblical texts	3.11
VH06: Games and play	2.96
VH01: Lectures / narrations	2.89
VH07: Stories and narratives	2.78
VH08: Painting, drawing and other visual art	2.71
VH13: Singing together	2.61
VH28: Experiential education; adventure-based learning	2.39
VH11: Working with other written texts	2.36
VH18: Meeting people from the parish	2.32
VH27: Meditation / exercising silent times	2.11
VH03: Drama, role play	1.96
VH16: Visits and excursions	1.93
VH04: Learning paths	1.89
VH12: Reciting texts learnt by heart	1.75
VH17: Talking with experts	1.61
VH25: Making music/musicals/musical games	1.56
VH14: Working with internet or text-messages	1.18

N = 27-28.

The main responsible workers, almost all of them are ministers, were asked how often they use the different materials and media. Austria is the only European country where self-created materials are at the first rank. In the other countries, except for Switzerland, they use the Bible most frequently.

Table 16: Teaching materials (mainly responsible person) (Austria)

How often did you use the following material for teaching the confirmands? (1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often)	M
VI06: Material produced by myself	3.32
VI01: Bible	3.21
VI14: Worksheets	3.07
VI04: Modern Christian songs	2.74

How often did you use the following material for teaching the confirmands? (1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often)	M
VI03: Church Hymn Books	2.54
VI05: Workbook for confirmands (i. e.)	2.48
VI08: Chalkboard or flip chart	2.25
VI07: Movies	2.00
VI02: Catechism	1.96
VI09: Overhead projector	1.93
VI15: Musical instruments	1.78
VI10: Computer & data projector	1.56
VI12: CD-ROMs or other data storage media	1.42

N = 26-28.

From the perspective of the confirmands, the group-orientation plays an important role. The most frequent method is working in small groups. Less used is the method of learning texts by heart. Perhaps in the last years a change has come about from traditional methods to modern ones. Twenty or thirty years ago, one main method was learning texts by heart. Actually the confirmands know central Christian texts even without rehearsing them: 79 % know the Lord's Prayer, 52 % a Creed, 25 % the Ten Commandments and 19 % Psalm 23 (KU01, KU02, KU06 and KU03). These results obviously indicate the importance of Religious Education in school.

Table 17: Frequencies of methods in the view of confirmands (Austria)

How often did you do the following things during the time of your confirmation training? (1 = nearly every meeting, 2 = sometimes, 3 = once in the whole confirmation time, 4 = never)	M
KT02: We work in small groups	1.79
KT01: We listen to stories / to a presentation	1.93
KT05: We play games	2.01
KT12: We pray together	2.03
KT17: We sing together	2.25
KT20: We recite the texts learnt by heart	3.06

N = 470-475. Note: The scale is reverted; low numbers mean high frequency.

Topics

Both perspectives – the confirmands' and the workers' – give an insight into the different expectations of confirmation work. The young people are focussed on their everyday life and hope to get some support for it. The workers look for an understandable connection between the tradition of the church and the actual issues of society.

Table 18: List of topics comparing confirmands and workers (sorted by confirmands ranking) (Austria)

	confirmands	workers
Friendship	90 %	82 %
The meaning of life	72 %	79 %
Justice and responsibility for others	66 %	91 %
Baptism	59 %	86 %
Jesus Christ	54 %	91 %
Violence and crime	46 %	47 %
The Lord's Supper	42 %	81 %
Other religions	41 %	38 %
Course and meaning of Sunday services	37 %	85 %

N = 527-533 confirmands; N = 115-118 workers. For details cf. sections WA and CL in the appendix.

Confirmands' interest in the meaning of life seems a little bit abstract, but it also opens up a chance. The young people want to arrive at their own point of view. They prefer learning about ethical themes. Yet the central topics of Christian faith also score over 50 %. Other religions are treated in Religious Education in school. Yet both, the confirmands and the workers, value the topic for confirmation work with 41 % and 38 %.

The workers' values are mostly higher than those of the confirmands. The largest difference can be discovered in the meaning of services. The importance and difficulties with worship services was mentioned above. Another difference concerns the meaning of Holy Communion. The workers come from the tradition of confirmation being the admission to Holy Communion. Since children of this generation are usually invited to Holy Communion, these young people have already had experience with it. They know what the Eucharistic communion means. 85 % of the confirmands are used to taking part in Holy Communion. Only 4 % celebrate it for the first time in their confirmation service and 11 % during their confirmation preparation.

Effects of Confirmation Time

Can a minority Church in a Diaspora situation influence anything? Yes, it can! The positive results stated by the confirmands described above make this quite clear. Moreover, the views of the workers are another indication of the positive effects. The workers are mostly satisfied with the participation of the confirmands in their lessons (54 %; VN02) and also with what the confirmands have learnt or experienced (54 %; VN03). Their own teaching they reflect upon, in part, self-critically; 47 % are often, 44 % are sometimes and 9 % are seldom satisfied with their work (VN04). The teamwork happened in 68 % of the cases

without conflicts. The cooperation between the workers was rather intensive; 45 % often and 22 % sometimes prepared together the group meetings and actions (VN09).

51 % of the confirmands hardly see how to integrate the experiences of confirmation to their everyday life (KK35). But the personal contact to the staff is quite positive (54 %; KK03). They also become more conscious of their responsibility for ecological problems (42 %; KK45) and their commitment to peace (50 %; KK46). On the whole, confirmands learn something essential for living in today's society and it is hoped that more of the young people will discover it later.

The cooperation with the parents worked quite well. There were no conflicts with the workers (82 %; VN08). The parents felt adequately informed (79 %; PA03) and the attitudes towards the parish changed to the positive (60 %; PA04).

3.2.7 Church Services

The worship services are a very special matter; 60 % of the confirmands consider them boring (KG04). The expectations of the workers about attendance in the normal church services on Sunday and the experience in youth adequate services lie by 68 % (WB05) and 90 % (WB04). Three out of four workers state that the confirmands had the opportunity to take part in attractive youth services (VB04). The preparation of the confirmation service happened in 72 % of the cases together with the confirmands (VD01). The confirmands attended the Sunday services regularly in 53 % (KK09). In most parishes, the young people are obliged to take part in the worship services on several Sundays. The confirmands are not used to the old Christian tradition, which regards worshipping as the heart of parish-life.

3.2.8 Conclusions and Challenges

The loyalty towards the Protestant Church appears to be unbroken. Confirmation work is accepted and supported by the confirmands themselves, the parents and the grandparents, the ministers and the numerous volunteers. The high expectations point to the effectiveness of confirmation work, especially in the training and supervising of the voluntary workers, the worship services and the participation in other activities of the parishes.

Two important tendencies appear: grouporientation and individual orientation. One is the partnership between confirmands but also the partnership between confirmands and workers, which were discovered as secret aims of all

participants. They are connected by team orientation and development of a good feeling as a Christian group. It outlines a community of special character which cannot be experienced in other social fields. Each individual person gets the chance to influence the local confirmation work; all the people involved respect each other. The other factor is the orientation of every individual person. If someone is baptised, confirmation is an obvious continuation of being a Christian. The young people continue growing in faith and learning about Christian values, which counts a lot in civil society. Confirmation work strengthens one for everyday life. More self-confidence about the qualities of confirmation work can be recommended.

The results of the study also point to some problematic matters in Austrian confirmation work. Church services are boring and this feeling grows during confirmation time (DIFF_CG04: +0.58). In the beginning of confirmation preparation the interest and expectations in services are rather high. At the end, the confirmands and the workers are a little bit disappointed in what they have experienced. Sunday services or services at other times with more youth orientation could be an important challenge in confirmation work. In addition, a link to the youth work in the parish could be achieved by putting together youth adequate worship opportunities.

Workers have honourable intentions and motivations to do a good job, but they do not reach the confirmands' interests and expectations as effectively as they wish. Referring to a statistical interpretation, it has to be mentioned that the confirmands ticked rather high in t_1 , so an increase of the values according to aims seems unrealistic. The low number of lessons during confirmation time gives an idea of »confirmation work light«. This phenomenon seems typically Austrian, because living in a minority situation influences the religious identity. Austrian Protestants often see themselves as outsiders of the society and beside the mainstream.

Confirmation work offers the challenge to involve two or even three generations in the parish. Especially the confirmands' parents show enormous interest in the activities. In this social micro-system opportunities for intergenerational dialogue could be experienced.

Since the first Sunday in Advent 2005, children have been invited to Holy Communion. The importance of confirmation is still undisputed by the young people. A revision of Church's statutory texts which still state confirmation as the first time to take Holy Communion seems necessary. Children soon feel part of the Christian community and they experience faith holistically. When they are confirmed, their Christian faith is strengthened and feel like full members of the Protestant Church in Austria.

3.3 Confirmation Work in Switzerland

THOMAS SCHLAG

During a confirmation service, the minister starts participating actively for the first time after about 45 minutes. Up until that moment, 16 year old Reto and his fellow confirmands had led through their presentation including some pieces of theatre and music about Psalm 23. After these ambitious presentations, the minister offers a kind of summarizing interpretation and finally blesses the young people with a touch on their shoulder and a handshake.

In another parish, a service – lasting for almost two and a half hours – finds confirmands, among them Flurina, repeating parts of the catechism, which is followed by an extensive sermon held by the minister on Tobit 12, 6-15 and on the theme of fate and coincidence, which the congregation has to listen to for more than half an hour. After receiving their blessing, Flurina and the other confirmed young people finally serve the Holy Communion to the congregation.

A third service takes place under the motto »world tour«. The church is decorated with balloon-globes and a world map. Again, the confirmands are intensely involved in the whole presentation. By decorating the church they now illustrate their own understanding of being part of one world. The sermon of the female minister has the symbol of a suitcase as its centre and she says: »The main aim of the year was that you learn to speak«.

The »ideal observer« could wonder, whether these casual situations are happening »under the roof« of the same Reformed Church and if there is something like a common theological understanding of confirmation work and the whole confirmation year amongst all the persons involved.

3.3.1 General Overview

The Socioreligious Context of Confirmation Work

Due to the Reformed theological self-understanding as a church of individual faith and priesthood of all, the high estimation of participation in everyday political life and finally, due to the cantonal structures with autonomous Reformed parishes, there is not *one* tradition, *one* general idea or even more, *one* common organisational principle of confirmation work in Switzerland. Instead, a high regional and local plurality in this field of church practice has to be noticed. Therefore, to try to describe confirmation work in Switzerland generally is more or less impossible or would at least lead to a voluminous handbook (cf. Wegenast 2001).

Nevertheless, to describe confirmation work in the one canton of Zurich gives some worthwhile impressions about the overall situation in Switzerland. First, because the general sociological and ecclesiological situation in the different German-Swiss cantons and their Reformed Churches is rather similar. Secondly, in many cantons organisational and pedagogical reforms are under way at present, so the closer look at one canton can be considered as significant for general challenges and developments to be noticed in Reformed Switzerland. Therefore, the following explanations will focus on the tradition and present situation of confirmation work in the Evangelical-Reformed *Landeskirche* (regional Church) of the Canton (Swiss federal state) Zurich.

Confirmation Work in Transition

The Reformed Church of Zurich is not only one of the largest cantonal Churches in Switzerland but understands itself to be the »Church of Zwingli and Bullinger« in a specific sense of the Reformed tradition of freedom of faith. Looking at the present situation in general, as in most other European countries, there is a strong tendency of secularisation – if not laicism – within the Swiss society with a noticeable number of Church members loosening their ties to their Church or leaving the institution for good. The Reformed as well as the Catholic Churches – especially in the German-Swiss context – find themselves on a religious market, that is, in a dynamic situation of intensive competition and amongst alternative religious competitors with obviously successful initiatives to gain public attention.

In accordance to this, a radical loss of tradition and Church membership has been noticed (cf. Dubach/Campiche 1993; Campiche 2004; Dubach/Fuchs 2005; Baumann/Stolz 2007a), though this does not mean that religion has faded away completely but has rather changed in practice and mode of expression (cf. Stapferhaus Lenzburg 2006; Stapferhaus Lenzburg/Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz Pädagogik 2006; Anselm et al. 2008).

Between 1970 and 2000, in the whole country the percentage of members of the Reformed Church compared to the overall population has declined from 46% to 33% (Bovay 2000, 11), in the city of Zurich from 53% in 1970 to 30% in 2000. Beyond that, one dramatic result has to be noticed: more than 55% of the people who are still members of the Reformed Church say that they do not feel a part of their local parish (Bovay 2000, 14). In the same period of time the proportion of people not belonging to a religious group has risen significantly from 1% to 11% (Bovay 2000, 11). Recent surveys show that the number of Church members continues to drop (Bovay 2000, 11), i.e., in the Reformed Church in the Canton Zurich from 2000 to 2005 by another 4%. As of December 31, 2006, 37% were members of the Reformed Church in the Canton of Zurich, 29% of the Roman Catholic Church and 33% were members

of other confessions, religions or without any affiliation (Evangelisch-reformierte Landeskirche des Kantons Zürich 2008, 47).

Participation

Even if the number of re-entries into the Church has risen over the last years, sociologists of religion notice that traditional Christian religiosity is losing importance, whereas fundamentalism, spirituality and religious plurality gain ground (cf. Baumann/Stolz 2007b, 63ff. and also Humpert 2004). Nevertheless, the number of young people attending confirmation work is still very high without any remarkable decline. In 2007, 4169 young people in 179 parishes were confirmed in the Canton of Zurich – compared to 4075 in 2006 and compared to 3155 baptisms in 2007 (Evangelisch-reformierte Landeskirche des Kantons Zürich 2008, 48). Even in the larger cities of Winterthur and Zurich, the proportion of confirmands is well over 60 % of the overall age group and up to 90 % in the more rurally situated parishes.

The continuity of young people attending confirmation time seems to be even more astonishing because confirmation work takes place during the last obligatory year of school, that means, at the age of 15 or 16. Despite this so-called »critical age« and the reflective potential of adolescence, this does not seem to have any negative effect on the decision to be confirmed. Obviously confirmation time is still acknowledged as one of the highlights of the individual and family biography. There seems to be a wide demand on the part of young people to experience this time as meaningful, the group atmosphere as adequate to their own feelings and the contents of the confirmation class to be of individual relevance.

Official Aims for Confirmation Work

Looking at the historical and theological background, as in some other cantonal Churches, baptism in the Reformed Church of Zurich is »some kind« of prerequisite to be confirmed but not a necessary one – the relevant article shows with its formulation »as a rule« (Kirchenordnung 2008. Art. 74) the typical Reformed liberal mixture of a fixed order and the openness for individual interpretation. Due to the practice of baptising children, Zwingli stressed the point that later they should be able to confess their faith which had been confessed by their parents at their baptism. Like Luther, he refused to understand confirmation as sacramental practice. The main aim of confirmation was a pedagogical one in the sense of teaching children the ability to understand the Gospel, remembering and confirming their baptism and to participate maturely in the life of the Church.

In 1628, an order by the Reformed Church of Zurich established that ministers should offer in-depth instruction to young people, who had not been

taught sufficiently about the Communion by their parents. This led to a formal instruction and final exam culminating in the admission to Communion. In 1760, the first public confirmation services were held. In 1797, the whole congregation of ministers in Zurich appealed to the Church Council to establish confirmation in the whole canton, but the matter was not closed before 1846. In 1834 the state law on religious education referred to confirmation as the end of the obligatory school which should take place at the end of the school year. The young people should be at least 16 years old. Since the 1920s there have been intensive discussions about the appropriate age of the confirmands as well as about the confirmation vow. The latter was left out as well as the final exam in the new Church Order from 1968. Since the new Order of the Zurich Liturgy, approved by the Church Parliament in the late 1960s, there has been no set form for confirmation. In this time W. Neidhart's study on confirmation with his emphasis on the »non-theological factors« (cf. Neidhart 1964) supported a new understanding and the development of creative forms of confirmation work in the parishes.

In the 1970s and 80s and due to the noticeable erosion of the *Volkskirche* as well as new interpretations of the confirmation service (cf. Müller 1988, 69-92) there was an intense debate if young people who were not baptised could be allowed to be confirmed. This was not regulated until 1989 when the Church Parliament in Zurich decided this question positively and implemented baptism »as a rule« for dealing with this question. Since the end of the school term in July 1989, confirmation services are normally held between Pentecost and the end of June. Before that, in 1980, with the introduction of Communion for children, confirmation lost its character as admission to Communion. It has developed more and more into a ceremony of becoming part of the parish with the right to be a godfather or godmother and taking part in Church elections. Confirmation is nowadays mostly seen as expression of the full mature membership of the Reformed community.

Compared to this wide understanding of confirmation, it seems quite surprising that there are obligatory prerequisites for being confirmed: attending confirmation courses, but also religious-pedagogical courses and religion as a school subject (cf. Kirchenordnung 2008, Art. 74). This finds its expression in the most recent outline of the Church Order where the articles on confirmation are not placed in the section »preaching and service« but in the section »child, youth and family« as one of the religious-pedagogical offerings of the Church. It is stated that »the confirmation responds to God's yes as it is expressed in baptism. In the confirmation service the community asks in the name of the confirmands for God's blessing. Confirmation is the invitation for a responsible Christian existence and for participation in the life of the regional Church« (Kirchenordnung 2008, Art. 73).

In many places, confirmation work is held once a week but also very often in weekend courses, altogether in 72 lessons (= lessons à 45 minutes). One of the major events and experiences is the confirmation camp which can last between three and seven days and takes place very often in the starting phase of the confirmation year.

Ministers are not obliged to teach the young people a certain amount of catechetical or dogmatic contents. Because the Reformed Church does not commit itself to a written confession, there is no official framework or something like a confirmation handbook which ministers have to use. This indicates a principal Reformed caution about given curricula »from above«. As a result of the aim to gain religious maturity, one of the main characteristics of a Reformed confirmation service in the Canton Zurich is the high participation, not unusually offering an almost unlimited responsibility of the young people to plan and even to lead a service in the light of their religious self-presentation.

Preparation of the Personnel

Confirmation work is one of the basic educational responsibilities of youth ministry work in the Swiss Churches, especially since in many cantons »religion« as a school subject has been taken over more or less completely by the state (cf. Schlag 2009). Due to that, the Reformed Church in Zurich recently established a comprehensive and broad catechetical curriculum that should prepare the children for the later confirmation time. So confirmation work with its chances and challenges is one of the main fields of ministerial training at the Faculties of Theology as well as within pastoral training courses. But students do not automatically come across confirmation work in their studies. Due to the recently established Bologna-System at the Swiss universities, they are only obliged to attend one seminar and one lecture in the field of religious education during their whole time of theological studies which then is, of course, not automatically a course in confirmation work.

One also has to know that a student pastor position (*Vikariat*) consists of only one year which means that many skills have to be acquired in continuing education courses during the first full-time pastoral assignment (*WEA – Weiterbildung in den ersten Amtsjahren*). So during the first years of pastoral work there is very often no adequate time to »just experiment« with certain ideas and innovative methods of confirmation work because the young ministers are often »all of a sudden« on full duty and carry responsibility for their own congregation and confirmation class.

In many parishes there is also additional personnel like youth workers, catechists or young volunteers. Due to the fact that in Switzerland church-related training institutions do not exist, the professionals are trained in courses offered by the Educational Departments of the cantonal Churches (in Zurich it

is the »*Abteilung für Pädagogik und Animation*«). Special training programmes for volunteers involved in confirmation work are so far rather rare and not intensively institutionalised.

Theology and Ecclesiology

Even if the Reformed Churches in Switzerland do not explicitly rely on a common confession anymore, there is a broad ecclesiological consensus on what the Church can be and should be. The first and most important characteristic of Reformed ecclesiology consists of the undisputed conviction that the Church is formed by the free and individual will of each of its members, based on God's creation, his grace and justification of each person. Compared to the Lutheran tradition, the autonomy of individual faith is not only a theological standard but has deep implications on the self-understanding of the Church's and local parish's life, their communication structures, procedures and responsibilities. To put it in modern words: Reformed practice of faith is understood as something which can only be fulfilled by bottom-up and never by top-down structures within the Church.

This high estimation of individual faith practice in the light of a »participatory theology« has an important impact also on confirmation work within the participatory church. First of all, it is clear that confirmation work is mainly seen as initiated by each autonomous local parish which therefore carries the main responsibility for a successful confirmation year. Secondly, the active integration of young people is not something unusual compared to the regular church life but stands in a clear correspondence with the inner meaning of the Reformed Church. But thirdly, due to the lack of a Reformed Confession and the autonomy of the local parishes, it sometimes seems rather difficult to identify or make clear a common theological ground connected with the historic and dogmatic traditions of the Reformed Church. In between these chances, challenges and open questions, current confirmation work is situated – and also challenged to look for an adequate theological and pedagogical self-positioning within the demographic and societal developments.

3.3.2 Description of the Study

Procedures

The sample of parishes was selected by experts of the Faculty of Theology and the Department of »Pedagogy and Animation« of the Reformed Church of the Canton Zurich. Representativity was ensured by the Institute of Pastoral Sociology of the University of St. Gallen.

In a letter from the Tübingen team, that organised the survey for our coun-

try, 42 parishes were invited to take part in the study. 41 agreed to receive the materials for t_1 . In the end, workers and confirmands in 39 parishes filled in the questionnaires (39 in t_1 , 37 in t_2). As an important background factor, it should be mentioned that most of the parishes in the Canton Zurich are situated in a more or less urban context or are at least rather close to it which means a distance of no more than 40km to the major cities of Zurich or Winterthur, but all very well connected by a widespread public transport system. No weighting factors were applied for computing the results. The same questionnaire as in the German study was used, with only some minor changes (e.g., concerning the school types, etc.):

- t_0 : questionnaire for leaders describing the structure of the parish: June 2007
- t_1 : confirmands and workers: around September 2007
- t_2 : confirmands and workers: in spring / early summer 2008 (in every parish between 2-6 weeks before confirmation).

The questionnaires were filled in at the beginning of a regular confirmation lesson. On a voluntary basis, the parishes were invited to distribute additional questionnaires to parents. These questionnaires were administered in all the parishes that agreed to use the parents' questionnaire at the beginning of one of the meetings offered for parents of the confirmands.

Overview on Data

Table 19 gives the number of valid questionnaires collected.

Table 19: Number of questionnaires (Switzerland)

	t_0	t_1	t_2	percentage matched
Units	39	39	37	100 %
Confirmands		598	578	78.2 %
Workers		64	59	79.7 %
(parents)			246	84.3 % with confirmands

For interpreting the following results, it is important to know that for 56 % of the confirmands it was »o.k.« to fill in the questionnaire and even 10 % liked to fill it in, which can be taken as a positive reception of the project and its questions.

3.3.3 Setting of Confirmation Work

The framework for confirmation work is determined by the cantonal Reformed Church of Zurich. Due to that, the confirmation year normally lasts

from the beginning of the school term in August (sometimes even with a camp in the last week of the summer holidays) to the early summer of the following year. On an average the confirmation year consists of 30 lessons (one lesson = 60 minutes), almost three »Confi-days« and about three camp days. But these offers vary from parish to parish very much. So for example, one third of the parishes do not offer a »Confi-day« at all, one third of the parishes take no trips with their confirmands and one fifth have no camps in their programme. On the other side, there are almost 50 % that offer as many as four to even six days of camp!

It is also astonishing – but here in a problematic sense – that in almost three quarters of the cases the confirmands do not have the chance for something like an internship in their parish and only 25 % undertake joint activities with Christian youth work in the parish. Confirmation work in Switzerland is not linked to other church activities or groups as much as it could be.

3.3.4 Confirmands

General Characteristics and Background Information

The percentage of male and female confirmands is practically the same. In autumn before the confirmation, 39 % are 14 years old, 54 % are 15 years old. That shows that compared to Germany or Austria, the Swiss confirmands are one year older. Only 9 % of the confirmands are the only child in their family, but 80 % have one or two brothers or sisters. According to the parents' questionnaire, 80 % of the confirmands' parents are married, 17 % divorced.

The allocation of the confirmands to the different school types matches more or less the overall allocation of young people of that age in the Canton Zurich, apart from the fact that the number of »Sek. C«, which is the lowest type of the secondary school (with about more than 50 % pupils having an immigration background), is much lower among the confirmands. »Mittelschule« is the term for the school offering qualification for university admission and the number of »Mittelschule-pupils« is slightly higher compared to the overall allocation.

Although, as mentioned above, baptism is not a prerequisite for being confirmed, still 92 % of the confirmands are already baptised at the beginning of their confirmation year. The nationality of the confirmands is Swiss with 94 %; other nationalities are particularly confirmands of German and Italian nationality. The percentage of confirmands with a migration background is 19 % – although 95 % record Switzerland as place of birth. Fewer confirmands come from traditional immigrant populations like the Balkan states, but rather from western countries like Germany, Austria, Scandinavia or the U.S.

About half of the confirmands can remember having taken part more than three times in a church group or church event between the age of 5 and 9 (49 %) and even more remember doing so between the age of 10 and the beginning of confirmation time (71 %). It is also interesting that 32 % can not remember whether they have taken part in such church offerings between the age of 5 and 9 years.

Motivation for Participation

The Swiss confirmands say that the decision to register for confirmation time was mostly influenced by either themselves (49 %) or their family (45 %) – in addition to the formal importance of an official invitation.

Looking at the background of the motives in a differentiated way, it can be seen that the confirmands take into consideration not only their individual interests or the families' wishes but also stick to traditional reasons. 41 % name as a reason for registering »because it is a good old tradition« (CA03), 48 % »because I was baptised as a child« (CA04) – this, by the way, is the lowest mean value of all the participating countries. It seems that all aspects related to extrinsic motives and formal obligations are not as decisive for the confirmands to register for confirmation time as the view that confirmation is a good old tradition, which is related to their baptism and might be important for their self-orientation.

Expectations and Experiences

At the beginning of the year, the motives and expectations of the confirmands registering for the confirmation time show a polarity between life-related and faith-related questions. On the one side, faith-related questions are not so important for the majority: to »learn more about God and faith« (CB01), »to be strengthened in my faith« (CB08) and »to think about what is good or bad for me and my life« (CB07), the learning question (CB01) with the lowest mean value (3.27) of all countries. For only 5 % it is more or less important: »to learn central Christian texts by heart« (CK02) – again the lowest mean value compared with the other countries (1.79); for only 15 % »to attend the Sunday services regularly« (CK09); and for 29 % »to sing or make music together« (CK07). That »my questions concerning faith will play a role« (CK11) is hoped for by only 26 % compared to 49 % rejecting this and 25 % present a neutral position. To »receive a blessing on the day of confirmation« (CB11) is important for 32 %, but not so important for 49 %, again with a mean value (3.50) lower than all other examined countries apart from Sweden.

On the other side are the immediate life-related issues; 47 % of the confirmands want to »experience community in the confirmation group« (CB02) and 44 % »to meet and get to know friends« (CB06). It is important for 61 %

»to have a lot of action« (CK05) and for 65 % »to go on daytrips or for retreats/ camp with the group« (CK06) – all this »without too much stress« (79 %; CK10). The following motives seem to be very clear: »to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of my confirmation« (CB09), approved of by 60 % and »to get money or presents at the end« (CB10), approved of by 66 %.

Between these polarities some results show a broad variety of coping with growing maturity and questions of faith. Here it can be seen that many confirmands are very much »on the way and in the middle« of seeking for and finding orientation, but many still have not made up their minds about their own faith nor come to clear decisions. 42 % say that they registered for confirmation time »to come to my own decision about my faith« (CB03) and 41 % »to make an important step in growing up« (CB04). 35 % say that it is important for them »to find my own point of view concerning my own life« (CK01). In no other country is the expectation »to be allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands« (51 %; CK04) as high as in Switzerland, also with the highest mean value of 4.38.

Looking at the experiences of the year, the following results have to be mentioned. The early expectations to have »a beautiful celebration with family and friends« and to »get money or presents« have risen by the end of the year (»celebration« from 60 % to 75 %; »money and presents« from 66 % to 71 %). That the number is higher towards the end of the year is probably not surprising because of the anticipation of the upcoming event.

Almost all percentages of the experiences near the end of the confirmation year are higher than the respective expectancies, most of all the experiences with the »good community« (from 47 % to 75 %; CB02/KB02), but also questions of the individual conduct of life. 41 % say that they »have been thinking about what is good or bad for me and my life« (KB07).

Table 20 shows the satisfaction with different aspects of confirmation time.

Table 20: Satisfaction with different aspects in confirmation time (Switzerland)

To what extent are you satisfied with ... (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied)	M	SD	satisfied (5,6,7)
KN01: the whole confirmation time	4.87	1.43	66 %
KN02: having fun	5.16	1.54	70 %
KN03: content/topics of lessons	4.53	1.33	52 %
KN04: feeling of community	5.30	1.47	73 %
KN07: minister / person primarily responsible for confirmation work	5.35	1.56	74 %
KN08: other teachers/workers	4.98	1.47	66 %
KN10: church services	4.17	1.43	43 %
KN11: camp(s)	5.49	1.64	76 %

To what extent are you satisfied with ... (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied)	M	SD	satisfied (5,6,7)
KN13: prayers in the group	4.10	1.38	40 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	4.15	1.60	44 %

N = 385-573. Option 8 »we didn't have that« was used as a filter.

Attitudes towards Religion and Church

One would suppose that the confirmation year contributes not only to knowledge about Christian traditions and beliefs but also to personal faith of young people and a positive attitude towards the Church. The results show that the confirmands have obviously learnt a lot about the Christian faith. At the beginning, 46 % »know, what the Christian faith entails«, and at the end the number has gone up to 55 % (CE10/KE10).

But the confirmands do not evaluate most of the statements concerning Christian faith as more true, convincing or personally important than at the beginning of the confirmation time. That »God created the world« (CE01/KE01) is approved by 30 % in the beginning and at the end of the year, that »there is life after death« (CE02/KE02) by 53 % resp. 50 %.

The percentage of confirmands that are not sure »what I should believe« remains almost the same during the year (40 % for CE05; 39 % for KE05) and that »Faith in God helps me in difficult situations« is confirmed by 23 % at the beginning and 25 % at the end of the year (CE08/KE08). Almost half of the confirmands do not think that »my questions concerning faith were addressed« (KK11). Moreover, the number of confirmands that »try to live according to the Ten Commandments« is not only very low right from the beginning (14 %), but is at almost on the same level (17 %) at the end of the confirmation year (CE11/KE11). Almost half of the confirmands say that they have not been strengthened in their faith (KB08). In general, it has to be mentioned that in no other country the mean values of the faith-related items are as low as in Switzerland, especially at the end of the year!

Also the number of confirmands thinking about God (CH01), praying by themselves (CH02) or praying together with others (CH03) hardly changes over the year. Compared to some other surveys and studies conducted in Switzerland, the number of confirmands that pray either by themselves or with others is surprisingly low. Obviously, confirmation time has not made prayer more important or attractive for the young people.

Similar observations can be made considering the attitudes towards the Church, towards the institution in general as well as the church practice. That »the church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me«, is said by 40 % at the beginning and by 43 % at the end of the year (CG02/

KG02), the highest agreement rate in all countries! The number of confirmands finding church services boring even increases from 56 % to 61 % (CG04/KG04).

Although 55 % say that they were »allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands« (KK04) and 58 % felt welcome and accepted in the parish (KK37), looking at the real participation and activities within the church, the numbers seem to be rather low. 79 % (!) responded with one of the negative answers on the item that they »temporarily worked in programmes of the church (e.g., in a internship)« (KK26) and 59 % on the item »I took part in the preparation of church services« (KK31). Less than half of the confirmands say that during the time of confirmation training they »got to know our parish better« (KK25). In no other country are these items related to church life as low as in this context. The sceptical attitude towards attending Sunday services regularly at the beginning of the year (CK09) led at least to some positive experiences, e.g., with »worships adequate for young people« (KK30).

These results in the sense of more or less unchanging attitudes are confirmed by the general attitudes towards the Christian faith and the Protestant Church in general at the beginning and at the end of the year. Especially the percentage of confirmands that describe their attitudes towards faith and Church in general as »neither negative nor positive« keeps stable at around 45 % and the attitude »very positive« remains at a low level of less than 10 % (cf. Table 21).

Table 21: General questions on faith and Church (Switzerland)

How would you describe your current attitude in general towards ...?	very negative	rather negative	neither negative nor positive	rather positive	very positive
CF01: ... the Christian faith (t ₁)	2 %	9 %	45 %	36 %	7 %
KF01: ... the Christian faith (t ₂)	2 %	6 %	44 %	38 %	9 %
KF02: ... the Protestant Church (t ₂)	3 %	6 %	50 %	36 %	6 %

N = 509-550. The Swiss questionnaires did not include CF02.

Due to these results it does not seem to be surprising that 65 % of the confirmands did not become »motivated to help in the church as a voluntary worker« (KK27) and only 6 % at the beginning and only 9 % at the end of the year are »interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation« (CG08/KG08) – the lowest mean value (1.92/2.04) in all countries of our research.

At least the rather low expectation to come into contact with the leaders and workers at the beginning has risen from 22 % to an actual experience of 56 % (CK03/KK03), which does not necessarily mean they did not have a positive one in the beginning, but maybe just no expectation.

Nevertheless, the percentage of confirmands saying that »it is important for

me to belong to the church« increases from 21 % at the beginning to 30 % at the end of confirmation time (CG01-KG01) and the expectation to decide together with the fellow confirmands about the topics was in no country more fulfilled than in Switzerland (55 %; KK04) and above all, 84 % of the confirmands want to have their children baptised (KG03).

This raises the question about the non-cognitive and maybe even non-expressive reasons for some sort of »sense of belonging«, protection and institutional certainty beyond individual expressions and clarity of faith. In that sense, it might be assumed that the confirmands already show the same complex and sometimes ambivalent attitude of individual distance and openness towards the *Volkskirche* – the Church that wants to be open for everyone without putting much demand on the members – and its traditions, and therefore, do not differ significantly from adults.

Overall, confirmation time receives good marks when it is looked at as a whole year of experiences together with the group, the ministers and the workers. The whole confirmation time is rated as satisfactory by 66 % of the confirmands (cf. Table 20) and 51 % found the amount of time spent in confirmation preparation is just right. So at least the general impression of the confirmands is positive.

But even then, one must ask how much this impression is influenced by the experiences with the group itself and in which sense the »content/topic of lessons« (KN03) contributes to this position. One has to have in mind that the Swiss confirmands show the highest mean value of all countries on the item »I would prefer being confirmed without the confirmation time beforehand« (47 %; KK41). And the sense of satisfaction »with the whole confirmation time« is the lowest in all countries (mean 4.87; KN01).

Especially looking at the outcome of the year, the results show a rather critical attitude among many confirmands. 53 % find that the confirmation has little to do with their everyday life (KK35) and 46 % deny the point that confirmation time is »more interesting than what is usually done in school« (KK50), again the highest mean value of all countries.

Data from the Confirmands' Parents

It was a speciality of the German-speaking countries to include parents in the survey. Table 22 reports the results.

The results show a high satisfaction rate with confirmation work in general. However, it should be taken into account that the answers are not representative for all confirmands' parents but only for those who attended the parents' meeting with the minister. 79 % of the questionnaires were filled in by mothers, 21 % by fathers (not taking into account that some questionnaires were filled in by a couple). A remarkable result from the parents' questionnaire deals with the

Table 22: Answers from the parents' questionnaire (Switzerland)

	N	M	SD	pos. (5,6,7)
PA01: How satisfied are you with confirmation work here overall? (1 »not satisfied at all« 7 »totally satisfied«)	228	5.46	1.18	79 %
PA02: How satisfied is your child with confirmation work here overall? (1 »not satisfied at all« 7 »totally satisfied«)	230	5.00	1.28	71 %
PA03: Did you feel adequately informed by the parish about what was going on during confirmation training? (1 »not adequate« 7 »adequate«)	234	5.20	1.68	70 %
PA04: Did your attitude towards the parish change during the confirmation training of your child? (1 »negative change« 7 »positive change«)	235	4.42	0.95	31 %
PA05: How much did your child tell you about his/her experiences in confirmation training? (1 »very little« 7 »very much«)	231	3.86	1.71	37 %
PA06: How important is it for you personally that your child will be confirmed? (1 »not important« 7 »very important«)	234	5.41	1.47	74 %
PA07: How important is faith in God for you personally? (1 »not important« 7 »very important«)	234	5.26	1.56	71 %

N = 228-235.

estimation of confirmation. When asked »How do you celebrate the confirmation day in your family« the answers were: 0 % »not at all«; 18 % »rather a small party«; 27 % »a party like others, for example birthday parties« and 55 % »one of the most important events in the life of my child«.

Compared to Germany, not three out of four but »only« half of the parents see confirmation as one of the major events in life. Nevertheless, it can be said for Switzerland, that good support of the families surely is an underlying factor for the stability of participation in confirmation work over the last years.

3.3.5 Workers

Background Data

65 % of the workers who filled in a questionnaire were male, 35 % were female; there is a broad span of ages from 16 to 63 years with the majority of workers being between the age 42 and 46. 95 % are Protestant and 82 % are Swiss. More than three quarters of them are ministers or ministers-in-training, only a very small percentage consists of other full- or part-time workers and 10 % are volunteers.

Almost half of the workers have more than ten years of experience with confirmation work, which can be seen as an ambivalent figure. On the one hand, it

points to the fact of broad and long professional experience, on the other hand, it could imply a rather strong persistence in unchanging and somehow proven individual ways and habits of teaching.

Compared to the fact that about two thirds of the confirmands had participated in church group activities before the confirmation year, the number of confirmands that are known by the workers is rather small. This might indicate the problematic fact that a large number of ministers do not participate in these activities so that their work with young people within the parish does not seem to be of high intensity before confirmation time.

Confirmation work is considered by the workers as a major field of work (57 %) but interestingly enough, only very few (2 %) see it as one of the most important fields. This might raise the question if there is a dissonance between the perception of the confirmation work of the »normal« church members and the workers.

Motives of the Workers

In the self-reports, some facts about the motivational background can be found.

Only 5 % of the workers would »like to be relieved from working in confirmation training« (WE06) and 86 %/90 % consider their pedagogical/theological competence for this work as adequate (WE09/WE10). These results show clearly that the assumption of workers »suffering« during confirmation time has no basis. In contrast, the majority seems to almost enjoy the time being together with the confirmands. A second interesting result is that a majority of 77 % complies with the official guidelines of confirmation work although there is neither an official workbook or handbook nor an obligation to teach a certain catechetical content (WE01; WE02).

It has to be mentioned that workers see only limited opportunities for confirmands to join in the church life. 53 % report no suitable youth groups for newly confirmed adolescents (VL01). On the other hand, 72 % of the workers see opportunities for confirmands »to help as a volunteer in our parish after confirmation« (VL02).

On the whole and at the end of the year, 78 % of the workers are satisfied with the confirmation work in the parish (VM01), 94 % still like doing the confirmation work (VM02) and even 98 % (of the team-workers) find the teamwork successful (VM04).

Expectations and Experiences

The different items show not only the broad variety of different topics and contents during the confirmation year but also the workers' intention to combine personal questions with theological questions and with the present life of

the Church and parish. Obviously, confirmation work is widely understood as a time of networking (e.g., with the parents: 70 %; WD08, and with the elders: 54 %; WD09).

Most of the workers intend to activate the young people and to motivate them to become involved in church work. Due to the Reformed understanding of confirmation itself, the church services are prepared together with the confirmands in almost every parish (VD01 – 98 %), which is by far the highest number of all the countries in this research programme.

Therefore comparing some results from the beginning and the end of the year is interesting. The workers were asked what they wanted the confirmands to experience (Items »W«) and what the confirmands experienced, learnt and did according to the workers' point of view (Items »V«). In general, the expectations of the workers were higher than what they stated at the end. 77 % wanted the confirmands to work »temporarily in programmes of the church« and 66 % said that this actually happened (WB02/VB02); 81 % wanted the confirmands to »experience forms of worship adequate for young people« and 78 % said that this was actually the case (WB04/VB04); 75 % wanted the young people to »take part in the preparation of church services« and 69 % confirmed that this really happened (WB06/VB06).

The same phenomenon can be seen concerning the contents of the confirmation year. In general, at the beginning of the year, 100 % of the workers wanted to help confirmands to »develop a personal point of view concerning their own life« (WC01) and 92 % that they would be »strengthened in their faith« (WC02). At the beginning, 94 % of the workers thought the confirmands should be »supported in their personal and social development«; at the end, the number had gone down to 67 % (WC04/VC04). 81 % of the workers said in the beginning, the young people should »get to know what the youth work of the church offers to them« but in the end 65 % confirmed that this had happened (WC06/VC06). The hope that confirmands could be »won for continuing as voluntary workers in the church« was expressed by 53 % of the workers, in the end this was affirmed by only 39 % (WC07/VC07). And that the year would be a chance to »experience forms of meditation or prayer« (hoped for by 72 %) was fulfilled by only 48 % (WC10/VC10). And even the initial low aim of 13 %, that the confirmands »learn central Christian texts by heart«, goes down to 8 % at the end and is again by far the lowest of all the countries (WC03/VC03).

The same tendencies are seen in regard to personal conversation with each confirmand (from 81 % to 75 %; WD05/VD05), cooperation with the school (from 30 % to 9 %; WD06/VD06) and improving the contact between parents and the church (from 70 % to 56 %; WD08/VD08). Only the hope, that the »confirmation church service should be prepared together with the confir-

mands« expressed by 91 % of the workers led to the actual fulfilment by 98 % at the end of the year (WD01/VD01).

3.3.6 Didactics

Methods and Materials

From the perspective of the leaders, the following pedagogical measures were often used (items VH): discussion (63 %), group work (51 %), lectures/narrations (46 %). More activating and experience-oriented pedagogical measures were never or seldom used, like drama, role play (never or seldom: 57 %), learning paths (91 %), painting, drawing or other visual art (54 %), working with internet or text-messages (85 %), making music/musicals/musical games (80 %). But also such classical forms were rather rarely used, like reciting texts by heart (87 %) or even meeting people from the parish (63 %).

So, group work and discussion are still the favourites of the pedagogical measures during confirmation work. Many workers seem to be very reluctant to experiment with creative and »modern« forms of communication and there is still widespread hesitation to motivate confirmands to learn texts by heart.

In that sense, it is somehow not surprising that 54 % of the workers use the Bible sometimes, 29 % seldom and only 17 % often, the catechism 85 % never and 15 % seldom and a workbook for confirmands by 85 % never or seldom (items VI). But 68 % of the workers use materials produced by themselves often and 43 % use worksheets. Computer and data projector and other digital media are not or seldom used by 58 % resp. 69 % of the workers.

These results correspond with the confirmands' views (items KT). 81 % of them listened to stories or presentations nearly every meeting or sometimes and 85 % worked in small groups nearly every meeting or sometimes whereas 48 % never prayed together, 36 % never sang together and 81 % never recited texts learnt by heart.

Therefore most of them are in fact familiar with the Lord's Prayer, but knowing texts by heart is the exception. A Christian Creed is more or less known by heart by 17 %, Psalm 23 by 17 %, and the Ten Commandments by 38 % (items VU).

Topics

Table 23 compares the importance of topics stated by workers and confirmands in t_1 . The three lines at the top of the list (marked in light grey) show the topics in which the interest of confirmands exceeds that of the workers. The lines at the bottom of the list (marked in dark grey) are the topics that are emphasised much more by workers than by the adolescents.

Table 23: Comparison of importance of topics in t_1 (sorted by difference between workers and confirmands) (Switzerland)

Importance of topic	Workers	Confirmands
Friendship	76 %	87 %
Other religions	36 %	50 %
Violence and crime	48 %	69 %
The meaning of life	97 %	72 %
Justice and responsibility for others	95 %	65 %
Baptism	69 %	54 %
Jesus Christ	94 %	33 %
Course and meaning of Sunday services	77 %	21 %
The Lord's Supper	69 %	23 %

N = 583-592 (confirmands); N = 62-64 (workers). For details cf. sections WA and CL in the appendix.

Looking at the topics from the perspective of the workers, it can be seen that classical theological topics are estimated as important but not in all cases by an overwhelming majority of the workers, and looking at the Index iWA1, »aiming at Christian dogmatics«, this is the lowest mean value of all countries examined. On the other hand, in no other country do workers put so much emphasis on the aim that »the confirmation service should be prepared together with the confirmands« (91 %; WD01) and that this actually happens (98 %; VD01) as in Switzerland.

Furthermore, questions and issues of »real life« are considered at least as important as faith-related questions. In addition to the items mentioned above, workers also rate »Ecology and preservation of the Creation« (WA12) with 64 % and »Body and sexuality« (WA17) with 59 %. By the way, the workers' interest in the »meaning of life«, »other religions« and »violence and crime« is the highest compared to the other countries which might be due to the specific Zurich urban context.

Comparing the workers' and the confirmands' interests in regard to these items, there seems to be an emphasis on questions concerning everyday life experiences. In these topics, confirmands obviously share their interests with the workers. But almost all articulated interests of the workers concerning questions of faith are not considered as important by the confirmands.

But again, baptism plays a specific role. Whereas classical dogmatic contents are not of the very highest interest to the confirmands, baptism is for more than 50 % an interesting topic. And again, the articulated high interest in the topic »friendship« shows that confirmation time has, in addition to all experiences with and in the Church, its positive »hidden curriculum« in the close personal relations with others in and outside of the confirmation group.

Effects of Confirmation Time

Looking at the factors that influence the topics and activities during confirmation time, the workers consider the influence of the ministers or those persons mainly responsible as strong or very strong (100 %). Compared to this, the confirmands have a strong or very strong influence of only 51 % and the official guidelines for the course of confirmation work only 30 % (items VI).

The frequency of occurrences (VN) shows that contrary to common notion, confirmation time is not plagued with by permanent conflicts or chaotic situations producing overstrained and desperate ministers. Rather the opposite seems to be the case. After a class-meeting, the workers were »sometimes« or »very often« »satisfied with the way the confirmands participated« (83 %), satisfied »with what the confirmands have learnt and experienced« (96 %) and »satisfied with the way I did it« (98 %). Beyond that, many of the workers obviously have a high ability to create a comfortable framework and to cope with internal conflicts in a satisfactory manner.

3.3.7 Church Services

Compared to the other countries, the number of church services that confirmands have to attend is rather low. More than 80 % have to attend »only« 6 to 15 services during the whole year and in no parish a number higher than 15 services is required. Control of attendance is rather lenient in one third of the parishes. 85 % of the workers notice that the confirmands can take part in the Eucharist »right from the start of their confirmation training«. This result shows, probably in comparison with the practice within Lutheran Churches, the different meaning and practice of the Eucharist within the Reformed tradition and Churches, and also points to some ecclesiological conclusions from the fact that Swiss confirmands are normally two years older than in most other countries. Taking part in the Eucharist is a reference to the understanding that the confirmation time is seen as expressing and practising maturity in questions of faith and belonging to the Christian community.

The baptism of those confirmands who are not yet baptised takes place in 25 % of the cases on the day of confirmation, in 5 % 1 to 4 weeks before confirmation and in 2 % more than 4 weeks before confirmation. 48 % of the leaders observe that the confirmands can be confirmed without being baptised. This is due to the fact that according to the tradition and the Order of the Reformed Church of the Canton Zurich (as in many other Reformed Churches in Switzerland) baptism is not a prerequisite for being confirmed.

Looking at the church services from the perspective of the confirmands, it turns out that they are not estimated as very attractive, as a relevant piece or

even as a cornerstone of the confirmation year. Many confirmands find them, as mentioned above, rather boring, not only at the beginning but even more so at the end of the confirmation time.

On the other hand, it can be suggested and hoped for that the confirmands' own »final« confirmation service is excluded from this judgement because here the young people have the chance – and obviously grasp it – to express their own understanding of the confirmation year in the context of this public, familiar and personal event.

3.3.8 Conclusions and Challenges

The actual practice of confirmation in the Swiss Reformed Churches consists of a broad variety of approaches to the young people's questions and seems to take into consideration questions of individual maturity very intensely. This might be connected to and enforced by the older age of the Swiss confirmands but might also reflect a specific Reformed approach of taking into consideration the individual interests, attitudes and competences of the young adults in a theological perspective. In no other country is the aim to develop or to help to develop a personal view on life- and faith-related questions as high as in Switzerland. Confirmation time is still taken for granted by the confirmands as well as by the parents and the workers – and satisfaction is not low at all.

Nevertheless, the effects on personal faith-orientation seem to be rather small. Although almost half of the confirmands say that they have learnt more about God and faith during their confirmation year, it seems that the acquired knowledge and the various experiences do not lead to deeper personal convictions, a larger ritual practice, neither for themselves nor within the Christian community, nor a higher identification with the Church. There seems to be a remarkable gap between the workers' intention that confirmands should »be strengthened in their faith« and the answer of almost half of the confirmands, that this – in their own perception – does not happen. For a significant part of the confirmands leaving out the faith- and Church-related contents would not affect their positive perception of the confirmation time at all. Interestingly enough, identification with the Church increases the more young people make good experiences with church offerings, services and groups.

Although catechists, youth workers and volunteers very often have a specific emphasis when working with young people, they are so far not as much involved in confirmation training and work in the local parishes as they could and should be. This makes it important for the regional and local Churches to integrate them more intensively than is the case so far and to also open up

opportunities of training courses to reflect upon and to improve their own experiences regarding confirmation work.

In combination with the secular dynamics mentioned above, there are widespread discussions about the future of confirmation work (cf. Schlag/Neuberth/Kunz 2009). Due to the high variety of confirmation work, it is being discussed whether this liberal practice shows enough Reformed »corporate identity«. Efforts are being made to strengthen identity within the Reformed Churches' practice and to shape the confirmation time as a time to celebrate, to learn to live in a faith-orientated manner as well as to share joy and sorrow and to create community in the light of the Gospel. In this perspective, a new practical guide is currently being developed by the Department of Pedagogy and Animation together with the Faculty of Theology in Zurich, which is to provide a more common ground for confirmation work in the whole of the cantonal Church and also to be a source of inspiration for other Swiss-German Churches.

This framework should open up opportunities for young adults to gain knowledge about biblical and dogmatic traditions *and* theological interpretation, to practise their faith *and* to experience belongingness (»Beziehung *und* Beheimatung«) in their Church. In accordance to that, suggestions are being made to encourage ministers to intensify the experience-orientation and active involvement of the young people in the contents of the confirmation year.

Finally, ideas have to be developed to increase the possibilities for the younger generation to take over responsibility, to take part in churches' spirituality and solidarity and to shape their own projects after confirmation. This is to avoid the danger that religious socialisation becomes a completely internal field of church practice without any ties to the young people's real inner and outer world – that means the social and political context of the young people's life, their individual religious potential and their serious, optimistic and sometimes even desperate quest for meaning.

3.4 Confirmation Work in Denmark

LEISE CHRISTENSEN

It is the beginning of September. The sky is still summer blue and Thomas-David is cycling from his home to the vicarage, where the parish minister lives. He is going there to attend his very first lesson of his confirmation preparation. Thomas-David has his football securely tied to the carrier on his bike because he knows that his minister has got a large garden and hopefully there will be a break during the lesson in which he can play football with his mates. He knows most of those attending the confirmation preparation as he goes to school with them as well. But here it will not be a teacher teaching, it will be the parish minister. For the next eight months he will spend two lessons a week here, and some weeks there will be a whole day of instruction where all the confirmands will do artwork, watch a film or even go on an outing. Thomas-David is looking forward very much to the day of confirmation because his parents have promised him a beautiful celebration with lots of family and friends attending. Thomas-David has not thought a lot about God and Jesus up until now but he supposes that the minister will tell quite a bit about these matters and then, hopefully, he will be able to make up his own mind. Right now he is not too sure about anything that has to do with faith and church. His parents certainly have not told him a lot about religion. His older sister has informed him that the minister is very nice but tends to talk an awful lot herself. Thomas-David hopes that she will not speak for longer than 10 minutes at any time ...

3.4.1 General Overview

As is generally known, confirmation is not a sacrament in Lutheran religious communities, and thus not in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark (the Danish established Church). On the other hand, it seems fair to claim that what confirmation in Denmark lacks in sacramentality, it makes up for in popularity. Traditionally, confirmation and preparation for confirmation have been surrounded by great expectations on the part of both the confirmand and his/her family, and have been bound up with great festivity. It is, in fact, the only Church practice in which church members are more interested than the clergy themselves. These expectations and festivities are still present in those families whose young people still get confirmed, but the idea of a homogeneous nation belonging, with few exceptions, to the same Lutheran National Church, and with confirmation as one of the highlights of the church year, along with

Easter and Christmas, no longer gives a true picture. As in so many other Lutheran countries, the significance of confirmation has changed, with regard to the social consequences, to the rites of passage or coming of age connotations, and with regard to the interest of getting confirmed and the preparations leading up to it. In the following, I will give a historical overview of confirmation in Denmark, its present status, confirmation preparation and its content – and also attempt to identify some indicators of likely future trends.

A Historical Outline

After the Reformation, which took place in Denmark in 1536, the new Lutheran Church did away with the earlier form of confirmation, called *firmelsen* (the confirming), which had existed for many years under the Roman Catholic Church. After the Reformation, demands were made concerning the child's acquisition of basic Christian knowledge. This could be achieved in various ways, one of which was the study of the catechism following the sermon at certain church services. In the 17th century, Denmark went through devastating wars, famine, widespread diseases and other trials, all of which caused much of what had been achieved through catechism teaching to be lost again. Towards the end of the 1600s, however, the country was coming under the influence of pietistic trends, principally from Germany, and there was a renewed focus on common people acquiring religious knowledge and leading Christian lives (or failing to do so). This focus on the church's teaching and the pietistic need to show that one took one's religion seriously meant that Pietism became the propelling force behind the introduction of obligatory confirmation in 1736.

But confirmation did not become solely an ecclesiastical matter. It became tied up with a range of civil rights and duties, and was thus of considerable consequence for the young people getting confirmed. The usual age for confirmation was 14-15. But as the latest date by which it had to be done was the 19th birthday, there was considerable leeway. Not only did the ministers now have to prepare all these young people for confirmation, but they also had to administer all the related, complex legislation with regard to people's right to a job, to move to another parish, to become a maid or soldier, etc. These matters could not be taken care of without being confirmed. Before confirmation could take place, there was the preparation for it. For many years preparation consisted of, for the most part, learning Luther's Short Catechism by heart – very few young people could read or write. Preparation took place at the home of the minister, which is one of the few aspects of confirmation which has continued largely unchanged up to the present day.

In 1849, Denmark received its first constitution, and the absolutist church became a people's church – one which ordinary citizens were not forced to be members of. Church and state were not separated. The Evangelical Lutheran

People's Church was, as it is still today, mentioned in the constitution as a Church supported by the state. The new religious freedom given by the constitution meant that confirmation lost its civil status, and became a purely ecclesiastical matter.

After the adoption of the constitution, there was a general breaking up of Danish as well as European norms, political structures, religious affiliations and patterns of life. This did not mean, however, that confirmation lost its popular significance, but its civil regulatory function was completely gone. Almost everyone was still baptised as an infant and prepared by the local minister for confirmation as something natural and unavoidable. This did not necessarily take place because the young people knew their minister or had any personal relationship to him, nor because it was an inescapable ecclesiastical or civil duty, nor because it was seen as necessary for one's salvation. It was because it had become a tradition, and a popular one at that. In 1909, the last remnants of the old pietistic decrees dating from 1736 were done away with, and the minister could no longer demand anything much of his confirmation class other than that they behave during the teaching – which is something still creating problems in a good many confirmation classrooms. While confirmation lost in value as a part of society's structure, it increased in value as a church rite of passage, and in the private sphere as an occasion for holding lavish, large-scale parties later on. This last aspect is still of great importance in Denmark today.

The Present-day Confirmation Ordinance and Preparation for Confirmation

In the vast majority of places in the Church of Denmark, preparation for confirmation is in the hands of the local parish minister. In a few cases, the bishop can give permission for the parish minister to delegate the teaching to someone else competent of doing this. The confirmation ordinance under which ministers and confirmands work today states:

»Allowed to be confirmed is everybody who has been baptised with the Christian baptism, who has been prepared for confirmation and who is familiar with the Christian teachings and the order of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church service«.

And about the preparation for confirmation:

»The preparation for confirmation should be founded on the baptism and aims to strengthen the familiarity of the confirmand with the Christian teachings and the service of the Church of Denmark«.

As can be seen from the above, there are no hard and fast demands as to how the ordinance is to be implemented, which means that the minister has a high degree of freedom with regard to the pedagogical methodology used in confir-

mation work. There is no set syllabus, so the minister is free in putting together his/her confirmation preparation course.

Most confirmands attend preparation classes during the 7th or 8th grade of school. In other words, they will be 13-15 years old when they get confirmed. Almost all confirmation preparation in Denmark takes place either in the church hall or at the minister's home where, as a rule, there will be a special room set aside for this purpose.

Preparation for confirmation has to consist of a minimum of 24 double periods. Most parish ministers have between one and three groups of confirmands. The services at which confirmations take place fall without exception in the months from March to May, and preparation commences in the preceding August or September. There are no strict and rigid rules for the distribution of the 24-28 double periods (a double period lasts 90 minutes). The great majority of ministers further require, as an essential part of the preparation, that the confirmands attend church on Sunday a certain number of times – between 8 and 15 times. For many years now, it has been the case that the minister instructs each group on a particular weekday (Monday-Friday) for two hours in the morning from 08:15 to 10:00, and the confirmands are given the time off from school. This is a model still widely practised, but probably to a greater extent in the rural parishes. In recent years, though, a number of alternative models to this traditional »Tuesday morning teaching« have emerged. For example: when instruction is given in modules of one or several days' duration, when it can be organised with a greater degree of creative activity in the form of artwork, drama, film, etc., and when it is easier to take the confirmands on suitable outings. Confirmation preparation camps are not unusual either, where the minister, assistants and confirmands go to a camp from two to four days but it is, however, not commonplace everywhere. In the area around the capital, Copenhagen, it has in recent decades become common for confirmation preparation to be held outside the school time, i.e., in the afternoon, from 14:00 to 16:00. Generally speaking, there are few volunteer workers involved in confirmation preparation, which usually rests solely on the minister's shoulders.

I believe that most Danish ministers, regardless of their theological standpoint, regard confirmation preparation as a very important aspect of their daily work; important for the confirmands themselves, important for the Church and its congregation, important for the minister's own endeavours and awareness of his/her own theology. But when I say »I believe« this to be the case, it is because there has never been any thorough research in this area before this study. One can make one's guesses and optimistic assumptions as to what actually goes on in the confirmation preparation classrooms across the country, but the fact is that the Church does not really know. It has been the tradition in Denmark for many years, that the minister and the parish have a high degree

of autonomy, and that new initiatives, including those relating to confirmation preparation, preferably come from the bottom up, and certainly not from the top down – i. e., from the bishops, the Danish Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Church organisations and the like – and there is no form of reporting on confirmation teaching. This may be a very healthy principle, but it also means that it is difficult to gain an overall, realistic picture of confirmation preparation in Denmark – of what actually takes place within the classroom's four walls. But there are signs that this too is changing. The younger ministers seem very interested in cooperation and sharing experiences and ideas with each other. Presumably, then, this will lead – via and thanks to the Internet – to a much greater interchange across parish borders than has previously been practised. It will no doubt make it much easier to gain an overview of the content of confirmation preparation around the country and the teaching methods used which might be useful in order to strengthen and improve the instruction. The idea of supervision in the parish classrooms also appears to be more acceptable now than it was just a few years ago, although there are strongly divergent ideological and theological opinions on this, even though it – as of yet – is still not particularly often encountered.

The Confirmand

The typical confirmand is between 13 to 15 years old, probably more likely 13 or 14 than 15. Confirmands have varying degrees of interest in Christianity, the Church and questions of faith, but nearly all of them have some understanding of the religious area. This certainly does not mean that they have any understanding of the specifically Protestant Lutheran faith, but they can recognise and identify religious universes from contemporary films, music, computer games, sports arenas and so on, where religious connotations can even be quite dominant. The typical confirmand does not come from a churchgoing family, and in many cases, has to first acquire a vocabulary with which to deal with religious and church subjects. The confirmand is used – from home, family, school, leisure activities and peers – to engaging in discussions, being co-responsible for making decisions, and, not least, to being heard and listened to. The confirmand is thus accustomed to having a say, and this is significant for how fruitful confirmation preparation can be achieved. The earlier well-known »lecture« form, where the minister talks to (rather than with) the class on the week's chosen subject will in many cases be doomed for failure, as the confirmand of today expects to be taking part, to be voicing his/her own opinion, and is definitely not content with being expected to sit and listen and keep quiet. Keywords here are participation, process, dialogue, discussion, responsibility-sharing, shared decision-making, sympathetic understanding, joint ownership, authenticity and respect. This means, that whereas earlier on, confirmation pre-

paration matters were viewed primarily from the minister's perspective, and not so much from the confirmand's, it is now the other way around. There are no doubt very different opinions on whether this development is good or bad, but I believe that a fundamental change of attitude among both confirmands and their parents has come to stay. Moreover, one does well to remember that the confirmands – despite all the faults and shortcomings one might feel exist in the Christian upbringing of the young and their behaviour in general – as baptised people are full members of the Christian congregation, and have a right to be treated as such in the preparation classes.

The Minister

In order to be ordained in the Church of Denmark, one has to receive a theological Master's degree from a Danish university. This course of study consists for the most part of classical theology, in which religious pedagogy is not taught. In fact, the practical side of ministry is barely dealt with at all. After completing the theological master's degree, the future minister has to spend four months at a Church-run pastoral training college, where the practical aspects of being a minister – including the pedagogical elements – are learnt. For many ministers, however, the first encounter with a real-life confirmand is when, following ordination, he/she stands face to face with a class of perhaps twenty-five 13-14 year olds.

The ministers are fully equipped for the theological side of the job, and often manage the pedagogic side well too, but, as mentioned earlier, there is a lack of concrete information here. Personal involvement as the mainstay in the confirmation preparation cannot be overestimated when teaching today's questioning, insistent and »at eye level with the teacher« young people. Just like the doctor, the schoolteacher and the ticket inspector, the minister no longer has any automatic authority and respect in Danish society. Authority and respect have to be won through authenticity and integrity when meeting the confirmands. From the point of view of the confirmands, it is a meeting between equals, not a meeting with someone invested with any initial authority. This means that the keywords mentioned in the section on the confirmand equally apply here. And that is fine, as long as minister and confirmand can meet on an agreed platform characterised by those words.

Young people of confirmation age are typically going through a demanding process of change and character formation. These are the decisive years of adolescence, and many Danish parents are unwilling to force any religious or moral/ethical ideas onto their children. Although this may be seen as a positive and democratic idea, it can place the young people in a state of isolation and confusion when they are faced with religious and existential questions. This is where the minister can step in and become a reliable and credible example for

the young people and offer them some guidance. But this calls for sensitivity, tolerance and – once more – authenticity on the part of the minister. Finally, it should be said that it would be wrong to assume that it is only the confirmand who can learn in the confirmation preparation classroom. This preparation can help the minister see his/her work in a new light – outside the classroom too – and enrich and make the rest of the week's work more fruitful in spite of the well-known irritating aspects of dealing with teenagers!

Some Figures and Statistics

The figures given below for baptism and confirmation in Denmark are of special interest because they are the only figures and information available so far concerning the confirmation preparation courses. The percentages given for confirmation apply to the whole Danish population, not only to members of the Church of Denmark. The complete figures can be found on the Danish Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs' homepage, www.km.dk, and are updated annually.

On January 1, 2008, there were officially 5.5 million people living in Denmark, 82.1 % of whom were members of the Church of Denmark. The Copenhagen Diocese has the lowest membership (66 %) and the Viborg Diocese (in Jutland) has the highest (90 %). There are ten dioceses in Denmark. The membership for the country as a whole is steadily decreasing. In 1998, it was 85.8 %.

In 2008, 53485 persons were baptised into the Church of Denmark. Of these, by far the greater part consisted of infants under the age of one year. But this statistic also covers some older children – including many soon-to-be confirmands – and adults. In 2007, from which the newest data at the time of writing this chapter come, 73 % of the children under one year old were baptised. The lowest baptism percentage was in the Copenhagen Diocese, where the baptism rate has fallen under 50 %, while in the Viborg Diocese, the figure was 86 % – the highest percentage. Ten years earlier, in 1997, 79 % were baptised in the country as a whole.

In 2007, 50452 persons were confirmed, which means 72 % of all young people of this age group in Denmark. In 1997, the figure was 79 %.

It is evident that the more rural the area, the greater the percentage of those baptised and confirmed. The closer one gets to Copenhagen or other large Danish towns, the fewer are baptised and confirmed, and the greater the number of those who have moved away from the Church of Denmark despite having been baptised and confirmed. There can be many reasons for this, but no doubt the most important one is that away from the big towns, people are more traditionally-minded, and less inclined to rebel against earlier generations' mode of living and against the established Church. In addition, by far the greater part of the non-Christian immigrants in Denmark live in or close to the large towns.

Denmark is still in many ways a homogenous society, sharing common values, but these values are becoming more shaped by having a shared relationship with Danish society than with the Church. It once was, if not the other way around, then at least the case that almost everyone belonged to the Lutheran Church, which was one of the mainstays or pillars of society.

3.4.2 Description of the Study

In the Church of Denmark, confirmation takes place almost without exception in the months of March to May. Preparation for confirmation starts in the previous August or September. The first questionnaire, t_1 , for the confirmands as well as for the confirmation workers (teachers), was sent to the participating parishes in the middle of September 2007, and the second questionnaire, t_2 , at the beginning of March 2008, with all the participants filling out the second one about three weeks before confirmation. 34 parishes took part, and they were divided among various parts of Denmark, with rural districts, smaller towns, larger towns, and the capital area, Greater Copenhagen. Both East and West Denmark were thus represented. 1193 confirmands filled out the first questionnaire, while 1014 filled out the second one (56% of the questionnaires could be matched). With regard to the confirmation workers, 46 filled out the first questionnaire and 36 filled out the last one (matching rate 44%). The fact that fewer filled out the second one is probably due to the minister – who almost everywhere in Denmark is solely responsible for the preparation of confirmands – either changing his/her place of duty, being on maternity/paternity leave or similar, and therefore not responding to the second questionnaire. It should be noted that rather few workers took part in the Danish study, with the result that the conclusions based on the workers' answers (including information on the setting and working structures) must be seen as less reliable than those based on the confirmand part of the study. The confirmand part of the study, on the other hand, may be seen as having statistical validity. Parents were not asked in the Danish study.

3.4.3 Setting of Confirmation Work

As mentioned earlier, Danish confirmands usually attend their confirmation preparation either at the minister's vicarage or at the local church hall. The preparation can take place during school hours in the morning as it is normal in the rural districts, in the afternoon after school hours as is usual in Greater Copenhagen, or in blocks of four or more lessons several times a month. Con-

firmands must attend at least 24 double lessons. The preparation takes place between August/September and March/May. Some confirmands are offered some sort of camp during their preparation time but far from all groups do this. Most confirmands go on at least one daytrip. Few confirmands take part in voluntary confirmand or youth work during their time as confirmands or the following year(s).

3.4.4 Confirmands

General Characteristics and Background Information

Each parish has between one and six confirmand groups, the average being about two groups. In the study, there are 51 % female confirmands and 49 % male. 26 % stated that they were 13 years old when they started the confirmation preparation, 67 % were 14 while the rest were 15 (6 %). This means that the preparation for confirmation takes place during the 7th or 8th grade of school. There is a certain geographical difference with regard to the age at which young people attend confirmand preparation.

Table 24: Proportion of age groups in different areas (Denmark)

Age	Capital Area	Larger City	Small Towns	Rural Areas
13 years	9 %	16 %	38. %	38 %
14 years	40 %	26 %	25 %	9 %

N = 1181.

The study did not make enquiries regarding the confirmands' grade in school, but the figures suggest that in smaller towns and in rural districts, one tends to carry out the confirmation preparation in 7th grade, whereas in larger towns and the capital area, confirmation preparation takes place in 8th grade. 96 % of the confirmands stated that they were baptised when they began the preparation, while 3 % were not. The rest stated that they did not know if they were baptised. It cannot be said that the confirmands were very enthusiastic about filling out the questionnaires, as on a scale from 1 (did not like it at all) to 7 (liked it a lot), the mean was 2.08. However, the workers do stress that the confirmands worked in a serious manner with the filling-in exercise. This statement is confirmed by the fact that an examination of all the filled in questionnaires shows that only very few questionnaires had to be excluded due to obviously insincere answers or nonsense.

When the confirmands start their confirmation preparation, they have a certain amount of knowledge about Christianity. 72 % report that it was primarily

the school that provided them with this knowledge, while the mother and father come in second and third place, with 48 % and 39 % respectively. It may be said, to be very traditional, that the mother in the home is the major contributor to the religious shaping of the children. 29 % had heard about Christianity from their grandparents, while the godparents play a role for only 9 % of the confirmands. Few confirmands have been introduced to prayer when they were little. Only 5 % had experienced that evening prayers were said with them »almost every night« while 7 % state that prayers »sometimes« were said with them. 56 % claim that their parents never said evening prayers with them. One out of three answers that they do not remember if prayers were ever said with them.

Motivation for Participation

Asked about who had the biggest influence on their choice of joining confirmation preparation, 72 % answer that they themselves had the biggest influence, while in 26 % of the cases, the family was decisive. The influence of peers was modest: 3 %. The statement that they themselves had the biggest influence on their choice of attending confirmation preparation can be said to be a typical teenage answer. The confirmands have little by little begun to exert influence on their own lives and are very concerned about issues that have to do with what they themselves can vouch for and what not. That the influence of peers seems to matter so little in a Danish connection with regard to the choice of signing up for confirmation preparation does not mean that Danish confirmands are less concerned about the choices and ways of their peers than other young people. This answer should probably be seen in connection with the fact that in Denmark, it is still quite normal for the confirmands to attend confirmation preparation with their normal school classes during school hours, i.e., in the morning. This means that the option of signing up for confirmation preparation is the prime option rather than the opposite. As a starting point, one can therefore count on attending confirmation preparation in the same group as one's classmates. In the rural districts, the smaller towns and in the larger towns, 82 % answer that they know everybody or almost everybody in the confirmation group when starting their confirmation period. In the capital area it is different, as the confirmands here state that they know fewer than half of those with whom they will be attending confirmation preparation. 3 % state that they know no one at all in the confirmation group. In the capital area the confirmation preparation often takes place outside school hours; the percentage of those being confirmed is much lower than, for instance, in Jutland, and the borders of the school district do not coincide with the parish borders. This means that school classes can be split into several different confirmation groups in several different parishes. Seen as a whole, the confirmands were not in any doubt as to whether they should attend confirmation preparation or not.

Nine out of ten state that it was completely or almost completely obvious that they should want to attend confirmation preparation, whereas only 2 % seriously considered whether to sign up or not. But why did the confirmands choose as they did?

The confirmands have a clear impression of the fact that confirmation has to do with baptism. 55 % answer that they signed up for confirmation preparation because they were baptised when they were little. Baptism is thus the most motivating factor closely followed by the notion of tradition with 47 %. The wish of the parents plays a role for one fourth of the confirmands, which is also the case with the notion of duty. 10 % of the confirmands find that the wish of the grandparents is decisive. Other possible motivating factors mentioned play a modest role. That only a small percentage of the confirmands expect that it might be fun to attend confirmation preparation is evident. Only one in ten signed up because rumour has it that it could turn out to be fun (CA01-CA08)!

Expectations and Experiences

Confirmation and the preparation for confirmation cover a whole range of areas for a young person. It is all about a celebratory party following the ceremony, religion, instruction, religious practice, community, presents, new clothes, Sunday services – and more indefinable issues such as dreams, faith, reminiscences of a rite of passage, self-determination, feeling of a new phase in one's life and a lot of other things. In this way, confirmation and the preparation do occupy the confirmands' minds a good deal, but still, they cannot be said to have great expectations of what is going to happen during the period of preparation. All statements with a religious content – e. g., »to learn more about God« (CB01); »to think about what is good or bad for me and my life« (CB07) or »to be strengthened in my faith« (CB08) – have agreements under 50 %.

But motivations that are more connected to the social aspect of the preparation period are not filled with great expectations either. The statement »to make an important step in growing up« (CB04) has support from about 1/3 of the confirmands, and the same goes for the statement »to experience community in the confirmation group« (CB02). Less than 20 % expect to consider »what is good or bad for me and my life« (CB07). The only two points connected to expectations that have support from more than 50 % are »to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of my confirmation« (CB09) with 69 % and »to get money and presents at the end« (CB10) with 54 %. It should be mentioned that girls give higher priority to the party with family and friends whereas the prospect of presents and money carries greater weight for the boys. 61 % of the boys find that presents and money is a strong motivating factor for signing up for confirmation preparation, while 47 % of the girls support this view.

Concerning these questions there is also a difference between 13 year old confirmands and the 14 year olds. The party is significantly more important to the 14 year olds than to the 13 year olds, namely 73 % against 60 %. Presents and money is given priority by 56 % of the 14 year olds, while 48 % of the 13 year olds give these matters priority. The confirmation blessing is also rather highly valued by the confirmands, as 47 % count it as a motivating factor (CB11). The lowest rated motivating factor is to learn how to pray. Only 16 % have any hopes connected with this issue (CB12). 18 % expect to exert some influence on the topics discussed during lessons (CK04) and 30 % hope that their questions concerning faith will play a role during the period of preparation (CK11).

The expectations of the confirmands seem to have more to do with the actual day of the confirmation than with the preparation period, in relation to which they do not seem to have many or great expectations. This may be due to the fact that the confirmands have little or no idea what they are supposed to expect and what will take place during confirmation preparation. The great majority of them have not been exposed to a religious upbringing or education at home, and the Danish Order on confirmation and preparation for it is not very clear. The Order does not state what one can expect from the preparation other than that it is to make the confirmand familiar with the faith of the Church of Denmark and the order of service of this Church.

So what actually happened during the preparation period in respect to the motivating and expectation factors? Do the confirmands' views change during the preparation time?

Shortly before the actual confirmation day, the confirmands still have great expectations of the confirmation party with family and friends, now 96 %, which is not strange considering the nearness of the day. The same goes for presents and money, now 78 %. But the blessing on the day of confirmation is now regarded as important by 57 % of the confirmands (KB09-KB11). This increase in appreciation of the blessing may be due to the fact that the confirmands now actually know what a blessing is. One can say that the confirmands have gotten *more* than they bargained for during their period of preparation. But one must remember that their expectations were rather modest to start with. More than half have experienced a feeling of community in the confirmation group where only 35 % had expected to do so (CB02/KB02). 30 % expected to learn more about the Bible but 57 % actually did (CB13/KB13). 16 % had expectations about learning how to pray but 51 % learnt about it (CB12/KB12). That they have learnt *how* to pray does not, however, mean that the confirmands actually have begun to pray. They just know how to do it. An unexpected personal relationship did develop within the classroom. Very few confirmands, 6 %, had any thoughts about coming into personal contact with the minister/other teachers but 47 % actually did (CK03/KK03).

Seen as a whole, it seems that the confirmation preparation has been reasonably successful judged by the mentioned criteria. The majority have learnt more, have developed personally more, and have made more ethical considerations than they had expected. The sense of community in the group also seems to have been a much better social setting than expected (CB02/KB02). But it also has to be said that it is no doubt for the best that only 18 % of the confirmands had any expectations of exerting influence on the topics dealt with during the preparation since only 24 % experienced that possibility (CK04/KK04). 37 % expected to increase their self-esteem and self-confidence, which happened for 18 % (CK13/KK13). The focus of the preparation seems to be more connected to faith in God than to faith in oneself! It has to be mentioned, though, that even if the confirmands have learnt more about God and faith (74 % at the end compared to the expectations of 43 % at the beginning of the preparation, CB01/KB01), have taken a stand in relation to their own faith (62 % compared to 39 %; CB03/KB03) and have become strengthened in their faith (48 % compared to 32 %; CB08/KB08), it does not mean that they thereby have accepted Christian faith into their own lives as a resource, or that there is any mention of a dogmatically correct version of Lutheran faith. To be strengthened in one's faith, can strictly speaking, also mean that they have become stronger in their non-Christian faith which they came with! So how do the confirmands feel about central Christian issues and about the content of Christian beliefs?

Attitudes towards Religion and Church

Which faith is it that the confirmands bring into the classroom? Table 25 shows the attitudes of confirmands towards certain religious statements.

Table 25: Attitudes of confirmands in t_1 and t_2 (Denmark)

What do you think about the following statements?	Yes (5,6,7) t_1	Yes (5,6,7) t_2	Mean difference
CE01: God created the world.	34 %	34 %	0.00
CE02: There is life after death.	53 %	58 %	0.17
CE03: God loves all humans and cares about each one of us.	56 %	59 %	0.11
CE04: Jesus has risen from the dead.	39 %	44 %	0.16
CE05: I am not sure what I should believe.	34 %	31 %	-0.26
CE06: I often talk about God with other people.	7 %	10 %	0.22
CE07: Sometimes I am ashamed to tell my friends that I am taking part in confirmation preparation.	4 %	7 %	0.11
CE08: Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.	18 %	20 %	0.11
CE09: I believe in God.	62 %	61 %	0.00

What do you think about the following statements?	Yes (5,6,7) t_1	Yes (5,6,7) t_2	Mean difference
CE10: I know what the Christian faith entails.	44 %	70 %	0.93
CE11: I try to live according to the Ten Commandments.	20 %	26 %	0.16
CE12: At the end of the confirmation preparation period, I definitely want to be confirmed.	92 %	93 %	0.05

N = 1158-1187. Item names for t_2 are KE01-KE12. The mean differences are computed on a lower database due to the matching rate of 56 %.

As is obvious from Table 25, the confirmands arrive in the confirmands' classroom with a relatively modest belief in God as creator. That it should be this way is not an unknown phenomenon in Denmark. The traditional explanation for this is that the confirmands on the threshold of confirmation preparation erroneously presume that many of the ministers of the Church are characterised by a rather conservative outlook on creation, i. e., that they actually believe in Adam and Eve and the creation in six days as recounted in Gen 1 and 2. Most confirmands cannot share this belief. Therefore, many teaching materials for confirmands include a chapter on these matters, where a modern scientific way of looking at the origin of the universe is related to the biblical way of talking about creation, and where it is shown that the one does not exclude the other.

However, this instruction does not appear to exert any major influence on the confirmands' notion of God as creator. Precisely the same percentage believe at the beginning of the preparation period in God as creator as at the end, that is 34 %. Almost 50 % deny both, in the beginning and in the end, that God created the world even though almost 2/3 actually state that they believe in God. This means that the explanation has to be sought elsewhere than in the confirmands' prejudices against the ministers' belief in creation.

The explanation or at least part of it might be found in the way the confirmands perceive God – that is, what their image of God is. God is not so much the almighty Old Testament Creator-God as a more friendly, loving and caring kindergarten-teacher-God. He loves and cares about each and every individual – almost 60 % believe this – but in spite of his friendliness and care, only 20 % believe that faith in Him can or will help them in difficult situations. Maybe the image of the loving and caring God that most ministers would like to introduce to their confirmands comes at a cost? Maybe all this talk about the loving and caring God – however important and true this may be – has the cost that all talk about God's omnipotence, creative powers and power to help people in need becomes unreliable and unbelievable? The kindergarten-teacher-God cannot make the world come into being or help needy people. Maybe there is a con-

cealed theological and pedagogical task of elucidation here for the ministers? How does one in a credible and trustworthy way pack the religious suitcases of the confirmands, which they are to carry with them the rest of their lives, a way that also shows the diversity in the images of God?

Another side of the explanation can be that young people at the age of about 14 have begun to make their own decisions with regard to a lot of issues and therefore they are rather reluctant to accept explanations that seem doubtful or even awkward to them. They are maturing rapidly and asking a lot of questions to themselves, to the minister, to their surroundings.

One could also harbour the suspicion that even if one does believe in God and in the resurrection of Christ which 39 % and 44 % state that they do at the beginning and end of the preparation period respectively (CE04/KE04), this belief does not have any major consequences for the confirmands' everyday lives. The confirmands do not talk to other people about God, even though it does not seem to be a taboo (88 % state that they are not embarrassed about attending confirmation preparation, (CE07), the majority do not try to live according to the Ten Commandments (CE11), and they do not believe that they can get any sort of help through praying, which, by the way, is not something they spend much time doing – in both questionnaires 10 % state that they pray on a regular basis. This means that in spite of the fact that one answers in the affirmative to certain central statements of faith, i. e., the resurrection of Christ, they do not carry any real importance or meaning in the everyday lives of the confirmands. It should be noted, however, that the Ten Commandments are not a subject which the Danish ministers, in general, put a lot of emphasis on in their instruction of confirmands (53 % do so, WA01).

The preparation of confirmands is an intensive course in Christianity. But even if this is the case, one has to say that on the whole, the religious sentiments of the confirmands change only slightly during the preparation. There is actually only one place where a marked shift occurs, namely, with regard to the statement »I know what the Christian faith entails« (CE10/KE10). This statement was subscribed to by 44 % at the beginning of the preparation period, 70 % at the end. They may have learnt a lot during the course, but this cognitive knowledge seems not to have any influence on their personal attitude towards Christian faith.

A good many years ago, there was discussion in Denmark as to whether the teaching of Christianity (RI/RK) in state schools should contain elements of preaching the Gospel or not. In 1974, it was finally decided by law that the teaching of this particular subject should no longer contain any elements of preaching, but only religious *knowledge*. This discussion seems to have been brought into the Church as well. As mentioned earlier, a large part of the confirmand preparation in Denmark takes place during school hours. It would

seem that the school hands over some of its time to the Church with the proviso that it fits with the school's pedagogical and didactic goal, namely, the imparting of knowledge. A number of both ministers and confirmands regard the preparation as a teaching project on Christianity, but not a course on Christian faith and the practice of its ways. One group of the Danish ministers thinks that the goal of confirmation preparation should first and foremost be the teaching of knowledge, whereas another group thinks that the primary and higher aim should be to get the confirmands to acquire a personal and positive relationship to Christian faith. 39 % of the ministers think that »confirmation work should be used as a missionary chance for winning young people for the Christian faith« (WD02), while 67 % have as their ambition that the confirmands should »learn to live their everyday life in relationship to God« (WC11). Judged by the answers of the confirmands, the latter ambition does not seem to be anywhere close to becoming a reality.

The very broad wording of the Danish confirmation order – familiarity with the faith of the Church of Denmark and the order of service – leaves room for both interpretations and, of course, for a middle position that tries to accommodate both perspectives during the preparation period. »What's in it for me«, ask many young people, and if the minister is unable to give an interesting or satisfying answer to this question, there is no reason why the confirmand should not turn his/her back on the whole enterprise of the Church – regardless of how much factual knowledge about the Church and Christianity the confirmands may have. It has to mean something to them *and for* them if it is to be of any interest to them.

Generally (KN01-KN15), the confirmands seem to be quite happy with their preparation period. 63 % are happy with »the whole confirmation time« and 83 % are happy with »the feeling of community« in their group. The confirmands are also quite satisfied with their minister; 72 % say so. Only 12 % are decidedly unhappy with him or her. Only the statements »having fun«, »church services« and »prayers in the group« score below 50 %. It is not surprising that »prayer in the group« is among the lowest scoring statements when one considers the confirmands' attitude towards prayer in general and their lack of faith in God's being able to help in difficult situations. Their relationship to Sunday services is also a bit strained, which, by the way, does not change over time. 57 % thought at the beginning of their confirmation time that services were boring, and 60 % think so at the end (CG04/KG04). The confirmands had an expectation of confirmation preparation not being much fun, and this expectation was fulfilled. But 66 % were happy with the content of the instruction, so one should not necessarily mourn the fact that the confirmands did not find the instruction full of fun – maybe this was not a wish on their part? Maybe it is

just grown-ups who believe that young people are always and only interested in having fun?

In spite of considerable theological differences within the Church of Denmark, there is one matter where unity prevails, and that is in the love of infant baptism. This love seems to be shared by the confirmands to a great extent, as about 90 % would definitely want their own children to be baptised (CG03/KG03). This love probably also has a background in the fact that baptism in Denmark is becoming a day of great festivity for the family and friends, a day that the confirmands really appreciate. Another reason behind the vast commitment to the statement »if I have children I want to have them baptised« could be that baptism in Denmark, in most cases, goes hand in hand with the naming of the child. So when the confirmands say to such a great extent they want their own children to be baptised, they may really be answering a quite different question. The confirmands do not seem to make any connection between baptism and membership in the Church, as only 20 % regard membership as being an issue of importance (CG01). The confirmands also think that the Church »does a lot of good things for the people« (CG05/KG05), but it does not have anything in particular to do with themselves. They are not interested in joining any voluntary work within the Church (KK27). Only 8 % are interested in this.

Even if the confirmands are quite happy with their preparation period, it does not seem to have any effect on their relationship to the Church. It is slightly more important to them »to belong to the Church at the end« (27 %; KG01) than in the beginning (20 %; CG01). Again one notes the tendency among the confirmands to regard the Church as something rather nice to have in society, but just not of any real interest or relevance to themselves. There is nothing in it for them! Fewer than one in ten would like to attend a youth group after confirmation (7 %; KG08), the local church building means very little to them both before and after the preparation – 14 %/15 % find the church building important (CG07/KG07) – and only few would use the minister as his or her spiritual adviser/confidant, 7 % (CG06/KG06). They like the minister, but do not see him/her as a person of resources in times of crisis. It is as if the period of preparation for confirmation does not in any significant way move the confirmands out of their comfort zone, but it allows them to regard the Church, its buildings and its employees from a certain safe but nevertheless friendly distance.

3.4.5 Workers

As mentioned earlier, the Danish figures for the workers do not have the same statistical value as those for the confirmands. Consequently, the discussion about them will not be as extensive as that of the confirmands. 46 took part in the first part of the study, whereas 36 in the second. These figures are too small to constitute significant statistics, but large enough to indicate some tendencies. Every minister had between one and three groups, usually two or three. 53 % of the ministers were male, 47 % female, and their average age was 48. 96 % were ministers, 4 % had other backgrounds. There were extremely few volunteers. Six out of ten ministers have worked with confirmand preparation for more than ten years, 13 % for six to ten years, 17 % for two to five years, while the last 10 % were beginners. 37 % knew almost none of the confirmands at the beginning of the preparation, 45 % knew fewer than half, 7 % half, 15 % the majority and 6 % almost everybody. The ministers used various ways of getting into contact with future confirmands – 61 % through the local school, 54 % sent out letters, 33 % used local/daily newspapers. None of the ministers stated that contact was established through a person-to-person encounter.

3.4.6 Didactics

Pedagogical Measures during Confirmand Preparation

Danish ministers seem to favour the cognitive ways of learning: lectures and narrations, discussions, prayer and meditation (the weight will probably be on prayer rather than meditation, as the ministers do not give any priority to »silent time«) and working with biblical texts, while experimental and experience-based learning: games, painting/creative artwork, drama and role play, excursions, meeting people of the parish and exercising silent time play a much smaller role. Singing (hymns) is also a very important feature of confirmand preparation (VH01-VH28). This type of instruction, which is given in accordance with cognitive principles of knowledge, seems to give the confirmands a good and sound knowledge of Christianity as a religion, but it does not seem to lead the confirmands to a more personal relation to the Christian faith. Ministers and confirmands agree that the confirmands have learnt the Lord's Prayer and a Creed by heart but they do not agree on the extent of it. 97 % of the ministers believe that the confirmands have learnt central texts by heart, e. g., a Creed and the Lord's Prayer (VC03) whereas 58 % of the confirmands state that they know the Lord's Prayer quite well by heart and 33 % believe that they know a Creed quite well (KU01-KU02). Half of the ministers believe that the confirmands have become more interested in Christianity which, however, cannot be said

to be substantiated by the confirmands. As mentioned before, there does not seem to be a correspondence between the concrete cognitive knowledge which the confirmands without doubt acquire and any personal interest on the part of the confirmands.

With regard to teaching materials, the ministers favour the Bible, the Danish Hymn Book, self-created materials and worksheets and, to some extent, exercise books for confirmands, of which there is a wide variety to be found in Denmark. Luther's Small Catechism was used »sometimes« by 15 % of the ministers (VI01-VI15).

96 % of the ministers consider their theological competences as being adequate for teaching confirmands and 65 % consider their pedagogical competences adequate (WE09; WE10). Even if the ministers are not so sure about their pedagogical abilities, they seem to be quite happy about teaching confirmands as only 7 % would like to be relieved of this duty (WE06). This seems to correspond quite nicely with the answers of the confirmands who do appreciate their ministers even if they are reluctant to contact the ministers in times of crisis. It is doubtful if the ministers really are the role models that many of them (63 %) would like to be, given the confirmands' overall somewhat lukewarm perception of the Church and its teachings (WE07).

Topics during Confirmand Preparation

So what do the ministers consider to be important issues in their instruction of the confirmands?

Not surprisingly, the ministers are most interested in those topics that one could call classical topics within the teaching of the Church (WA01-WA18). It is the only place in the Danish study that 100% is reached. All ministers rate the subject »Jesus Christ« to be of top priority, closely followed by topics such as »Baptism«, »The Lord's Supper« and »The meaning of life« with 96 %, »Christian holidays« and the »Sunday service« with 93 % and 87 %. In two of the topics the confirmands and ministers show similar proportions of agreement, namely »Ecology and the preservation of the Creation« and »Violence, and crime« where about one-third of the confirmands and ministers regard these topics as important. The top priority for confirmands is the topic »Friendship«, scoring 85 %, and this topic is actually also highly regarded by the ministers – with 70 %. This is hardly surprising, as friendship is a solid biblical topic – David and Jonathan, Jesus and Peter, Jesus and Judas, etc. – and at the same time, a subject with connotations of trust and loyalty that concerns all people, regardless of age and gender.

The confirmands (CL01-CL11) are also rather interested in the topic »Christian holidays« – 65 %, which is rather high, as the confirmands do not appear to take a great deal of interest in almost any of the other topics – most of them are

below 50 %, e.g., »Jesus Christ« 39 %, »The Holy Spirit« 28 % and the »Course and Meaning of the Sunday service« 17 %. That »Christian holidays« gives rise to a certain interest may result from the fact that this is something familiar which does have an impact on their own lives as it means time off from school. Neither the confirmands nor the ministers take a great deal of interest in »Protestant-Catholic« relations, which is not a big issue in Denmark, nor »Other religions« (two topics where the confirmands incidentally are more interested than the ministers with 17 % versus 9 % and 26 % versus 20 %). But it should be noted that a subject such as »Baptism« appears to be of greater importance to the confirmands than »Ecology« or »Body and sexuality« (this last subject does seem to be weighted differently by girls and boys – the latter being far more interested than the girls).

The dilemma in the teaching situation is, of course, having to find a good and sound balance between the topics that primarily interest those who are being taught and the topics which the teacher finds absolutely necessary. 32 % of the confirmands expressed the feeling that their questions concerning faith were addressed by the minister (KK11), while 68 % of the ministers felt that they had addressed the faith-related questions of the confirmands (VB18). This is a sizeable discrepancy. In the confirmation preparation, the ministers seem to stick to the topics that are absolutely at the very centre of the Church and theology. This choice is probably influenced by the fact that topics such as environment, ecology, body and sexuality, violence and crime – that is, the more general topics – are being taught in school. One cannot expect the specific church-related topics such as the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit and Baptism to be taught anywhere other than in Church or at home. The pedagogical task must then consist of making those topics which the confirmands have deemed uninteresting, interesting and relevant. It is all about getting in there and encroaching on the confirmands' comfort zone and that may include other pedagogical measures than those employed at the present time.

Voluntary Work

In Denmark, there is not a widespread tradition of voluntary work in connection with preparing young people for confirmation. This work is usually the responsibility of and carried out by the minister alone. However, there are some youth groups and clubs in various churches and parishes, usually in the bigger towns. It is not an area of work that is given high priority in the Church of Denmark. It is, therefore, not surprising that so few confirmands (6 % in t_1 , 7 % in t_2) say they would like to join a voluntary work group or a youth group after confirmation (CG08/KG08). The ministers do not engage in this kind of work either, probably due to a lack of time. 31 % would like »the confirmands to be won to continue as voluntary workers in the church« (WC07). 21 % had

confirmands who »worked in church programmes« (VB02), 34 % saw to it that the confirmands »got to know what youth work programmes the church has to offer them« (VC06) – but 57 % of the ministers actually had this ambition from the outset (WC06), 17 % confirmed that »in our parish there are youth groups that are suitable for newly confirmed adolescents« (VL01), 20 % said that »if a confirmand wants to help as a volunteer in our parish after his/her confirmation, there are opportunities to do so« (VL02), 3 % stated that »the confirmands were encouraged to do voluntary work« (VC07). One can sum up by saying that voluntary youth work does not have much of a foothold in the Church of Denmark – neither with the confirmands nor with the ministers.

3.4.7 Church Services

Most ministers want their confirmands to take part in the ordinary Sunday services because the confirmands should become familiar with the Order of Service. 96 % of the ministers make such a demand on the confirmands (WB05) while 67 % of the confirmands state that they took part in the Sunday services on a regular basis (KK09). 85 % of the ministers state that they have given their confirmands the chance of experiencing church services attractive to young people (VB04) – 71 % had that ambition from the outset (WB04) – whereas 41 % of the confirmands find that they have experienced such services (KK30). 65 % of the ministers think that the confirmands took part in the preparation of church services (VB06) while 46 % of the confirmands state that this was indeed a fact (KK31). There seem to be some discrepancies here. As mentioned earlier, a lot of the confirmands (60 %) find the ordinary service boring at the end of their confirmation time (KG04) – 57 % did so at the beginning (CG04).

The ministers probably know how important it is to involve the confirmands in the actual church work and services for them to feel ownership of the whole enterprise but on a daily basis this goal seems hard to reach. Or perhaps the ministers and the confirmands do not have the same understanding of the terms »involvement« or »taking part«? Certainly the sentiments of the ministers and the confirmands are at odds here.

3.4.8 Conclusions and Challenges

There is a saying in Danish that »it is difficult to prophesy, especially about the future«. As previously mentioned, confirmation is deeply rooted in Danish society as a cultural and social family event – one which is followed by a large-

scale festivity, an aspect which undoubtedly has come to stay. Confirmation is, likewise, still seen as a kind of coming-of-age ritual, a point of transition from the simple innocence of childhood to the more complicated and demanding period of adolescence. At the big family confirmation parties, one can still, here and there, hear Aunt Mildred speak emotionally of confirmation as »being admitted to the adult world«. That this view is today far from the truth seems fairly obvious, in that modern society would seem to be confirming the young person not into the adult world, but into the teenage world – which can last anywhere up to about 50 years, with little change apparent in choice of clothes, choice of music or mode of speech. But that's a whole different discussion!

That the percentage of those who get confirmed will continue to fall seems to be a given – at least in the nearest foreseeable future. Outside Copenhagen, the schools have traditionally given the confirmands two morning periods a week off to go to confirmation preparation at the church or vicarage. In many parishes now, schools want to stop this practice, as they do not see why they should give up valuable teaching time in the most attractive part of the day (the morning) so as to make it available to the local minister. An alternative might be afternoon confirmation preparation, in or out of school time, or a greater use of confirmation preparation camps or module-based preparation. One can approve or disapprove of these tendencies, but it is unlikely that they can be stopped, though efforts to do so are being made in a number of parishes.

Confirmands in the immediate future will probably be more open-minded towards religion than was the case twenty years ago – religion in a broad sense, that is, and not the heavy, prescriptive, dogmatic kind. It will be the Church's task to bring form and content to this openness in such a way that the confirmand will be able to meaningfully relate his/her life to Christian faith and practice. The »pro me« aspect of confirmation preparation is certainly unlikely to diminish in the near future. It will also be up to the Church to engage the parents, so that dialogue will not only be between minister and confirmand, but also include parents and the local community. Many of the present parents and parents-to-be have grown up without any religious language as a result of the late 1960s and the 1970s social attitudes and outlook on life. This outlook still has a lot to say in Danish society. The Church will need to open up its language in such a way that these parents will feel they can communicate and be heard and thus be participants in their children's confirmation preparation. There does seem to be some movement afoot towards involving the ordinary Sunday congregation in the work with the confirmands, so that the latter can feel themselves to be a true part of the church fellowship rather than guests forced to attend. One can hope that this approach will be more widely adopted and succeed to a greater extent than is the case at present.

Pedagogy of religion is also a matter which should be touched upon to a

greater extent in the future. It might be worthwhile for the ministers to seek further education in this area as this subject has been touched upon only very lightly during the ministers' time at the Pastoral Training College. To teach in a very cognitive style may be cool and suitable for about 1/5 of the confirmands but then 4/5 of a group will need other forms of instruction in order to learn and to internalise learning contents. To listen, to see, to touch and to do are very important features of a successful lesson. Also there should be both: cognitive as well as social and emotional features in all confirmation lessons.

As mentioned earlier, there seems to be a move within the group of Danish ministers towards a greater extent of cooperation with other people in regard to the preparation of confirmands. These other people could be colleagues within ministry, deacons, teachers, volunteers, etc. This move should be welcomed as there are a lot of resources hidden in the art of cooperation. Working together usually generates a lot of energy and new ideas and can only be recommended also within Church matters.

Confirmation in Denmark seems to be a quite healthy 275 year old tradition – however, with certain ills and ailments – even if the number of confirmands is dropping. Only time will show if the Church will manage to keep numbers stable but with good, reliable, interesting and authentic instruction one should not be too pessimistic. But still, it remains to be seen.

3.5 Confirmation Work in Finland

TAPANI INNANEN, KATI NIEMELÄ AND JOUKO PORKKA

Laura had been waiting for this day for the whole year; the very day when their confirmation camp finally started. A nice warm summer day at a great camp place on a lake shore. She had already gotten to know most of the girls in the group during their first meetings in the springtime and she was quite sure that they would get along and she would make great friends. She had also noticed some cute guys in the group, but was too shy to approach them. The leaders seemed to be quite all right, especially the young volunteers. All in all, she was not that nervous, she was actually rather enthusiastic. Her older brother Ville had been confirmed two years ago and had told her that confirmation camp is a great experience. He seemed to have really enjoyed the faith stuff as well. That was something that Laura was not looking forward to so much when thinking about the next seven days and nights at the camp. Her brother had even attended volunteer training and was going to work as a volunteer in another confirmation camp later in the summer. Maybe she would also experience something so special that she would like to do that as well.

3.5.1 General Overview

Background of the Finnish Confirmation Work

The typical Finnish girl Laura has told her friends that she was going to *rippikoululeiri*, literally translated *confession school camp*. In the Finnish context, one very seldom, practically never, hears public discussion of »confirmation« or »becoming confirmed«. Instead of that, the normal manner of speaking about confirmation is *päästä [ensi] ripille*, i. e., *to get [for the first time] to confession [of sins]*. That is why there is no discussion of confirmation work or confirmation time, but *confession school*, in Finnish *rippikoulu*. In the same way Swedish speaking Finns talk about *skriftskola*.

The manner of speaking about *rippikoulu* has its roots in the Finnish past. It was only about a century ago when all Finnish people were supposed to participate at least once a year in Holy Communion. And before one was allowed to participate, one had to confess one's sins privately to the local minister and get the absolution. Then the minister documented participation in the Holy Communion, or more exactly, in confession, and recorded this into the »Confession Book«, a special kind of Church record. In practice, the situation of the private confession had perhaps no religious content at all – but the obligatory mark

was written down. Young people could have their first confession, and then receive Holy Communion, only after getting confirmation teaching and being confirmed. So, preparation for confirmation was naturally called confession school.

The Finnish term *rippikoulu* tells a lot of the background of confirmation work in Finland. A firm state church system was created during the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, especially by the new Church Act (1686). The activities and administration of the Church were systematically made more efficient. The Church took responsibility for the national system of education, and wanted to instil a systematically controlled set of Christian customs among Finns. Common civility and obedience to the secular and spiritual authorities were taught by the Lutheran Church.

In this situation, confirmation training was developed to support the education of the people. The Church Act stipulated that in order to be married, it was first necessary to be able to receive Holy Communion, and before that, knowing Luther's Small Catechism was required, which in turn required the ability to read. Confirmation training, *rippikoulu*, and confirmation, or *getting to confession*, thus constituted the point at which one officially obtained permission to marry. Thus confirmation training and the First Communion assumed the status of a rite of passage; before confirmation one was a child, after it one was an adult. The strict state Church situation began to change in the late 1800s, when Finland was a grand duchy of the Russian Empire. From the Church's point of view, the most important reforms were the separation of regional municipal administration from parish administration in rural areas, the establishment of an elementary school system for which the municipality was responsible and no longer the Church, and the adoption of a new Church Act, which created an administration of the Church separated from the state.

Finland became independent of Russia in 1917. After that, the republican Constitution Act (1919) and the Freedom of Religion Act (1922) enshrined the principle of religious freedom; the Lutheran faith was no longer officially recognized as the state ideology.

As a result of this freedom of religion, confirmation and confirmation training as well lost all kinds of legislative influence concerning the official membership of civil society. But at the same time, the Constitution Act strengthened the power of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland to independently regulate its own administrative structure. A single person or a family that used the ecclesiastical rites of passage – baptism, wedding, burial – was still officially registered. And since confirmation remained a precondition for church weddings, *rippikoulu* practically retained the same status of a general rite of passage from childhood to adulthood as earlier. When the motive of general education disappeared, religious aims became more important in the preparation for con-

firmation. The Finnish society faced very rapid changes during the 1960s. The policy after World War II emphasised small scale farming in order to accommodate refugee families and former soldiers. When the small independent farms no longer provided a living, large numbers of people moved from the countryside into the southern cities in search of work. New mass media brought the whole world's problems into Finnish homes each day. The old collective way of living in rural communities broke down, being replaced by the new way of living in urban residential areas. Traditional institutions – Churches, schools, the army, etc. – became objects of criticism for libertarian and neo-leftist movements. Confirmation training also faced these challenges; the proportion of those being confirmed began to decrease.

This was the time when the Lutheran Church started to actively develop confirmation work. In the 1970s and 1980s, a reform of the confirmation preparation curriculum was carried out. More attention was paid to the way of teaching, not only to the right content of teaching. A remarkable amount of academic research concerning confirmation work was conducted by Kalevi Tamminen and later Jarkko Seppälä, both professors of Religious Education at the University of Helsinki.

Some important developments concerning confirmation work in Finland since 1965 can be seen in Table 26.

Table 26: Confirmation training in Finland and belonging to the Lutheran Church in Finland 1965–2007

	Camp form % of all the confirmands	Confirmed % of 15 year olds in Finland	Church belonging % of Finnish population
1965		84.3	94.9
1975	42.4	89.5	92.2
1985	68.1	94.1	89.1
1995	86.0	89.6	85.6
2005	91.2	87.9	83.1
2007	91.2	88.5	81.7

In Finland, the popularity of confirmation training had decreased to some extent, but increased again during the 1970s and has remained fairly constant since then. The relative share of 15 year olds in confirmation work after the mid-1980s has shown only a very slow decline.

Statistically, one interesting turning point was in 1976. For the first time the proportion of the confirmed, 91.8% (calculated out of all 15 year olds), was larger than the proportion of Finnish people, 91.7%, belonging to the Lutheran Church. Since 2000, this difference has been about 5 to 7 percentage points, and

it has been increasing. In 2007, about 2000 young people who did not belong to the Church attended confirmation work.

One of the most remarkable developments in confirmation work was the rise of the camp form. There had been some camps during the 1950s, but still in 1970 some 65 % of all the confirmands attended after-school groups – on afternoons or evenings – or daytime groups during summer holidays. The popularity of the camp form increased markedly in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1979, over half (54 %) of the confirmands participated in a camp and at the end of the 1980s, four out of five.

In 2007, nine out of ten attended a camp for confirmation preparation, a form of classes whose popularity has increased. Only 6 % completed their confirmation time on a day school basis mainly during the summertime, two percent through after school classes and two percent individually. Undoubtedly, the popularity of the camp form is one of the main strengths of the Finnish confirmation work.

Confirmation Training Curriculum 2001

The most recent reform of confirmation training is the new curriculum »Life – Faith – Prayer: Confirmation Training Curriculum 2001«, which was approved in 2001. According to it, the overall objective is that: »a young person should be strengthened in his/her faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost into which s/he was received through holy Baptism, grow in love of his/her neighbour and live in prayer and the fellowship of the parish«.

The new curriculum gives a frame which the local parishes must follow when they formulate their own written instruction for local preparation groups. The scheme provides the basis and general direction for the local planning of confirmation training, its implementation, evaluation and constant further development. »Life« (the Ten Commandments), »Faith« (the Creed) and »Prayer« (the Lord's Prayer) thus constitute that part of the teaching that is based on the main parts of Luther's Small Catechism which are mutually dependent and reinforcing.

The confirmation curriculum has clearly taken into account the developments occurring in pedagogical thinking as well. An attempt has been made to abandon school-like divisions into lessons and to work with study modules. With the change in teaching and the conception of learning, the teaching has become pupil-centred. The confirmand should be an active, functioning subject, no longer the recipient of teaching. This overall objective should govern everything that happens in confirmation work, both studies and leisure and all the time spent together. The effort is made to provide not only understanding but also experiences and activity. At the core are the young person's own questions about life and the teaching emanating from them.

According to the Confirmation Training Curriculum of 2001, confirmation work is seen as part of the continuous confirming role of the Church throughout a person's entire life. What precedes confirmation work is upbringing in the home, likewise, the work of the parish with children and families. After confirmation there is youth work in various forms and the activities of the parish for adults. Thus, the unique significance of confirmation work as baptismal instruction has given way to lifelong growth as a Christian.

The Curriculum of 2001 states that the confirmation period should last for at least half a year. In terms of contact lessons, confirmation work should include at least 80 hours. The first unit comprises 6–12 hours with the aims of developing a sense of belonging to the group and to orient the confirmands towards shared learning and confirmation work. The actual content oriented unit comprises 44–56 hours of teaching, most of which take place during the camp. The concluding unit (8–10 hours) is intended for the young person to analyse and evaluate what has been learnt and make a connection to other contents and to make sense of it for his/her life and prepare for confirmation. There is also a module (8–16 hours) integrated into the three units in conjunction with the parish which is intended to enable the young person to get to know the local parish and to become familiar with the workings of the Church.

The most typical way of organising the confirmation period of a training group is to start with several day meetings (e.g., on Saturdays) during the school year (typically during winter and spring). The main part usually takes place during summer or winter holiday at a camp. The camp period typically lasts for about seven days. The confirmation is most often held within a week or two after camp. The maximum size of a group is 25, if the authorities of the local parish do not make an exception. The Confirmation Training Curriculum 2001 emphasises that the confirmands should be strengthened in their connection to the Church. The Christian community is seen as very important, but ecclesiastically it is not quite obvious how this community should be enacted in practice. Holy Communion and the Communion Service is said to be the centre of Christian spiritual life. On the other hand, the good social atmosphere in the group of confirmands and in the other parts of youth work in the parish is emphasised in a way that it could almost be seen as the most important way to Christian community. Perhaps, for instance, diaconal work is shown to confirmands more as a place to visit in order to see how the employed staff do their work than a possibility to become committed as an active Christian in one's own everyday life.

Confirmation Training as a Part of Youth Culture

Confirmation work occupies a very special position in Finland. At the same time, the Finns are among the most passive church-goers in Europe. Confirma-

tion work, however, reaches many young people. The only religious ritual to reach a larger proportion of Finnish people is Lutheran burials.

In Finland, confirmation work is clearly a part of youth culture. Earlier studies show that the peer group is of pivotal importance for participation in confirmation work. Young people want to be like the others. Participation in confirmation work is generally taken for granted both by young people and their parents. Although it is thought to be a duty linked to age, young people are mostly happy to participate. Other reasons accepted by young people, in addition to peers and social pressure, concern the rights conferred. The eligibility for marriage in the Church and for being a godparent is considered important. Various studies show that eligibility for marriage in the Church has been the single most important reason for attending confirmation preparation for years. Many studies also show that confirmation work has positive effects on young people's religiosity (cf. Niemelä 2008).

A new Freedom of Religion Act was accepted in Finland in 2003. It changed the status of Religious Education in the school system. The pupils have the right to receive »the teaching of their own religion«, i.e., teaching groups are divided according to the religious backgrounds of the pupils, each group has a curriculum slightly different from the other, but the aims of all curricula – 13 different ones have been accepted – are based on the needs of common civil society. About 94 % of all the pupils are working in Lutheran groups. The research has pointed out that young people find it easy to see the difference between confirmation work and Religious Education in school. The confirmation work concentrates more on learning religion or about religion, the school teaching more on learning from religion.

The survey collected in 2004 reveals that Church employees consider confirmation work as one of the most important fields of work, together with baptism and funerals. For example, Sunday services are regarded as less important. Also, ordinary Finns typically regard confirmation work as an important field of work and as more important than Sunday services. A total of 81 % of them is satisfied with the way in which the confirmation work is done (Kirkko muutos-ten keskellä 2004, 163).

What about after confirmation? Many confirmands are interested to continue their parish activity, especially as a volunteer in Church youth work. Young Confirmed Volunteers (YCVs) are an important part of Church youth work in Finland – and in most parishes it is the essential core of it. The main work of these volunteers is to work as assistant leaders in confirmation work groups and other children's and youth work. Each year about one third of the confirmands start the training for YCVs after their own confirmation. Most of them also complete the training and later work as volunteers – some of them for many years. In 2007, a total of 18000 young people worked as Young Con-

firmed Volunteers. Two out of three of those who attended YCV training in 2007 were girls.

Equivalents Outside the Protestant Churches

The civil confirmation, the non-religious alternative to Church confirmation has never been very popular in Finland. Since the end of the 1980s, the non-religious Prometheus camps have endeavoured to provide an alternative to confirmation. The Prometheus camps are intended as »growing-up camps« for those aged 14–15. They entail no religious or world view commitment. They welcome all young people who have completed the 8th grade at school, but are primarily intended for those with no religious affiliation. The educational principles are based on Humanism. They are organised by an independent association entitled *Prometheusleirin tuki ry*. In 2006, a little more than one percent of the age group participated in such camps.

Current Research on Confirmation Work in Finland

The situation of Finnish confirmation work has been studied in academic research since 2000. In her longitudinal research project, Kati Niemelä has studied the quality and effectiveness of confirmation work. Her data were collected in surveys of young people conducted at the beginning and at the end of the confirmation period, and five years later, on the threshold of adulthood, in the city of Tampere (Niemelä 2002, 2006, 2008).

After implementing the new Confirmation Training Curriculum 2001, confirmation work was evaluated between 2005 and 2009 in a large national research project. The research was conducted by a network of four universities and the Church Research Institute. About 20 Master's theses have been written during the project, and several doctoral dissertations are under way. The final report with about 20 articles was edited by Tapani Innanen and Kati Niemelä (Innanen/Niemelä 2009).

Concerns About the Future in the Finnish Discussion

The situation of confirmation work in the Finnish Lutheran Church is fairly stable and culturally strong. However, not even in Finland should the high number of confirmands be taken for granted. In the Finnish metropolitan area, the proportion of confirmands has clearly fallen. In 2006 the participation rate in the Diocese of Helsinki was 75.5 %. Of all the towns and cities, the lowest participation rate in confirmation work is in the city of Helsinki, where in 2006, participation among 15 year olds living there was 70.7 %. The highest participation rate was in the northern Diocese of Oulu (93 %), an area with a very low population density.

New national research points out that many of the pedagogical ideals of the

new curriculum have only partly been implemented. For instance, the teacher-centred lessons continue to play an important role in confirmation work. One of the main challenges will be to get the confirmed young people more involved in parish activities, for instance, as voluntary workers in diaconal and music work.

3.5.2 Description of the Study

The Finnish study was conducted by the Church Research Institute. The researchers involved were Kati Niemelä, Tapani Innanen and Jouko Porkka. More information about the Finnish study is available in Finnish in Innanen/Niemelä 2009.

Procedures

The data were collected from fifteen parishes and 107 different confirmation groups of the Lutheran Church of Finland. The average size of a parish in 2007 was 8372 members. 36% of the members belong to a parish with more than 20000 members. We tried to pick parishes of different sizes from different parts of the country so that the data would be as representative as possible. Most of the parishes were willing to participate; only three of the parishes we asked did not want to take part. Our aim was to get enough groups to participate that the confirmands' sample size would be about 2000. The actual number of respondents in t_1 was 2176 and t_2 1747.

The sample is quite representative, including parishes from different parts of the country, from urban and rural areas. Of the groups, 30 % were from a big city, 37 % other urban areas, 22 % suburban and 10 % rural areas. Each parish has one or more confirmation groups (= Unit). On the average, the parishes in the data had 7 confirmation groups which is very close to the situation in the Lutheran Church as a whole.

The t_1 questionnaires of the confirmands and workers were sent to the parishes in October 2007. The t_2 questionnaires were sent to the parishes in January 2008. We also added separate questionnaires (t_1 and t_2) for Young Confirmed Voluntary leaders (YCVs) which were sent out in January 2008. The volunteers' questionnaire was a mixture of the questions for workers and confirmands and also included some volunteer-only questions.

The instruction was that the t_1 questionnaire should be answered as early as possible and t_2 as late as possible. Most typically, the t_1 questionnaire was answered during the first meeting of a group. This could be either in autumn or in winter and in some cases later in spring. The t_2 questionnaire was typically answered on the last day of a camp period (if such) and several days before

confirmation. The first confirmations were held as early as January, but most confirmations were held in summertime. The questionnaires were typically completed in a meeting room, in a classroom setting, during a class meeting.

Not all of those who answered t_1 answered t_2 , as well as not all of those who answered t_2 had completed the t_1 questionnaire. This second option especially held true for teachers because many of the teachers do not teach the group from the beginning, but join the group later or work in the parish only during the summertime and attend only the camp. It also seems that the leaders in several groups did not remember to distribute t_2 questionnaires.

The confirmands mostly found it okay to complete the questionnaires (64 % found it okay, 8 % liked it). However, 29 % found it annoying.

Overview on Data

Table 27 gives the number of valid questionnaires collected.

Table 27: Number of questionnaires (Finland)

	t_0	t_1	t_2	N/percentage matched
units	107 (information was available through general church statistics)	was collected together with teachers t_2 questionnaire	80	
confirmands		2176	1747	76 %
workers		157	212	71 %
(parents)	not included			
YCV (volunteers, only in Finland)		336	429	70 %

In interpreting the workers' results, it is important to remember that volunteers, the YCVs, are not included in the workers' data. The number of YCV-respondents (about 400) compared to the number of workers who answered the questionnaires (about 200) illustrates the importance of the YCV-system as part of confirmation work in Finland. Some of the results from the YCV data are reported later in the text. Every group in our study had YCVs. On the average, a group had 6 volunteers (min. 2, max. 12).

3.5.3 Setting of Confirmation Work

Most confirmation training groups were conducted partly or mostly in a camp form. Only 6 % of the groups had no camps. 87 % of the groups were such that more than 50 % of the lessons were in camp. In 7 % of the groups, camp accounted for less than 50 % of the teaching. These figures are very much in line

with the situation in the Lutheran Church as a whole. Of all confirmation groups in 2007, 90 % were in a camp form. 60 % of the camps lasted 6-8 days. 30 % of the camps were longer than eight days. 79 % of the groups held their camp during summertime, 12 % during wintertime (6 % had no camp, 2 % something else).

The sizes of confirmation groups varied from 12 to 30, 23 being the mean size of a group. This means that the group sizes are not totally in line with the confirmation curriculum which says that the maximum size of a group should be 25. In a total of 30 % of the groups, the size of the group was more than 25.

According to the curriculum, the period of teaching should last for at least half a year, i.e., from the first meeting to the last meeting. In terms of contact hours, confirmation work should include at least 80 hours. This is, however, not always the case. 43 % of the groups met for a shorter period than six months (3-5 months). One third of the groups had 6-7 months between the first and the last meeting. 15 % of the groups met for a longer period (8-11 months).

A group had on the average 14 days of meeting (varying from 5 to 23) and had 68 hours of instruction. One fourth of the groups had less than 50 contact hours and one out of ten had more than 80 hours of instruction. 20 % of the groups had trips or outings during the teaching period (in addition to the camps). These typically lasted for one or two days. Confirmands typically attended Sunday services four times and youth meetings two or three times (average 2.5).

3.5.4 Confirmands

General Characteristics and Background Information

The Finnish confirmands are equally divided between males and females. Of those who answered the questionnaire, 51 % were male, 49 % female. Most confirmands were 14 or 15 years old. When answering the questionnaire at the end of the confirmation time, 54 % of the respondents were 15 years old and 45 % were 14. 1 % of the respondents were 16 or older. Out of all confirmands in the Lutheran Church in 2007, 96.3 % were 14-15 years old. 2 % were 16-17 and 1.7 % 18 or older.

Almost all confirmands have attended Religious Education at school from first grade on, with an average of 1 hour a week each year. 2 % of the confirmands were not baptised at the beginning of their confirmation time.

Little more than one third of the confirmands had attended church children's groups when they were 5-9 years old (38 %) and a little less than one third from 10 years on (30 %). 60 % had never attended such a group. This means, that for

a quite high number of Finnish confirmands, the confirmation period is the first time in their life that they attend church activities if occasional church visits are not counted.

Motivation for Participation

For most young Finns, it was obvious that they attend confirmation preparation. Two out of three (65 %) said that it was obvious, one out of four (25 %) that it was quite obvious. Only one out of ten was unsure and also considered not attending (3 % very unsure, 7 % to some extent). Only 29 % of the young people said that somebody influenced their decision to register more than they did themselves. Of these others, family (18 %) and friends (9 %) were most influential.

In general, the Finnish confirmands are strongly motivated to attend – for various reasons. The most important reasons for young Finns to attend confirmation time are that they were baptised as a child (81 % agrees) and most of them wanted to go to camp (»I want to attend a camp«: 75 %; an item only included in the Finnish questionnaire). By taking part in confirmation, young people receive rights – they get the right to be married in the Church, the right to be a godparent and the right to vote in parish elections. These rights are regarded as important and for many, they are among the most important reasons for attending. Almost three out of four (73 %) see the right to be married in the Church and 60 % the right to be a godparent as an important reason.

Confirmation work also has a positive image. The young people want to attend because they are told that it is fun (72 % agree). Young people see confirmation as a good tradition (60 %) and their family also wants them to attend. Only a minority of the confirmands (14 %) feel that they were obliged to do so (CA01-CA08).

Expectations and Experiences

As seen above, most confirmands have a positive attitude towards the confirmation period. However, their expectations (items CB01-CB11) are not so much towards religion and religious learning, but towards having fun and having a good time with friends. About one fourth of the confirmands were hoping to learn more about God and faith (24 % agree), to be strengthened in their faith (25 %), learn to pray (22 %) or increase their knowledge about the Bible (23 %) or learn about other religions (19 %). However, there are notably more confirmands who want to come to a decision about their faith (39 %), think about what is good and bad for their life (34 %) or talk about life after death (30 %).

Above all, the confirmands want to meet and get to know friends (73 %) and get money and presents at the end (72 %). But they are not only hoping for money and presents at the end, but half of them are also hoping to have a

beautiful celebration with family and friends (54 % agree) and to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation (45 %). Confirmation period is also seen as an important step in growing up (48 % agree).

Despite their low religious expectations, most of the confirmands do experience the confirmation period as religiously rewarding (KB01-KB15). At the end of the confirmation time, as many as 80 % feel that they have learnt more about faith and God or have been enabled to come to their own decision about their faith. 55 % feel that they have been strengthened in their faith, 55 % have learnt to pray.

Also their social experiences are mainly positive. Three out of four (77 %) feel that they have experienced a good sense of community in the confirmation group and almost as many (69 %) feel that they have made an important step in growing up.

Table 28: Expectations and experiences of confirmation period (Finland)

	% expected (chose 5-7)	% experienced (chose 5-7)
to learn more about God and faith.	24	80
to experience community in the confirmation group.	41	77
to come to my own decision about my faith.	39	80
to make an important step in growing up.	48	69
to meet and get to know friends.	73	59
to think about what is good or bad for me and my life.	34	55
to be strengthened in my faith.	25	76
to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of my confirmation.	54	77
to get money or presents at the end.	72	66
to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation.	45	59
to learn to pray.	22	74
to increase my knowledge of the Bible.	23	53
to talk about life after death.	30	26
to learn more about other religions.	19	80

N = 2149-2165. Item sections CB and KB.

Most confirmands were typically satisfied with their confirmation period. They simply liked it. Whatever was asked, typically less than 10 % were not satisfied (KN01-KN14). 87 % of the confirmands were satisfied with the confirmation time as a whole, only 5 % were dissatisfied. Confirmands were most satisfied with the feeling of community (88 % agree, 5 % disagree). They were typically also satisfied with their leaders (more than 80 % agree, less than 10 % disagree). Confirmands typically liked the musical part of their confirmation period (84 %

agree, 7 % disagree) and the content and topics of the lessons (81 % agree, 6 % disagree). Of the items asked, confirmands expressed least satisfaction towards Church services. However, most of the confirmands were also satisfied with them (73 % agree, 9 % disagree). They also found the confirmation period different and more interesting than school (63 % agree, 17 % disagree; KK50).

Table 29: Satisfaction with different aspects in confirmation time (Finland)

To what extent are you satisfied with ... (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied)	M	SD	satisfied (5,6,7)
KN01: the whole confirmation time	5.80	1.14	87 %
KN02: having fun	4.96	1.25	65 %
KN03: content/topics of lessons	5.53	1.20	81 %
KN04: feeling of community	5.99	1.20	88 %
KN07: minister / person primarily responsible for confirmation work	5.73	1.38	84 %
KN08: other teachers/workers	5.75	1.19	84 %
KN10: church services	5.25	1.31	73 %
KN11: camp(s)	5.89	1.25	86 %
KN13: prayers in the group	5.49	1.36	77 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	5.79	1.32	84 %

N = 1695-1746.

The question about the length of the training period is also a good indicator of general satisfaction. When asked whether they found the time spent with confirmation work too short or too long, only 15 % of the confirmands thought it was too long. 32 % thought it was too short and 54 % thought that the length was just right.

Attitudes towards Religion and Church

When starting their confirmation time, the Finnish confirmands are a bit more sceptical about Christian beliefs than the confirmands in most of the other countries surveyed. About one third of the confirmands agree with most of the belief-items asked. One third disagrees with the belief-items and one third is in between. If we look at the frequencies of the Christian belief-index, 28 % agree (5-7), 35 % disagree (1-3). However, the number of young people agreeing with the belief-items increases during the confirmation period. At the end of the time, 41 % agree (5-7) with the Christian beliefs, 21 % disagree (Christian belief-index iCE1; iKE1).

The Finnish confirmands are somewhat more passive in their religious activity when starting their confirmation time than confirmands on the average. Only one fifth of the confirmands pray at least once a week. However, the confirmation period also activates their religious behaviour. The basic attitude of a

young person starting confirmation period in Finland towards religion and church is positive, but rather passive. Most of the confirmands describe their basic attitude towards Christian faith as rather positive (35 %) or »neither negative nor positive« (44 %; CF01). Those negative or very positive are small in number.

Confirmation period often has positive influences on religious attitudes. If we compare the answers given at the beginning and at the end of the time as many as 39 % of the confirmands describe their basic attitude more positively at the end. Only 11 % of the confirmands give a more negative answer at the end of the confirmation period. The figures are not that positive in any other country. The results are the same if we compare the values of the »church adherence«-index at the beginning and at the end (37 % more positive, 11 % more negative; iCG1; iKG1). Especially the number of those interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation increases. At the beginning of the confirmation period, 21 % are interested. At the end, the number has risen to 48 % (CG08/KG08). Only the perception of the church services has not changed into more positive views. Still, at the end of this time, two out of three confirmands regard church services as boring.

Table 30 shows the clear positive shift in the general attitude towards faith and the Church from t_1 to t_2 .

Table 30: General questions on faith and Church (Finland)

How would you describe your current attitude in general towards ...?	very negative	rather negative	neither negative nor positive	rather positive	very positive
CF01: ... the Christian faith (t_1)	4 %	8 %	44 %	35 %	8 %
KF01: ... the Christian faith (t_2)	1 %	5 %	30 %	47 %	17 %
CF02: ... the Protestant Church (t_1)	4 %	6 %	50 %	34 %	7 %
KF02: ... the Protestant Church (t_2)	1 %	4 %	37 %	45 %	13 %

N = 1703-2149.

3.5.5 Workers

Background Data

According to the curriculum for confirmation work from 2001, the leader of a single group of confirmands is always the minister. Youth workers and church musicians participate as teachers. Other church staff like diaconal and mission workers can also be involved in teaching.

The ministers and youth workers are typically responsible for one or two confirmation groups per year. That means that they spend 7-15 days and nights

in confirmation camps, and before and after that, are responsible for the evening and weekend meetings with their confirmands, the confirmands' parents and planning the content and day programmes of the confirmation training with the YCVs and their colleagues. If you sum up the time spent, you can say that every confirmation group takes 15-20 full working days from the employees who are responsible for a group.

But it is not only the ministers and youth workers who are running the confirmation work in the Finnish Lutheran Church. Compared to other countries, the share of other professionals is high in Finland. Of those who answered the questionnaire, only one third (36 %) were ministers. One fourth (25 %) were youth workers. Others were cantors (7 %), deacons (5 %), mission secretaries (6 %), summer (student) theologians (9 %), trainees (7 %), or others (4 %). Every group also had YCVs, on the average 6 persons, but they filled out a separate questionnaire which means that they are not counted in these figures.

Among the employees who replied to this survey, 59 % in t_1 and 57 % in t_2 , were female. The respondents of t_2 were from all age groups: 21 % were younger than 25 years, 27 % 25-34, 19 % 35-44, 25 % 45-54, 8 % older than 55 years.

The cantors ($M = 48$ years) and ministers ($M = 44$ years) were the oldest and youth workers the youngest ($M = 37$ years) among the employees in confirmation work, if we do not consider the summer theologians or other summer workers who are mainly students. Ministers and cantors were also the most experienced employees in the confirmation work. Half of the respondents were experts in confirmation work and had been teaching for more than 10 years and had taught 20 or more groups. One out of ten had been teaching for less than one year. The experience is also seen in participation of confirmation work training. 55 % of the teachers had taken part in a special training for confirmation leaders and 33 % had been trained in confirmation work as a part of some other courses or professional training. Only 13 % of the teachers were without any training for confirmation work. The male employees had more training in confirmation work than the females, and ministers, youth workers and cantors had more than the other professionals.

Motivation for Being a Worker

The respondents regarded confirmation work as a very important field of work. More than two out of three (72 %) regarded it as one of the most important and 19 % an important field of work. Only 2 % regarded it as one of the less important and 7 % as equally important with other work fields.

Most workers involved in confirmation work like doing this part of their work. 87 % of the respondents replied that they like doing the confirmation work. Only 5 % replied that they do not like it. At the beginning of the confirmation period, 10 % replied that they would like to be relieved from doing it

(WE05; WE06). According to the data, they are in many cases the same persons. It seems to follow the logic: if you do not like the work, your experience will strengthen your negative expectations.

Most respondents (92 %; VM01) were satisfied with the confirmation work in their parish. Most of the workers are also quite satisfied with their pedagogical and theological skills. Three workers out of four (75 %; WE10) considered their theological knowledge and pedagogical competence (75 %; WE09) for confirmation work adequate.

The official guidelines for confirmation work were known very well to the workers. As many as 90 % of all respondents knew them and complied with them (WE01; WE02). However, although the satisfaction and trust seems to be so broad in confirmation work, half of them assume that their colleagues do not share the same aims as they do (WE03).

It is typical that the employees do not know the majority of the confirmands at all before the confirmation time starts. Almost three out of four of all respondents (72 %) knew none of them before. Only 2 % knew all of them and 3 % the majority. Actually it is possible to know the majority of confirmands before confirmation time only in very small rural parishes. However, since the confirmation group usually met together for half a year and spent more than a week at camp together, the workers got to know the confirmands quite well. Three out of four employees (74 %) knew all the confirmands at least by name at the end of the confirmation period. Cantors and deacons who only visited the group were not familiar with their names.

Two workers out of three (66 %; WE07) would like to be role models for younger people. This category included more females than males, more under than over 35 years old and more workers who participated in less than five confirmation groups. It seems that the older one grows and the more experience in confirmation work one has, the less one wants to be a role model for younger people. At the same time, it is interesting that the less experienced workers regard faith in God (WE08) as more important than the more experienced. This difference was not found between the age groups.

When the Confirmation Training Plan 2001 (CTP 2001) was ratified, it was decided that all the employees in confirmation work all over the country should be trained in the document's theological and pedagogical fundamentals. This training for the trainers was organised by the dioceses, in most cases by those responsible for confirmation work, the local experts who had been selected, trained and nominated for the task by the dioceses.

The data show that the training for trainers was effective. Those who did not participate in the confirmation training course for trainers were less informed about the official guidelines for confirmation than the others. They also complied less with these guidelines than the others and thought that the other em-

ployees for confirmation work in their parish did not share the aims of the others in their work. They felt that their pedagogical competence was inferior to the others. At the same time, they wanted to be a role model for the younger people more than the others.

Motivation of the Volunteers (YCVs)

In Finland, the volunteers for confirmation work are mainly young, only 1 or 2 years older than the confirmands – therefore they are called YCVs (Young Confirmed Volunteers). They all have participated in an YCV training course which lasts one or two years after their own confirmation. Some parishes allow the YCVs to start their work in the confirmation group after one year's training but other parishes require two years. The courses are organised by local parishes and they consist of approximately 50 hours of teaching – less in smaller parishes and even twice that much in larger ones. The training consists of topics like skills for camp work, parish life, Christian dogma, young peoples' own growth and how to live as a Christian. Usually the YCV training is organised according to an evening class model, i. e., the groups meet in the parish centres weekly for about two hours at a time. In addition, the training includes two or three weekend camps in a parish camp centre.

The special survey gathered from the YCVs indicated four different motivation types among the YCVs. One third of them (33 %) were called *diversely motivated*. On one hand, the altruistic reasons motivated them, especially the willingness to offer the confirmands a meaningful and pleasant confirmation period. On the other hand, the social aspect of being with the other YCVs, the confirmands and the employees was an important motivating factor. Their third major motivation was the contents. They were expecting their time as YCVs to contribute to their own spiritual and personal growth. Because of their orientation, they are probably also active not only in parish life but also in other fields of society as well.

The second motivation type was called *socially and externally motivated* – 30 % of all YCVs belonged to this group. They were not interested in spiritual or personal growth but they participated mostly because of the possibility of being together with their friends and extending their social network.

The third type was called *spiritually motivated* – every fourth (25 %) belonged to this group. They were most interested in learning more about spiritual life and theology, and in helping the confirmands find out about the importance of these topics. They were YCVs especially because it is a spiritual activity – they probably would not take part in any other kind of voluntary work but that in a parish.

The fourth group was called *poorly motivated* – 12 % of the YCVs belonged to this type. According to the data, they were not motivated to be YCVs at all and

they seemed to be expecting nothing from being a volunteer in confirmation work. It seems that they had started this activity by accident – perhaps they did not have anything else to do or they had lost the reasons why they originally started the training.

The results indicate that not only the confirmation work but also the YCV activity is part of the youth culture in Finland. Among the YCVs, a great variety of differently motivated young people can be found. This is possible because they are seen not only as assistant workers but also as part of the parish youth work – young people who are learning new things about God, faith and life.

Expectations and Experiences

The Finnish confirmation workers emphasise binding confirmands to their parish more strongly than workers in other countries. They hope that the confirmands will get to know their parish and its youth work and will later continue as voluntary workers. They also strongly hope that faith and Church will play a role in their life after confirmation and that they will learn to live their everyday life in a relationship to God.

At the end of the confirmation time, Finnish workers are also most positive about the confirmands' bonds to the parish. They feel that the confirmands have gotten to know the parish better (89 %; VC05), have learnt what programmes of youth work the parish offers (87 %; VC06) and have been encouraged to become volunteers (94 %; VC07).

The Finnish workers also emphasise learning by heart more than workers in other countries. This may seem to contradict their other aims. However, learning by heart has a long tradition in Finnish confirmation work and it is also something that the confirmands expect.

At the end, Finnish workers are also more optimistic about the confirmands learning Christian texts by heart than workers in other countries. Practically all employees feel that confirmands have learnt texts by heart (98 %; VC03). That is also the reality if we compare the actual knowledge of Finnish confirmands with the confirmands from other countries.

The data show that many workers know about the importance of activating the youth and being interested in their perspectives, but in their practical work they follow their own ideas.

- 40 % want the confirmands to be involved in the selection of topics for the confirmation time, but only 22 % report that this actually happened (WB09/VB09).
- 86 % think in the beginning of confirmation time that confirmands should experience forms of worship adequate for young people, but only 42 % affirm in t_2 , that special services of this kind actually happened (WB04/VB04). The employees seem to think that they should cooperate with the schools and

the parents during the confirmation time. These pressures come from the surrounding society and the CTP 2001. However, parishes do not work this way. These results show that while the employees know that this cooperation should be established, the reality is that much of the time tradition wins over and the cooperation does not take place.

- 78 % said in the beginning of the confirmation training that it is important that the confirmation work establishes a good contact between the Church and the parents of the confirmands but only 47 % say that this has actually happened (WD08/VD08).
- 56 % perceive it as important that the confirmation work cooperates with the school but only 13 % say that this has happened (WD06/VD06).

Overall, the workers appear to be satisfied with the learning results – most of the goals seem to have been reached.

3.5.6 Didactics

Methods and Materials

When asked about the pedagogical measures they use in their teaching, the following measures received the highest values: discussions, working with biblical texts, group work, stories/narratives, lectures, singing together, meditation and silence, learning paths, games and play, drama and role play, painting, drawing and other visual art and prayer. All in all, the focus is on methods that were typical for traditional school lessons. However, this traditional teaching is also supported by a healthy mix of other methods. The nature around the camp centres and the availability of a good number of other employees and YCVs make it possible to go out of the classroom and to meditate, make learning paths and play games, drama and role games together. The summer theologians seem to be the most conservative in their pedagogy – they seem to mainly use lecturing.

The content of the lessons are also mirrored by the material being used. The Bible is used »often« by 81 % of the respondents and »sometimes« by 15 %. You can say that every employee uses the Bible in their confirmation work. The other favourite is the »red book«, the singing book of the young parish, which is used during the evening programmes, free time, and devotional services as well as in the teaching. It is used »often« by 40 % of the respondents and sometimes by 28 %. Luther's Catechism and the church hymn book are also used quite often. A workbook for confirmands, worksheets and material produced by the leaders themselves are also used in many cases. It is interesting that even 39 % of the respondents replied that they never use a workbook for confirmands. It is surprising because there are a lot of different kinds of materials for confirmands available. New media are used only by a small minority.

Topics

The employees' and the confirmands' vision of what is important in confirmation training differ greatly. The following list shows what the confirmands consider as the five most important topics in confirmation preparation, and how that compares to the opinion of the employees.

- 1) Friendship – in the employees' list, this was number twelve.
- 2) The meaning of life – in the employees' list, this was number seven.
- 3) Body and sexuality – in the employees' list, this was number thirteen.
- 4) Justice and responsibility – in the employees' list, this was number six.
- 5) Violence and crime – in the employees' list, this was number fifteen.

And the employees' list:

- 1) Jesus Christ – in the confirmands' list, this was number ten.
- 2) Baptism – in the confirmands' list, this was number nine.
- 3) Lord's Supper – in the confirmands' list, this was number seven.
- 4) The Holy Spirit – its importance was not ranked by the confirmands.
- 5) The Ten Commandments – in the confirmands' list, this was number fifteen.

The comparison shows how the confirmands' interests lie in matters that are not related to the Church, while the employees value the basic Christian dogma the most. The Finnish workers emphasise teaching related to Christian dogma more than workers in other countries. However, the gap between the interest of the workers and the interest of the confirmands is not as large as it may seem. Compared to other countries, the Finnish workers are also highly interested in life-related matters which are of interest to the confirmands. Only Swedish workers score higher in the interest in life-related topics.

Table 31: Comparison of importance of topics in t_1 (sorted by difference between workers and confirmands) (Finland)

Importance of topic	workers	confirmands
Other religions	22 %	26 %
Friendship	83 %	70 %
Violence and crime	57 %	42 %
The meaning of life	94 %	51 %
Justice and responsibility for others	97 %	43 %
The Lord's Supper	100 %	40 %
Course and meaning of Sunday services	86 %	20 %
Baptism	100 %	34 %
Jesus Christ	100 %	30 %

N = 155-157 (workers); N = 2134-2145 (confirmands). For details cf. sections WA and CL in the appendix.

It is also worth noting that workers in Finland emphasise many faith-related topics (the Ten Commandments, Baptism, a Creed, Holy Spirit) more than workers in any other country.

3.5.7 Church Services

According to the curriculum, worship services should be an integral part of confirmation time. It does not only mean that during confirmation time young people should attend services and that services should be organised within the group. More than that, prayer and worship should be an integral part of each day and each session of a group. The data show that in addition to their intensive confirmation period, the confirmands typically attend four Sunday services. In addition to that, the group itself organises services. Other data show that most groups have a daily service during their intensive confirmation period (camp etc.). 83% had a daily worship service. Other prayer services were even more popular. All groups had some kind of evening prayer each day and half of the groups had a separate morning prayer (in addition to three worship services) (see Chaulagai 2009). Even though worship life during confirmation period is active, it does not seem to positively change the confirmands' attitudes towards worship services. Of all the items asked, confirmands expressed least satisfaction with church services. However, as the statistics mentioned above show, the confirmation period does indeed increase the personal devotional life of the confirmands.

3.5.8 Conclusions and Challenges

Confirmation preparation is very popular in Finland. Nearly 90% of the young people attend confirmation preparation each year which is higher than the percentage of those belonging to the Church. Almost all confirmands attend preparation in a camp form. The camp itself is seen as very important. Camp typically lasts for 7 days and is held during the summertime. In addition to that, a group has several meetings during the school year and each confirmand has to attend church services and church youth meetings several times.

The results show that the Finnish confirmands have a positive attitude towards attending confirmation preparation. However, their expectations are not so much towards religion and religious learning, but towards having a good time with friends at camp. Also the rights granted by confirmation – eligibility to marry in the Church and the right to be a godparent – are regarded as important.

At the end of the confirmation period, most confirmands were typically satisfied with their confirmation time and only few of the confirmands felt that the period was too long. They were most satisfied with the sense of community. Confirmation also often had positive influences on their religiosity.

The Finnish confirmation workers represent a large range of professions. They typically regard confirmation work as a very important field of work. They also typically like their work and are well trained for confirmation work.

All in all, the results from Finland are fairly satisfying. Young confirmands are satisfied and their attitudes towards the Church and faith often become more positive during confirmation period. However, there are some things that do not work as planned or wished. One of them is cooperation with schools. It is seen as important, but often not so well accomplished. Also teaching methods are often very much school-like, even though the setting is a camp. It is especially the summer theologians (students of theology) who use more school-like methods. Perhaps they follow the pedagogical methods they have been subjected to at the university. Anyway, these results raise a question concerning the theological education; what is the role of pedagogy and confirmation work in their studies?

Regarding the topics handled during confirmation period, there is a gap between the interests of the teachers and the confirmands. However, compared to other countries, the Finnish workers are also highly interested in life-related matters which are also of interest to the confirmands.

In Finland, the confirmation workers emphasise binding confirmands to their parish more strongly than workers in other countries. This is also achieved more often. Many young people feel closer to their parish after their confirmation and many of them are also willing to continue as voluntary workers. The system of the Young Confirmed Volunteers is a success. In each of the groups surveyed, there was an average of six YCVs. Many young confirmands are willing to continue in this kind of voluntary work and it is also a way to bind them more strongly to their parish.

All in all, there are several reasons behind the success of confirmation work in Finland. Firstly, the confirmation system has strong support from the families. It is regarded as important by parents and grandparents and is considered an important tradition. Secondly, confirmation is still seen as an important rite of passage even though it has lost its official status in that respect. Young people are still granted rights by confirmation; in order to be able to be married in the Church or to be able to be a godparent, one has to be confirmed. These rights are regarded as important. Thirdly, the confirmation system has attained the status of being a part of youth culture among young people. It is regarded as something »everybody does«. It unites the age group of the 15 year olds. Young people are happy to participate and confirmation time is something they look

forward to. Fourth, the system itself is well organised, actively renewed and well accomplished. Especially the camp system can be regarded as an important success factor. Fifth, the leaders and confirmation workers are well trained and represent a wide range of professions. There are also many young volunteers whose role and input is seen as important by confirmands and leaders.

3.6 Confirmation Work in Norway

IDA MARIE HOEG AND BERND KRUPKA

This Saturday and Sunday, Kristin has to attend confirmation training, together with about two thirds of her confirmation group of 65. The Saturday will be spent in a workshop on the Ten Commandments arranged by the minister and the catechist of the parish. Kristin will meet up together with her father, who is one of the confirmand parents doing chores this Saturday. She will also meet her 17 year old cousin, who will lead a play session as one of the ten young volunteers involved. On Sunday, the whole group will lead a service about the Ten Commandments. As a dance-confirmand, in a six-weeks-period in spring, Kristin will meet weekly with her group to set up a musical to be performed in a service. Two of her friends have chosen different activities, namely scout-confirmation and choir-confirmation, and she will meet them this Saturday. Her best friend, however, follows a different confirmation scheme run by the older minister of the parish, without weekends, but with weekly meetings in class from September to May, just like it used be. In her parish, there are four services on two Sundays in May reserved for confirmation. Her parents being divorced and in new partnerships and everybody being very fond of Kristin, it was not easy to pick a date when everybody from the various generations in the two families could meet.

3.6.1 General Overview

Introduction

Confirmation in Norway is not only a Christian event – it is an annual celebration of the spring and the beginning of summer, and of the bonds and traditions of the family and its heritage. Family members come from far and wide, and national costumes, songs and speeches contribute to the celebration. Even though confirmation by no means marks the end of adolescence as it once did, it is still seen as an important turning point in a young person's life, sometimes considered as the individual's *big* celebration.

Confirmation in Norway is very popular; a large majority of children baptised in the Norwegian Church choose to be confirmed at the age of 14 or 15 years, and other Christian, religious and non-religious alternatives are also possible. Confirmation as a family event focuses on the day of confirmation, or confirmation as a rite. In recent decades, however, the Church has concentrated on the period of confirmation and the confirmation time. In many parishes,

confirmation seems to be an important part of parish work with a high degree of resources dedicated to it.

Official Aims for Confirmation Work

Confirmation in its present form belongs to the heritage of the pietistic movement and its belief in education. The Law on confirmation from 1736 introduced confirmation classes as the first form of public education for all and it became the cradle of schooling. Confirmation consisted of a) a period of baptismal education leading up to b) a catechization, i.e., a public demonstration of knowledge acquired in baptismal education, c) a public confession of the creed and d) a solemn individual promise to live in accordance with one's baptismal covenant, and e) the first participation in communion. Sometimes, these aspects were combined in the confirmation service, but catechization and/or first participation in communion often took place in a different service. Confirmation also coincided roughly with the end of the required minimum of school education until 1969, when a compulsory 9th grade was introduced. Confirmation was compulsory in Norway until 1912.

Confirmation's role as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood was strengthened by its legal importance in the 18th and early 19th centuries, when a number of civic rights, such as getting married or opening a bank account required that one was confirmed. Today, no rite or function in the Church presupposes confirmation. There is no need to be confirmed to have access to the Eucharist, to become a godparent or to have a wedding in church.

The Act relating to the Preparation for Confirmation and Confirmation from 1911 stated that, »The task of confirmation is of a very practical nature: The young people shall learn to read their Bible, participate in worship and partake of communion« (*Plan for konfirmasjonstiden* 1998, 9). In this tradition, confirmation is an educational service of the Church for a wider public.

According to the latest curriculum, the aim of the confirmation is »to awaken and strengthen the life of faith given in baptism so that the young people can live in the community of the parish and grow as disciples of Jesus«. There is a stronger focus on experience, community and integration in the parish than there is on cognitive aspects of learning and knowledge acquisition. The Christian community is understood in terms of the local parish and its parish life. Growing as a disciple of Jesus means to become part of this community (*Plan for konfirmasjonstiden* 1998, 7-13).

Thus, whereas confirmation as a rite is highly respected in public, the official document of the Church has its main focus on confirmation as an educational endeavour aiming at participation in the fellowship of the parish. Confirmation as a rite is hardly mentioned. One important aspect of this curriculum is the idea of parish-integrated confirmation. This means an integration of confirma-

tion with the baptismal education provided by the parish. Thus, religious learning is learning in a social setting, socialisation into the community of the parish and its events, the key element being the interdependency of understanding and acquaintance.

Until the changes introduced by the new Act relating to the Church from 1996, confirmation was the only educational task amongst the minister's duties that was »required by law«. Therefore, confirmation has always been assigned ample personnel resources compared to other work with children and young people in the parish. The focus on methodical variation in the latest curriculum has led to a considerable concentration of personnel on confirmation; parish-integrated confirmation implies that all parish staff members contribute to planning and running confirmation classes – an ideal that is widely accepted.

Confirmation Work in Transition

In recent decades, confirmation has undergone quite a few changes. The present generation of grandparents had half a year of confirmation preparation in the spring or autumn leading up to the confirmation in May or December. For many of them, long distances made it necessary to concentrate the confirmation time over a period of two or three weeks in residence at the rectory or at a school during the summer holidays. Over the last three decades, confirmation has followed the model that was established in the 1978 curriculum, demanding 45 hours of class teaching and attendance at eight Sunday services, including the confirmation, spread over a period of eight months. This appears to have been the era of books for confirmands, culminating in the early 1990s, when several of the major national publishing houses put expensive and beautiful confirmation books on the market.

The new curriculum for confirmation time from 1997 has had three major consequences. Firstly, it made methodological variation an official requirement, and secondly, it underlined the need for youth work in the parish. Thirdly, it also encouraged the involvement of voluntary staff in confirmation, serving as representatives of the local parish the confirmands are supposed to grow into.

This has led to a wide variety of schedules for confirmation, combining elements of choice between activity groups, weekend events and camps. The most spectacular trend seems to be to gather confirmands from several parishes or whole regions for kick-off-events, festivals or confirmand music gatherings with anywhere from several hundred up to a thousand participants. The new curriculum also seems to have brought an end to the era of the confirmand book.

Participation

In 1960, nine out of ten 15 year olds were confirmed in the Church of Norway. Today 67 % of all young people are confirmed. Even though this shows a decline in numbers, there is still a strong tendency amongst church affiliated adolescents to be confirmed. Eight out of ten 15 year olds who were baptised 15 years earlier signed up for the confirmation class in 2007.

The Church of Norway does not differentiate between baptised and not yet baptised youth. The presentation service, which marks the start of confirmation, the education itself and the confirmation service at the end of confirmation were designed for Christian youth. Since the end of the 20th century, the Church has been confronted in a very concrete way with the consequences of secularisation and pluralisation in modern society. Every year some young people who are not baptised want to take part in confirmation. In 2003, approximately 3 % of baptised persons were baptised after the age of 12.

The fact that *not* everybody has received a Christian education, which in Norway usually implies baptism and taking part in the teaching in religion and ethics as a subject at school, has been a major challenge for Church. In the 1980s, the Bishops' synod discussed a new understanding of confirmation as a mixed group of Christian and non-Christian young people and the consequences this had for the confirmation. In accordance with the popular understanding of confirmation, the synod came to the conclusion that the confirmation service should only include young people who were already baptised. They proposed amendments to the liturgy for the introduction service and the educational structure of the confirmation to include young people who had not been baptised (*Konfirmasjon og udøpte* 1997, 3). The not yet baptised confirmands are baptised during their confirmation time, usually during an ordinary Sunday service. The liturgy is the baptismal liturgy for adults, a liturgy that contains an act of individual confession. With the exception of a baptismal conversation with the minister, they do not have to follow a special education programme for not yet baptised confirmands, but take part in the confirmation on equal terms with the baptised confirmands.

Equivalents outside the Protestant Church

The strong position the confirmation has in Norwegian culture can be illustrated very well by the fact that there are many copies of the confirmation practice outside the Church of Norway. The Norwegian Humanist Association offers non-religious rites of passage, including confirmation, as a service to the Humanist community and others who want to participate without being affiliated with the Humanist association. From the very beginning until now, confirmation has been the most expansive humanist ritual (the first civic/humanist confirmation was held in Oslo in 1951). As a parallel to the Church

advertising campaign for Church confirmation, in 2008, the Norwegian Humanist Association started to send every 14 year old a brochure about their humanist confirmation. From the arctic north to the southern most counties, young people can take part in humanist confirmation, and many choose to do so, especially in the urban and densely populated part of Norway. In 2008, 15 % of the 15 year olds attended the humanist confirmation as an alternative to the Church confirmation. The idea of confirmation based on other world views than Christianity has also been adopted by the largest alternative religious institution, the Holistic Federation of Norway, which offers a confirmation programme and a confirmation ritual for their members – called the holistic confirmation. Confirmation is also to be found in Christian denominations which do not normally offer confirmation training, such as the Baptist Union, the Pentecostal Movement and the Salvation Army in Norway.

Confirmation Instructors

Even though the title had been in use for centuries, the clerical status of the catechist was first formalised by law in 1969, leading to the establishment of a one year practical course as a supplement to teacher training for catechists. By 1985, this was extended to a four year training course at the university college. After 2000, the Bologna University Reform led to the requirement of a Master's degree for the profession of a catechist. The requirement envisioned combined training for catechists and teachers covering the traditional theological disciplines, educational theory and some specialisation in the field of methodology, and practical-catechetical training. Whereas this content- and theory-oriented model of training continued to be the official requirement, other training courses for church educators were established, focusing on youth culture and modern approaches to youth work.

The profession of catechist was never a major success. Other educational staff with various qualifications are also employed as parish educators. This tendency to rely on parish educators was greatly strengthened by the Faith Education Reform, a comprehensive catechumenical programme for the Church of Norway, initiated by the Norwegian parliament (*Stortinget*) in 2003. Officially, the reform aims to replace the loss of the school subject of religion as the baptismal education of the Church in 1969. The Faith Education Reform has initiated a new debate on the profession of the catechist, its clerical position and its training requirements. It has also led to a renewed focus on educational matters in the practical-theological seminary education for ministers.

Research

Religious education within the framework of the Church of Norway has had and continues to have low priority among scholars of theology and education.

Contrary to the case of Religious Education in school, which has produced several doctoral dissertations, only two have been produced on religious education in the church field itself (Hareide 1966/71, Asheim 1961). No one has had greater impact on confirmation in post-World War II Norway than Bjarne Hareide (1908-1977). He was a strong advocate for the renewal of the confirmation practice. He was not satisfied that confirmation teaching was an isolated practice that the ministers were responsible for on their own without involving the parish. Moreover, he was also critical of the ministers' willingness to contribute. In his opinion, the Church was suffering under the lack of a curriculum for the confirmation teaching. As head of the Commission on Education of the Lutheran World Federation from 1952-1965, he built the foundation for the renewal of theology and education for confirmation in Norway and abroad. Due to his long and hard efforts, the Church of Norway established its first curriculum for confirmation in 1978, just one year after he passed away.

Hareide has made a substantial contribution to the field of confirmation and specifically religious education within the framework of the Church in general, not only to the Church of Norway but also to the wider Lutheran community. His scholarly work includes articles and books that deal with confirmation from a systematic, historical and educational perspective.

The research on confirmation since World War II can be divided into three subcategories: historical studies conducted by church historians and historians of culture, systematic studies by theologians and empirical studies in the field of education and sociology.

Researchers in practical theology and church history have pointed out that the meaning of the confirmation service during most of the 20th century has been unclear (Pettersen 2008, 109, Elstad 2007, 152). In Hareide's approach, the confirmation service is a *reminder* of the baptismal covenant with prayers and a blessing of the confirmands. Prayer, blessing and the reminder aspects of the service do not satisfy all the issues that have been raised about the confirmation service. The confirmation's central role in Norwegian religious, social and cultural life raises crucial questions about the confirmation service, questions which probably can best be discussed from the perspective of ritual.

Empirical studies reflect that confirmation is a complex institution which can be investigated both as instruction and as a rite. In his position as a sociological researcher, Hege Kitterød conducted a survey among confirmands in three parishes in Oslo. She points out that it is difficult to conceptualise confirmation as a religious *or* a social rite. Similar to much of the sociological research on confirmation, she has found that it is important to the family as a family rite, but underlines that the confirmation rite offers *more* than social functions for the family. The confirmation time has activated the families as well as the confirmands' connection to the Church. For many confirmands with

little contact with the Church, the confirmation also provides an opportunity to increase their knowledge of parish life and to meet Christian people who consider faith important (Kitterød 1985, 53-54).

The confirmands are a religiously mixed group. Theologian Ann-Magritt Granli has focused on not yet baptised confirmands; who are they and what motivates them to want to take part in the confirmation? In this micro-qualitative work based on interviews, she has found that the social background of not yet baptised confirmands is not homogenous. Most of them come from middle-class families, but other social classes are also represented. Their motivation for baptism and confirmation is a need for social and cultural belonging. The confirmands tend to feel connected to Christianity, to the Church and the national community which they consider to be represented by the Church (Granli 1997, 151, 157, 159).

The Faith Education Reform has made work with children and young people one of the main goals of the Church of Norway. This means that the Church is focusing on educational questions, and has stimulated parishes with new and substantial curricula, as well as invited research and educational institutions to take part in the catechumenical programme. Even though the educational or theological faculties have not yet introduced a research programme on confirmation or faith-based youth work, the Faith Education Reform has led to a new focus on work with children and young people in practical theology, sometimes called children's theology.

Theology and Ecclesiology

Since its introduction in 1736, confirmation has undergone three major periods of theological debate in Norway. In the 18th century, the main concern was to establish formal Christian Education for all. Early in this period, ministers were encouraged not to admit children for confirmation who did not attend school. In the rite, the confirmands were addressed mainly as the subjects of confirmation who had to promise to fulfill the baptismal covenant. Confirmation expressed religious maturity, whereas participation in church life after confirmation was the responsibility of the individual.

In the nineteenth century, the public character of confirmation as a rite proved to be a dilemma. The subjectivist focus of the time could no longer accept a public confession by all. On the other hand, confirmation was so well established as a public rite for all that it could not be changed into a matter of individual confession. After a debate over several decades, the individual promise of the covenant could be replaced by a general confession and a blessing with a laying on of hands. The rite now focused on confirming the mercy given in baptism. Thus, it was possible to remove the compulsory nature of the confirmation and at the same time maintain it as a public institution. Introduced

as an alternative to the old form in 1912, the new approach dominated for many decades until it was made the only possibility in 1981 (Haraldsø 1986, 35-44).

The price of this development was that it became unclear what confirmation had to do with individual faith, individual confession, involvement in the Christian fellowship and the Eucharist. In the 1950s, these aspects were then the subject of debate (Hareide 1971, Pettersen 2008). However, the discussion ignored confirmation itself and focused on confirmation time. This did not mean that confirmation was left without rituals. On the contrary, confirmation has been »ritualised«, both by introducing several further specific small and large services during the confirmation period, and by allowing the young people to take part in the Eucharist during their confirmation time. An interesting question is whether participation in the ritual life in the parish can be understood as a statement of faith (Elstad 2007, 155).

Open Questions and Perspectives for the Future

In Norway as in many other European countries, the teaching of religion within the framework of the public education system and the number of teaching hours in religion per week has declined over recent decades. Grace Davie, a sociologist of religion, has focused on what kind of consequences this decline in Religious Education, accompanied by a decrease in religious practice, has for the new generations of Europe. She points out how this situation can undermine the passing on of the social memory of Christianity (Davie 2000, 97). The Faith Education Reform aims to compensate for this loss of knowledge and to communicate all the other aspects of Christian life, such as Christian attitudes, identity and community, to the younger generation. One could ask whether it is realistic to believe that the reform will have the same effect on Christian knowledge for the younger generation, as Religious Education gave in the framework of school. In the coming years, the church's experience of the consequences of religious illiteracy will probably spark a new debate. The Church will have to consider difficult questions as to whether or not it should expand the confirmation time, either with more meetings or a longer period of training.

A large conference for all youth workers was held in the autumn of 2008 in Norway. The programme, which was put together by the Joint Parish Council of Oslo, the Church of Norway National Council and the largest theological faculty (MF – the Norwegian School of Theology), explored the claim that there is an international trend in Christian youth work to move away from activities and entertainment to a practice orientation – practice understood not in terms of various activities but in terms of the Church's classical practices, such as prayer, Bible reading, community and spiritual direction. Key questions for the Church can be: is the social orientation of confirmation work sufficient,

or is it necessary to put more effort into classical practices? Adolescence has always been a time for questioning moral codes and traditional values, and young people are very interested in existential and philosophical questions. The open-mindedness and curiosity of the young people could be an opportunity for the Church to stimulate them when it comes to classical practices.

The situation for religion in Europe and the new tendencies and trends in Christian youth work will be important factors for confirmation work in the future. Empirical studies can also play a crucial role in the framing of confirmation. The Church has so far been informed by few empirical studies of confirmation. The international research on confirmation work can provide helpful information for the Church in its efforts for building a better foundation to adapt confirmation to the young people's religious orientations and needs.

If the battle for the Norwegian National Church (*folkekirken*) is indeed to be fought over confirmation (as Bishop Erling Pettersen, at the time the leader of the Council of the Church of Norway, was quoted as predicting in 2003), the theological debate should take a closer look at the general understanding of confirmation in the general public and its high level of popularity. A ritual approach to confirmation can raise important questions, such as: Whether or not the participants and their families have a different understanding of confirmation? Is confirmation a rite of initiation which has to be understood as the beginning of an adult Christian life? Or do the young people confirm their membership and relation to the Church of Norway? If so, does it communicate well when confirmation no longer represents admission to other rites in the Church? These and related questions are key issues that must be explored in future research agendas that aim in various ways to examine and understand the complex relationship between confirmation and ritual.

3.6.2 Description of the Study

Background Information of the Study

The majority of the 65 units in our survey structured their confirmation work around a number of day courses throughout the confirmation year, often combined with a project period offering a choice of groups working with different methods. 19 units had a camp of more than two days as part of their confirmation work.

Our study was designed to cover 7 % of the number of confirmands for each diocese in 2006. The 64 units that were included in the study (65 in t_2 , see below), gave us a final sample of 2890 confirmands. A unit in our sample can be defined as a confirmation class covering one or several parishes or vicarages with one person in charge. The confirmands' questionnaires were usually filled

in during class. Staff questionnaires were usually distributed to the workers' homes and gathered at a later occasion.

As Norway used a number of country-specific questions, some of them are reported in this chapter. Since they are not printed in the appendix, their item names are not given in the text.

Overview on Data

Table 32: Number of questionnaires (Norway)

	t_0	t_1	t_2	percentage matched	remarks
units	65	62	60	100 %	+1 parish in t_2 , t_0
confirmands		2296	2343	52.8 %	
workers		130	120	60.0 %	
parents			635		

The somewhat higher output in t_2 is due to taking in one large extra parish, which lowers the dropout number unitwise (140 in t_1 vs. 20 in t_2).

3.6.3 Setting of Confirmation Work

Confirmation work in Norway has a norm of 45 lessons, each lasting 45 minutes, spread over a period of 8 months, plus participation in 8 services including confirmation. Confirmands are given a choice of several methods and activities for at least parts of the confirmation time. Each parish has to develop its own contextualized local plan for confirmation time describing their way of fulfilling the plan's general requirements.

Norwegian confirmation work is moving away from a traditional classroom type of teaching to other ways of organising confirmation work – without having settled into a specific format. In larger units, it is not uncommon to offer several independent confirmation schemes with different teachers and methods. Most common are periods of weekly or fortnightly classes combined with workshops on the weekend. There are big differences in the number of workers involved in confirmation. One unit in our sample has more than 130 confirmands and involves 30 workers, both employed staff and volunteers, whereas another unit with the same number of confirmands involves only one person, following the traditional scheme of a chaplain or a catechist employed solely for the purpose of confirmation work. Another unit again with less than 30 confirmands involves 20 persons in their confirmation work. In the study, we limited the number of staff per unit for the questionnaires according to the number of confirmands involved. No unit is represented in the sample with more

than 6 members of staff, and the smallest units did not participate with less than 2 workers.

3.6.4 Confirmands

General Characteristics and Background Information

There are insignificant differences in the age of the respondents and between the respondents to the surveys (t_1 and t_2). The confirmands are mainly around 14 years old (88 %). In t_1 , 48 % of the respondents are boys and 50 % are girls. In t_2 , 46 % are boys and 54 % are girls. Most of the confirmands were baptised before attending the confirmation class, only 3 % were not. Half of the confirmands come from cities and the other half from more densely populated areas (21 %) or rural areas (27 %). According to the data, a total of 20 % did not fill in the first questionnaire.

It seems that alongside the secularisation of public life, the more privatised aspects of religious life have been of growing importance. The Norwegian questionnaires included country-specific items on the confirmands' religious background and religious education in the private sphere. The confirmands were asked if their parents said evening prayers with them when they were children. More than half of the confirmands state that religion has had an impact on their family life. 39 % stated that their mother or father said an evening prayer with them every night or almost every night (19 %) or occasionally (20 %).

In Norway, the increase in religious individualism and pluralism has opened up more than one type of choice of confirmation for young people, like secular confirmation. In the other Nordic countries, secular or humanist confirmation has not been a success like it is in Norway. The fact that many young people in Norway (15 % in 2008) choose the humanist confirmation rather than the Church confirmation made it necessary to ask the Norwegian confirmands about their choice of Christian confirmation as opposed to the humanist confirmation. The main reason for the confirmands not choosing the humanist confirmation (73 %) was that they wanted to be confirmed in the Church. At the end of the confirmation time we asked the confirmands about their decision for Christian confirmation. 16 % answered that they wish they had chosen humanist confirmation. This number is almost the same as the number of the confirmands who regard themselves atheists at the end of confirmation time.

Motivation for Participation

The results of the confirmation survey have to be interpreted in light of the strong Norwegian tradition of confirmation and the general situation of religion and the Church of Norway. The Church of Norway is a majority church

with 82 % of the population as members. In 2007, 74 % of the population baptised their children in the Church of Norway and 93 % of Norwegians who pass away were buried by the Church of Norway. Many indicators which measure religiosity show that Norway is located half way between the most secularised Nordic countries, Sweden and Denmark, and the least secularised, Finland and Iceland. In our survey we have the opportunity to see how the Norwegian confirmands approach religion, and in this chapter we see the degree to which religion is a motive for them to register for confirmation class.

Due to the modernisation of Norwegian society, an important argument presented by the critics of religion, who are sceptical about the strong position confirmation has maintained in the young peoples' and their families' lives, is that the confirmands do not choose Christian confirmation on their own but experience strong social pressure from their parents and grandparents to choose the Christian confirmation. A survey among confirmands in Norway from the 1980s shows that their friends' participation in confirmation was a more important motivating factor than the parents' and family's wishes that they attend confirmation (Hauge 1983, 102). This is not the situation in Norway nowadays. In our survey, some of the confirmands (30 %; CA06) think their parents are an important decision factor. Friends (21 %; CA01) and their grandparents (19 %; CA07) have less influence on their decision. Compared with the influence of friends and parents, the confirmands' self-description as a Christian received a higher score. 33 % of the confirmands said that they registered for confirmation because they considered themselves Christian.

Another theme in the Norwegian confirmation debate, as in our two neighbouring countries, have been the gifts of money and the presents the confirmands receive when the families have the confirmation dinner/reception. In Norway, there has been a strong tradition for viewing the material motivation and the religious motivation for confirmation in comparison to each other. Critics who are sceptical about the Christian confirmation have a tendency to argue that young people only opt for the Christian confirmation because of the money and other presents. If we compare the religious motivations with the material motivations, we find that material motives are stronger than the religious ones. More confirmands (52 %; CB10) think money and presents are more important than learning about God and faith (29 %; CB01), being strengthened in one's faith (28 %; CB08) and receiving a blessing on the day of confirmation (35 %; CB11). Are money and other presents the most important reason for attending a confirmation class?

Young people in Norway have many different motives for attending a confirmation class. The motivating factors can be conceptualised as tradition, festivity, social dividends and material benefits. This means that for the Norwegian confirmands, the following are among the most important motivation

factors for signing up for confirmation classes – traditional motives: because I was baptised when I was a child (60 %; CA04), because it is a good old tradition (52 %; CA03); festivity motives: to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of confirmation (58 %; CB09); social-dividend motives: to experience a sense of community in the confirmation group (53 %; CB02); material motives: to receive money or presents at the end of the confirmation period (52 %; CB10).

Expectations and Experiences

Can we see the same tendency in the expectations for confirmation as we saw for the motivation factors? The Norwegian confirmands' expectations also centre on social dividends or social life. Having a lot of activities (45 %; CK05) is a strong expectation for confirmation time. The Norwegian confirmands, like other young people, like to relax and take it easy, which also affects their expectations for confirmation. Six out of ten confirmands want to take part in confirmation without too much stress (61 %; CK10). A second important expectation is the confirmands' interest in maturity. Half of the confirmands have strong expectations concerning maturity: to increase and strengthen my self-esteem/self-knowledge (55 %), and to learn how to take responsibility for myself (55 %; country-specific items).

Comparing the aims of the confirmands for the confirmation time with the fulfilment, the confirmands have learnt and experienced much more from confirmation work than they actually were motivated to. The strong emphasis on socially oriented motivations has been realized. Nearly 80 % of the confirmands have experienced a sense of community in the confirmation group (KB02), 76 % of the confirmands who attended camp or day trips are satisfied (KN11), and 57 % had good personal contact with the leaders and counsellors (KK03). Unfortunately, the strong expectations concerning maturity have not been fulfilled. Only 39 % of the confirmands consider that during the confirmation period they have learnt to take responsibility for themselves, and only 30 % feel that their self-esteem has increased.

The strong emphasis on the importance of having a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of confirmation, and receiving money gifts or presents at the end of confirmation have also to a large extent been strengthened through the confirmation time. However, the largest increase is in the field of faith and religious knowledge. The discrepancy between their motivation in the beginning of confirmation time and what they got out of it is largest in this respect. Two out of three consider that they have learnt more about God and faith (64 %; KB01). More than half of the confirmands came to their own decision about their faith (56 %; KB03) and nearly half were strengthened in their faith (45 %; KB08). Concerning the Church of Norway's aim of confirmation:

»... to awaken and strengthen the life of faith given in baptism so that the young ones can live in the community of the parish and grow as disciples of Jesus« (*Plan for konfirmasjonstiden* 1998, 7-13), many of the confirmands have reached the aim.

Attitudes towards Religion and Church

The majority of the confirmands' religious orientation is based on a loving God who cares about all people (58%; CE03). The majority also feel that there is a life after death. Whether or not God created the world is doubtful, but that Jesus is actually his Son seems more obvious to the majority of the confirmands. This result for the belief in God as a creator is not surprising but supports a Nordic and probably a European trend among young people. A Norwegian survey among young people from 2007 shows that few young people believe that God created the world (Holmquist 2007, 53), and a Finnish survey from 2007 among Finnish confirmands reports that the belief in God as a creator is almost on the same level as the belief in the Virgin birth (Niemelä 2008, 92, 97). The results suggest that young people view the theory of evolution as a contradiction to the theological creation story, and can not see that it is possible to connect those two perspectives with a belief in God as a creator.

Can we see a strengthening of the religious beliefs during the confirmation period? Yes, in their attitude to Christian faith in general and in every aspect of Christian belief we find that there is a development in personal belief, although this reinforcement is in many respects on a low level. The biggest change takes place in the confirmands' belonging to the Church. At the end of the confirmation time, 7% more have a stronger sense of belonging to the Church than in the beginning of confirmation preparation (from 29% in t_1 to 36% in t_2 ; CG01/KG01).

Is there an increase in the religious behaviour during the confirmation time? No, in this aspect of Christian life we do not see a development during the confirmation time, except for personal prayer. More confirmands pray by themselves and there has also been an increase in the belief that they receive help when they pray. The number who think about God daily or several times a week is the same in the beginning and at the end of confirmation time. Also, concerning doubt, there is no change in the number.

3.6.5 Workers

Background Data

The workers' sample mirrors the involvement of all parish staff in confirmation work that was brought about by the new curriculum from 1997. It consists of

50 (41) ministers and ministers-in-training, 27 (21) catechists and parish educators, 8 (13) deacons and youth workers, 15 (12) other employed staff and 23 (35) volunteers (t₂-figures in brackets). A Norwegian specialty is the low rate of female ministers in the sample. 20 % females amongst the ministers is representative for the Church of Norway. But females account for 60 to 70 % of the other categories of confirmation workers.

Confirmation work seems to be an area of church activity with a lot of job satisfaction. Staff is mostly content with the parishes' confirmation scheme (81 %; VM01) and they like working with young people (87 %; VM02). In two thirds of the units confirmation work is organised as teamwork, and the workers experience cooperation to function well. Satisfaction with confirmation work is highest amongst volunteers, who all are positively satisfied with confirmation work. The satisfaction rate is lowest amongst staff without theological education or an education for teaching and caring professions (64 %; VM01).

Our sample confirms the low focus on educational matters in the training of personnel for the Church of Norway (see above). 27 % of the workers say they do not have any specific training for confirmation work. Every fourth minister and more than every third catechist or parish educator did not learn about confirmation work as part of their vocational training. This rather low level of professionalisation is not experienced as a problem: 4 out of 5 workers are content with their educational competence for confirmation work (79 %; WE09). 4 out of 10 volunteers and 3 out of 10 deacons and youth workers, however, express a desire for higher theological competence (WE10).

Religious motivation of the staff is high: 96 % of the workers state that faith is important for them (WE08).

Perceived Influence

The workers consider the persons involved in confirmation work as the main factors of influence. Confirmation work is mainly up to the person in charge, the confirmands and other staff. The influence of the confirmands is rated higher than in many other countries, in spite of the low focus on involvement and participation. The confirmand book is considered unimportant, as are general guidelines for confirmation work or the parish council.

Localities seem to play a bigger role than financial resources. This is quite remarkable, as the units' confirmation budget varies from less than NOK 10000 to more than half a million (appr. € 1200 to 60000)! One can wonder, however, whether the workers understand the potential meaning of the teaching locality, be it a medieval church with its special flair or a modern type church with many rooms and facilities.

Frequency of Occurrences

The members of the staff state that they often are satisfied with the outcome of confirmation class, both concerning the confirmands' contribution and achievements, and their own performance. Only 10 % of the staff report a time problem (VN01), whereas two thirds report that confirmands at least sometimes had problems to make room for confirmation class in their timetable (VN06). What the Norwegians call »time squeeze« has become a reality not only for adults, but also for young people as these figures show. As such, it clearly poses a challenge to church-run youth work!

Our study reveals a certain degree of problems and incidents in confirmation work. 15 % of the staff (mostly volunteers) report that they often have discipline problems with the group, whereas 40 % have them sometimes (VN05). Conflicts between staff and parents or amongst staff occur quite seldom.

Aims of the Workers

Confirmation staff in Norway focuses on faith-related aims. 97 % of the Norwegian workers think, for example, that confirmands should be strengthened in their faith – the highest score among the participating countries on this question (WC02). 89 % of the workers consider it important that confirmands experience forms of worship adequate for young people (WB04). This focus on faith experience might also explain why more workers (84 %; WB05) consider it important for confirmands to attend the prescribed number of services than to attend confirmation class as required (72 %; WB03).

Norwegian workers score high on the parish binding index concerning acquaintance with the parish and its youth work (iWC1). This is probably also the reason for the importance of good contact with the parents: 88 % think that confirmation work should contribute to good contacts with the parents of the confirmands (WD08).

The Norwegian confirmation workers do not seem to link personal experience and confirmand participation. Only 40 % want to include confirmands in the choice of teaching topics (WB09). Also, pedagogical or maturity aims (such as e.g., strengthening one's self-confidence), scoring comparatively high amongst confirmands, are of less concern for the staff.

Compared to the other countries, Norwegian staff is more relaxed about the regularities of confirmation work. Attending classes and services and the learning by heart of texts are less important than in the neighbouring countries.

When asked about confirmation in hindsight in t_2 , workers show themselves to be quite confident about more technical issues concerning regularity and practical accomplishment of confirmation work: 95 % are confident that the confirmands attended the required number of services, 91 % arranged day trips or camps, and 84 % are convinced that the confirmands got to know their par-

ish better (VC05). While confirmation work seems to run as scheduled, this section of the questionnaire also shows cautiousness on faith experiences, and involvement and participation issues. 73 % of the workers think that the confirmands were strengthened in their faith; while as many as 97 % were aiming for it (WC02). Only two thirds of the workers are confident to have addressed the confirmands' own questions (66 %; VB18), and only 21 % actually did include confirmands in the choice of topics (VB09) as opposed to 40 % who intended to do so (WB09).

This contributes to the impression that connection to the confirmands' life-world is generally low. There is little cooperation with school, and only 25 % of the staff affirms at least one conversation with each confirmand (VD05). In contrast to that, 51 % assume a positive effect of confirmation work on the relation to confirmands' parents (VD08). One almost gets the impression that good contact with the confirmands is less important than good contact with the confirmands' parents!

For the workers, confirmation is about exposing confirmands to the Christian faith and exposing them to certain experiences, and about including them in the fellowship of faith. In the workers' eyes, this requires a personal and experience-based approach, but it is not a matter of individual involvement, reflection, decision and independence. It rather means to become part of a tradition. This approach seems to reflect the national curriculum for confirmation work quite precisely, where it says that confirmation work shall »awaken and strengthen the life of faith given in baptism so that the young people can live in the community of the parish and grow as disciples of Jesus« (*Plan for konfirmasjonstiden* 1998, 7).

3.6.6 Didactics

Methods and Material

Compared to their aims for confirmation work and the way workers organise it, their methodical imagination is largely bound to school-type methods. Lectures, group work, Bible discussion and so forth prevail. In hindsight, prayer played a much bigger part than expected by the workers. Methods with high learner-involvement like, e.g., drama and role-play are not commonly used.

The confirmands' memory (cf. Table 33) confirms the workers' impression, the one exception being singing. Singing and music is of no concern to the staff, whereas confirmands remember to have sung often (KT17).

Table 33: Methods according to the confirmands (Norway)

How often did you do the following things during the time of your confirmation training?	Nearly every meeting	Some-times	Once	Never
KT 01: We listened to stories / to a presentation	21 %	57 %	12 %	9 %
KT 02: We worked in small groups	19 %	57 %	14 %	10 %
KT 05: We played games	19 %	52 %	16 %	13 %
KT 12: We prayed together	34 %	41 %	15 %	11 %
KT 17: We sang together	35 %	42 %	11 %	11 %
KT 20: We recited the texts learnt by heart	12 %	42 %	20 %	26 %

N = 2196-2227.

Learning texts by heart has low priority amongst both staff and confirmands. Only about half of the workers consider it important (54 %; WC03). In hindsight, about 40 % of the confirmands state that they do not know the Ten Commandments or a creed by heart (KU02; KU06). Only one out of five confirmands, however, is not confident about knowing the Lord's Prayer (KU01).

Topics

What can we say about the majority of the confirmands' religious orientation? Let us focus on what the variables tell us about their interest in certain topics in the teaching and their expectations for the confirmation period. It is not the most central issues in the Christian belief, like Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible and The Lord's Supper which interest most of the confirmands (see Table 34). The confirmands point to issues which we can define as *socially related*. Friendship, justice and responsibility for others are among the most interesting topics in confirmation.

Some issues in the confirmands' religious orientation tend towards central Christian beliefs. Nearly four of ten consider baptism as an interesting topic (38 %; CL01). We regard this religious interest as a traditional orientation towards Christianity which corresponds with some basic elements in the Norwegian folk churches as well as in the other Nordic folk churches.

Furthermore, many confirmands are interested in key questions within the Christian religion, as well as in other religions and worldviews. Almost 60 % of the confirmands are interested in the »meaning of life« (CL11). Many of them also think it is important during the confirmation time to concentrate on »finding their own point of view concerning their life« (35 %; CK01) and »having their questions concerning faith addressed« (37 %; CK11).

The figures show a tendency that the Christian faith and belief has the potential to engage youth. Firstly, many of the confirmands are interested in some key aspects of Christianity, such as the Christian holidays and the baptism; secondly, they want their own personal questions concerning their life and faith to

be addressed. It seems that a subjective and individualistic approach to the issues in the confirmation time is crucial. A *particular* orientation with the focus on the »person« and the person's questions, thoughts and feelings influences the confirmands' interest in certain topics and their expectations for confirmation. When issues like belief, faith and identity are addressed in the confirmation class, it is important for the confirmands that these issues are perceived in a subjectivity-centred way.

Table 34: Topics ranked by importance by confirmands and workers (Norway)

Confirmands	Workers
Friendship	Jesus Christ
The meaning of life	The Holy Spirit
Justice and responsibility for others	Justice and responsibility for others
Christian holidays and their meaning (Easter, Christmas ...)	The Lord's Supper
Body and sexuality	Baptism
Baptism	The meaning of life
Violence and crime	Friendship
Care of the environment/ Ecology	Care of the environment/ Ecology
Jesus Christ	Body and sexuality
Spiritual phenomena such as healing, spiritism, Satanism, witchcraft	Course and meaning of Sunday services
The Holy Spirit	The church as a building
The Lord's Supper	Violence and crime
Course and meaning of Sunday services	Other Christian denominations
The Ten Commandments	Other religions
Other religions	Christian holidays and their meaning (Easter, Christmas ...)
The church as a building	The Ten Commandments
Other Christian denominations	Spiritual phenomena such as healing, spiritism, Satanism, witchcraft

N = 2144-2198 (confirmands; section CL); N = 124-129 (workers; section WA). In addition to the internationally used items, the country-specific items are also reported here.

The comparison shows that workers are not tuned in to the confirmands' personal approach to religious topics. The catechism topics reach top scores. General religious issues concerning religious plurality score lowest. This might be a reaction to the introduction of a multi-religious curriculum in school »RLE« (Religion, Worldview and Ethics) by which workers consider religious plurality the domain of the school and rather want to focus on their own tradition in confirmation work. However, it does not meet the confirmands' expectation: »Spiritual phenomena« and »other religions« are two of three items where the

confirmands' interest is higher than the workers' (confirmands: 30 % and 20 %; workers: 20 % and 12 %), the last one is friendship (confirmands 84 %; workers 81 %).

Effects of Confirmation Time

While social experiences top the confirmands' list of best experiences, some activities that could be considered core aspects of confirmation, such as group work (KT02), content of lessons, music and singing (KT17) are evaluated positively by half of the confirmands or more.

Table 35: Confirmands' best experiences with different aspects in confirmation time (Norway)

To what extent are you satisfied with ... (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied)	M	SD	satisfied (5,6,7)
KN04: feeling of community	5.78	1.42	82 %
KN11: camp(s)	5.62	1.67	76 %
KN05: rules	5.50	1.61	75 %
KN01: the whole confirmation time	5.26	1.38	72 %
KN16: group work	5.27	1.69	68 %
KN08: other teachers/workers	5.10	1.49	65 %
KN03: content/topics of lessons	4.79	1.47	60 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	4.83	1.71	58 %
KN02: having fun	4.51	1.80	53 %
KN10: church services	4.52	1.67	52 %
KN13: prayers in the group	4.60	1.54	50 %

N = 1909-2313.

Confirmands and workers differ strongly in their appreciation of more personal religious experiences in confirmation work. Only 35 % of the confirmands feel that they have experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (KK30), while 77 % of the workers think that they have delivered that kind of worship (VB04). 51 % of the workers expect confirmands to have a good experience with group prayers, while only 29 % of the confirmands actually do (KK48). Also, 89 % of the workers think contact between themselves and confirmands has been good, while only 57 % of the confirmands agree (KK03). Workers seem to overestimate the quality of faith experiences in confirmation work, while they have less esteem for the potential of confirmation work core activities. They also seem to have misconceptions about the quality of their relations with the confirmands.

3.6.7 Church Services

Norwegian confirmands are required to attend at least 8 services during confirmation time. Usually, three of these have a ritual function for the confirmation year, two of them being the service of confirmand presentation at the beginning of the year and the confirmation itself at the end, while the third one is a modern successor of the catechization, a service that demands a mild form for visible confirmand-participation (e. g., sing a song, read texts, contribute with a drama and so on). We can assume that workers and confirmands mainly refer to this service when 79 % of them say that the confirmands have been included in the preparation of services (VB06), and 49 % of the confirmands say the same (KK31). Due to the increasing popularity of schemes where confirmands participate in liturgical functions following the example of the catholic ministrants, we can assume that a substantial number of confirmands have passed out hymn books, lit candles, carried the processional cross or participated in a similar way in one or two of the remaining services. As we have seen, attendance to services is more important to the workers than class attendance, and 77 % of the workers state that their confirmands were offered worship adequate for young people (VB04).

One cannot claim that the introduction to the worship life of the Church is very successful, when at the end of confirmation time, 57 % of the confirmands (3 % more than in the beginning of the year) consider services to be boring (CG04/KG04). If almost half of those 52 % of the confirmands that are content with their service experience (KN10) (cf. Table 35), still think that services are boring, this must be understood as an expression of rather low expectations. Actually, those confirmands who care about attending services regularly are slightly more bored by them than the others.

In this light, the various ministrant schemes are at best a good start that has to be followed up by better measures, and if workers are serious about the importance of services, more focus has to be put on them.

3.6.8 Conclusions and Challenges

The Norwegian confirmands are motivated for confirmation only to a low degree by their friends; and slightly more confirmands are motivated by their parents' wish for confirmation and by their Christian identity. Among different motives for participating, tradition, festivity, social dividends and material benefits are the strongest motivating factors.

All in all, the confirmation time has been a fruitful experience for the majority of the confirmands. The data from the survey at the end of the confirmation

time show a high degree of satisfaction with the social life, the leaders, the organisation of confirmation work, activities and topics. In sum, nearly three out of four say they are satisfied with the confirmation time (72 %; KN01). Confirmation does play a religious role for the confirmands. Concerning the Church of Norway's aim of confirmation, more than half of the confirmands came to their own decision about their faith (56%; KB03) and nearly half were strengthened in their faith during the confirmation time (45%; KB08). The confirmation time has not been very successful for the confirmands in respect of maturity. Many confirmands had great expectations about maturity, but in the end, more confirmands have actually experienced gaining Christian knowledge and become more familiar with what the Bible says than fulfilling the maturity expectations.

Confirmation staff in Norway is highly motivated for their work. It gives them satisfaction, they experience it to be an area where cooperation works well and they are confident in their performance. For them, confirmation time is about faith and about the core themes of the catechism. Introducing the confirmands to the fellowship of the parish is very important. Confirmation workers want Norwegian confirmation work to be personal in the sense that it enables personal experiences of faith. This focus on religious experience, however, does not lead the workers to tune in on the personal approach to religious questions we find amongst the confirmands. Similarly, they are not very interested in confirmand participation and involvement. Focus on the confirmands' life-world is low. In sum, the combination of catechism perspective, faith-experience approach and the importance of the fellowship of the parish make up for an understanding of confirmation work as an opportunity to join a tradition and accept its answers – rather than an occasion to ask personal questions and discuss the things in life that are important. In that respect, workers have a tradition-oriented understanding of confirmation.

3.7 Confirmation Work in Sweden

PER PETTERSSON

The 14 year old Sven had not thought of confirmation at all until his older friend Erik told him about his own confirmation time as one of the best times in his life. Erik had talked especially about the 10 day long summer camp. The confirmation period started with a weekend camp in September the year before, followed by a four hour Saturday meeting once a month and finally, the summer camp. The Saturday meetings consisted partly in preparations for the Sunday services in which the young people often contributed songs, music, their own written prayers, a bit of drama, etc. Erik had stressed that the type of close and open friendship that he experienced in the group was something unique that he had not experienced elsewhere. His view on the Church had changed in a positive direction and from having been more or less an atheist, he now had a conviction that some kind of higher power must exist. It was Erik's positive experience that was the trigger for Sven to register for confirmation and thereby, also the reason why he presently, at age 16, is working together with Erik as a volunteer worker in a confirmation group.

3.7.1 General Overview

The Swedish Religious Landscape

Sweden, along with Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland form a Protestant Nordic Region. Since the time of the Reformation, the Lutheran National Church has been dominant, comprising the great majority of the population. Today 74 % of the Swedish population belongs to the Church of Sweden, 5 % are members of different minority Protestant denominations, 2 % belong to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches and 2 % of the population belong to other religions, primarily Islam (Church of Sweden Statistics 2007, SST statistics 2006).

Parallel to other European countries, Sweden has passed through a process of secularisation through which the state as well as the individual have liberated themselves from the previous power of the Church. The formal strong relationship between the state and the Church of Sweden changed from a situation of total unity towards a separation of the church from the state, which was almost complete on January 1, 2000. Even on an individual level, the relationships to the Church have changed by an increased privatisation of religion, a continuous decline in people's regular participation in worship and a decreasing acceptance

of the traditional dogmas and values of the Church (Gustafsson/Pettersson 2000). Thereby, Sweden is often referred to as one of the most secularised countries in the world.

However, the Swedish religious situation is complex, most clearly highlighted by the prevailing formal relationship between the vast majority of Swedish people and the Church of Sweden, and the high level of participation in religious life rites in the context of the traditional majority Church (Pettersson 2000). 62% of all children born are baptised in the Church of Sweden, 35 % of all 15 year olds participate in its confirmation work, 46 % of all marriages take place in the Church of Sweden and 83 % of all dead are buried within a Church setting (Church of Sweden Statistics 2007). According to surveys, 10 % of the whole population attend at least one Christian service per month and another 22 % say they attend a few services per year (e.g. Gustafsson 1995). This complexity of being highly secularised in some respects, and at the same time, highly religious in other respects is sometimes called the Nordic Paradox because the situation is the same in all the Nordic countries (Bäckström/Beckman/Pettersson 2004). Surveys among young people show that they also have this dualistic attitude to religion and church (Pettersson 2006).

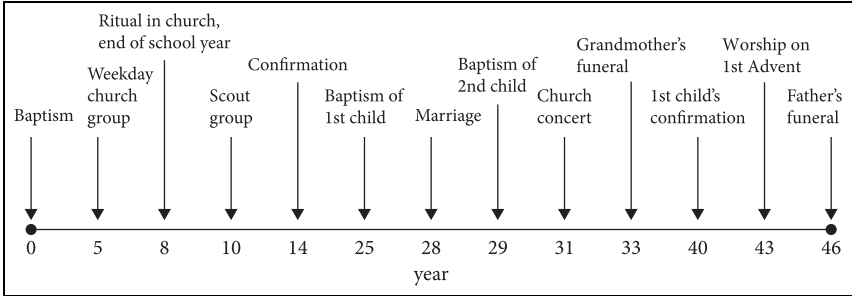
Confirmation as a Significant Part of a Lifelong Church Relationship

A majority of people still belong to the traditional majority Church their whole lifetime and use the services of the Church quite a few times when seen in a lifetime perspective. This is the most common religious pattern in all the Nordic countries. For some it amounts to only major family related occasions such as children's baptisms and relatives' burials, but for others added to this it could be, for example, a period of continuous contact as members of a church choir or a period when their children participate in church activities. Many have more continuous contact as regular users of the Church during a shorter or longer period of their lifetime, while being more passive in other periods, without having an explicitly negative attitude toward the church.

When linking together the different kinds of contact an individual has with the Church during his or her lifetime, it amounts to several occasions for most people. From the individual's perspective, occasional encounters with the Church and periods of more regular participation form a chain of contacts within a lifelong relationship to the Church (Pettersson 2000). Figure 6 illustrates the Swedish (and Nordic) religious normality with fictive Svea Svensson, 46 years old, as an example.

Svea was baptised at the age of three months and participated in weekday church groups during a period of her childhood. As is the case for most Swedish children, the end of each school term such as at Christmas and summer, was marked by a gathering at church, or with a minister saying something at the

Figure 6: Svea Svensson, age 46, her relationship to the Church of Sweden and her use of its services as seen from her own life's perspective. A fictive example (Pettersson 2000).



school. Life rituals like confirmation, baptism and funerals in a religious setting have been natural parts of life as well as participation in worship in the context of festivals, especially during the period Advent to Christmas. Her contacts with the Church are numerous when viewed in a long-term perspective. But like most Swedes following this same pattern, she would say that she hardly ever has any contact with the Church and that she is neither religious nor a believer. Nevertheless, she believes in some kind of higher reality along with 74 % of the Swedish population (Gustafsson/Pettersson 2000).

Regarded in a lifelong perspective, the confirmation period is for most church members the most significant period and possibility in life that provides a chance to get to know the teaching of the Church and to establish a positive relationship to the Church. Research shows that the impression and experience of the Church and its representatives during the confirmation period can be remembered by the individual for the rest of life (Pettersson 2003). The relationship and basic attitude toward the Church which is created during the time as a confirmand is often of decisive importance for the development of the individual's future Church relationship. This relationship is to a large extent built on encounters with the people appearing as representatives of the Church. Church workers active in the confirmation work have an especially important role as relationship builders between the individual young person and the Church in this respect.

Historic Development of Confirmation and Religious Education in Sweden
 Confirmation by a bishop, which was the custom in Sweden during the Middle Ages, became obsolescent during the Swedish Reformation in the 16th century. It was replaced by an examination and confession before the first communion. Already during the Middle Ages, the great geographical size of Swedish dioceses meant that confirmation was often neglected, as bishops' visits to many areas were infrequent.

The root of public education, in general, in Sweden goes back to the catechization initiated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Knowledge of the Christian tradition as well as literacy was regarded as important in society, and the formal responsibility of the Church for people's ability to read was stated in the Church Law of 1668 (Hartman 2000).

During the 18th century, the idea of confirmation was revived and stressed as an affirmation of the baptism made by the adult believer. In the 19th century, confirmation became more widespread, serving as a sort of »rite de passage« from childhood to adulthood. In 1842, compulsory school attendance for every child was established in Sweden. The subject »Christendom« was the dominating field of knowledge and had the function of being a preparation for confirmation. The Church had control of the school as well as the teaching through the local school board since the minister was its chairperson. This close connection between school and the Church persisted for a long time but gradually weakened. Due to a new education plan in 1919, Luther's Catechism was replaced as a teaching book and school gradually became non-confessional.

Since religious education in the public school system is non-confessional today, the place for confessional religious education in Sweden is within the different Churches and other religious organisations. As described previously, the major religious body is the former state church, the Church of Sweden. Its major educational activity consists of the confirmation work. In 2007, 44500 young people of the age of 14-15 participated in it and were confirmed after the 60 hour confirmation course. This is by far the largest religious educational activity in the Swedish society apart from the compulsory school. In addition to the confirmation education, the Church of Sweden also runs many other pedagogic activities for children, young people and adults. Some of them have explicit educational aims; others have a more implicit educational function. Other minority religious denominations and religions have different forms of educational activities and life rites for different age groups according to their respective traditions.

Pedagogic Change of the Church of Sweden's Confirmation Teaching

In the early 20th century, there were no national guidelines directing the Church of Sweden's confirmation teaching. Confirmation teaching varied in degree of difficulty, length, content and the size of the confirmation classes. The first elaborated normative curriculum for confirmation teaching was adopted in 1942, based on a traditional confessional view, with Bible knowledge and the catechism of Martin Luther in the centre. This curriculum was followed by a handbook for confirmation teachers published in 1955, that elaborated the ideas in the curriculum. Since these normative efforts in the mid-20th century, the development has moved towards an increasing focus on the pedagogic process in

confirmation work and a decreasing regulation of the content in the teaching. The Church has continuously revised its view on religious didactics along with the general pedagogic discourse, following the same path as the public schools, towards a more pupil-oriented pedagogic model.

A major change took place during the 1970s as a part of the radical wave of pedagogic reforms sweeping through all forms of European educational systems, universities as well as the ordinary school world. In 1978, a principal document on pedagogic views in all kinds of church education was adopted by the Church of Sweden's educational board. It was stated that the old authoritarian educational model should be abandoned and replaced by a new pedagogic view elaborated in »The Guiding Principles for the Church of Sweden's Confirmation Work«. Confirmation work should be »a service to teenagers at a breaking point in their lives« (Wallinder 1990).

The idea was that teaching in Christian belief should relate to the existential needs of the young people. Their own questions should be the starting point in the teaching. Theologically, this new pedagogical approach was underpinned by contextual theological reflection inspired by liberation theology and the pedagogical work of Paolo Freire. As part of the change in the pedagogical view, the label »confirmation teaching« was replaced by the label »confirmation work«.

Thus the development of religious education in Sweden, in public schools as well as in the Church of Sweden's confirmation work, has radically developed from a traditional top-down model towards a pupil-oriented pedagogical model. This is a development from religion being more or less *forced* onto people in the former relatively homogeneous Swedish society, towards the present pluralistic situation in which religion is a voluntary and a *possible resource* for individual and collective needs. The development from catechism teaching to confirmation work as a service can be viewed as an effort from the Church's point of view to adapt to a changing societal and religious context. Within the activities of the Church of Sweden, the pedagogical change in the confirmation work has taken the lead in the implementation of a »receiver orientated« theological praxis.

Changing Theological Understanding and Aim of Confirmation

The understanding and interpretation of the aim and content of confirmation and confirmation teaching has been changing continuously since it was revived in the 18th century. A major change in approach took place during the 20th century. In 1979 a decision was made by the Church of Sweden General Synod to open the possibility for children to participate in the Holy Communion together with their parents, and for young people to participate during their confirmation period. Thereby, the confirmation rite lost its previously important motivation as admission to the Holy Communion.

Another previous motive for confirmation had been the individual's subjective affirmation of one's own baptism as a child. The guiding principles of 1978 contain the following phrase: »The church welcomes the young to confirmation work without examining their faith. Personal faith can not be viewed as a precondition for young people's participation in confirmation work or even in the confirmation service«. The individual personal confession was thereby separated from being a motive for confirmation and this part of the confirmation ritual was made optional. In line with this view, the confirmation liturgy of 1986 describes confirmation as an »intercession and blessing act«.

It is clear that confirmation is not regarded as a sacrament, but the actual present theological interpretation is not clear. It is of course possible to see the confirmation rite as an act of affirmation which comes from two directions: God's affirmation and the confirmands' affirmation. In practice, this is the view of many people and Church personnel.

According to the present »Guiding Principles for Church of Sweden's Confirmation Work«, the aim of confirmation work is very comprehensive and generally formulated. It starts with the following words: »The confirmation work shall demonstrate the faith and life of the Church of Sweden by offering the confirmands knowledge that the Christian faith and the life of the Church is dealing with the questions of life that we as human beings carry« (Riktlinjer för Svenska kyrkans konfirmandarbete 2008).

The main aim in confirmation work is mostly described as to give the confirmands insight and opportunity to explore and try out the Christian faith starting with the young people's own questions and issues of life. The stories of the Bible, especially the story of Jesus Christ, are regarded as tools to help the adolescents to form and interpret their life stories in the light of the Gospel. Another important aim is to support the young people in the process of identity formation, emotional and personal growth and their building of good relationships.

There is presently no elaborated national curriculum or more detailed outline with directives on the content in a »confirmation course«, neither any specified list nor description on what issues ought to be covered. The lack of a common description of concrete objectives and content means, that in practice, it is up to the individual teachers and local teams to decide their own objectives and plan the content of the course and thus make their own curriculum. There is neither any national examination nor control of the textbooks and other educational materials that are produced for confirmation work by different publishing companies. Each teacher or team has to judge for themselves what material is theologically coherent with the profile and ideology of the Church of Sweden.

Thus a great deal of responsibility is laid on the shoulders of the individual confirmation teachers. Many questions are left to be answered by them. Conse-

quently, the form and content of the Church of Sweden's confirmation work is in practice outlined and shaped at the local level. This means that the actual content in a »confirmation course« can be totally different from one confirmation group compared to another group, even within the same local parish.

Confirmation Training Today in Practice

Confirmation work in the Church of Sweden is the responsibility and the obligation of the local parishes. The minister is in charge, but is not always involved in the actual teaching process. The Guiding Principles recommend parishes to organise a team of leaders qualified in theology, pedagogy, music and diaconia to plan and conduct the confirmation groups. In most local confirmation work, some kind of teamwork takes place, although sometimes a minister has a group on her/his own. Very often voluntary workers are part of the confirmation team, especially young workers from the age of 15 and up, who are former confirmands. Many dioceses have special leadership training programmes for young confirmation workers. This is regarded as part of the youth work in the Church of Sweden and involves growing numbers of young people with 7900 young confirmation workers involved in 2007. The involvement of young workers adds certain qualities to the confirmation team due to the closeness in age to the confirmands, for example, by contributing a young perspective on faith and an understanding of values and trends in young people's lives.

The confirmation group starts when the young people are fourteen, and the confirmation service takes place during the year they become fifteen. If the young person was not baptised as a child, baptism will take place during the confirmation period. Confirmation in the Church of Sweden is open to everyone who wishes to take part, irrespective of background, handicap or other personal conditions. Emphasis is put on offering a pedagogical environment and methods that will enable handicapped and others who need special support to take part in confirmation. The period from registration to confirmation lasts at least six months, in order to give the participants an opportunity to attend and acquaint themselves with liturgical services over a longer period of time. It is required that a confirmation period must include at least 60 hours of group meetings and at least four nights of confirmation camp. Some groups meet weekly during the school year, and the confirmation service takes place in April or May. Others start in Advent, meet a few times during the spring and conclude with a confirmation camp in the summer. There are also longer summer camps organised at diocese level or by other organisations for a period of three to four weeks. About 25 % of the young people confirmed in the Church of Sweden attend this latter kind of longer confirmation camp.

Since so many activities compete with the young people's time and attention, there is a growing trend in the Church to combine the various offers of confir-

Table 36: Church of Sweden statistics 1970-2007

Year	Baptism % of all born	Confirmation % of all 15 year olds	Church marriage % of all marriages	Church burials % of all deaths	Church membership % of whole population
1970	81	81	79	96	97
1979	76	67	59	94	93
1985	74	69	61	93	92
1990	72	63	64	93	89
1995	79	51	63	89	86
2000	73	43	61	88	83
2002	70	39	58	88	81
2004	69	38	54	88	78
2005	68	37	50	85	77
2006	65	36	49	84	76
2007	62	35	46	83	74

Church of Sweden statistics are available from 1970 when the collection of this statistical data started.

mation work with different leisure activities, for example, sports like ice hockey, golf, sailing and hiking or cultural activities like music, drama or language training abroad.

The pedagogical process in confirmation work is focused on the encounter between the confirmands, the leaders and the faith and tradition of the Church. Attention is given to meet the confirmands with full respect as individuals and people in their own right. A variety of expressive and creative methods are used to build a common experience in the group as a starting point for dialogue and reflection. These methods include: value clarification exercises, drama, dance, play, singing, music, painting, etc. Overnight camps are regarded as an important form of activity in order to build good relationships, to build a supportive culture for open discussions and to practice regular prayer life in the group.

Concerns about the Future in the Swedish Discussion

During the last years there has been increasing attention within the Church of Sweden's organisation concerning the significance and importance of the confirmation work. This increased attention is largely caused by the continuous decrease in participation in confirmation work over the last 40 years. As Table 36 shows, all figures on membership in the Church of Sweden as well as on participation in the life rites have decreased between 1970 and 2007.

However, the most dramatic decrease has taken place in the confirmation training and puts Sweden in a position as an exception among the seven countries participating in this research project. This fast decrease has activated many

voices in the Church that have argued for strong efforts to increase the financial resources directed to confirmation work. A number of improvement projects at the national level and different kinds of development work at local and diocese levels are going on, although critics argue that far too little is being done (Grahn/EEK/Pettersson 2007, Pettersson 2009). A major concern is the question what will happen in the long run to the rates of baptism and church membership as an effect of the decrease in the confirmation rate.

3.7.2 Description of the Study

The Swedish part of the international research project on confirmation was conducted by Karlstad University, Service Research Centre – CTF (Per Pettersson) and financed by The Church of Sweden, Unit for Research and Culture at national level (contact person: Jonas Bromander). A computer company handled the administration of sending out and collecting questionnaires and scanning them into a computer file.

Procedures

35 parishes and 15 residential study and youth centres were selected randomly from all of the Church of Sweden parishes and the Church of Sweden's official catalogue of summer confirmation camps in the year 2008 (www.svenskakyrkan.se). Those that accepted to participate were selected as the Swedish sample, consisting of 34 units, i.e., 23 parishes and 11 residential study and youth centres with summer confirmation camps. Confirmants and workers in all units took part in both questionnaires, except in one of the selected parishes where workers did not take part in the first round of questionnaires. Parents were not included in the Swedish study. Data collection took place between November 2007 and August 2008. Table 37 gives the number of valid questionnaires collected.

3.7.3 Setting of Confirmation Work

As described in the previous general overview, there is a great variety of didactic framings of confirmation work in Sweden. Within this variety, the major difference lies between confirmation groups organised in a parish setting and groups organised at campsites that are managed at diocese level or by Church-related organisations. The latter use the campsite as the physical base and the camp form as the general didactic framing. This is a different approach from the groups with the local parish as the physical context and base, and the camp days more as a complement.

Table 37: Number of questionnaires (Sweden)

	t ₁	t ₂	percentage matched
Units	33	34	97 %
Confirmands	1082	1061	53 %
Workers	215	196	48 %

The Swedish questionnaires included a number of extra, Nordic common, questions and a few Swedish country-specific questions that are not included in the present chapter.

3.7.4 Confirmands

General Characteristics and Background Information

Within the group of confirmands, 60 % are female and 40 % male. Sweden is the only country in the study where the proportion between boys and girls is not equal. Where confirmation has become a matter of choice, this choice seems to be more often taken by girls than by boys. The majority of the confirmands, 70 %, were 14 years old and 28 % were 15 years old when they filled in the first questionnaire. 2 % of them were 13. Half of the respondents (54 %) knew their fellow confirmands at the beginning of confirmation work.

When analysing and interpreting the Swedish data on confirmands, we need to remember that only 34 % of the total Swedish age group of young people participated in confirmation work in 2008, the year when the data was collected. In most of the other participating countries, the percentage of young people taking part in confirmation was about double this. This means that we can assume that the Swedish sample consist of young people that are more motivated than the samples in the other countries.

The questionnaire t₁ included a number of background questions focusing on the confirmands possible religious socialisation. Results show that 95 % were baptised before they started their confirmation period. When asked about participation in group activities offered by the Church (Sunday school, children's group, youth group etc.), 51 % report that they had previously (more than three times) participated in such activity when they were 5-9 years old and another 23 % say that they do not remember if they had. 37 % of the sample have participated in such kind of Church activity from the age of ten until they started confirmation work. Do these figures indicate a high or low level of religious socialisation? That depends on your expectations and what you compare it with. In the Swedish context most observers would regard the fact that almost four out of ten of the sample participated in church youth work within the last four years as a relatively high figure.

When the confirmands were asked about the importance of religion in their

home, 84 % say that religion has quite little or no importance in their home and 16 % say that religion has very big or quite big importance. One out of four (25 %) say that their mother or father said an evening prayer for them when they were children almost every night or at least sometimes.

The questionnaire included a question about which persons have taught the respondents something about the Christian faith when they were children. The respondents judge teachers in school as having had the most important role in this respect (58 % say yes), followed by mother (46 %), a minister or other worker in church (44 %), grandmother (34 %) and father (33 %).

Motivation for Participation

Our sample of young people in all the seven countries were born in the 1990s and have grown up in a global service economy which strongly emphasises individual freedom and the right to, as well as necessity of, individual choice. The comparative international value studies, European Values Survey (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS) have shown a continuous development within the whole Western world from material values of security towards post-material values of freedom. Comparatively, the Nordic countries are often highlighted as being the countries where people are most focused on individual values and adhere least to traditional religious values. And Sweden is sometimes regarded as the most extreme case in this respect (Halman/Luijkx/van Zundert 2005).

Results from the Swedish young people in our sample confirm the image of people focusing on their own individual needs and experiences (CA01-CA08). The most common motive for them to register for confirmation was that they had been told that confirmation training is fun (59 %). For some confirmands, it was especially important that they were personally invited (15 %).

But the confirmands are not exclusively orientated toward themselves as individuals. They also have an orientation to collective and traditional values, shown by the second most common motive to register for confirmation which is »because it is a good old tradition« (35 %). And further, one of four (24 %) refers to the fact that »I was baptised when I was a child« as a motive to register for confirmation. This can, of course, be interpreted as an awareness of the meaning of their own baptism. However, a more credible interpretation is that this is another way by which the respondents stress the importance of the main religious and cultural tradition, of which baptism as well as confirmation is a part.

The importance of friends is stressed by one third of the respondents as a motive; »because my friends did so as well« (31 %). Their friends' behaviour has an even slightly higher authority as a motive to register than the wish of parents (28 %), or the wish of grandparents (13 %). Only one of ten Swedish confirmands (9 %) registered because they felt obliged to take part. One can

guess that this feeling of obligation among a minority was related to the wish of parents or grandparents.

Expectations and Experiences

When the respondents more personal aims and expectations are analyzed (CB01-CB11), the focus on their own individual needs becomes even more significant. Among the listed possible expectations, three of them concern establishment and development of personal relationships. Two of these were the most common expectations within the Swedish sample: »to meet and get to know friends« (62 %), and »to experience community in the confirmation group« (58 %). Another expectation which scored somewhat lower, also stresses the importance of personal relationships; i. e., »to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of my confirmation« (45 %).

Two other expectations are individually orientated but of two different kinds. The statement, »I registered for confirmation time to come to my own decision about my faith« (52 %) concern individual existential needs, while the statement »to get money or presents at the end« (46 %) expresses individual material needs. But when it comes to more significant religious expectations related to the respondents as individuals, the Swedish young people are more hesitant. Only 34 % had an expectation »to learn more about God and faith«, 28 % expected »to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation« and 18 % expected »to be strengthened in my faith«.

The focus on the individual is further stressed (CK01-CK11). A majority of the Swedish sample of young people said at the beginning of their confirmation period that it is important for them to have a lot of action (86 %) but, at the same time, without too much stress for themselves (75 %). They wanted their own questions concerning faith to play a role (57 %), to find their own point of view concerning their own life (56 %) and to take part in singing and making music together during the confirmation time (53 %). They ranked all of these statements focusing on themselves relatively high. And again, when it comes to statements more focused on the Church as an institution or people that represent the Church, such aspects are not of the same importance to the respondents. Only 26 % say that it is important to come in personal contact with the leaders, and only 24 % that it is important to decide about the topics in the confirmation work together with their fellow confirmands, and no more than 7 % think that it is of importance to learn central Christian texts by heart. It is obvious that the confirmands are interested in the Church as an institution, mainly in its function as a resource for their own personal needs.

When the Swedish confirmands just before the day of confirmation are asked about their degree of satisfaction with different aspects of their confirmation period, they are generally very satisfied. Nine out of ten say that they are satisfied

with the whole confirmation period as such, that they had fun and experienced a sense of community. They are also highly satisfied with the person primarily responsible for confirmation work (minister or other person), the other teachers/workers and the camps. The camps have rendered the highest satisfaction rate of 91 %. But the respondents are slightly less satisfied with the content of the lessons (76 %), the prayers in the group (72 %) and the church services (65 %). As we see, they are generally very satisfied with the aspects that were their primary motives to register and participate in confirmation work (Table 38).

Table 38: Satisfaction with different aspects in confirmation time (Sweden)

To what extent are you satisfied with ... (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied)	M	SD	satisfied (5,6,7)
KN11: camp(s)	6.32	1.25	91 %
KN08: other teachers/workers	6.12	1.25	89 %
KN01: the whole confirmation time	5.98	1.24	88 %
KN02: having fun	6.06	1.32	88 %
KN07: minister / person primarily responsible for confirmation work	6.07	1.32	87 %
KN04: feeling of community	6.02	1.31	86 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	5.70	1.54	80 %
KN03: content/topics of lessons	5.34	1.36	76 %
KN13: prayers in the group	5.37	1.58	72 %
KN10: church services	4.96	1.70	65 %

N = 1034-1053.

However, when we check the outcome of their confirmation period in some more specific aspects there are a few things which concern the core issues of the Church that we need to observe. One third of the respondents (32 %) do not feel that their own questions of faith were addressed during the confirmation period (KK11). And 47 % of the respondents have not experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (e.g., youth services; KK30). It should be especially important for the Church to overcome these obvious problems in communicating its core issues concerning central questions of faith and the forms of worship. Further, we note that a quite high figure, almost one of four (23 %), felt that taking part in confirmation time was stressful for them (KK10).

Attitudes towards Religion and Church

Our results show a general change during confirmation time among the Swedish participating young people concerning attitudes towards the Christian faith and the Church. They become more positive in a number of aspects. The number of respondents believing in God shows an increase from 30 % to 45 % (CE09/KE09), and the number of confirmands that say that faith in God helps

them in difficult situations increased from 21 % to 36 % (CE08/KE08). Believers in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead increased from 29 % to 46 % (CE04/KE04), and 63 % say that there is life after death at the time of their confirmation as compared to 54 % in the first questionnaire (CE02/KE02). The percentage having a positive attitude toward the Christian faith has increased from 46 % to 63 % (Table 39).

Table 39: General questions on faith and church (Sweden)

Item: How would you describe your current attitude in general towards ... ?	very negative	rather negative	neither negative nor positive	rather positive	very positive
CF01: ... the Christian faith (t ₁)	3 %	8 %	43 %	37 %	9 %
KF01: ... the Christian faith (t ₂)	3 %	6 %	29 %	42 %	21 %
CF02: ... the Church of Sweden (t ₁)	2 %	7 %	45 %	37 %	9 %
KF02: ... the Church of Sweden (t ₂)	2 %	5 %	33 %	46 %	14 %

N = 1048-1074.

When it comes to attitudes toward the Church, a majority with the opinion, that the Church does a lot of good things for a lot of people increased from 73 % to 83 % (CG05/KG05). A striking result of the Swedish study is the high appreciation among the confirmands of the life rites in the context of birth, marriage and death (the latter two life contexts were added in the Swedish questionnaire). By the end of the confirmation period, 89 % say that if they have children, they will want them to be baptised (KG03). 82 % say, that they want to get married in the church and 95 % say that they want a church funeral. All these figures show an increase during the confirmation period.

The general attitude towards the Church of Sweden specifically is also generally positive and has increased from 46 % at the start of the confirmation period to 60 % by the end (Table 39). Simultaneously, there is an increase of the respondents saying that it is important for them to belong to the Church from 19 % to 38 % (CG01/KG01). There is also an increase in the interest of taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation from 14 % to 32 % (CG08/KG08).

But when asked about church services, the result is the opposite. The number of confirmands saying that »Church services are usually boring« increased from 53 % to 59 % close to the day of confirmation (CG04/KG04). This result is something for the Church to seriously reflect about. Participating in church services is in the Swedish context almost the only thing that most confirmands are »forced« to do. The aim of this practice is often expressed as »schooling« them into regular participation in church services. But perhaps this practice has the opposite effect for many young people. As we previously showed, only every second of the respondents say that they have experienced forms of worship adequate for young people during their confirmation period.

3.7.5 Workers

Background Data

The ratio of the sexes is the same in the workers' group as among the confirmands; 60 % are female and 40 % male. The ages of the responding workers are widely spread from 14 to 64 years old. 36 % of the workers are under the age of 20. 23 % are 20-29 years old and 18 % 30-39 years old. Only 21 % are older. That means that the group of workers consists of a 59 % majority under the age of 30. This can, to a large extent, be explained by the fact that 32 % of them are voluntary workers. Almost all of the respondents under the age of 20 belong to this group. Only 18 % of the workers are ministers, 4 % are ministers-in-training, 36 % are other kinds of employed workers.

The experience of working with confirmands is very varied in the sample. 19 % had never worked with confirmands before, 12 % have one year of experience, 34 % have 2-5 years experience, 11 % have 6-10 years experience and 25 % have worked with confirmands for a longer time.

When asked about training for confirmation work, 76 % say that they have attended such special training and 55 % say that they have attended a special course on confirmation work. Within the group of ministers, 66 % say that such training was part of their basic professional education.

At the start of the confirmation period, 66 % of the workers knew almost none of the confirmands and only 2 % knew the majority. By the end of the period, this figure had changed to 90 % of the workers knowing almost all of the young people in their group.

Aims of Confirmation Work according to the Workers

There are no big differences between the employed and voluntary workers concerning their views on the objectives of the confirmation period (WB01-WB11, WC01-WC11, WD01-WD08). These two groups of workers have roughly the same views on what aims are most important and those that are not so important. But since the employed workers have, for the most part, the largest influence on the priorities, their figures will be presented here.

According to the employed workers, the most important aims of a confirmation period are the following: the participating young people should be supported in their personal and social development (94 %; WC04), be encouraged to think about death and resurrection, (88 %; WB01) and they should get to know other people to whom faith is important (86 %; WB10). These aims are closely followed by some others. The young people should become more familiar with the content of the Bible (92 %; WB11), they should be strengthened in their faith (89 %; WC02), they should learn to live their everyday life in a relationship to God (79 %; WC11), they should develop a personal point of view

concerning their own life (86 %; WC01) and they should be encouraged in their own creativity (86 %; WC08).

Interestingly, the voluntary workers think that it is more important than the employed workers that the participants in confirmation work should be encouraged to be confirmed even if they are still unsure about their position (73 % compared to 57 %; WB08).

Self-Estimated Outcomes

When the employed workers are evaluating their own efforts during the confirmation period, they state that they are fulfilling many of their objectives, but fail in some of their ambitions. They feel that they have succeeded in providing the participating young people with possibilities to experience forms of meditation and prayer (97 %; VC10) and that they have supported the young people's personal and social development (92 %; VC04), and given them a chance to experience forms of worship attractive for young people (83 %; VB04) by letting them take part in the preparation of services (81 %; VD01).

There are, however, a few areas in which the workers feel that they are less successful in relation to their goals and objectives. When comparing how the employed workers ranked the level of importance of different objectives at the start of the confirmation period with their own evaluation at the end of the period, we see some significant gaps (Table 40).

Table 40: Comparison between objectives and self-evaluated implementation/outcome from the workers' perspective (Sweden)

Aim (the confirmands should ...)	Stated as important at the start	Self-evaluated implementation/ outcome	Diff %
WB09: take part in the selection of topics for the confirmation training	82 %	34 %	48
WC05: get to know our parish better	73 %	39 %	34
WC06: get to know what the youth work of the church offers them	81 %	47 %	34
WD05: I want to have at least one personal conversation with each confirmand	80 %	50 %	30
WD08: The confirmation work should contribute to good contact between the church and the parents of the confirmands	77 %	50 %	27
WD06: Our confirmation work should cooperate with the school	36 %	15 %	21

N = 211-214.

A majority (82 %) of the Swedish workers have the ambition to involve the participating young people in the selection of topics to bring up during the confirmation period. However, only 34 % report that this has taken place. 80 % of the workers have the ambition to have at least one individual conversation with each confirmand during the period. But only 50 % say that they succeeded in fulfilling this objective. These two areas represent two different kinds of pupil-centered pedagogic objectives which take a lot of time. One can guess that the reason of failure has to do, at least partly, with not enough time available for the confirmation work among the employed workers. Table 40 also shows shortcomings concerning the goal to further develop the contacts between the Church and the parents of the confirmands, and also in the ambition to elaborate cooperation between the confirmation work and the school. Another area in which there is a great difference between objectives and outcomes is the aim to let the young people get to know the local parish and its youth work. Consequently, the comparison of results between t_1 and t_2 reveal a few areas in which strategies should be developed by the Church in order to reduce the gap between objectives stated by the workers themselves and their own perceived outcomes.

3.7.6 Didactics

Methods and Materials

The workers' questionnaire t_1 included a number of proposed pedagogic methods, and asked about their use (VH01-VH29). Swedish results show that non-traditional methods are much more common than the traditional form of pulpit lecture, which is only used often by 16 % of the workers, and sometimes by 39 %. Swedish workers prefer instead a mix of more creative and interactive pedagogic methods like discussion, prayer and meditation, music and song, group work, stories and narratives. All these methods are used often or sometimes by over 90 % of the workers. These are followed by a number of methods stimulating the pupil's creativity and used by more than 75 % of the workers (e.g., drama and role play, painting and drawing, learning paths, quizzes). Methods that are more time demanding and need long-term planning are used more seldom, like having visiting teachers or experts (28 % often or sometimes) and study visits (15 %)

When it comes to questions about pedagogic materials (VI01-VI15), the most common materials are modern Christian songs which are used often by 77 % of the Swedish workers. Next come the Bible and the official Church hymnbook which are both used often by 58 %. If we add the figures for »often« and »sometimes«, we get the following ranking order: over 90 % use the Bible, modern Christian songs, material produced by the workers themselves, the

Table 41: Comparison of importance of topics in t_1 (sorted by difference between workers and confirmands)

Importance of topic	Workers	Confirmands	Diff %
Other religions	33 %	33 %	0
Violence and crime	66 %	55 %	11
Other Christian denominations	32 %	16 %	16
Friendship	93 %	76 %	17
Ecology and preservation of the Creation	55 %	38 %	17
Body and sexuality	78 %	54 %	24
The meaning of life	91 %	65 %	26
The church as a building	51 %	20 %	31
Justice and responsibility for others	94 %	56 %	38
The Ten Commandments	71 %	25 %	46
Christian holidays and their meaning	90 %	44 %	46
Course and meaning of Sunday services	76 %	23 %	53
Baptism	91 %	30 %	61
Jesus Christ	96 %	35 %	61
The Lord's Supper	94 %	31 %	63
Holy Spirit	93 %	28 %	65

N = 213-215 (workers); N = 1044-1071 (confirmands). For details cf. sections WA and CL in the appendix.

official church hymnbook, chalkboard/flip chart and musical instruments. Between 75-90 % use musical instruments, worksheets and movies. CD-ROMs, data stored media and overhead projectors are used only sometimes by a minority of 4 %.

Historically, the most common material in confirmation education apart from the Bible and the hymnbook was the Catechism of Martin Luther. According to our results, it is almost never used today; 73 % say that they never use the catechism and 27 % that they seldom use it. During the 20th century, the catechism that had been in common use until then was replaced by textbooks and workbooks that were officially certified and became frequently used. But our results show that only 8 % of the workers say that they often use such a book today and 54 % say that they do it sometimes. Obviously the successor of these more official kinds of textbooks consists of material produced by the workers themselves which is frequently the case.

Topics

Now we will turn to a comparison between the young people's and the workers' preferences of topics to be brought up during the confirmation period. In Table 41 the questionnaire's list of topics is sorted according to the degree of

difference between the workers' ranking and the young people's ranking of the respective topic. The percentages refer to the sum of respondents that have ticked box 5, 6 or 7 on a seven point scale graded from not important to very important.

As we see from Table 41, the workers, not surprisingly, rank almost all topics as being more important than the young people's ranking. The biggest difference between them concerns topics that are of a more theological nature and more traditionally and closely Church-related. The difference is smaller, even if it is still big, concerning topics that are of a more ethical and societal nature and more related to daily life, such as: violence, friendship, ecology, sexuality, meaning of life and justice. But one item that was added in the Swedish study (and therefore is not included in the table) attracts the young people (35%) more than the workers (23%). That is »Spiritual phenomena such as healing, spiritism, Satanism, witchcraft«.

Effects of Confirmation Time

Swedish confirmation work seems to have succeeded in creating a good frame for community-building because 88% of the participating young people say that they have experienced a good community in the confirmation group (KB02). This is further supported by 77% saying that they have come into good personal contact with the leaders and workers (KK03). However, there is obviously a small but important group that has not experienced this community and good contact. This is also shown by 16% saying that they sometimes felt like an outsider (KK22), and 12% who would have preferred to be confirmed without taking part in the confirmation group (KK41).

For a majority of participants, the confirmation time is a period of personal growth in essential aspects of life, belief and values. They say that during their confirmation time they have made an important step in growing up (57%; KB04). They have had a chance to reflect on what is good or bad for them in their life (60%; KB07), and been enabled to come to their own decision about faith (74%; KB03). But there is also a quite large minority of one third who have not felt that their questions of faith were addressed (32%; KK11) and what they have learnt in confirmation work has little to do with their everyday life (29%; KK35). This is presumably an indication of different pedagogic models in use, if they are more or less pupil centred.

For most of the young people that pass through a confirmation period, it is a highly positive experience with a lot of action (84%; KK05) and personal experiences that they do not get in the compulsory school system. A majority say after the confirmation time that they have experienced good examples of respect among people with different convictions (63%; KK33) and that they also experienced that their commitment to other people is important (61%; KK44).

3.7.7 Church Services

As shown previously in this chapter, Swedish confirmands become more positive toward the Church during the confirmation period, but at the same time they become a bit more negative toward church services (from 53 % to 59 %). This might at least partly be explained by the fact that only every second one of them has experienced forms of worship adequate for young people during their confirmation time and only every second has participated in the preparation of church services during their confirmation period (53 % for both: KK30 and KK31).

From our results we can make a few suggestions in order to improve church services from the young people's perspective. All questions concerning music, songs and singing got high rates of approval. Thus the link to young people's taste of music and songs should be strengthened. Secondly, it is interesting that the prayers in the group get higher rating than the church services. An important task should be to find out how our results can be used in developing these elements into services. The importance of participation in the preparation of services is presumably one important key factor.

3.7.8 Conclusions and Challenges

1) There is a need for research on the group of young people that are members of the Church but do not get confirmed.

A major challenge for the Church of Sweden is the low confirmation rate. Some research and development work has been done and more is being done to focus on the pedagogic practice, the team of workers and the young people that take part in confirmation time. But there has not yet been any real research on the young people that do not take part. This is an interesting task both from a scientific and a practical church perspective to do further research on the group of young people that are members of the Church but do not get confirmed. What are the reasons? Do these young people differ from the young people that are passing through a confirmation period? And if so, in what respect?

2) There is a need for research on the group of dissatisfied participants in confirmation work.

As shown, there is a small group of 10-15 % of young people taking part in confirmation work that does not feel comfortable in this context and would rather be confirmed without participating in the confirmation group. This is also a group of young people that has not been examined. One can guess that most of these young people are in pedagogically conservative contexts. But in

any case, it would be of interest to find out more about this group of dissatisfied young people, and also to find what can be done to identify their needs in the local group and how to improve the communication between them and the workers.

3) A major challenge for the Church of Sweden is to develop strategies to increase young people's involvement and participation in the planning and preparation of church services.

A third challenge is of a theological as well as a sociological character and lies in the relationship between the general aims of confirmation work and the rest of the Church context. Should confirmation work be seen as a door into the local parish or is it more like a door into being a grown-up individual handling his/her own faith, beliefs and values? There is a generally positive attitude toward Christianity and to the Church of Sweden from the point of view of recently confirmed young people. But when it comes to the traditional core issues of the Church and the core activity, Sunday church services, there is a gap between the confirmed and the Church. There is undoubtedly a strong need for reform of the church services, not only according to our results of this study. If the church services are to have a possible attraction as a resource for young people, they must be involved and participate in the planning and preparation.

Comparative Perspectives

4. Comparative Perspectives

In this part of the book, we will move beyond the reports from the different countries by considering the results in a comparative perspective. The parallel reports from the different countries in part two are very interesting and allow for many interpretations. Yet from the beginning, more far-reaching comparative perspectives have played a crucial role for our research. The aim was not only to achieve parallel accounts of confirmation work in the different countries but to achieve an integrated study. This is why we developed research tools that could be used in the different countries. As the chapters in the following show, this approach allows for interesting new insights in many respects. Yet at the same time, it is quite difficult to compare research results from different countries that are closely connected to the different ways in which confirmation work is carried out. There can be no doubt that our data are highly contextual and that interpretations must do justice to this contextuality. Moreover, since the present study is the first of its kind, there are no other data available that could be used as points of reference. This is why we start out with some considerations of both, the potentials and difficulties of international comparative research on confirmation work.

The following chapters deal with the results in a comparative perspective and interpret them in the light of core questions concerning confirmation work in today's society. While the tables in part 3 had been ordered by item numbers (to facilitate comparisons between countries), the tables in this part are ranked by total results, i. e. the average result for all seven countries.

4.1 Potentials and Difficulties of International Comparative Research on Confirmation Work and Religious Education

FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER

The authors of the present study are convinced that international comparative research in the field of confirmation work is a promising enterprise. This conviction has led to the collaboration of the researchers in the first place, and the actual process of working together across different national contexts has further supported the initial intuition that this kind of research can be of great value to everyone involved. The value of international cooperation in this field includes a number of different aspects: the acquaintance with forms of different ecclesial and educational practises, insights into the theological and pedagogical rationales operative in different countries and, not least important, support for ecumenical efforts in respects that had barely been touched before. On a more technical and academic level, the availability of international data allows for new research questions and for many insights that are beyond the reach of regional or national studies. On the basis of our data, not only individual methods or teaching and learning materials can be compared but whole systems of confirmation work on many different levels – a possibility that appears to be very promising at a time when many traditions and traditional practices have become unstable.

Yet there can also be no doubt that international comparative research on confirmation work or on religious education in general is a much uncharted field that holds many obstacles and serious difficulties. In the following, we want to consider some of the difficulties and obstacles that international comparative research has to face. Our focus will be on confirmation work and on religious education which means that we will leave aside the more general methodological considerations and issues raised, for example, in the area of general comparative education (cf. Schriewer/Holmes 1990, Kodron et al. 1997, Allemann-Ghionda 2004)

A first issue with this kind of research obviously is language. It begins with the terminology of the area under study itself. While the traditional term *confirmation* is used in all participating countries, concepts like *confirmation work*, *confirmation training*, *preparation for confirmation*, etc. are not. Moreover, even the understanding of general terms like *religious education* varies greatly. In some countries, pedagogical practises related to the Church are called *religious nurture* and are not considered as truly educational because, at least supposedly, they are aiming at teaching young people into the Christian faith or at recruiting them for the Church. In other countries, the term religious education is

used in a more general sense for all processes of religious socialisation, development, and education independently of their location and there also is more openness for appreciating confirmation work as educational. Difficulties with different languages and with translations also occur at the level of the items used in the national questionnaires.

While at least most of the linguistic problems could be solved through extensive checks, there remains a fundamental question that refers to confirmation work in different countries as common object of research. Does this common object really exist or are we dealing with many different kinds of practises that may go by the same name but cannot be compared in any meaningful way?

It is certainly true that confirmation work is organized in different ways in the participating countries. Finland, for example, with its heavy emphasis on camps and with its systematic reliance on young volunteers, certainly is unique, at least to some degree. In Austria and Germany, with their continued practise of denominational school Religious Education, confirmation work operates in a context that is very different from, for example, Sweden where school and church have maintained their distance from each other by now for several decades. Other differences refer to the aims of confirmation work that can be more ecclesial in some places or more related to social or even national aspects in others.

Empirical approaches can avoid some of the difficulties posed by such differences by trying to capture the actual experiences and aims of the participants themselves. Yet even with this idea as the guiding principle, interpretations remain difficult. The only response adequate to this situation is contextual sensitivity. All comparative statements must be treated with utmost care and with a constant eye on their limitations. Contextual sensitivity must exclude, for example, naïve one-to-one comparisons, be it of materials and textbooks, of lesson plans or individual teaching/learning units, etc. (cf. the critical discussion in Schweitzer 2004). At a first glance, such comparisons are attractive because they appear to be quite manageable. Yet it should not be overlooked that it is the whole framework of confirmation work that determines the use and the possible influence, for example, of materials produced for working with confirmands. In some cases, such materials can be operative as the guiding principle of whatever content is presented to them. In other cases, they are rarely used, depending on the agenda of the workers who follow their own personal ideas more or less independently.

To some degree, issues of international validity and reliability can be settled by empirical testing (Francis 2009). Yet even with all statistical precautions, we cannot escape the contextuality of all data and, even more, the contextual nature of all interpretations. This is why we decided that our data should be presented in the shape of national portraits in the first place (part 3 above). Coun-

try reports of this kind are a very valuable source for a field of study and discussion that is still in the process of establishing itself at an international level and of finding ways for gaining an understanding of confirmation work and religious education in other countries. This is why, for example, publications on the structures and institutions of school Religious Education in different countries have received broad attention (cf. Schreiner/Holt 1995, Schreiner 2000, Kuyk et al. 2007). A similar interest may be anticipated for descriptions of confirmation work in different Churches and countries.

The present volume takes up the current interest in international descriptive publications but goes beyond them in important respects. Most of all, the results presented in this volume are based on an integrated empirical approach. In this respect, it parallels recent attempts in the field of school Religious Education that are also aiming at international comparisons on an empirical basis (Ziebertz/Riegel 2009, Knauth et al. 2008). Earlier accounts could at best draw on data from studies that were available in the different countries by putting them together and trying to reinterpret them at a different level. Such studies may show some overlap in their general focus as well as in their research questions. Yet it is easy to see that they can hardly lead to a cohesive understanding since their data are too diverse and only allow for indirect combinations and comparisons. Moreover, with the inclusion of the perspectives of the adolescents and of the workers, the present study aims at aspects of confirmation work that have not received sufficient attention in the international consultations on confirmation in the past (for such consultations that were organised by the Lutheran World Federation cf. Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009, 199-202). Such consultations tended to focus on the theological understanding of confirmation or on the models used by different Churches. In religious education research in general, it has been an important step to gain empirical insights into the relationship between youth and religion (Ziebertz/Kay 2005, 2006, Ziebertz et al. 2009) and into young people's views of (school) Religious Education (Knauth et al. 2008). Yet there can be no doubt that a more complete account of the situation of religious education and of confirmation work must also include the teachers or workers (Ziebertz/Riegel 2009). They also play an important role in mediating between the adolescents on the one hand, and the religious traditions and contents on the other.

Our main focus in this book is on empirical comparisons as a basis for a deeper understanding of the situation and the meaning of confirmation work in different countries as well as an important part of non-formal education in Europe. Other possible comparisons will receive much less attention, for example, the different models or organising confirmation work or the choice of contents, the ways of celebrating confirmation or the understandings of the Church embedded in the different ways of doing confirmation work (cf. Adam 2009).

What do these observations mean for international comparative research? The main implication of the differences between the situation of religious education in different countries is that we are not dealing with a unified structure that can be studied in its respective modifications. Instead we are faced, as it were, with individuals – individual realities of teaching and learning – that cannot be compared to each other without careful consideration of the feasibility of the comparison intended. Strictly speaking, individuals do not compare. They are just different. This insight does not exclude comparisons altogether. Yet in order to arrive at meaningful comparisons, one must be explicit about the comparative perspectives chosen. In other words, with comparative research, we have to be quite mindful of the perspectivity and contextuality of the research, even more so than with other academic endeavours.

In sum: international comparisons cannot replace national reports. Instead, there must be a continuous interplay between national accounts and international comparisons – with special attention being given to the balance between contextual and more decontextualised approaches that should complement each other. National accounts will continue to operate as the basis for international comparative research that, in turn, can greatly enrich all national understandings.

After these necessary caveats, however, more must also be said about the possible value of the comparative chapters in this part of the book. Most importantly, it must be stated that the present study is the very first of its kind. While earlier international studies in the field of religious education – as mentioned above – for the most part focus on the students and on their attitudes in relationship to religion and religious education, the present study refers to both, the adolescents as confirmands as well as to the workers (full-time and volunteers) who are in charge of the respective programmes in different European countries. Moreover, the study operates with questionnaires that were administered at different times during the programme – a procedure that allows for insights into the changes effected by the programme.

In this respect, the present study is innovative and promises new insights into an area of religious education or confirmation work that is of central importance. Given the observation typical for many countries that the traditional function of the family for religious nurture and education has at least been subject to severe changes or – as some observers put it – is more and more losing its influence on the process of religious tradition between the generations altogether, the influence of professional religious educators and of intentional programmes offered by the Churches can hardly be overestimated. While they might not be able – or willing – to take over a compensatory function that makes up for what the family used to be, their role in the continuation and transmission of religious traditions to new generations will inevitably gain in

weight if other institutions become less involved in this process. In this sense, professional religious educators and intentional programmes deserve additional awareness in the contemporary situation, especially from those who are interested in the future of religion in Europe.

Discussions on the shape of religious education involving teachers as well as other specialists have become available internationally through conferences and publications. It is noteworthy and remarkable how the interest in such exchanges has grown over the last few decades. Yet it is also easy to see that such exchanges have been limited to those who are willing and able to participate in English language discussions. Moreover, reports about the actual practise of religious education in the classroom that have been included in this conversation tended to be second hand, i. e., from specialists reporting on the generalisations of their personal observations. In this respect, the present study promises a decisive step forward. The empirical approach allows for new insights into how confirmation work is actually understood in different countries not only by a few spokespersons but by a much larger group of practitioners. This approach can bring us much closer to what religious education looks like in a particular country. It can also make sure that the actual mix of approaches and experiences that is typical of any larger group of practitioners, will be included. This is why the empirical study of teachers' or workers' attitudes can complement the international academic debates that have been dominant so far, in important respects.

It should also not be overlooked, however, that the data from the country reports are sometimes hard to interpret. First of all, this is due to their newness itself. Interpreting data always means comparing them to other data and results. In the absence of earlier or parallel data to be used as points of reference, such comparisons are difficult and sometimes not possible at all (for additional observations cf. Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009). In this respect, the data presented in this volume can be considered as pioneering insights that should be used as reference points for later studies. In fact, the results of the present study include strong motives for doing this research on a more regular basis, for example, at five to ten years intervals. As will become clear in more detail in the different chapters of this part of the book, the results from this study are important and challenging not only for the different Churches and their future but also for society at large. Moreover, they indicate that the future of religion in Europe will also be of importance for the future of Europe altogether, for example, in terms of the values transmitted between the generations or in terms of the social attitudes acquired by young people.

4.2 Similarities and Differences of Confirmation Work in the Seven Countries – First Orientations

VOLKER ELSENBAST, FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER AND WOLFGANG ILG

The task of the present chapter is to identify similarities and differences in the respect to confirmation work in the participating countries. While the subsequent chapters will focus on specific comparative aspects – didactics, motivation and expectation, changes in the attitudes towards church and religion, gender, the contribution of confirmation work to society – the focus of this chapter is more preliminary and more general. In a first step, we are interested in the overall picture. The chapter can be read as an introduction to the following chapters and as a first overview.

The question of similarities and differences can be treated in different ways. In the past, consultations, for example, organised by the Lutheran World Federation since the 1950s (cf. Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009) focused on the theological rationales and aims of confirmation work and confirmation as stated in the official documents of the Churches. The focus of this procedure was on the theology of confirmation. At that time, this was a helpful approach to ecumenical and international dialogue among the Lutheran Churches in different countries and cultures around the world. Yet how much can official statements and normative accounts tell us about the different realities of confirmation work? As we can see from the responses of the workers in the present study, the influence of official guidelines is generally limited. This does not mean that considerations of the different models and of their theological backgrounds stated in the official documents would not be of use or interest anymore. The preceding chapters on the individual countries rightfully make ample reference to the pertinent documents. Yet in the present chapter we follow an empirical approach that is based on the data of our own study and that can bring us closer to the practice of confirmation work.

Our overview in the following is organised around four questions. First, we are interested in common features which implies that we will also have to consider different profiles. Second, we will be considering the current situation of confirmation work in Europe in terms of its stability and fragility. Third, we will discuss the influence of the age group – adolescence – and of social modernisation as possible homogenizing factors that exert their influence independently from the different national contexts and in addition to all processes of pluralisation. Fourth and last, we will have a look at the one question that is of crucial interest in all of the countries: Does confirmation work really matter?

4.2.1 Common Features and Different Profiles

Researching confirmation work in Europe presupposes that there are enough similarities in the confirmation work of the different countries in order to create a common object for empirical research. A first possibility for examining this question is to compare the different models by focussing on the different activities that occur during confirmation time. Our data on this question are not complete. Nevertheless they allow for some interesting insights.

Table 42: Activities in confirmation time in the seven countries

	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VQ01: numbers of meetings over all	35.79	42.86	13.71	29.57	25.67	13.93	15.94	
VQ02: hours of 'normal instruction' (hours à 60 min.)	47.06	45.74	21.89	30.06	51.54 [38.25]	68.85	20.76 [15.57]	
VQ03: special days with the group (at least 3 hours)	3.07	3.21	1.96	2.71	2.36		2.36	
VQ04: trips/outings of at least 3 hours	1.01	1.02	0.75	1.49	1.29	0.68	1.18	
VQ05: overnight events in the context of trips/outings/camps (number of nights altogether)	3.98	3.26	2.61	2.71	0.48	7.96	1.58	11.08
VQ06 Internship in the parish (hours per confirmand)	2.14	2.27	1.04	1.74	0.93 [0.70]		2.29	
VQ07: Other, i.e. ... (times during confirmation training)	1.51	1.42	0.43	2.31	1.17		3.20	
VQ09: joint activities with Christian youth work in our parish (number of meetings / activities)	1.96	2.1	1.04	0.40	0.85		1.98	

Data collected by the leaders (t_2). In this section Sweden included only item VQ05, Finland only items VQ01, VQ02, VQ04 and VQ05. In VQ02 Denmark and Norway asked for lessons of 45 min, in VQ06 Denmark asked for hours of 45 min: The results adapted in a 60 minutes-format are given in square brackets.

Table 42 shows that the different elements are not equally emphasised in the different countries but that there also is a fair amount of overlap. According to the overview, confirmation work typically means a mix of instruction, special occasions with the group, some outings and the possibility for internships in the parish, even if not all of these elements are realized in all places at the same time and at the same level. Moreover, we can see that the amount of instruction can vary greatly. Finland and Sweden emphasise overnight outings and camps while Denmark has very little of this kind of activity.

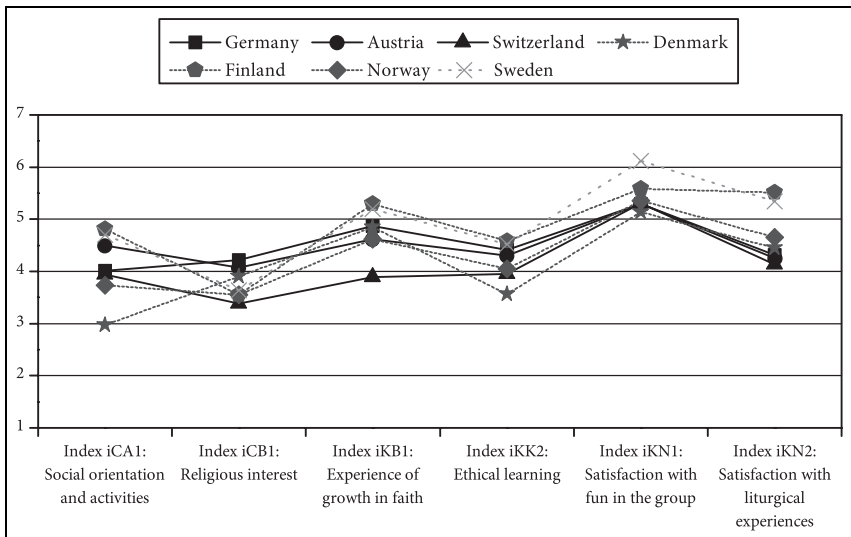
Another helpful approach is based on the workers' responses (cf. Figure 10 on p. 229 and p. 306 in the appendix). The strongest agreement here is about the satisfaction of the workers. Moreover, there is much agreement on the importance of topics related to the life-world. Nevertheless there also are differ-

ences in this respect. Workers in Sweden and Finland emphasise this aspect most while Danish and German workers give it the least emphasis. One might expect that the sequence with the importance of Church dogmatics is the mirror image to that of the interest in the life-world but this is not the case. It is true for Danish workers but the Finnish workers score even higher with dogmatics, in spite of their stressing the relationship to the life-world. Even clearer differences show up with the importance of relating to the parish. The extreme positions are found with Finland on the one hand and with Denmark on the other. In this case, Sweden comes close to Denmark.

A first conclusion from these observations (for a more detailed analysis cf. chapter 4.3) could be that the popular assumption of a »Nordic pattern« does not really hold true. It probably makes more sense to speak of different profiles or types that are realized in different countries. Denmark seems to be closest to the traditional model of the school or catechetical instruction while Finland has made the strongest move in the direction of making youth work the guiding model for confirmation work.

Does this impression also hold true when we take the responses from the confirmands as our lens? Figure 7 allows for a comparative view of these responses, based on selected indexes.

Figure 7: Results of confirmands' indexes in the seven countries



Again the picture shows both, a basic common structure but also many variations. The aspect of social orientation and activities is strongest in Finland and

weakest in Denmark (iCA1) – which fits very nicely with the aims of the workers above. The results also indicate that the experience of growth in faith can nevertheless be strong (cf. Denmark: iKB1). In many ways, Switzerland seems to be a special case which indicates that a different theological tradition (Reformed instead of Lutheran) and a different understanding of the relationship between confirmation and baptism (Switzerland is the only one of the participating countries involved that does not require baptism before confirmation) could make a difference – a hypothesis that should, however, be treated with much care because we have to assume that there are many other cultural factors involved as well. Yet even in the case of Switzerland, there is a fair amount of overlap with the values in other countries. Another question that cannot be taken up here, however, refers to differences within the countries themselves.

Concerning satisfaction, Finland and Sweden show the highest results. This goes along with a positive change in the confirmands' attitudes towards church and religion – a topic that is further discussed in chapter 4.5. A deeper analysis of the satisfaction of the confirmands is reported in Table 43. This table shows that confirmands in general are quite satisfied with their confirmation time. Aspects of community and the camps are considered the most precious parts of confirmation time in most of the countries involved.

Table 43: Satisfaction with different aspects in confirmation time in the seven countries

Item	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KN01: the whole confirmation time	72 %	67 %	68 %	66 %	63 %	87 %	72 %	88 %
KN02: having fun	68 %	72 %	76 %	70 %	43 %	65 %	53 %	88 %
KN03: content/topics of lessons	58 %	49 %	48 %	52 %	66 %	81 %	60 %	76 %
KN04: feeling of community	77 %	71 %	69 %	73 %	83 %	88 %	82 %	86 %
KN07: minister / person primarily responsible for confirmation work	76 %	72 %	76 %	74 %	72 %	84 %	76 %	87 %
KN08: other teachers/workers	72 %	69 %	70 %	66 %	60 %	84 %	65 %	89 %
KN10: church services	52 %	47 %	47 %	43 %	44 %	73 %	52 %	65 %
KN11: camp(s)	77 %	73 %	69 %	76 %	66 %	86 %	76 %	91 %
KN13: prayers in the group	52 %	43 %	40 %	40 %	46 %	77 %	50 %	72 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	60 %	51 %	48 %	44 %	55 %	84 %	58 %	80 %

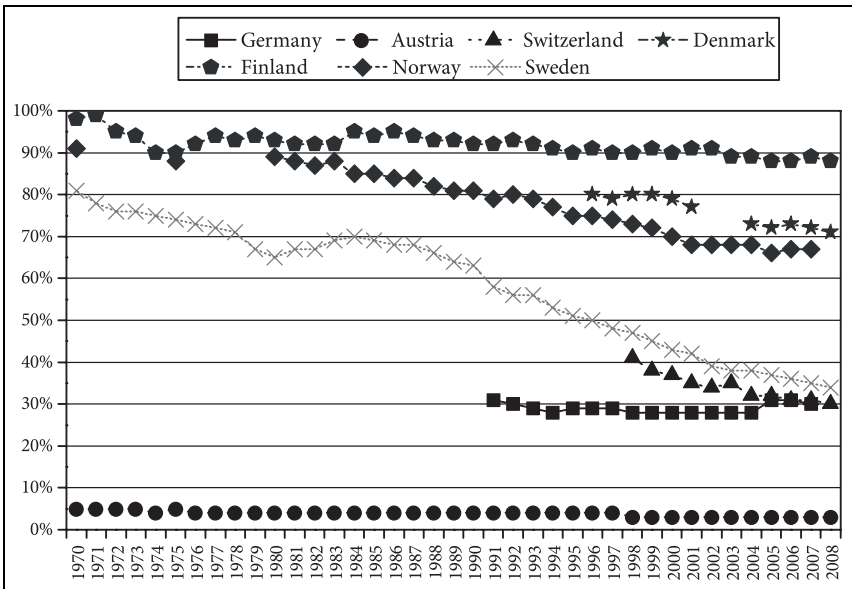
N = 15370-17904 (confirmands). Option 8 »we didn't have that« was used as a filter.

In sum: The general picture shows that there is indeed a basic common structure that justifies referring to »confirmation work in Europe«. At the same time, there clearly are different profiles corresponding to the different national and theological presuppositions, traditions and understandings. Yet none of the countries is unique. The general picture is a continuous mix of commonalities and differences.

4.2.2 Stability and Fragility of Confirmation Work in the Future

The present study shows that confirmation work is very successful in terms of the satisfaction of the confirmands as well as of the workers. Together with the centuries old tradition of this institution, this result could lead to the assumption that no one has to be worried about the future of confirmation work in Europe. Yet things are not quite so simple. On the one hand, the participation rates in the different countries provide additional evidence for the stability and scope of confirmation work – in some countries, most of all in Finland, we find participation rates of more than two thirds of the total population; on the other hand, the rates are obviously not stable over time, as Figure 8 shows impressively.

Figure 8: Participation rates in the seven countries



Partly based on Niemelä 2008, 7.

The example of Sweden shows that the assumption of stability might be quite treacherous. Participation rates there went down from more than 80 % in 1970 to approximately 35 % in 2006. In Norway, the decline is less marked but it is also impressive – from close to 90 % in 1980 to approximately 65 % in 2006. These examples can remind us of the fact that the future of religious institutions should not be considered a given. As the country reports above express repeatedly, there are many worries about the future concerning confirmation work.

Some of the worries in the different countries refer to the general changes of society and culture. The effects of migration, urbanization, pluralisation and individualisation make themselves felt even in once isolated areas of rural Europe. Right now it is mostly in the urban areas where participation rates are decreasing. Is this indicative of the future for other parts of the countries as well? Given the demographic tendencies in Europe, it seems obvious that the absolute number of confirmands will become much smaller in the future. If the effects of migration continue as many analysts expect or even wish for, the confirmands will turn into a minority in places where they still form a majority today. Is confirmation work prepared for this challenge? This should not necessarily be taken as a threat. Future models of confirmation work could include dialogical elements that bring together young people with different religious backgrounds, possibly not only from the different Christian denominations but also from different religions.

Another worry is related to the competition for the time of the young people. Most of all the school has turned into a place that has much more to offer than just teaching and learning. Additional programmes and activities related to the school also imply time demands. The same is true for the increasing number of commercial offers or for other programmes in fields like sports or music. The changing shape of religious socialisation, in the family but also through the media, must also be taken into consideration here. Confirmation work is a limited programme that only lasts for a certain period of time. Will this time span be sufficient for reaching the aims of this programme if there is no (more) support from other institutions?

Although confirmation has lost most of its civil meaning in all of the countries involved, there are still some remnants of state approval concerning the pedagogical efforts of the Churches. The strongest support can be seen in Denmark where schools have their pupils go to the minister for two hours per week during school time (a tradition currently under debate). A weaker but legally guaranteed way of support exists in half of the German federal states, where one or two afternoons per week must be kept free of school obligations in order to give the Church the opportunity for doing confirmation work. How much such legal regulations depend on the historical background can be seen from the fact that none of the former (socialist and atheistic) GDR-states have such a rule whereas the majority of western German states do.

4.2.3 Adolescence and Social Modernisation as Homogenising Factors?

In addition to the influences from a shared Protestant tradition that account for the identity of confirmation work in different countries, we can also think of

more contemporary influences that operate as homogenising factors. In the first place, confirmation work in the participating countries is dealing with the same age group – adolescents around the age of 14 or 15. Moreover, all of the participating countries belong to the Western world that sociologists often describe as modern or postmodern. So it makes sense to ask if the influences of adolescence and social modernisation work towards a kind of homogeneity that has little to do with common aims. Instead, this homogeneity would be the more or less automatic consequence of the influence of modern adolescence. One can even wonder if such influences are so powerful that they can even override different aims, for example, because certain aims simply cannot be reached with today's Western adolescents.

The religious presuppositions that the adolescents bring with them to their confirmation time are indeed very similar across the different countries. As especially index iCB1 »Religious interest« shows the values in all of the countries are either between 3 and 4 or slightly above 4 (cf. Figure 7). Before the confirmation time, religious practice does not play a major role for the adolescents. This can also be seen from a number of the individual items. There is a fair amount of agreement among the adolescents in reference to personal religious outlooks and practices. The confirmands are rather not sure what to believe (33 %; CE05). Only 11 % state that they often talk about God with others (CE06) which speaks for a privatised and not very communicative type of religion that is quite common in modern individualised societies. The flip-side of this individualisation can be seen from another response. Very few of the confirmands say that they are ashamed to tell their friends that they are taking part in confirmation work (6 %; CE07). This fits with the view that everyone has a right to make his or her choices and that no one is entitled to criticise such choices. To some degree, this is not completely true for Austria. Here the share of those who feel at least sometimes ashamed to do so, rises from 8 % in t_1 to 13 % in t_2 (CE07/KE07). The reason behind this might be the minority situation of Protestant confirmands in a Catholic country like Austria.

While there can be no doubt that the age of the confirmands and the social and cultural situation in the Western world lead to some kind of homogeneity or at least to circumstances that can be compared in a meaningful way, this clearly is not the whole story. The comparative table with the national and international means shows a lot of variety (cf. appendix). The table presents all differences between the national and the corresponding international means that are bigger than 0.3. The great number of variations indicates that the presuppositions might be similar across the countries but that the experiences within confirmation work can still be very different, depending on how this work is carried out. This observation also is a first indication for the question of the effects of confirmation work that we will take up in the next section.

A view that is aware of the commonalities between young people in modern Western societies but is also open for the differences between them is in line with contemporary understandings in social theory. The time of general expectations of secularisation, for example, that assumed an irrevocable and indiscriminate loss of religion effective throughout the modern world, seems to be over. The theory of secularisation has been greatly modified and refined or has been given up altogether by many social scientists (cf. Berger 1999, Pollack 2003, Taylor 2007). More than in the past, we should expect different national or ecclesial traditions and practises to make a difference, with confirmation work no less than with other fields.

4.2.4 Does Confirmation Work Matter?

The title of this section is taken from Kati Niemelä's (2008) Finnish study that, for good reasons, is being quoted quite frequently in the present volume. Her study is the first example of a longitudinal approach in the context of confirmation work. It shows that, even many years after confirmation, there are positive effects. The present study does not include longitudinal data. Yet with the t_1 - t_2 -design it allows at least for some insights into the effects of confirmation work (cf. chapter 4.5). Moreover, it includes a number of items that indicate in which ways confirmation work can matter for the Church as well as for society (cf. chapter 4.7).

In the present context we focus on differences between t_1 and t_2 . The following values present the means of the individual differences in the responses of the confirmands for each country and for all of the interviews:

Table 44: Mean differences between t_1 and t_2 in the seven countries

What do you think about the following statements? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
DIFF_CE01: God created the world.	0.05	-0.02	-0.23	0.06	0.00	0.30	0.05	0.24
DIFF_CE02: There is life after death.	0.27	0.25	0.09	-0.02	0.17	0.49	0.13	0.28
DIFF_CE03: God loves all humans and cares about each one of us	0.17	0.05	-0.15	0.04	0.11	0.60	0.12	0.52
DIFF_CE04: Jesus has risen from the dead.	0.28	0.21	0.01	0.14	0.16	0.59	0.31	0.45
DIFF_CE05: I am not sure what I should believe.	-0.05	0.02	-0.04	-0.12	-0.26	-0.05	-0.01	-0.28
DIFF_CE06: I often talk about God with other people.	0.24	0.19	0.23	0.22	0.22	0.31	0.39	0.41
DIFF_CE07: Sometimes I am ashamed to tell my friends that I am taking part in confirmation training.	0.09	0.12	0.31	0.19	0.11	-0.14	0.21	0.12

What do you think about the following statements? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
DIFF_CE08: Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.	0.22	0.13	-0.05	0.24	0.11	0.53	0.17	0.52
DIFF_CE09: I believe in God.	0.10	0.00	-0.12	0.02	0.00	0.40	0.08	0.50
DIFF_CE10: I know what the Christian faith entails.	0.62	0.49	0.27	0.45	0.93	0.76	0.53	1.13
DIFF_CE11: I try to live according to the Ten Commandments.	0.31	0.25	-0.18	0.19	0.16	0.56	0.20	0.63
DIFF_CE12: By the end of the confirmation time I definitely want to be confirmed.	0.12	0.03	-0.05	0.03	0.05	0.44	0.00	0.38
DIFF_CG01: It is important for me to belong to the Church.	0.31	0.26	0.07	0.39	0.26	0.29	0.34	0.67
DIFF_CG02: The Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me.	0.18	0.21	0.15	0.27	0.12	0.02	0.34	0.18
DIFF_CG03: If I will have children, I want to have them baptised.	0.04	0.04	-0.18	0.02	-0.07	0.15	-0.13	0.09
DIFF_CG04: Church services are usually boring.	0.21	0.26	0.58	0.09	0.01	-0.09	0.30	0.44
DIFF_CG05: The Church does a lot of good things for the people.	0.17	0.11	-0.07	0.23	0.22	0.28	0.20	0.33
DIFF_CG06: If I should have personal problems, I would turn to a minister.	0.24	0.21	0.16	0.33	0.12	0.40	0.13	0.41
DIFF_CG07: Our church building means a lot to me.	0.20	0.18	-0.09	0.26	-0.02	0.29	0.29	0.40
DIFF_CG08: I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.	0.48	0.41	0.38	0.23	0.18	1.12	0.11	0.60

The table displays the mean of individual differences, computed as t_2 -value minus t_1 -value. Only matched cases were used.

The means describing the changes between t_1 and t_2 are generally positive. There are only three exceptions concerning religious practise where there is a very slight change to the negative. The strongest positive change concerns knowing the Christian faith (increase of 0.62; DIFF_CE10). Also very strong (0.48) is the increase with DIFF_CG08: »I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation«. With 0.31 the increase is also remarkable for DIFF_CG01: »It is important for me to belong to the Church«. This corresponds with a better image of the Church: DIFF_CG05: »The Church does a lot of good things for the people« (increase of .17). It is also noteworthy that a number of the items referring to personal faith – for example DIFF_CE04: »Jesus has risen from the dead« (increase of .28) – clearly change from t_1 to t_2 .

In the absence of other data or results it is, of course, difficult to say if these changes are »big« or »small«, »satisfactory« or »disappointing«. Changes that refer to religious attitudes and orientations probably are slow to come in general. Not too much should be expected from the limited time period of confirmation work. Yet we could also say that the results are encouraging, at least on the whole – especially when taking into account that the confirmands typically are at an age when many young people increasingly distance themselves from faith and the church. Confirmation work does matter.

It should not be overlooked, however, that the increases between t_1 and t_2 also include two attitudes that are very critical for the Church: DIFF_CG04: »Church services are usually boring« (increase: .21) and DIFF_CG02: »The Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me« (increase: .18). In this case, the effects of confirmation work are certainly not the intended ones.

As pointed out repeatedly in this volume, the results of the present study should be seen as a starting point for new and additional efforts of the Churches to renew their confirmation work. Moreover, there are a number of questions that deserve special attention in future work. At the end of this chapter, we want to state at least three of these questions. The first question refers to the aims of confirmation work. As has become obvious, these aims can be different in the countries involved in the present study. What role could the empirical data gathered in this study play for the definition of such aims? The second question is about the organisational models and the resources used in confirmation work. Are they in line with the aims stated for this work? The third question refers to short-term as well as to long-term effects of confirmation work. Which factors are important for supporting the positive effects of confirmation work, right after confirmation but also in the longer run? And how can the influences of family, school, peers, the media, etc. be taken into account with such attempts?

4.3 Planning and Teaching in Confirmation Work

TAPANI INNANEN AND BERND KRUPKA

4.3.1 Introduction

Any intentional educational situation includes some kind of preceding planning. There can be a written plan describing for instance, what the learner should know or do after the teaching, under which circumstances the teaching takes place and what contents are to be taught. But it is also possible that the educator has only some very general ideas of what he or she should teach. The students, of course, have their own expectations beforehand and experiences after the educational event.

This chapter gives a first theoretical framework to analyse questions of planning and teaching and then evaluates the data from different countries with the theoretical tools. Several questions are investigated: how confirmation work is planned and realized, what aims of confirmation work are pursued, which kind of teaching methods are used and how the teachers and confirmands reflect upon the learning situations.

4.3.2 Formal, Enacted and Experienced Curriculum in Confirmation Work

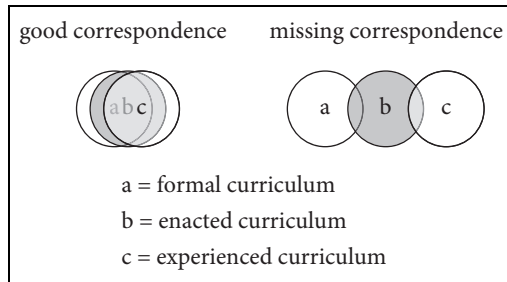
The pedagogical concept of curriculum is a widely used tool to analyse the educational situation, its aims and its outputs. The idea of curriculum includes several manifestations. Formal educational systems, for instance, schools in different societies, have *formal* or *explicit* curricula. These are written documents where the organisation responsible for teaching tells what is supposed to be taught and learnt, under which circumstances, in which environment, etc. Each teacher has a planned curriculum, perhaps a written plan but at least some preliminary thoughts of his or her own when going to teach. In the very situation where the teacher is teaching and the learners are supposed to learn, the enacted curriculum can be seen. This is the way in which the teaching and learning situation is realised, more or less alike with the plan which the teacher had beforehand. And finally, the experienced curriculum is the way the student interprets the enacted curriculum. This is the final result of the whole teaching process; what the student has really learnt (see for instance Costigan/Crocco/Zumwalt 2004, 253–257).

The curricular situation in confirmation work can be seen from three different points of view. Churches can accept a special written curriculum for con-

firmation training, or least there are some guidelines about confirmation. These written documents can be called the formal curriculum. Each leader in a specific confirmation teaching process somehow finds the ideas he or she wants to realise while teaching. Then the whole environment – including buildings, the group of confirmands, other social contacts of young people and teachers, the competence of teachers, learning materials and so on – gives the context where the training is realised. This may be called the enacted curriculum. Finally, the most important part of the learning process is the experienced curriculum. What the confirmand has experienced during the training process, and what he or she has really learnt.

The correspondence between the formal, enacted and experienced curricula can vary from situation to situation, as seen in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Correspondence between formal, enacted and experienced curricula



With a situation of good correspondence, a significant part of the formal curriculum is found in the experiences of the confirmands. In the situation of missing correspondence, the confirmands have experienced and learnt something totally different from the formal curriculum. Although the learning process – as well as the evaluation of it – is very complicated, these different manifestations of curriculum can be used when analyzing the data from the different countries.

4.3.3 Curricular Background in Seven Countries – the Formal Curriculum

Comparison of Written Guidelines and Other Learning Environments

Every Church in the seven countries has some written background which gives official guidelines for confirmation training. The role and status of the given guidelines can be very different. Different formal texts give, in some form, the important context in which the local workers carry out the confirmation work on their own. But then how will they get more detailed aims for their teaching

and arrangements for the learning environment, their understanding of the supposed outcomes of the confirmation preparation, or teaching methods? Concerning didactical questions like the ones mentioned here, the comparative table below summarises some central points of the curricular background of confirmation work in the different countries.

Curricula for Confirmation Work

The table indicates the great variation in regard to the written curricula in the different countries. In Austria, Switzerland (here: Zurich) and Denmark there is no written curriculum for confirmation work available. This means that the main principles for realising the confirmation work are based on some other instructions. The plans can be deducted from »above«, for instance, a Church Handbook or some other liturgical text, or inducted from »below«, for instance, following the traditions in a local parish or listening to the expectations of young people.

The ways in which confirmation work is organised in the different countries give a picture of transition from a school-type to youth-work-type of confirmation work. As long as confirmation classes virtually enjoyed the status of formal education, they could profit from the public consensus about their necessity and validity and be organised just like compulsory education, with classes to attend at regular times in order to internalise a clearly defined content. Attendance, aims and content could be taken for granted. This can be described as a school-type setting.

The countries in our study differ as to which extent confirmation has become a private matter. We can interpret the curricula as the didactical consequences of what sociologists describe as the transition of religion from the public to the private sphere. If confirmation preparation increasingly becomes a private matter, attendance, aims and content can no longer be taken for granted. The didactics of confirmation become increasingly inspired by informal education in the shape of church youth-work. This implies that the self-evidence of the learning progress, learning satisfaction and meaningfulness for the learners plays an increasing role.

The catechism heritage in terms of a focus on the fundamentals of the Christian faith is common to all confirmation work. Where planning documents were available to us, they vary in their accentuation of experiential, youth-work-type learning in two dimensions.

- Relation to the life-world: Confirmation work offers young people company and support in addressing important questions in their lives. Often, these questions concern ethics – like e.g., friendship, or are religious or philosophical questions in a very general sense – like the meaning of life. In their openness, they also correspond with the biographical concerns of private

Table 45: Curricular background of confirmation training – comparative table

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland / Zurich	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Orders for confirmation	Varies in the 22 regional Churches in the different states	Order for Special Services	Church Order	Royal Decree Book of Order	Church Law, Church Order, Church Handbook	Order for Worship, Syllabus passed by the synod (see below, <i>Plan...</i>)	Church Handbook
Curriculum for training	Most orders refer only to broad outlines as the minimum number of lessons (ca. 60-90) and central topics	No curriculum	No curriculum	No curriculum	<i>Rippikoulusuunnitelma 2001</i> as frame; plans in local parishes	<i>Plan for konfirmationstiden i Den norske kirke 1998</i> , requiring local plans in parishes	No national curriculum, but national guidelines; <i>Riktlinjer för Svenska kyrkans konfirmand-arbete</i> , revised 2008
Central aims	–Traditionally: the appropriation of the Christian faith (catechism-centered) – Contemporary: to encounter the parish hospitable for young people	»To convey experiences of faith; to work out the tenets of our faith; to help youngsters to find a home within their congregation«	»Confirmation is the invitation for a responsible Christian existence and to participate in the life of regional Church«	»To strengthen the familiarity of the confirmand with Christian teachings and the order of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church«	»To be reinforced in faith in the Triune God; to grow in love for fellow humans; to live a life of the prayer in communion with the parish«	»To awaken and strengthen the life of faith given in baptism so that the young people can live in the community of the parish and grow as disciples of Jesus«	»Offer possibility to explore and test the Christian faith from the perspective of their own questions of life«
Curricular ideal	Local planning; parish / teacher based approach. Confirmation work instead of confirmation lessons	Diaspora situation parish / teacher-based approach		Teacher-based; minister of the local parish teaches	Constructive learning, local planning, team work, volunteers involved	Integration with other offers of the parish	»Service to teenagers«; parish/team based approach
Length of training period	9 – 20 months depending on the regional Church	8 – 12 months	10 – 12 months	7-8 months (September – April/May)	Min. 6 months	A time-spread over 8 months is compulsory	From 4 weeks – to one year
Age of confirmands	13 – 14	12 – 15	15 – 16	13 – 15	14 – 15	14 – 15	15

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland / Zurich	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Participation rates (% of all adolescents)	ca. 30% (= about 90% of all Protestant adolescents)	3%	30%	71%	88 % (99 % of adolescents belonging to the Lutheran Church)	67%	34%
Preparation lessons	Usually one meeting (90 min) per week plus some Saturday meetings. Some states (<i>Bundesländer</i>) guarantee one afternoon without school activities in 7 th /8 th grade to allow for confirmation lessons	20 – 50 lessons (à 60 min), camps included	72 lessons (à 45 min.)	Min. 24 double lessons (à 90 min.), Sunday services	80 lessons (à 45 min)	45 lessons incl. 8 Sunday services	60 hours
Camp as a part of training?	Usually 1-2 weekend camps	Often weekends	3 – 7 days	In some parishes shorter camps (2 – 3 days)	Mostly 90 % of groups) about a week	Mostly weekend camps, occasionally longer camps	Minimum one weekend – maximum 4 weeks
Ecclesiastical books to study	Bible, Hymn Book	Bible, Hymn Book	Bible, Hymn Books	Bible, Hymn Book	Bible, Hymn Book, Catechism of Finnish Lutheran Church	Bible	Bible, Hymn Book
Study book for confirmands	Many books are on sale; no official book	Some pastors use books from Germany	No specific book; possibility to choose from various books or materials	Large variety	The books accepted by the bishops (7 different books)	A variety of different books from different publishers. Quite common: <i>Konfirmanthibelen</i> (Bible with a catechetical appendix)	A variety of different books from different publishers. No official national control or acceptance procedure.

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland / Zurich	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Handbook for teachers	Often come along with the confirmands' workbooks	No	No specific book; possibility to choose from various books or materials	Large variety, each study book has a handbook for teachers	Each study book has a handbook for teachers	<i>Håndbok til Plan for konfirmasjonstiden I Den norske kirke</i> 1998, Teacher versions of the various study books	The main publisher <i>Verbum</i> has produced a series of three handbooks 2003-2005. Most study books have a handbook or separate instructions for teachers.
Teaching environment	Usually parish hall	Church, parish hall, camps	Parish hall, Community centre, camps	Church hall, vicarage house	Special room, camp centres, a special sacral room needed	Church, parish hall, occasionally school or localities of one of the pietist mission societies.	Wide variation: parish localities with ordinary lecture room or more relaxed room, camp or conference centre.

religiousness, where the individual lifestyle and a sense of meaningfulness are key aspects.

- Relation to the parish: Confirmation work is social learning that enables experiences of fellowship and socialises confirmands into a community. In the published documents, the parish is understood as the basic unit for confirmation work in a theological way and confirmands are invited into the Christian fellowship of the parish.

The more these two elements are focused upon, the further confirmation work moves away from the school-type to the youth-work-type.

4.3.4 Enacting the Curriculum: Workers' Aims and Orientations and Structures

The relation between official curricula and workers' aims and preferences can be understood in terms of an internalisation of the curriculum. Accordingly, workers' aims and methodical choices will therefore describe a position according to their accentuation of the following aspects: *Catechism – Life-world relevance – Parish community*.

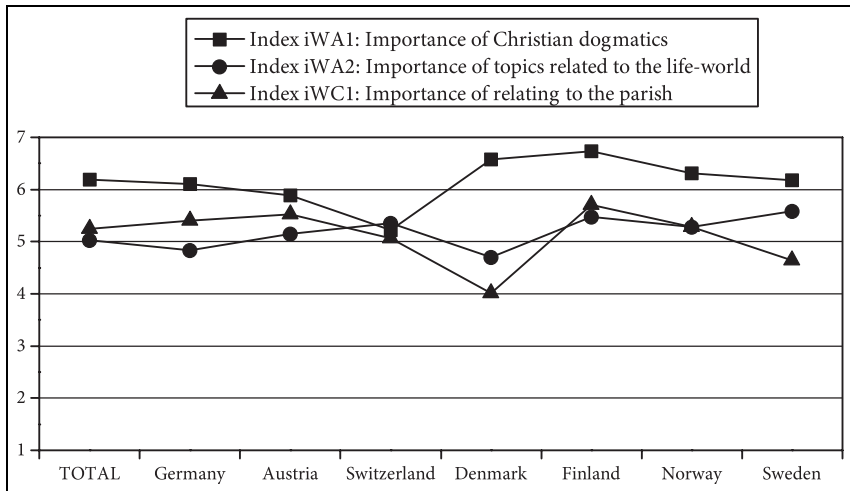
If we look at the enacted curriculum, these differences also account for differences in the structure of confirmation work and its settings in terms of staff composition and organisation, and we can follow them on a micro-level to teaching methods, topics in class and so forth.

Our data give us the opportunity to study the different curricular options independently of the national curricula. Due to the size and the variation of the German sample in the study (reflecting the number of confirmands in Germany, that is by and large as big as the number of confirmands in the six other countries altogether), all the various curricular aspects of confirmation that might dominate confirmation work in one country or another, will be most strongly represented in the German sample. For example: even though virtually all Finnish confirmands participate in camp, our sample of confirmands who have participated in a confirmation camp longer than 3 nights, will mostly consist of German confirmands. On the other hand, the curricular differences between the countries are quite distinct. The national differences in our data between the countries can illustrate the effects of different curricular orientations.

Workers' Aims and Orientations

In our material, the three main orientations found in the curricula could be verified in terms of workers' orientations (t_1) on the level of indexes. They are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Indexes on workers' orientations for the seven countries



N=2319-2328.

The index called importance of Christian dogmatics expresses a catechism orientation of the workers. The traditional topics of confirmation work, namely baptism, The Lord's Supper, a creed, Jesus Christ and The Holy Spirit are considered to be very important. A focus on life-world questions corresponds with the index on topics related to the life-world, namely ecology and preservation of the Creation, the meaning of life, justice and responsibility for others, friendship, body and sexuality and violence and crime. Parish community is expressed by the index on relating to the parish. Workers scoring high on this index want confirmands to get to know their parish better, to get to know the youth work the Church offers to them, and they also want them to be won as voluntary workers in the Church.

The graph illustrates the high importance of catechism topics for the workers in all countries. The somewhat lower score on this index for Switzerland can be an expression of a Reformed notion of scepticism to the everlasting validity of creeds and declarations of faith.

There are considerable national variations concerning the parish relation index. Denmark scores lowest on the index; only 38 % of the Danish workers (almost exclusively ministers) consider it important that confirmands get to know their parish better (WC05). This corresponds with confirmation work in a school setting. Confirmation seems to be too close to formal education and too general a concern in Denmark to be limited to the community of the parish.

The other country with a significantly lower score on this index is Sweden. A look at the status of confirmation in Sweden gives the impression that the role

of confirmation is highly privatised. As only a minority of 15 year olds take part in it, and confirmation work as well as confirmation itself do not necessarily take place in the parish, they seem to have lost their importance for the local community. Swedish confirmation documents focus on the life-world aspect when they define confirmation as »a service to teenagers« (see chapter 3.7.1, p. 187). This can be interpreted as a privatisation of confirmation – to the extent that the parish relation is not in focus any more.

Danish and German confirmation workers are least concerned with the life-world relevance of confirmation work. This might be ascribed to the self-evident role of confirmation in the eyes of the workers. Finnish workers score the highest on the importance of Christian dogmatics, but also on parish relation and the life-world index. We will see that in terms of organisational structure and methods, Finland represents the youth-work-type of confirmation work.

Staff Composition

There are considerable national variations concerning the composition of confirmation staff and the degree of confirmation-specific professionalisation. In Denmark, more than 9 out of 10 confirmation workers in our sample are ministers. In the German-speaking countries, the staff sample consists mainly of ministers and volunteers, with Switzerland representing the highest share of ministers (80 %) and Austria the lowest (25 %). The Nordic countries – with the exception of Denmark – display a wide variety of professions in confirmation staff, thus contributing a wider variety of professional competence to confirmation work. In Finland, we actually find several professional functions related highly to confirmation work in our sample.

The composition of staff corresponds with the character of the curricular documents of a Church. Churches with a school-type approach seem to have a lower degree of non-theologians as workers involved, whereas Churches with a youth-work-type curriculum focussing highly on experience, life-world relevance and parish-relation mentioned above, will have a strong representation of volunteers. In our sample, Austria and Germany have the highest representation of volunteers with 65 % respectively 48 %, whereas Denmark and Switzerland have the lowest rate with 0 respectively 12 %. In Sweden and Finland, professionalisation tendencies refer to all staff members and even volunteers. 8 respectively 9 out of ten employed workers other than deacons and parish educators and two thirds of the Swedish volunteer workers have received some form of training for confirmation work. Those figures are much lower in the other countries. Concerning Finland, one has to keep in mind that the answers of the Young Confirmed Volunteers (YCV) are not included in the Finnish workers' results – those YCVs are such an important group on their own, that Finland gathered them into a separate survey (cf. chapter 3.5.5). The data of

that survey are not used here. As can be seen in the Finnish national chapter in this book, every Finnish group of confirmands had YCVs, on the average 6 persons. It means that the Finnish percentage of volunteers is at least as high as in Austria.

Ways of Organising Confirmation Time

On the average, confirmands gather 36 times during confirmation time, receiving 47 hours of regular instruction. Variations between the participating Churches are considerable. Finnish confirmands will participate in 69 hours of regular instruction, whereas their Norwegian counterparts will get away with 21. All other countries and Churches are placed somewhere in between (figures for Sweden are not available).

Regular instruction will to a varying extent be complemented by or integrated into other types of gatherings during confirmation time. Most significant are the differences concerning the overnight events. Most of the confirmands in Sweden and almost all Finnish confirmands participate in confirmation camps or outings lasting more than three nights. Only half of the confirmands in the German-speaking Churches share such an experience. In Norway, confirmation camps are only partly established and they seem widely absent in Denmark. Whereas the length of Finnish confirmation camps is limited to about a week or a little more in order to maintain contact with the normal life of the parish, approximately one third of the Swedish units in our study offer longer confirmation camps lasting from 6 to 31 days, which implies that parish integration is reduced to a minimum or absent all together.

Teaching Methods

Whereas workers' orientations differ considerably as to what extent life-world and parish community are important for them, they all seem to be caught within a school-type methodical framework. Discussion, working with biblical texts, group work, prayer and meditation, lectures/narrations, stories and narratives and singing together are often or sometimes used. Methods with a higher degree of student involvement like games, adventure-type experiential learning, but also meditation, exercising, silent times and learning diaries are generally used, even if this still occurs (too) rarely. The more experience-oriented methods are more frequently represented amongst units that offer confirmation camps lasting three or more nights. This might explain why they are slightly more common in Sweden and Finland.

Topics Taught

On the average, catechism topics prevail, while life-world topics are not considered to be equally important. This trend is more pronounced amongst minis-

ters and deacons/catechists/youth workers. Employed workers with less church-related training, and also volunteers have a higher commitment to life-world topics.

High identification with the catechism topics can also be related to the workers' age. The older the workers are, the more important the catechism is to them, and the younger they are, the more important the life-world is. The priorities of the age group of workers under 27 are comparable to those of the confirmands. This might be an age effect – meaning that with increasing age and life experience, core topics of the Christian message become more important. It could also be a cohort effect not related to becoming older, but to a common type of upbringing or socialisation of a certain age group, where the school syllabuses and also parental education were more focussed on the catechism topics than in recent years.

The data indicate that professional socialisation also plays a role. Ministers and other church-trained staff are more highly represented amongst the older age groups. Their training increases their identification with the values and perspectives of the Church so that catechism topics become more important. The younger workers, usually without professional church-training, are closer to the confirmands' life-world and private religious orientation, which are closely related to biographical aspects, lifestyle and questions of meaning. The younger Finnish staff in our sample (mostly the »summer theologians«, i.e., students of theology) is almost completely church-educated, and they identify much more with topics concerning the catechism.

The involvement of non-church-educated staff and younger workers will thus influence topic preferences that are close to the confirmands' preferences, focussing more on life-world issues and issues of private religiousness.

4.3.5 Confirmands and the Experienced Curriculum: Importance of Age of Staff and Camp Experiences

We have seen variations in the curricula concerning the importance of the confirmands' life-world and the importance of the relation to the parish. We could distinguish these orientations in the enacted curriculum as shown in workers' aims and orientations in terms of a more school-type or youth-work-type orientation. We could distinguish the inclusion of volunteers and other professions in confirmation staff and the professionalisation of volunteers as one of the main structural features of youth-work-type confirmation work. An important factor was the average age of the workers. A higher average age implied a higher representation of church-educated workers and a lower average age implied a higher representation of non-church-educated workers, which is more

often represented in the youth-work-type of confirmation work. Confirmation camp as an organisational framework showed itself to support the use of teaching methods with high learner involvement corresponding to the youth-work-type. We also saw considerable national differences in the amount of regular instruction in confirmation work. The aggregation of data on unit level allows us to draw conclusions on confirmands' satisfaction concerning these aspects of confirmation work.

Our data also show a correlation between age of staff and confirmand satisfaction. The younger the staff is, the more satisfied the confirmands are with their experiences of being welcome in the parish, of community and with their liturgical experiences. The same correlation applies to ethical learning in confirmation time and to confirmands' experience of growth in faith.

Even more impressing is the confirmation camp experience. Confirmands from groups that have been to camp three nights and more, score higher on almost all indexes on confirmand experience. They experience more growth in faith, they show higher identification with Christian beliefs, they show more adherence to the church. They also show more ethical learning, they are more satisfied with their group experience, they feel that their parish has been more open to them and they have better liturgical experiences. Changes of religious attitude amongst confirmands in these groups are not big, but bigger than in units that only offer a weekend trip or shorter outings to their confirmands.

We discussed above how younger workers focus less on catechism and how a youth-work-type orientation of curriculum allows for the integration of younger workers into the confirmation staff. We have also seen how camp corresponds with a youth-work-type orientation and how it encourages methods which encourage learner-involvement. However, our data do not allow us to reduce the observed effect of workers' age and length of camp to these other didactical aspects that correspond with them. If we look at workers' aims and orientations by themselves and independently of camp or workers' age, we cannot find the same correlations to the confirmands' experiences. The same thing applies to methods; learner-involvement-friendly methods alone will not do the trick. Therefore, we have to assume that both the young age of staff and the camp form in *itself* are positive factors in confirmation work.

Concerning camp, the confirmands' experiences of community give us a good indication. There is a strong correlation between confirmands' satisfaction with community and most of the indexes referred to above. We can, therefore, conclude that camp creates an atmosphere of community amongst confirmands that is highly favourable for their religious learning.

The main difference between younger and older workers seems to be their closeness to the confirmands' orientations. Therefore, younger workers can function better as role models for the confirmands. They share the confir-

mands' values, language and experiences. They are more convincing and attractive examples of a Christian life style than the older workers can be.

These observations make community experiences and learning by role models two main factors for the success of confirmation work.

4.4 Motivation and Experiences of the Confirmands

IDA MARIE HØEG

4.4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the confirmation *process*. Of specific interest in this context is the development of the confirmands in respect to their motivation and expectations at the beginning of the confirmation time and the extent to which they feel that their expectations have been met. Information on educational questions, methods or more specific experiences with theological topics is not a topic of discussion here. To ascertain the confirmands' motivation and experience, we will answer the following research questions:

- What kind of impact do the parents and families have on the confirmands' motivation for confirmation? Compared to the parents', what kind of role do the confirmands' friends have in the motivation to register for confirmation?
- Is confirmation an opportunity for the young people to socialise with people of the same age, to be together with their friends, develop new relations and acquire a sense of community with their peer group?
- Do the confirmands have a religious motivation for taking part in the confirmation, and do the confirmands obtain religious dividends from it? Or are there other motives that are highly valued, such as becoming more mature, material benefits, ethical learning or religious knowledge?
- Does the confirmation as a ritual play an important role for the young people? Does the ritual have religious meaning for them or is the celebration with family or friends the most important factor?

4.4.2 Influences on the Decision to be Confirmed

Two sections (CA and CB) in the confirmands' questionnaire t_1 asked for the motivation for taking part. Table 46 compares those items from section CA that refer to external factors for participation. The other items from CA and all items from CB are compared with each other in 4.4.3.

For the majority of confirmands, none of the influencing external factors are especially dominating. Among these however, the most important factor is the personal invitation from the Church. Many Protestant Churches in Europe have put a lot of effort into informing young people about confirmation. Some parishes invite the confirmands personally; others send information about con-

Table 46: External factors for becoming a confirmand

I registered for confirmation time ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M	SD	Applicable (5,6,7)	M Total male	M Total female
CA02: because I was invited personally (e.g., by a letter).	3.40	2.39	33 %	3.31	3.49
CA06: because my parents wanted me to do so.	3.37	2.16	30 %	3.55	3.19
CA01: because my friends did so as well.	3.33	2.00	29 %	3.33	3.32
CA07: because my grandparents wanted me to do so.	2.41	1.95	16 %	2.53	2.28
CA05: because I felt obliged to take part.	2.17	1.78	13 %	2.27	2.06

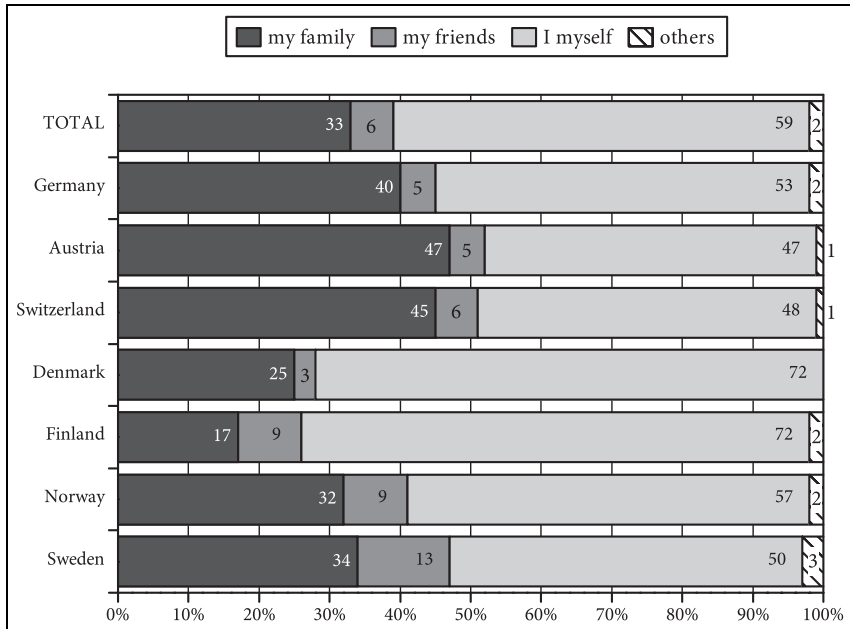
N = 18879-19189. Selected items from section CA.

firmation to every school or have information meetings at school or in church. This proactive strategy with personal invitations appears to have an effect.

The obligation some of the confirmands feel to choose confirmation can relate to a number of norms and expectations: cultural, social and institutional expectations. This kind of pressure is quite complex and can also be quite vague. Institutions and groups, such as the family, friends and the Church, can establish a norm and strong expectations for the young people to take part in confirmation. Only a few confirmands consider this kind of vague obligation as an important factor in their decision. More specific obligations to family and friends have a stronger effect. Social pressure from the parents compared to social pressure from the peer group does not show any significant difference. The confirmands are less likely to want to satisfy their grandparents' wishes. The position of the family seems to be stronger for boys than girls. For boys, their parents also play a more important role in the decision than their friends – for girls it is the other way around.

To make the picture clearer, we asked the confirmands about who most influenced their decision to register. The graph below, which displays the result of this question, shows that there are differences in the seven countries regarding the decision-making. All in all the individual choice has a strong position among the confirmands. Compared with family and friends and others, the confirmands in the seven countries believe that they themselves had the strongest influence on the decision. In Austria and Switzerland, the position of the family seems to be strong; approximately the same number of confirmands think that the family and they themselves had the strongest influence on the decision. The confirmands from Finland and Denmark are much more concerned about their own approach to confirmation than about their family and friends. Nearly two out of three consider themselves to be the strongest part in the decision. The peer group influence on the confirmands' decision varies a

Table 47: Influence of family, friends and my own on decision to register, according to country



N=18055.

lot. Even though the number is low in Sweden as well, Sweden is the country with the highest percentage of confirmands who are of the opinion that the friends' decision had the strongest influence on their decision to register. This might be an effect of the situation that joining confirmation time in Sweden has become a matter of individual choice, where adolescents debate with their peers about taking part or not.

4.4.3 Material, Traditional, Social, Religious and Festivity Orientation

The confirmands are motivated by several factors to become a confirmand. About half of the confirmands are socially, materially, festivity, traditionally and religiously oriented in their motivation. Boys are more materially oriented in their motivations than girls, and girls are more socially and maturity oriented than boys. Changes occur in religious orientation as well. Girls tend to have a stronger religious orientation in their motivation than boys do.

The day of confirmation is a major event, both for the family and for the confirmands themselves. The day itself is an important reason for being con-

Table 48: Motivation factors for becoming a confirmand

I registered for confirmation time ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M	SD	Applicable (5,6,7)	M total male	M total female
CB10: to get money or presents at the end.	4.63	2.15	55 %	4.94	4.32
CB09: to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of confirmation.	4.62	2.02	55 %	4.66	4.57
CA04: because I was baptised when I was a child.	4.61	2.20	55 %	4.53	4.68
CB06: to meet and get to know friends.	4.29	2.01	49 %	4.13	4.43
CB02: to experience community in the confirmation group.	4.25	1.82	46 %	4.07	4.41
CB11: to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation.	4.21	1.89	45 %	4.13	4.29
CB03: to come to my own decision about my faith.	4.20	1.91	45 %	4.05	4.34
CB01: to learn more about God and faith.	4.00	1.88	40 %	3.95	4.04
CA03: because it is a good old tradition.	3.84	2.08	40 %	3.81	3.85
CA08: because I had been told that confirmation training is fun.	3.82	2.17	40 %	3.69	3.94
CB04: to make an important step in growing up.	3.78	1.97	38 %	3.87	3.68
CB08: to be strengthened in my faith.	3.68	1.93	35 %	3.70	3.67
CB07: to think about what is good or bad for me and my life.	3.47	1.83	29 %	3.42	3.52

N = 18986-19208.

firmed (CB09; CB10; CB11). Just as important as the beautiful celebration with family and friends, is the receiving of money and other gifts at the end of the confirmation time.

The confirmation time can be viewed in social terms where social orientation has an effect on their motivation to register for confirmation. For the young people, this means that experiencing a sense of community in the confirmation group, and meeting and making friends are some of the most important motivation factors for signing up for confirmation classes. Very much of the »activity based confirmation preparation« is different from classroom education. These activities involve more than one confirmand and presuppose cooperation and co-activities. Some confirmands tend to be motivated by the confirmation preparation's reputation as being a fun experience. Four out of ten wanted to be confirmed because they had been told that confirmation training is fun.

The young people are in a stage of life characterised by openness, new thoughts and questioning of established truths. It seems that this openness does not exclude openness to tradition and traditional values. Many confirmands' choice to register for confirmation is motivated by the fact that they have been

baptised and that they have a positive view of the traditional aspect of confirmation – confirmation as a good old tradition.

What can we say about the majority of the confirmands' religious motivations for attending confirmation? They say that the confirmation is an opportunity to find their own religious path. The highest score among the items associated with religious factors is for the item relating to individual religious orientation: to come to my own decision about my faith (CB03). The day of confirmation also has religious meaning for many confirmands. Nearly half of them consider receiving a blessing on the day of confirmation to be an important motivation factor (CB11).

Table 49: Motivation factors for becoming a confirmand, according to country

I registered for confirmation time ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable) Mean total (with total weight)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CB10: to get money or presents at the end.	4.63	4.52	4.43	5.07	4.60	5.42	4.45	4.14
CB09: to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of confirmation.	4.62	4.54	4.42	4.76	5.28	4.59	4.74	4.12
CA04: because I was baptised when I was a child.	4.61	4.46	4.80	4.13	4.67	6.01	4.84	3.05
CB06: to meet and get to know friends.	4.29	4.09	4.85	3.98	3.52	5.39	4.13	4.81
CB02: to experience community in the confirmation group.	4.25	4.27	4.64	4.15	3.76	4.11	4.52	4.72
CB11: to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation.	4.21	4.39	4.45	3.50	4.30	4.29	3.76	3.41
CB03: to come to my own decision about my faith.	4.20	4.30	4.53	3.91	3.97	4.08	3.84	4.44
CB01: to learn more about God and faith.	4.00	4.30	3.81	3.24	4.17	3.27	3.48	3.67
CA03: because it is a good old tradition.	3.84	3.40	3.96	3.84	4.21	4.89	4.49	3.66
CA08: because I had been told that confirmation training is fun.	3.82	3.78	4.36	3.52	2.20	5.35	2.75	4.68
CB04: to make an important step in growing up.	3.78	3.76	4.49	3.79	3.70	4.32	3.88	2.99
CB08: to be strengthened in my faith.	3.68	4.04	3.87	2.97	3.57	3.30	3.29	2.75
CB07: to think about what is good or bad for me and my life.	3.47	3.53	3.80	3.09	3.12	3.77	3.43	3.21

N = 18986-19208.

Confirmands in Germany and Finland deviate from the other countries. In Finland, we find confirmands with strongly loaded motivation, while in Germany the differences in the mean values of the items are low. Finland, Sweden and Austria have confirmands with the strongest social orientation. In Switzerland and Finland, we find the largest group of materially-oriented confirmands. The confirmands in Denmark are strongly motivated by the festivity dimension.

Finland and Norway have the largest percentage of confirmands who are traditionally oriented.

4.4.4 Fulfilment of Aims and Importance

At the beginning of the confirmation time, the confirmands were asked what motivated them to register for confirmation. The motivation of about half of the confirmands was socially, materially, festivity, traditionally and religiously oriented. Four out of ten were motivated by maturity, religious knowledge and ethical thinking. Many of the same topics were addressed in the second survey (t₂) at the end of the confirmation time, but then reformulated into statements about experiences. The experiences of the confirmation time do not follow the same ranking list. Interesting changes occur during the confirmation time.

Table 50: Fulfilment of aims

During my time in confirmation training ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M	SD	Applicable (5,6,7)	M total male	M total female
KB02: I have experienced a sense of community in the confirmation group.	5.48	1.52	76 % (+30)	5.41	5.55
KB01: I have learnt more about God and faith.	5.28	1.59	72 % (+32)	5.25	5.32
KB03: I have been able to come to my own decision about my faith.	4.99	1.63	64 % (+24)	4.95	5.03
KB08: I have been strengthened in my faith.	4.49	1.81	53 % (+13)	4.52	4.47
KB04: I have made an important step in growing up.	4.45	1.77	52 % (+14)	4.53	4.39
KB07: I have thought about what is good or bad for me and my life.	4.45	1.77	51 % (+22)	4.40	4.51

N=17813-17980. The numbers in brackets indicate the difference between motivation for confirmation (t₁) and the confirmands' experiences (t₂).

Socialising has been a success for many confirmands, especially for the girls. Three out of four report that they have experienced a sense of community in the confirmation group. Few confirmands were motivated by religious interest. At the end of the confirmation time, three out of four have learnt more about God and faith. The confirmation time has made a religious difference for the young people. First of all, it has helped the confirmands to acquire a subjective attitude to their personal religious life. Almost two out of three have been able to come to their own decision about their faith. The confirmation time has also made religious faith matter for half of the confirmands; they report that they have been strengthened in their faith. Confirmation time helps the confirmands

to mature. The percentage of those who experienced confirmation time as an important step in growing up (t_2) was higher than those confirmands who registered in order to take such steps (t_1). Every second confirmand sees that they made progress during the confirmation time: »I have made an important step in growing up.«

Table 51: Fulfilment of aims, according to country

During my time in confirmation training ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KB02: I have experienced a sense of community in the confirmation group.	5.48	5.32	5.34	5.44	5.56	5.48	5.66	6.13
KB01: I have learnt more about God and faith.	5.28	5.20	4.78	4.11	5.32	5.59	4.97	5.74
KB03: I have been able to come to my own decision about my faith.	4.99	4.83	4.63	4.15	4.93	5.70	4.76	5.38
KB08: I have been strengthened in my faith.	4.49	4.59	4.45	3.43	4.29	4.61	4.13	4.42
KB04: I have made an important step in growing up.	4.45	4.28	4.32	3.80	4.21	5.15	4.76	4.61
KB07: I have thought about what is good or bad for me and my life.	4.45	4.36	4.32	3.96	4.25	4.76	4.47	4.85

N = 17813-17980.

There are interesting differences between the confirmands in the seven countries concerning the mean values of social life, Christian knowledge, faith, maturity, and ethics. The effect of social life is strongest among the Swedish confirmands and the effect of maturity is strongest among the Finns. The topic Christian knowledge and the confirmands' possibility to come to their own decision about their faith make the biggest differences among the countries. The Swedish confirmands tend to have the highest value regarding the knowledge aspect (learnt more about God and faith) and Finnish confirmands the subjective aspect of faith (to come to my own decision about my faith). In several aspects the Swiss confirmands show a low positive effect from the confirmation time; confirmation only matters to a certain degree regarding faith, maturity and ethics to the Swiss confirmands. The maturity effect of confirmation is strongest among the Finnish and the Norwegian confirmands.

The surveys also address t_1 - and t_2 -survey questions about important dimensions of confirmation. Table 52 displays the t_2 -results, compared to the t_1 -results (that are reported in Table 48). The festivity dimension of the confirmation has a strong position among the confirmands, stronger than the material and religious dimensions. These three dimensions of the confirmation also indicate interesting gender differences (see chapter 4.6). Girls find festivity much more important than boys do, and boys find the material dimension of the confirmation much more important than girls do. Deviations are not as strong

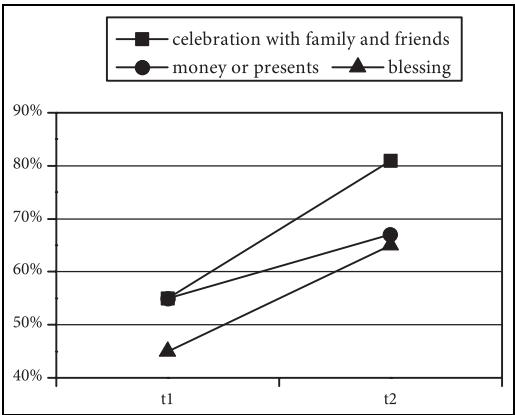
Table 52: Important aspects of the confirmation

What is important for you? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M	SD	Applicable (5,6,7)	M total male	M total female
KB09: It is important for me to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of confirmation.	5.83	1.53	81 % (+26)	5.73	5.93
KB10: It is important for me to get money or presents at the end.	5.19	1.80	67 % (+12)	5.47	4.91
KB11: It is important for me to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation.	5.03	1.75	65 % (+20)	4.91	5.15

N=17811-17874. The numbers in brackets indicate the difference between motivation for confirmation (t₁) and the confirmands' considerations at the end of the confirmation time (t₂).

with respect to the blessing, but here also girls consider it to be more important than the boys. It is very interesting to note, that the motive of money loses importance in relation to festivity and blessing as the confirmation time progresses (see Figure 11). All three motives ascend as confirmation approaches, but the importance of money rises much slower than that of the family party and the blessing.

Figure 11: Important aspects of the confirmation (average for all seven countries)



N = 19089-19136 (t₁); N = 17811-17874 (t₂).

4.4.5 Summary

How can we summarise the trends indicated by the confirmation survey relating to motivation and experience? The confirmands are motivated by several factors in their decision to register as a confirmand. About half of the confirmands are socially, materially, festivity, traditionally and religiously oriented in their motivation. Boys are more materially oriented in their motivation than girls, and girls are more socially and maturity oriented than boys. Few confirmands were motivated by religious knowledge. At the end of the confirmation time, three out of four have learnt more about God and faith. Changes occur in religious orientation during the confirmation time. It appears that a subjective approach to religion during the confirmation time is crucial. Almost two out of three have been able to come to their own decision about their faith. The social life has been a success for many confirmands too, especially for the girls. Three out of four report that they have experienced a sense of community in the confirmation group. Confirmation helps the confirmands to mature. Every second confirmand sees that they have made an important step in growing up. The festivity dimension of the confirmation (having a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of the confirmation) and the religious dimension of the confirmation day (receiving a blessing on the day of confirmation) have a strong position among the confirmands, and they become even stronger over time, more so than the material aspects, e.g., receiving money and other gifts.

4.5 Religious Change during Confirmation Time

KATI NIEMELÄ

4.5.1 Introduction

Confirmation time always has religious aims – as a part of baptismal training it is based on Jesus' commandment »... *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you* ...« (Matt. 28:20). However, there are differences between countries as to the main aim of the confirmation time. In some countries – like in Finland – the emphasis is most of all on faith; the confirmation time aims to strengthen the confirmands' faith in God. In some other countries, like in Denmark, the main emphasis is more on the cognitive dimension where »the preparation for confirmation [...] aims to strengthen the familiarity of the confirmand with the Christian teachings and the service of the Church of Denmark« (see chapter 3.4.1, p. 118).

This chapter deals with religious change – does it happen during confirmation period – and if so, how and why? When dealing with something that is called »religious«, it is important to clarify what is meant by religion and religiosity. I will analyse religious change during confirmation period from the following dimensions of religiosity: change in belief, change in religious knowledge, change in the relationship to the Church (commitment/affiliation) and change in religious behaviour (practice). I will look at the change in terms of the following perspectives: firstly, how confirmands themselves view whether there has been change during the confirmation period and secondly, if there has been a change in their answers in t_1 and t_2 questionnaires. Thirdly, I will compare these results with those answers that workers have given. That is, to what extent do workers' aims and experiences correspond with the same aims and experiences of the confirmands. Finally, after analysing the religious change, I will analyse reasons behind this change; what explains change, positive or negative. Quality theories suggest that satisfaction of a person, in this case a confirmand, is in connection with attitudinal change related to a service product, in this case Church and religiosity (see e.g., Grönroos 1990). It can be assumed that if the experiences of confirmation period are positive, religious changes will also be positive and that the converse will also be true.

When researching young people around the age of 13-15 and religious change, it is important to remember that the confirmation period is not the only experience in their life which may result in changes in religious views. This is among others also a time of important cognitive changes which as such may result in changes in religiosity (see e.g., Fowler 1981).

There has been a lot of research over the years indicating that religiosity tends to decrease after adolescence (see e.g., Hoge/Roozen 1979; Kääriäinen/Niemelä/Ketola 2005; Mikkola/Niemelä/Petterson 2007). This age-period is frequently accompanied by an increased distance from religious authority and a decrease in religious activity. For example, a newly published report of longitudinal research in the USA shows in a three-year-perspective that between the ages of 13-17 to 16-20, there is a decline in beliefs, religious affiliation and activity. Regarding specific beliefs, adolescents seem to shift away from conventional religious beliefs. The shift away from standard religiosity can also be seen in both their public and private religious practices (Denton/Pearce/Smith 2008). A Finnish longitudinal study in a 5-year-perspective indicated that the confirmation period may serve as a means of maintaining and activating religious observance among young people and preventing a retreat from religious authority and faith in general. The research indicated that during confirmation period there were both positive and negative changes in religiosity, but positive changes were by far more common. These changes partly faded afterwards, but even after five years they affected young people's perceptions of the church and religiosity. The outcomes were connected with the quality of the training; positive experiences in confirmation period correspond with positive religious outcomes. Those with a positive confirmation experience are, for example, more likely to stay members of the Church and are more willing to take part in church activities in adulthood (Niemelä 2008). Also in adulthood, confirmation period is often reported as being one of the important factors that have influenced one's image of the church – more often in a positive way. 55 % of Swedish adults reported that the confirmation time is a factor that changed their image of the church positively, 7 % negatively (Bromander 2005, 34).

4.5.2 Change in Religious Belief

That the confirmands are »strengthened in their faith« is one of the most important aims of confirmation workers. In all seven countries, the great majority of the workers see it as an important aim (differing from 87 % in Denmark to 97 % in Norway). There is much more variance in whether confirmation work should be used as a »missionary chance« for winning people for the Christian faith; it is important for many Norwegian (66 %) and German (58 %) workers, but not so important for Finnish (37 %) or Danish (39 %) workers.

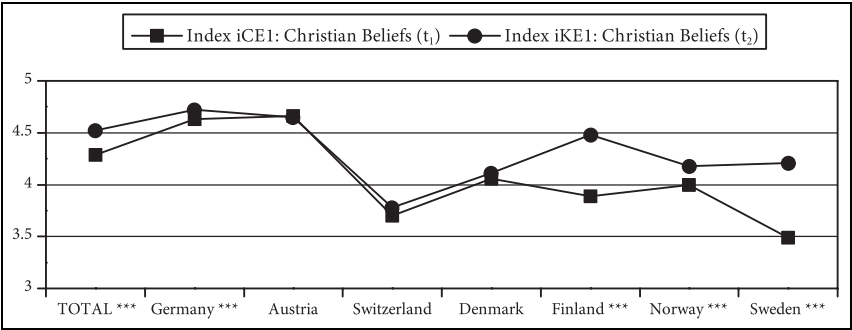
Being strengthened in faith is not so much an aim of the confirmands. In Sweden and Switzerland only one fifth of the confirmands registered for confirmation time »to be strengthened in their faith«. The figure is also rather low in Finland (25 %), but quite high in Germany (42 %) and Austria (39 %). When

asked at the end of confirmation period, it is the German confirmands together with the Finnish confirmands who most often feel that they have been strengthened in their faith (55 %). However, the figures are almost at the same level (45-53 %) in all of the other countries except in Switzerland (29 %). Among the Finnish confirmands the difference between expectancy and experience concerning growth in faith is by far the greatest. The Finns do not expect to be strengthened in their faith at the beginning but at the end they have been clearly strengthened.

But what is the actual change in belief items when we compare answers given by the confirmands at the beginning and at the end of the confirmation period? To identify this, answers given to five belief-items which were asked in both t_1 and t_2 will be analysed. These items form the index of Christian belief (iCE1/iKE1). The items included are: God created the world, God loves all humans and cares about each one of us, Jesus has risen from the dead, faith in God helps me in difficult situations, I believe in God.

When starting confirmation time, the German and Austrian confirmands are most in agreement with belief-items while the Swedish and Swiss confirmands are least in agreement. During confirmation period, the figures rise notably in Finland and in Sweden and to some extent also in Norway. In all other countries there is no change or the change is only minimal (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Change in »Christian belief« during confirmation period in the seven countries.



N = 13184 (only matched cases were used). Figure shows mean values at the beginning of confirmation period (t_1) and at the end (t_2). Scale 1 to 7 where 1 = minimum, 7 = maximum. The differences are significant for Germany, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

When we analyse the change on the individual level, we see that during training there are both, positive and negative shifts in beliefs. In Finland and Sweden, as many as one third (32-33 %) of the confirmands have shifted positively (change ≥ 1) in their beliefs, while only one in ten (11-12 %) has shifted negatively. In

other countries, there is no large difference in the number of those shifting in a positive (18-25 %) or negative (17-24 %) direction (see Table 53).

Table 53: Change in Christian belief-index on individual level in seven countries.

Difference iCE1 to iKE1	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
Negative change (≤ -1)	16 %	17 %	24 %	19 %	17 %	12 %	19 %	11 %
No change	60 %	62 %	58 %	59 %	61 %	55 %	56 %	57 %
Positive change (≥ 1)	24 %	21 %	18 %	22 %	22 %	33 %	25 %	32 %

N = 13184 (only matched cases were used).

4.5.3 Change in Religious Knowledge

The data show that the confirmation period increases religious knowledge in all countries at least to some extent. Two out of three of all confirmands report that during their confirmation period they have learnt more about faith and God (KB01). However, there are clear differences between the countries. The figures are very high in Sweden (81 %) and in Finland (80 %) and lowest in Switzerland (44 %). When these figures are compared with the aims of the confirmands when starting their confirmation time, it can be seen that the Swedes and especially the Finns learnt even though they did not intend to learn (see Table 54). At the beginning of confirmation period, only one fourth of the Finns (24 %) were hoping to learn more about God and faith, which is the lowest figure among the seven countries. The figure among the Swedes is one third (34 %). Germans and Danish confirmands had the highest intentions when starting their time (43-46 %).

When asked what they really learnt during the confirmation time, confirmands were also asked additional questions which relate to religious knowledge. Two of them were asked in all countries: learning about other religions and learning about life after death.

Learning about other religions is not very important in any of the seven countries. German, Austrian and Swiss workers put somewhat more emphasis on it (see workers' interest in different topics) which also seems to result in more learning. Confirmands in these countries feel that they have learnt more about other religions than confirmands in other countries.

Regarding learning about life after death, the Swedish confirmands score highest. More than two thirds (69 %) of the Swedish confirmands feel that they have learnt about life after death while only a little more than one third (35-39 %) of the confirmands in Switzerland, Austria and Norway feel this way.

Table 54: Expectations and experiences related to religious knowledge

Item	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KB01: I have learnt more about God and faith.	72 %	70 %	59 %	44 %	74 %	80 %	64 %	81 %
CB01: To learn more about God and faith.	40 %	46 %	34 %	25 %	43 %	24 %	29 %	34 %
KB14: I have learnt about life after death.	48 %	45 %	37 %	35 %	54 %	53 %	39 %	69 %
KB15: I have learnt more about other religions.	30 %	33 %	30 %	37 %	30 %	26 %	19 %	25 %
CK02: To learn central Christian texts by heart (e. g., a Creed).	39 %	35 %	40 %	35 %	42 %	44 %	35 %	56 %
WC03: The confirmands should learn central Christian texts by heart	58 %	61 %	42 %	13 %	78 %	74 %	54 %	33 %
VC03: The confirmands learnt central Christian texts by heart	77 %	82 %	55 %	8 %	97 %	98 %	54 %	45 %

N = 17796-19208 (confirmands); N = 2041-2304 (workers)

Learning by heart seems to be a high priority in Finland and Denmark, where three out of four of the workers (74-78 %) regard learning by heart as an important aim. Also nearly all workers (97-98 %) in these two countries see that the confirmands also have learnt Christian texts by heart during their confirmation period. Also in Germany, learning by heart is given quite a lot of emphasis by workers. At the same time in Switzerland, learning by heart seems to play no role at all. Also in Sweden it is given little emphasis.

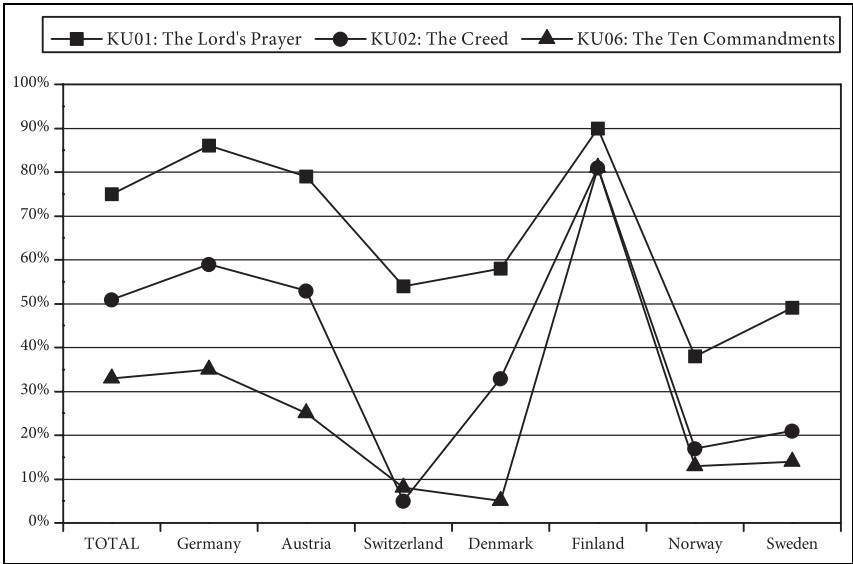
These figures correspond with the actual knowledge of the confirmands (cf. Figure 13). At the end of confirmation period, most of the Finnish confirmands know the Lord’s Prayer, a Christian Creed and the Ten Commandments by heart. The figures are also high in Germany and Austria, while they are low in Switzerland, Norway and Sweden.

4.5.4 Change in Religious Practice

When starting confirmation period, the German and Austrian confirmands are most active in religious practice. They think about God and pray privately and together with others more actively than confirmands in other countries. One third of the confirmands in these two countries pray at least once a week, while less than one fifth of the confirmands in Denmark, Sweden and Finland pray that often. In Switzerland and Norway, one fourth of the confirmands pray at least once a week when they start their confirmation period.

During confirmation period there is relevant change in religious practice only in two countries, Finland and Sweden. However, after this increase, the religious behaviour in these two countries is still on a lower level than it was in Germany and Austria at the beginning of confirmation period. Table 55 shows the change in religious behaviour in seven countries (based on an index

Figure 13: Percentage of confirmands who know central texts by heart (t_2)



N=17714-17805.

of 3 items: praying privately and praying together with others and thinking about God).

Table 55: Religious practice and its change from t_1 to t_2 (iCH1/iKH1)

Item	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
Index iCH1: Religious practice (t_1)	2.32	2.50	2.42	1.97	2.09	2.00	2.12	2.00
Index iKH1: Religious practice (t_2)	2.39	2.52	2.4	2.01	2.08	2.28	2.13	2.30
Change	0.06	0.02	-0.02	0.04	-0.01	0.28	0.01	0.30
Sig. (paired t-test)	***	*				***		***

N=13315 (only matched cases were used). Table reports mean values at the beginning of confirmation period (t_1) and at the end (t_2) and change in means. Scale 1 to 5 where 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=once a week, 4=several times a week, 5=daily.

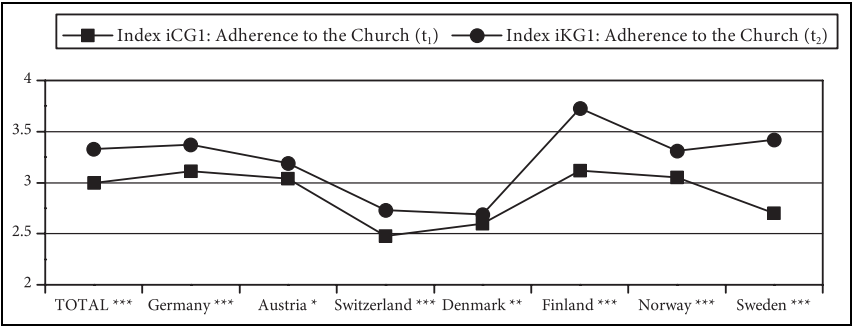
4.5.5 Change in Relationship to the Church

How about attitudes towards the Church and church membership? To what extent do they change? We look at this change by analysing the index »Adherence to Church« (iCG1/iKG1) which consists of four items which measure im-

portance of church membership, willingness to turn to a minister with problems, meaning of a church building and willingness to take part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.

At the beginning of the confirmation time, German and Finnish confirmands score highest in their relationship to the Church, and Swiss, Danes and Swedes lowest. At the end of the training, Finnish confirmands are by far the most positive in their answers. Their answers have changed on an average of +0.61. The Swedish confirmands represent the second highest; they have changed in their attitude with an average of +0.72 (cf. Figure 14).

Figure 14: Change in relationship to the Church (iCG1/iKG1)



N = 19161 (t₁); N = 17843 (t₂).

Among German, Norwegian and Swiss confirmands there are also some positive changes (+0.25 to 0.26) in church adherence, but the changes are notably smaller than in Sweden and Finland. In Austria and especially in Denmark, there are hardly any changes.

The differences in the relationship to church adherence between the seven countries can be illustrated by looking at the interest in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation (KG08). At the end of the confirmation period, as many as 48 % of the Finnish confirmands and 32 % of the Swedish confirmands were interested in taking part in a Christian youth group. The same figure among the Danes is only 7 % and among the Swiss confirmands 9 %. In Germany, Austria and Norway, the figure lies between 20-26 %.

It seems that the positive figures of Swedish confirmands are also a surprise to their leaders. When the workers were asked about their estimates of the confirmands' connection to the parish (VC05; VC06), the Swedish workers are most negative after the Danish workers. At this point it can be said that the Danish workers are realistic, but the Swedish workers are too pessimistic. One reason behind that might be the fact, that some of the confirmation centres in Sweden are organised independently from the parish. Thus, confirmands might

be interested in Christian youth work but they would not associate it with groups or activities offered by the local parish. The positive figures from Finland are no surprise to Finnish workers who score highest in their estimates and also in their aims; it is the Finnish workers who are also most interested in binding confirmands to the parish. The Danish workers, however, score lowest in their aims.

4.5.6 What Explains Change in Religiosity?

What explains the better results in Sweden and Finland compared to other countries? Quality theories suggest that satisfaction of a confirmand leads to a positive outcome in attitudes related to church and religiosity. The data show that these two countries with most changes in religiosity are also countries with most satisfied confirmands (see Table 43 in chapter 4.2.1). In Sweden and Finland, only 4-5 % of the confirmands are not satisfied while nearly nine in ten report satisfaction. In other countries, the majority of the confirmands are satisfied with their confirmation period, but figures are lower than in Finland and Sweden (ranging from 63 % in Denmark to 72 % in Norway).

The Swedish and Finnish confirmands score highest when measuring both the satisfaction with fun in the group and satisfaction with liturgical experiences. Confirmation period seems to have been a positive experience for them both socially and spiritually. They are most happy with their camp period, most happy with the content of lessons and also most happy with their leaders. The Swedish confirmands differ from others especially by high satisfaction rates in »having fun«.

The data show that the satisfaction of the confirmands correlates positively with religious change. The Spearman Correlation coefficient for Change in Christian belief and Satisfaction with the group experiences is $r_{\text{DIFF_iCE1/iKN1}} = 0.20^{***}$; and for Change in Christian belief and satisfaction with liturgical experience is $r_{\text{DIFF_iCE1/iKN2}} = 0.23^{***}$. These correlations are highest in Sweden with the respective *r*-values of 0.24 and 0.32. The difference is clearly visible in Sweden: 39 % of those satisfied with liturgical experience scored higher (≥ 1) in the Belief-index at the end of training than at the beginning. Those who were not satisfied (scored 1-3), represent only 6 %.

What lies behind the better success in confirmation work and more satisfied confirmands in Sweden and Finland? There seems to be something closer to life in the confirmation work of these two countries. When comparing workers' aims in teaching, there is more emphasis on life-related topics in Sweden and Finland than in the other countries. Workers in these two countries consider such topics as body and sexuality, violence and crime, friendship, justice and

responsibility for others as more important than workers in other countries – topics that are of high interest to confirmands. There is, therefore, better correspondence with teachers' and confirmands' interest in topics in Sweden and Finland than in other countries. It is also worth noticing that the teachers' interest in life-related topics does not mean that they are less interested in issues related to Christian dogma – the Finnish workers score highest on that and the Swedes also slightly above average.

Has the success of confirmation work in Finland and Sweden something to do with the better motivation of confirmation workers in these countries? This might apply to Sweden, where confirmation workers are most positive about doing the work. However, this does not explain the case in Finland where the workers' interest in confirmation work is at the same level as in Denmark and Switzerland.

However, there is one thing in common for Sweden and Finland and not for the other countries. That is the long camp period. Swedish and Finnish confirmands have on an average the longest camp-periods. In Sweden camps last, on an average, as many as 11 days, in Finland 8 days. In Germany, Austria and Switzerland camps last on the average 3 days, in Norway less than two days and in Denmark there is often no camp at all.

Looking at the data on a unit-level (aggregated data), the length of a camp period correlates with satisfaction with the group experience at level $r_{VQ05/iKN1} = 0.34^{***}$ and with satisfaction with liturgical service at even $r_{VQ05/iKN2} = 0.41^{***}$. The length of a camp period also correlates positively with religious change. The length of a camp correlates with religious change by $r_{VQ05/DIFF_iCE1} = 0.25^{***}$, with change in church adherence by $r_{VQ05/DIFF_iCG1} = 0.21^{***}$ and with change in religious practice by $r_{VQ05/DIFF_iCE1} = 0.23^{***}$. The length of a camp period correlates with religious change most strongly in Austria where the correlation coefficients differ from 0.48^{**} – 0.56^{**} . In other countries there is no correlation, partly due to the fact that there is minimal variance in the length of camp period.

4.5.7 Summary

I have analysed religious change from four perspectives: change in belief, change in religious knowledge, change in religious behaviour and change in church adherence. The results show that there are two countries where there is notably more religious change during confirmation period than in other countries. Finland and Sweden differ from the other countries by having more confirmands with positive religious change when self-evaluations of the confirmands are analysed at the end of confirmation time and even more so when

changes in answers in t_1 and t_2 are analysed. Especially in terms of religious behaviour, church adherence and religious belief, there is more positive change among Finnish and Swedish confirmands than among other confirmands. The differences in religious knowledge are not that clear. In five other countries there is only little or no religious change at all. Especially the results in religious change in Austria and Denmark are minimal.

What explains the better outcomes in Sweden and Finland compared to other countries? Like the quality theories suggest, the data show that satisfaction of a confirmand leads to more positive outcomes in attitudes related to church and religiosity. Satisfaction of the confirmands correlates positively with religious change. The correlation is strongest in Sweden.

All in all, the confirmands in Finland and Sweden are most satisfied with their confirmation experience. The analysis suggests that there is something closer to life in the Finnish and Swedish confirmation time. The topics handled seem to be closer to confirmands' life than in other countries. One very important feature is a long camp period. The length of a camp period correlates positively with both religious change and satisfaction.

4.6 Gender and Confirmation Work

THOMAS SCHLAG AND LEISE CHRISTENSEN

4.6.1 General Reflections on Gender and Confirmation Work

The time of adolescence is intensely marked not only by questions of self-orientation and internal self-regulation concerning the individual conduct of life (cf. Gestsdottir/Lerner 2008), but also by the desire to distinguish one's own personality and sexuality in the horizon of increasing self-observation and interpersonal orientation. In connection with this, young people can feel a strong need to compare themselves with other people of their own age group and especially with ones of the other sex and their habits.

Due to this highly sensitive and comparative attitude towards their peers, it can be observed that this can very often either lead to a strong distance or a deep attraction and fascination towards their peers. Therefore, the mutual perception of the opposite sex and the willingness to acknowledge each other and work together can be rather instable and precarious.

Gender studies in the field of human biology and developmental psychology show that especially during the period between 12 and 18 years of age, there are not only deep changes in growing up, but also significant differences between boys and girls, due to hormonal and social factors with specific-effects on male as well as female young people (cf. Lerner 1999a; 1999b). »Gender identity« can, therefore, in a broader sense be defined as »an individual's self-conception as being a male or female, as distinguished from actual biological sex« (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007). Like an individual's concept of his or her sex role, gender identity develops by means of parental example, social reinforcement and language. So age and gender play an important role in the modulation of adolescent behavioural autonomy. »Gender modulates the self-image of the adolescent« (Fleming 2005, 36). But it has also to be said that gender identity is »performatively constituted by the very ›expressions‹ that are said to be its results« (Butler 1990, 25 and recently in a more differentiating sense, cf. Butler 2009).

That can clearly be seen in the delayed development amongst the male compared to the female young people. Girls seem to mature earlier than boys and develop certain abilities like self-reflection, communicative expression and mutual understanding earlier than boys (cf. Martin, 1996). It can also be seen that they gain competences to interact in a cognitive and reflected way some years before the boys. This, of course, does not mean that boys do not have to cope

with intensive developmental processes. But what seems to differ strongly is the concrete age of developing the competences mentioned above.

These differences and effects are currently widely reflected in education theory which stresses the need to take into account not only the different habits and attitudes of young men and women but also the common needs of both sexes. Behind this lies the conviction that gender equity in and through education helps to »make a more gender equitable, productive, and peaceful society« (Klein 2007, 1; cf. Grenz 2008; Ostrouch/Ollagnier 2008).

Confirmation work is not a separate space and time of adolescence, but highly influenced by these gender-related developments because the gender-question is also relevant for the individual and common perception and performance of religion. Religious traditions and education play an important role for the construction of gender (cf. Renahan 2009; Hofmann 2004). So it is clear that confirmation time can not just ignore the specific social conditions and developments of male and female young people. But it has to be said that gender-related or gender-specific attitudes and perceptions of confirmands have not been examined closely in confirmation work research so far.

4.6.2 Data

In the horizon of the gender perspective of the study, we first look at the overall international data. As a criterion to estimate some aspect as gender-significant, a T-test has been run on the results. Only significant differences are reported. But, as even small differences are significant due to the high number of confirmands involved in the study, we have chosen to call relevant a difference between males and females in mean values of 0.3 or more. If there is a »-« in front of the number (e.g., -0.47) this means that the item is approved more strongly by the girls, if there is no »-« (e.g., 0.36) this means that the item is approved more strongly by the boys. But it also has to be mentioned that the deviation in the certain items does not automatically say something about general gender tendencies throughout the countries that have been examined, because the average result of all countries is not automatically congruent with the national data. Therefore, in case of high deviation, national results will be mentioned as well. Together with the deviation number, we also give the mean value (from 1 = not applicable to 7 = totally applicable) to show the level of affirmation and rejection of the particular item.

In a second part (II.2) additional gender specific results from the different countries will be presented to give more detailed information on the countries' »gender profile« of the expectations and perceptions of confirmation work.

Due to the very different workers' profiles in the countries as well as in the

parishes – e.g., the different professional and voluntary backgrounds of male and female workers – this chapter will focus on the confirmands only.

Overall International Data

Looking at the reasons why confirmands register for confirmation time, it can be seen that the extrinsic motives of the male confirmands are in most countries higher than that of the female confirmands. On the item »because my parents wanted me to do so« (CA06) the mean is 3.55(m) compared to 3.19(f). The gender gap on that question – which is 0.36 on average – is the largest in Denmark with 0.70. The motive »to get money or presents at the end« (CB10) – which is 0.62 on the average – is also higher; 4.94(m) compared to 4.32(f). On the other side, girls show a higher interest »to experience community in the confirmation group« (-0.34; CB02). They also have a more positive attitude towards going on daytrips or retreats/camp with the group (-0.36; CK06). The motive »to be allowed to be a godparent« (CB05), which was only asked in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Finland, is also stated to be of more relevance amongst the girls (-0.83); 4.46(f) compared to 3.63(m).

The girls also have higher expectations of the confirmation year concerning questions of their own life and faith orientation. It is more important for the girls »to find my own point of view concerning my own life« (-0.42; CK01). That the »questions concerning faith will play a role« is also more important for the girls (-0.38; CK11) with a large gender gap, especially in Sweden (-1.00; CK11).

Asked what they think about the Church, on the average the female confirmands are more likely to have their children baptised (-0.33; CG03). Still, both sexes answer this question on a high level: 6.38(f) compared to 6.05(m). Although at a rather low level, the female confirmands in most countries are more interested »in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation« (-0.34; CG08); 2.86 compared to 2.52(m). Very clearly, the girls in all the countries are much more interested »to sing or make music together« (-0.90; CK07); here the gender difference in Finland and Sweden is extremely high.

This somehow more positive attitude towards the confirmation year as such amongst the girls is also connected with the interest in certain topics. The girls are more interested in:

- baptism (-0.65; CL01) with the largest gender gap in Norway (-1.11),
- in other religions (-0.59; CL07) with the highest difference in Switzerland (-0.82),
- justice and responsibility for others (-0.70; CL08), especially high in Sweden (-1.08),
- friendship (-0.59; CL09): 6.24(f) compared to 5.65(m), with an especially high gender difference in the Scandinavian countries,

- violence and crime (-0.70; CL10) and
- the meaning of life (-0.47; CL11): 5.28(f) compared to 4.85(m).

Not only the attitudes but also the gaps in the attitudes towards the confirmation year and its contents remain more or less the same at the end of the year. On the average, it is still much more important for the boys »to get money or presents at the day of my confirmation« (0.56; KB10); 5.47(m) compared to 4.91(f). Still a higher number of girls say towards the end of the year that they want to have their children baptised (-0.31; KG03); 6.42(f) compared to 6.11(m). To be »interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation« (-0.45; KG08) is also mainly a point for female confirmands. That they »became motivated to help in the church as a voluntary worker« (-0.35; KK27) is affirmed by girls more highly; 3.37(f) compared to 3.02(m). At the end of the year the boys seem to be more open to turn to a minister, »if I should have personal problems« (0.31; KG06).

The more positive affirmation of the female confirmands towards the whole confirmation time and its contents is also reflected in the horizon of perception and participation. The experiences they made during the year are estimated slightly more positively, so for example, that »my commitment to other people is important« (-0.44; KK44). That »my commitment to peace is important« is on the average also higher on the girls' side (-0.32; KK46). Obviously, the girls are also more satisfied with camp(s) (-0.30; KN11) as well as »music, songs and singing« (-0.52; KN14). Although not to a high degree, the boys in most countries tend to be more ashamed »to tell my friends that I am taking part in confirmation training« (KE07), here especially in Austria (0.83), Denmark (0.36), Norway (0.44) and Sweden (0.33).

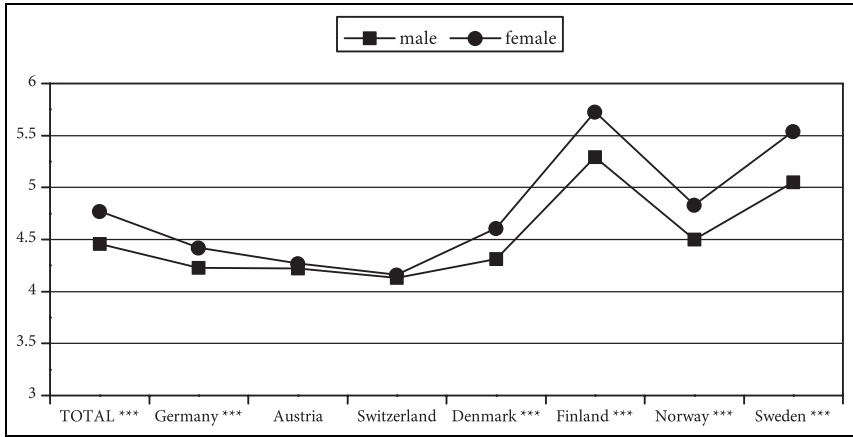
These impressions can also be proved by the Index »Satisfaction with liturgical experiences« (iKN2) that shows a higher satisfaction amongst the girls; 4.77(f) compared to 4.46(m) (cf. Figure 15). A similar effect with the strongest deviances in the Scandinavian countries shows up in the case of the Index »Ethical learning« (iKK2) with higher effects on the side of the female confirmands; 4.47(f) compared to 4.17(m) (cf. Figure 16).

Therefore, it is not surprising that for the male confirmands taking part in confirmation training is more stressful (0.35; KK10): 3.12(m) compared to 2.77(f). There is also a clear tendency amongst the boys to »prefer being confirmed without the confirmation time beforehand« (0.52; KK41); 3.82(m) compared to 3.30(f).

National Data

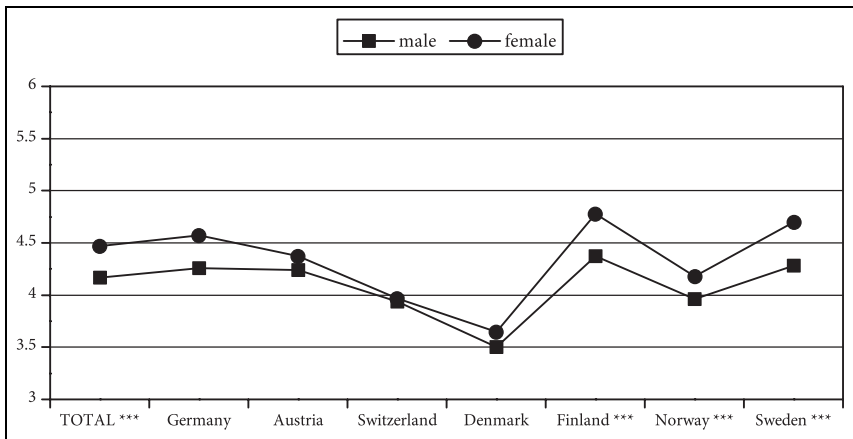
It can be seen, that there are gender differences in the countries which are not representative for all of the countries but for specific situations, and these are

Figure 15: Mean values for index iKN2 »Satisfaction with liturgical experiences« by gender



N = 17550. Scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high).

Figure 16: Mean values for index iKK2 »Ethical learning« by gender



N = 17466. Scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high).

not, in all cases, what one would expect. To understand these differences, one must look at least in some cases more deeply into the national results.

First of all, one has to say, that the results in *Germany* on the gender issue are nearest to the overall mean average – which is, for the most part, a statistical phenomenon as the number of German confirmands in the weighted sample exceeds every other country by far.

In *Austria*, some results are quite astonishing. There are many items that are

ticked by the boys at a significantly higher rate than by the girls. The reasons to have registered for confirmation time are higher for the male confirmands on the following items: »to learn more about God and faith« (0.30; CB01), »to make an important step in growing up« (0.54; CB04), »to be strengthened in my faith« (0.37; CB08), »to receive a blessing on the day of my confirmation« (0.30; CC11). Also some important statements on theology and the Church are in Austria more positive on the boys' than on the girls' side; for example, the item »Jesus has risen from the dead« (0.38; CE04), »Faith helps me in difficult situations« (0.53; CE08), »I try to live according to the Ten Commandments« (0.36; CE11) – and even the items »It is important for me to belong to the Church« (0.34; CG01) and »Our church building means a lot to me« (0.52; CG07). The boys also show a higher interest in the topics »Jesus Christ« (0.49; CL05) and the Bible (0.55; CL06). This positive affirmation of the male confirmands on these items is also repeated at the end of the year. And they also tick significantly higher than the girls on the items: »It feels good to me, when we pray in our group« (0.30; KK49) and »What we do during confirmation time is more interesting than what is usually done in school« (0.34; KK50). Interestingly enough at the end of the year, the Austrian girls have a more positive perception of the »community in the confirmation group« (-0.49; KB02) or had more »the feeling of community« (-0.52; KN04) and liked more »the action« (-0.35; KK05).

Some similar results can be seen in *Switzerland*. Here also the boys registered for confirmation time more than the girls »to be strengthened in my faith« (0.32; CB08) and ranked higher for the statements »Jesus has risen from the dead« (0.32; CE04), »I believe in God« (0.40; KE09) and »I know what the Christian faith entails« (0.38; KE10). They are also significantly more interested in the topics »Course and meaning of Sunday services« (0.31; CL03), »Jesus Christ« (0.56; CL05), the Bible (0.31; CL06). At the end of the year, these interests seem to be somehow fulfilled. So the boys state significantly higher that »I have learnt more about religions« (0.31; KB15). They still say more than the girls that »Jesus has risen from the dead« (0.31; KE04) and – like the Austrian male confirmands – they also tick significantly higher than the girls on the item »It feels good to me, when we pray in our group« (0.36; KK49). Nevertheless at the end of the year, the Swiss boys appreciate more than the girls that they had fun (0.39; KN02) and the feeling of community (0.31; KN04).

In *Denmark*, the results show that female confirmands have a higher positive attitude towards classical topics of confirmation work. As an important motive they emphasise more »to come to my own decision about my faith« (-0.32; CB03). Also, their belief in God (-0.34; CE09) and that »God loves all humans and cares about each of us« (-0.36; KE03) is stronger. They want to learn about Jesus Christ (-0.34; CL05) and the Bible (-0.36; CL06) more than their male

peers. At the end of the year, their belief in God (-0.42; KE09), that »God created the world« (-0.38; KE01) and that »there is life after death« (-0.30; KE02) is also stronger. And it is also more important for the girls, »to belong to the Church« (-0.48; KG01). In connection with this, they emphasise more strongly, that »we had a lot of action« (-0.31; KK05) and »fun« (-0.33; KN02) and that they »experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (-0.56; KK30). In connection with this, the self-description of the girls at the beginning and at the end of the year of being a Christian (-0.31/-0.42; CG09/KG09), a religious person (-0.38/-0.31; CG11/KG11) and being a »spiritual person« (-0.28/-0.20; CG12/KG12) is significantly higher than for the boys, whereas the latter state higher »I am an atheist« (0.45/0.48; CG14/KG14). The Danish results might have something to do with the fact that half of the workers are women and that in Denmark there are no male or female volunteers.

In *Finland*, it seems that the girls are much more involved in the confirmation work than the boys, emotionally as well as intellectually. They are not only much more eager »to experience community in the confirmation group« (-0.51; CB02), »to meet and get to know friends« (-0.91; CB06) and »have a lot of action« (-0.71; CK05) but they also have higher expectations »to think about what is good and bad for me and my life« (-0.32; CB07) and »to be allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands« (-0.47; CK04). So they are, as mentioned above, more interested in certain topics related to everyday life and mutual communication than the boys. The girls are obviously not as uncertain what to believe as the boys are (-0.38; CE05). Also at the end of the year, they have a more positive perception of what has happened during that time, probably due to the higher participation. The girls have attended the Sunday services more regularly (-0.34; KK09) and have a more positive attitude towards church services (-0.30; KN10) and prayers in the group (-0.39; KN13). Again, two questions that were only used in the Nordic countries, are also of interest here. The girls' self-description of being »a Lutheran« at the beginning (-0.30; CG10) and the end (-0.30; KG10) is not only higher than being »a Christian« (-0.23/-0.22; CG09/KG09) but also higher than the boys' self-description on that point. Only on a few items is the average mean of the boys significantly higher. They feel more »obliged to take part« (0.33; CA05), they state higher »to pray by myself« at the beginning (0.30; CH02) and the end (0.36; KH02) of the year and they could imagine more to turn to a minister in case of problems (0.59; KG06). Nevertheless the confirmation training has obviously been more stressful for the boys (0.34; KK10). At the end of the year, the tendency to call oneself an atheist is also significantly higher (0.32; CG14) amongst the male confirmands, although this mean value declines at the end of the year (0.27; KG14).

These tendencies in gender differences are very close to the results in *Norway*.

Here also the girls' attitudes and their interests in the contents of the confirmation year are obviously more positive. The boys' motives are more extrinsic like that they felt obliged to take part (0.45; CA05), for example, because of their grandparents' wishes (0.43; CA07) and they want to have »a lot of action« (0.31; CK05). For the girls it is more »important to belong to the Church« (-0.47; CG01), to »attend the group meetings of the confirmation training« (-0.56; CK08); they know more »what the Christian faith entails« (-0.31; CE10) and they are interested in topics like the Lord's Supper (-0.33; CL02) and their »own parish« (-0.35; CL04). At the end of the year they are more secure than the boys about »what I should believe« (-0.30), for example, that there is »life after death« (-0.34; KE02), they attended the Sunday services more regularly (-0.33; KK09) and felt in the parish »welcome and accepted« (-0.31; KK37). The girls call themselves at the beginning and at the end much more a Christian (-0.50/-0.37; CG09/KG09) and a »religious person« (-0.37/-0.35; CG11/KG11), whereas the boys rather choose the self-description »I am an atheist« (0.41/0.39; CG14/KG14). Nevertheless on the average, the male confirmands rather than the female confirmands say that they pray by themselves – at the end of the year even more than at the beginning (0.28/0.31; CH02/KH02).

Looking at the emotional and cognitive perception of confirmation work, the gender differences between female and male confirmands seem to be the highest in *Sweden*. Almost all positive attitudes are on the side of the girls. They not only expect fun to a higher extent (-0.69; KN02), »a lot of action« (-0.53; CK05), look forward much more than the boys to the group meetings (-1.05; CK08) and church services (-0.83; CK09). But they want to »learn more about God and faith« (-0.34; CB01), to »experience community in the confirmation group« (-0.65; CB02), »to come to my own decision about my faith« (-0.60; CB03), »to meet and get to know friends« (-0.73; CB06) and »to think about what is good and bad for me and my life« (-0.54; CB07). They not only want much more than the boys »to increase my knowledge about the Bible« (-0.37; CB13), »to talk about life after death« (-0.42; CB14) and »to experience the presence of God« (-0.36; CK14), they are also much more interested in themes like »other Christian denominations« (-0.32; CL15), »care of the Environment/ Ecology« (-0.38; CL16), the Ten Commandments (-0.34; CL17) and the Holy Spirit (-0.34; CL19). It seems to be more »important for them to belong to the Church« (-0.33; KG01) and they are more convinced, »that the church does a lot of good things for the people« (-0.33; KG05). They are more interested in topics like the Lord's Supper (-0.36; CL02), course and meaning of Sunday services (-0.30; CL03), their own parish (-0.39; CL04) and the topic »Jesus Christ« (-0.33; CL05). These positive expectations of the Swedish confirmands are obviously fulfilled at the end of the year. Especially the girls say that they not only had a lot of action (-0.33; KK05) and experienced »good examples for respect

among people with different convictions (-0.39; KK33), but that »my questions concerning faith were addressed« (-0.35; KK11) and that they »have become (more) conscious of my responsibility for ecological problems« (-0.48; KK45). The girls are more secure that »there is life after death« (-0.62; KE02) and that »God loves all humans and cares about each of us« (-0.34; KE03). Therefore, it is still more important for the girls »to belong to the Church« (-0.34; KG01). The perception of prayers in the group is much higher than on the boys' side (-0.49; KN13). They not only appreciated the »contents/topics of the lessons« more (-0.47; KN03) but also the church services (-0.31; KN10).

4.6.3 Interpretation

Looking at the overall results, it seems to be clear that the classical contents and also the group-oriented methods of confirmation work are approved of and appreciated by the female more than by the male confirmands. It looks as if the intentions of confirmation work to contribute to faith- and life-orientation, to communicate about religion and to develop ways of group interaction and church participation fit much more with the general habits of girls during this time of adolescence. The girls are obviously more interested in speaking about faith-related questions and they seem to be more open to communicate, interact and express their feelings in the confirmation group, whereas the boys, for example, in Switzerland and Austria are more interested in getting information about their own and other religions.

But looking at the national results more closely, it has to be said that there are of course differences in the perception of the confirmation time amongst male and female confirmands that are especially connected with national traditions as well as the concrete models of and experiences with confirmation work in the different countries. In addition to the general gender difference and the clear gender specific phenomena in all of the countries, there seem to be gender related specific perceptions in the different countries also depending not only on the certain national traditions of confirmation work but also on the general religious situation. So, for example, the Austrian results might mirror the fact that the Protestant Church is a minority church. Maybe the idea of being a minority influences the boys more than the girls and therefore they are more positive towards church and faith questions.

Looking at the results it can also be suggested that where confirmation has become an individual choice rather than something everyone does, girls are more likely to participate – this is very much the case in Sweden.

Nevertheless, one has to be careful about clichés. First of all, it has to be noticed that the boys' appreciation of confirmation work and its contents are

not small at all. There are many items which show a clear interest on the part of the male confirmands, e.g., about faith and life orientation, community or group interaction. Throughout the examined countries it is obvious that boys appreciate their confirmation time, their group and also the ministers not much less than the girls. This is clearly seen on the item that they are more likely to contact a minister in case of personal problems than the girls, as well as their high affirmation of having their own children baptised some day. Above that, the boys' interest in issues like »justice and responsibility for others«, »friendship« or the »meaning of life« is also on a high level.

Secondly, by looking at the level of appreciation of the different items, there is obviously always a number of boys interested in making music, singing and expressing their thoughts and feelings. Vice versa, there are always some girls who rather prefer to express themselves by forms of outside activities rather than group discussions or singing, not to mention that they also do not mind getting money and presents at the end of the year.

Thirdly, due to the specific adolescent development, it seems as if the boys need some sort of inner space to think about questions which are important to them. This can be noticed especially where they prefer to pray for themselves instead of praying in the group and where they also show a clear desire to receive a blessing on the day of their confirmation.

The boys' attitudes can be interpreted as a gender specific form of keeping and hiding their important questions for themselves and trying to distance themselves from common conventions whereas more girls tend to accommodate to these conventions or make their emotions expressive. The Scandinavian results may be due to the fact that in most of these countries, church has begun to be mainly run by women.

From the results so far, it can not be seen clearly, whether certain models of confirmation work in the countries enlarge or reduce the gender gap. But it has to be noticed that especially in the Scandinavian countries, confirmation work seems to be more attractive for the girls which might be connected with the fact that participative forms are a main characteristic of the whole confirmation time.

4.6.4 Consequences and Impacts for Future Confirmation Work

The main problem, as far as it can be seen on the present basis, could be a didactical structure of confirmation work that does not fit well enough with boys' interests and competences. There could be a problematic connection between education, faith and feminization, as if confirmation time was only something »soft«. Especially certain communicative and creative approaches

to faith issues and church themes tend to involve girls more than boys. It should be clear that the educational goal of, from a gender perspective, better serving girls must not entail neglecting the boys. Rather the opposite might be the case, so that hopefully the pressure to adjust to traditional roles, behaviours, ways of thinking and modes of acting decreases for boys as well.

Looking at this, some points should be emphasised. For future confirmation work there is a need to develop more forms which rely not so much on the expression of personal views and feelings but on open space and time for individual reflection about life-, faith- and spirituality-related questions (cf. Lerner et al. 2006) so that boys can have the feeling to really be involved with their personal questions and answers (cf. Knauth et al. 2002; Ahrens/Pithan 2002; in general cf. Horne/Kiselica 1999).

If confirmation work wants to have a sustainable effect on the identification with the Church, it is necessary to develop attractive youth work opportunities especially for male young people. Here it looks as if the group activities as well as the Church services offered by the church workers are not open enough for the specific needs and perceptions of the male confirmands.

And looking at the general tendencies of the results, it is also a special task for confirmation work to enforce the dialogue between the girls and boys. By taking into consideration the boys' and girls' interest on an equal level, both sides could mutually benefit from their specific strengths, capabilities and possible contributions (cf. Burbach/Schlottau 2001). This might lead to a gender-balanced confirmation work that counteracts all sorts of stereotypes, so that the gender-gap does not, at least, enlarge during the confirmation year and time that they share as equals in their parishes and churches.

To achieve this, the main common perspective for all confirmands should be to encourage faith-reflection and spirituality in its fullest sense – mentally, relationally, and experientially in the sense of »not just learning about God, but also experiencing God and growing through a walk of faith« (Ratcliff 2002).

This would not only be a contribution of church work to the confirmands and the parishes, but also in a broader sense to society and its unsolved gender-problems as well. Even if the Church can not solve the problem of established gender differences alone, it is by no means operating by itself, but as a relevant institution in society. Therefore, the Church as a public actor and factor in society should understand itself not only as influenced by the cultural and social images and conceptions of gender, which are forming the confirmands' attitudes, values and approaches to religion, but also as a relevant factor to counteract gender-related conventions which prevent young people from developing their interests and participating equally in Church and society.

4.7 Does Confirmation Work Contribute to Civil Society?

PER PETTERSSON AND HENRIK SIMOJOKI

4.7.1 Introduction

Each year about half a million young people between the age of 14 and 16 are confirmed in the seven countries that participated in this study. This means that during the last ten years, only with respect to these seven countries and within the Protestant setting, 5 million Europeans have passed through this kind of religious formation. The question we raise in this chapter is if this pedagogic activity has any influence or effect on society at large, and if so, what this impact consists of. Or to put it the other way around, would it make any difference to society if none of these adolescents had taken part in confirmation work?

Our scope and task in this chapter is restricted to a comparative analysis of empirical data from our two surveys among young people and church workers at the beginning and at the end of the confirmation period. We will focus on the possible contribution of confirmation work 1) to social interaction and participation, 2) to ethical commitment and 3) to volunteerism. The aim is to develop a tentative theoretical understanding of the possible societal impact of confirmation work in Europe.

4.7.2 Confirmation Work and Societal Change

The historical and sociological lines drawn in the country chapters of this book show that the societal framework as well as the societal importance of confirmation work have changed fundamentally as part of general historical and ongoing societal and religious transformations.

The public role of confirmation work has been strongly affected by the accelerating societal differentiation implying a reduced role of religious institutions and changed relations between church and state. Especially in the Scandinavian countries, the ties between church and state were traditionally very strong, so that confirmation marked an important step of becoming a fully empowered member of society. Crucial civic rights such as the permission to marry and to become a teacher were attained through confirmation. But also in Germany and, to a lesser degree, in Switzerland, the public role of the Protestant Churches was defined by their relationship to the state for a long time. The only distinctive exception among the seven countries, in this respect, is the Protes-

tant Church in Austria which has a history of an oppressed and then progressively more tolerated Protestant minority.

The common development in all these countries is, however, that the once tight bonds between state and church are breaking up, if they have not already broken apart. Although the time schedules and modes of disentanglement vary a lot, from a very early and quite strict separation (Switzerland) to an ongoing discussion about fairly moderate changes (Norway), the general tendency of functional and institutional differentiation is obvious. The most radical switch can be found in Sweden where the former unity of state and church ended at the beginning of the new millennium with an almost complete separation. Keeping these shifts in mind, it is clear that the public function of confirmation work in the seven countries has dramatically changed over time and has to be redefined by the Protestant Churches within the frame of present society.

When analysing the present societal function of confirmation work, a first theoretical stance can be taken in relation to understanding the constitutional dilemma of modern liberal democracies. Following the frequently quoted dictum of E.-W. Böckenförde, the state cannot produce or guarantee the foundations on which it is based (cf. Bedford-Strohm 2007). Therefore, it has to rely upon individuals and communities that practice and promote social participation, civil activity, values of caring and solidarity and similar fundamental elements in building up democracy. The formation of these preconditions is jeopardized by the (post)modern condition of increasing individualization. Youth studies in the seven countries show that contemporary adolescents emphasise self-determination, freedom and individuality (cf. Ziebertz/Kay 2005). These notable tendencies toward a strong individualistic orientation among contemporary young people should, however, not rashly be interpreted as a loss of social cohesion. The process of individualisation does not automatically work against social commitment. Youth studies show that young people care for other people and highly value social responsibility, although in a more individually orientated way and with a mistrust of the ordinary political structures. However, the present general societal focus on the individual certainly makes social commitment less self-evident and, as a direct consequence of that, more of an educational task. The ensuing question asked by many political scientists is where values of communality and democracy can grow.

Seen in this perspective, it is obvious that confirmation work offers a rather unique setting for communal experiences, social learning and socialisation into certain common democratic values. This kind of developmental social role of confirmation work has also been stressed by the Churches themselves after the conceptual turn to more pupil- and group-oriented models during the last decades. Thus it is of interest for several reasons to investigate confirmation work from a societal perspective.

4.7.3 Confirmation Work in the Context of Civil Society: Theoretical Assumptions

In general public discourse, the Churches are often described as organisations in decline. This image is correct in some respects, but it is an understanding which mostly takes as its point of reference the historic dominant role of the Churches. It does not sufficiently compare the Churches' contemporary role with those of other organisations in present society. In fact, in comparison to other organisations in civil society, it is obvious that the Churches still keep up their significant position in some crucial respects.

The term »civil society«, as it is used in this chapter, describes organisational structures in between the individual/family and the state. This intermediate sector consists of a number of organisations at different levels: self-help groups, networks, interest organisations, political, religious and sports organisations, co-operatives, philanthropical organisations, political parties, labor unions, and a number of others.

In five of the seven countries of the present study, the Churches are formally positioned as organisations placed between the individual and the state, and are regarded as part of the civil society. Norway and Denmark are exceptions with state churches. But also in Norway and Denmark, church membership is voluntary and in this respect, these Churches have a similar position in practice. Additionally all Churches, even the state Churches, perform much of their activity through separate church related voluntary organisations which are part of civil society. Quite often, such organisations have a more religiously-neutral and society oriented image than the Churches themselves. This is the case especially in fields where the organisations perform activities on behalf of the state, e. g., social work. The large German Church related welfare organisations are significant examples.

Irrespective of their formal position in relation to the state, the Churches in all seven countries can be regarded as part of civil society in the sense that they organise and produce different kinds of activities which sustain social values (Harris 1998; Wijkström/Lundström 2002). Almost all such activities which are offered by Churches consist of providing non-material input. Accordingly, Churches can be viewed as value creating organisations, which is especially clear when it comes to the discussion of their role as agents within civil society and providers of social belonging and values of community, care and solidarity (Pettersson 2000).

Previous studies of how Churches contribute to society have shown that the Churches provide people with a feeling of basic social belonging and security (e. g., Bäckström 2001). The frequently used life rites, especially baptism and funeral, play a significant role in this respect. But also in many other ways, the

local parishes provide important, although often underestimated, possibilities for social interaction at a local level. They offer a wide range of social activities where people can meet and interact, e. g., in the context of confirmation work. Further, they possess physical spaces in churches and parish homes which are used as local resources for civil society at large, and are regarded as important for general networking at the local societal level. Such networks of relationships between people are important for social cohesion, stability, security and economic growth – as highlighted in the social sciences during the last decades (Putnam 1993; Castells 1996; Furseth 2008). The total sum of social mechanisms which link people together in a certain society are sometimes labeled »society's social capital«.

Seen against this theoretical background, confirmation work seems to offer a quite unique setting for the building of social capital in the wider framework of civil society. It is one of the pedagogic activities with the highest degree of participation in almost all of the seven countries. In the Nordic countries there is no other pedagogic activity apart from the public school system that comes near the percentage of participation in relation to the whole of each age group. However, the possible function of confirmation as a, metaphorically spoken, »greenhouse« for young people's growth as members of civil society has not yet been explored.

4.7.4 Does Confirmation Work Contribute to Civil Society? Three Hypotheses Tested

The general considerations presented above regarding the societal role of the Church generate certain suppositions about possible societal impacts of confirmation work. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the following comparative analysis refers to three crucial resources of civil society by asking about the possible contribution of confirmation work 1) to social interaction and participation, 2) to ethical commitment and 3) to volunteerism. Three hypotheses are formulated and tested using empirical data from the two surveys with young people at the start and at the end of the confirmation period.

First Hypothesis: Confirmation Work Promotes Social Interaction and Participation

In all countries covered by this study, the confirmands associate the confirmation time strongly with friendship and experiences of community. Asked about their motives for beginning confirmation training almost half of them stated that they registered in order to experience community in the confirmation group (46%; CB02). Even more (49%; CB06) reported to have signed up with

the aim to meet and get to know new friends. Altogether social motives seem to play a bigger role for the decision to participate than religious motives in the narrow sense (cf. item-section CB in the appendix, p. 307).

Despite this common tendency, the comparative analysis also brings instructive differences to light between the seven countries. Conspicuously the social expectations of the period of confirmation preparation are higher in countries with Churches that favor the socially activating and group-orientated camp setting in confirmation work. So for example, in Sweden where 58% of the young people mentioned experience of community in the group as a major reason for participating, or in Finland where 73% of the confirmands stated that the prospect of meeting and getting to know new friends influenced their decision to join in positively. But in Denmark, a country where the preparation for confirmation is widely practiced with methods and in didactical surroundings quite similar to those of the school, the picture is rather different. Only 35% of the respondents considered that the experience of community was of importance for their choice to register for the confirmation period and for less than a third of them (33%), the wish to meet or to make friends carried significant weight in their choice to attend confirmation training.

However, when we take a look at the perceived community after the confirmation period, we see that there is no strict connection between outcome in this respect and the differences in expectations. In all countries a great majority of the confirmands stated that they have experienced good community in the confirmation group, from 72% in Austria up to 88% in Sweden (KB02). In addition, 77% of all the confirmands were satisfied with the feeling of community (KN04). That is, on an overall level, the highest satisfaction rate of all experiences that were evaluated at the end of the confirmation period.

There is a striking gap of almost 15% between the Scandinavian nations and the German speaking countries concerning the perceived feeling of community (KB02). One could imagine that this difference could be related to different pedagogic approaches. But interestingly, Denmark and Finland, the two countries which diverge quite a lot in their pedagogic methods, have identical rates of 77% experienced good community feeling. Thus there seems to be no single superior pedagogic model of confirmation work in order to promote feeling of community in the group.

These empirical findings give support to our first hypothesis. Confirmation work, in the way it is currently practiced in various forms in Europe, seems to generally strengthen a sense of community. Thereby it is promoting social interaction and coherence among young people and contributes to the communicative culture of civil society.

However, we should not neglect that there are certain differences between the seven countries. These become apparent if we focus on how much confirma-

tion work supports *new* social relations. Here we are faced with a conspicuous division. In some countries like Denmark, Switzerland and, to a lesser degree, also Norway, the majority of the confirmands already knew most of their fellow confirmands before the confirmation period started. In other countries like Austria, Finland and also Sweden, the confirmands were only partly acquainted with the other members of their confirmation group. From a civil society perspective, the option to extend the social network of young people is undoubtedly of importance. It seems as if confirmation in Austria, Finland and Sweden has this function.

The importance of building social relationships is also manifested when the confirmands are asked about the most important topics to bring up from their perspective. A number of possible educational topics were suggested and ranked. From the different options presented to the respondents, the theme »friendship« had in all countries the highest rate of approval, from 70 % in Finland to 90 % in Austria (CL09). Maybe »friendship« is a key concept in their perception of the confirmation period.

How do these findings correlate with the aims, attitudes and experiences of the workers? First of all, it can be observed that the workers seem to have preferences on educational themes that differ noticeably from those of the confirmands. Contrary to the young people, they lay strong emphasis on the traditional Christian core contents, whereas »friendship« is not considered to be equally important (WA16). But when comparing the countries, striking differences become visible. Whereas 93 % of the Swedish workers regard »friendship« as an important topic of confirmation work, only 67 % of their German colleagues think likewise.

On the level of aims, there are significant differences as well between the countries. In Austria, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and – to a lesser degree – also in Norway, there seems to exist a broad consensus among workers that young people should be supported in their personal and social development during confirmation time (WC04) and that they should experience community in the confirmation group (WD03). The exception is again visible in Denmark, where the degree of approval of these items is considerably lower.

To sum up, the findings are simultaneously clear and ambiguous. All results support our basic assumption that confirmation work enhances social integration and participation in a community. Moreover, the general tendency of the responses indicates that the social impact of confirmation work is higher in countries where the Church has a specific emphasis on this aspect, e.g., by favoring camps and other socially activating working methods. But it has to be noted, also, that in *all* countries most of the confirmands were satisfied with the communal atmosphere in their group, regardless of the varying pedagogical concepts.

Second Hypothesis: Confirmation Work Strengthens the Ethical Commitment of Young People

The implications of confirmation work on young peoples' ethical commitment has been widely neglected in previous research on confirmation. Maybe the reason is because it transcends what is often regarded as the primary aims, i. e., the faith of the individual and the life of the church. From the confirmands' point of view, the perspective is different and almost opposite. They have a high interest in ethical issues and find them more important than the traditional dogmatic topics. In the German speaking countries, about two thirds of the respondents expressed interest in learning more about »justice and responsibility for others« (CL08). In the Scandinavian countries, the approval rates are somewhat lower, between 43 % in Finland and 56 % in Sweden and Norway, but they are still higher than those of faith-related topics like baptism, the Bible, Lord's Supper, Sunday service or even Jesus Christ. Even the more negatively connoted topic »Violence and crime« is of a higher attractiveness for the confirmands than most of the traditional catechetical topics (CL10). The practical consequences of faith seem to be more important for them than the exclusively theological ideas and beliefs without relationship to the ethics of daily life.

All in all, the confirmands would prefer a curriculum that is thematically linked to central problems of society. Interestingly, also the workers seem to think in this direction. In all countries the vast majority of them considered »justice and responsibility for others« to be a central topic in confirmation work and of equal importance as the theological core contents (WA17).

There is yet another result that underlines the importance of emphasising the ethical profile of confirmation work also from the point of view of the Church. In accordance to general findings of church sociology (Bromander 2005; Huber/Friedrich/Steinacker 2006), our survey confirms that the attitudes of contemporary young people in relation to the Church are highly ambiguous (cf. item-section CG and KG in the appendix). Although almost nine out of ten of the respondents want to have their children baptised some day, the Church as an institution seems to be of rather little relevance for them. Before participating in confirmation preparation, less than a third of the confirmands considered it important to belong to the Church. In Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland only one out of five had this opinion. But when it comes to ethical issues, the Church is regarded as important and as having a positive ethical profile. Altogether 68 % of all respondents in the seven countries regarded the Church as an institution that does a lot of good things for the people, the approval rates ranging from 62 % in Denmark and Finland to 73 % in Sweden (CG05).

But how do the confirmands evaluate their experiences of ethical issues during the confirmation time? The findings show that from their perspective, the confirmation period was clearly a phase of ethical learning. On the average,

45 % of the participants experienced good examples of respect for people with different convictions (KK33). Even more of the confirmands were encouraged in their dedication for peace (49 %; KK46) and more than half of them said at the end of the confirmation time that commitment to other people is important to them (51 %; KK44). However, the commitment for ecological problems was not influenced to the same degree (39 %; KK45).

In order to measure the generally perceived ethical learning during the confirmation period, the index iKK2 »Ethical learning« was constructed with the use of the following three items: »I have experienced that my commitment to other people is important« (KK44), »I have become (more) conscious of my responsibility for ecological problems« (KK45), »I have experienced that my commitment to peace is important« (KK46) (Table 56).

Table 56: Ethical learning index (iKK2)

	Mean	Cronbach Alpha
<i>TOTAL</i>	4.32	0.81
Finland	4.58	0.86
Sweden	4.52	0.80
Germany	4.41	0.81
Austria	4.30	0.83
Norway	4.05	0.79
Switzerland	3.95	0.84
Denmark	3.57	0.75

N = 17856. Ranked by descendig mean value on a scale from 1 to 7.

The total mean in this index is 4.32 on a seven step scale, which is quite high. Some instructive differences between the countries can be noted. The ethical impact of confirmation work seems to be especially strong in Finland (4.58) and Sweden (4.52). Denmark has the lowest mean value of 3.57. When looking closer at the results from Denmark we find that a considerably low portion, 32 %, of the confirmands stated that they have experienced that their commitment to other people is important. Only 22 % have become more conscious of their responsibility for ecological problems, and 29 % have experienced that their commitment to peace is important. The clear difference between these Nordic countries may reflect differences in the curricular agenda, but could more probably be a result of differences in didactic emphasis concerning experience-orientation. Finland is the country with the most learning environments in camp settings and with a strong emphasis on experiences, while Denmark has the least number of camp days and the highest degree of traditional pedagogic forms. This confirms the general impression arising from the statements of the confirmands, namely, that ethical learning in the context of con-

firmation work seems to be more a matter of encouraging experiences than of knowledge-based instruction.

In sum, it can be stated that confirmation work in its present forms contributes in different ways to the ethical growth of young people in Europe. It also becomes quite clear that much potential is being left unexploited. In the German speaking countries, about half of the confirmands considered that what they learnt during confirmation preparation had little to do with their everyday life (KK35). In Denmark, Finland and Norway around 40% of the respondents felt the same way. Sweden constitutes again the exception, where only 29% took this view, a result which fits with the overall picture of the specific ethical profile of Swedish confirmation work.

Third Hypothesis: Confirmation Introduces and Activates Young People for Voluntary Work

Volunteerism is one of the key elements and central resources of a vital civil society. Voluntary work is also, as described in several of the national chapters, closely linked with confirmation work. It should be noted though that the status of voluntary work differs a lot from country to country. In Denmark confirmation training is still mainly a pastoral matter and to a slightly lesser degree, this is also true in Norway. In other countries, most notably in Finland and Sweden, volunteerism is a central feature of confirmation work. The German speaking countries seem to range somewhere in between; on the one hand, the influence of voluntary workers is noticeably rising, on the other hand, there are no institutionalised forms comparable to those of the Finish Young Confirmed Volunteers (cf. Porkka 2004).

This variation has to be kept in mind when asking about confirmation work's contribution to volunteerism. At first sight, this contribution does not seem to be very impressive. On an average, 24% of the confirmands became motivated to help in the church as a voluntary worker during the confirmation time (KK27). But concerning this question, it is particularly interesting to compare results from the different countries. While only 8% of the Danish confirmands are willing to work as a volunteer in the church, 27% of their Swedish and 51% of the Finnish equivalents affirm this willingness. Table 57 shows the ranking of the countries according to mean values of the respective item KK27. The correlation with the organisational setting is obvious. Voluntary commitment is attractive in countries where voluntary workers, especially former confirmands, are actively involved in confirmation work. The presence of young voluntary workers in the confirmation context can be assumed to provide important role models. In countries where the confirmands have no or only little prospect of participating as a volunteer later on and where no pattern for this role is provided, they are naturally not very attracted by this option.

Table 57: Results from the item »I became motivated to help in the church as a voluntary worker« (KK27)

	% Yes	M	SD	r with KK26
<i>TOTAL</i>	24 %	3.20	1.92	0.27***
Finland	51 %	4.45	2.09	0.10***
Sweden	27 %	3.30	1.91	0.21***
Germany	23 %	3.20	1.81	0.25***
Austria	18 %	2.89	1.73	0.34***
Switzerland	14 %	2.79	1.61	0.23***
Norway	15 %	2.63	1.77	0.43***
Denmark	8 %	2.11	1.54	0.42***

N = 17650. Ranked by descending mean values. The last column displays the correlation of KK27 and KK26 »I temporarily worked in programmes of the church (e.g., in a internship)«.

This nexus is further confirmed by the statements of the workers. 92 % of the Finnish workers reported that their parish offers opportunities for voluntary commitment – a possibility that is available only in 20 % of their Danish colleagues’ parishes (VL02). And the different agendas of the respective Churches become obvious from the result that not more than 3 % of the Danish workers, but 94 % of the Finnish workers felt that the confirmands were encouraged to do voluntary work during their confirmation time (VC07).

Our empirical data also point to another factor that promotes volunteerism in the context of confirmation work. Results from the German speaking countries show that the more confirmands temporarily work in programmes of the Church as volunteers during the confirmation period (KK26: 25 % in Germany, 18 % in Austria, 13 % in Switzerland), the more interest they show to help in the Church as a voluntary worker after confirmation (KK27: 23 % in Germany, 18 % in Austria, 14 % in Switzerland). This is also true for a comparison on the individual level. In all countries there is a significant correlation of both items, as reported in the last column of Table 57. Interestingly enough, the correlation is highest in Norway and Denmark, thus pointing out, that if volunteer work is used in these countries, it has a clear effect on the willingness to engage in voluntary work later on.

4.7.5 Summary

This chapter set out to develop a preliminary understanding of the possible societal impact of confirmation work within the theoretical framework of civil society. Although the range of evidence is in many ways limited, the empirical findings support the basic assumption that confirmation work contributes to

important societal values by strengthening the social, ethical and voluntary commitment of the young people. The comparative analysis between the studied countries highlights some distinctive similarities and differences. They indicate that the possible contribution of confirmation work to civil society is, at least to a certain extent, influenced by the conceptual understanding, the pedagogical profile and the didactical setting of confirmation work in the respective country. Finally the analysis draws attention to the need for more focussed research on the societal significance of confirmation work among European young people and for their future role as citizens in the formation of society.

Summary of the Results – Perspectives for the Future

5. Summary of the Results – Perspectives for the Future

FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER, WOLFGANG ILG AND HENRIK SIMOJOKI

This final part of the book has three main tasks. First, it gives an overview on the main results concerning the present situation of confirmation work in Europe. Such an overview cannot replace the detailed descriptions in the individual chapters above. Yet it will give readers who are pressed for time the chance for a quick glance at what results the study has to offer. Second, a separate section is devoted to challenges for the future. These challenges also arise from the empirical findings. At the same time, their identification presupposes more than an empirical description. Challenges always have to do with normative expectations. Third, we will also raise the question of the need for further research, not only in the general sense that may be expected from any empirical study – more research is always needed! – but in respect to specific questions and arguments concerning confirmation work.

Following the format of the whole book as well as of the study itself, the focus will be on general tendencies characteristic of confirmation work in Europe as well as on comparative aspects that emerge from the empirical findings. In other words, both, commonalities and differences between the countries, will be of interest.

We will also offer a number of perspectives for the future that are also of importance for the practice of confirmation work. Readers should keep in mind, however, that the development of practical consequences for confirmation work in the different countries clearly requires more than what a single empirical study can offer. The present study can only be a first step in this direction and additional steps will be needed (in some of the countries, respective publications and programmes for the workers are already under way). This is not only true because of the general questions referring to the relationship between theory and praxis but also because of the contextual nature of confirmation work in the different countries.

5.1 Confirmation Work in Europe: Summary Description of Its Present Situation

5.1.1 The Changing Shape of Confirmation Work

Protestant instruction in preparation for confirmation has a long tradition that goes back to the time of the Reformation. Although this instruction has gone through various reforms and has taken on somewhat different forms over the centuries, its basic catechetical shape has remained one of its core characteristics. Until today, preparation for confirmation is often associated with the catechism, with predefined questions and with answers that had to be learnt by heart. Yet today, as can be seen in the country reports in part 3, in all of the participating countries, this traditional shape is clearly changing. Especially during the last 40 or 50 years, catechetical instruction has been replaced, at least to some degree, by more pupil-oriented, active and creative ways of teaching and learning. The term »confirmation work« itself is expressive of the new ways of working with confirmands. Today's confirmation work often is much closer to youth work than to traditional kinds of teaching at school.

According to the data from the present study, it is this kind of confirmation work that is so widely accepted by the adolescents as well as by the workers who are responsible for this programme. One of the most important explanations of the positive responses to confirmation work in all of the countries lies in the new ways in which this work is actually carried out today. Yet it is also easy to see that the renewal of confirmation work has not been pursued with equal determination in all places. In this respect, there are differences within the countries as well as differences between the countries. Within the countries, the differences refer to local or regional factors, for example, to different traditions or different demographic factors but also to the varying commitment of individual workers and parishes. As far as differences between the countries are concerned, we can speak of different profiles at a system level. At least in some respects, confirmation work does not mean exactly the same in the different countries. The most striking example for this comes from Finland on the one hand and Denmark on the other. While confirmation work in Finland has more and more come to mean spending longer periods of time together in camps with a great number of young volunteers involved, confirmation work in Denmark takes place in close connection to school, following itself a school-type format taught solely by the minister.

The present study can be seen as the attempt of tracing and documenting the renewal of confirmation work in Europe. It shows how far the changes have

actually taken place and to what degree they can be considered successful in different locations.

The study draws on questionnaires that were completed by more than 19000 confirmands, 2300 workers and 6900 parents from 900 parish groups in the seven countries involved (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden). The questionnaires were administered in autumn 2007 (t_1 , in most groups this meant the beginning of their confirmation time) and in spring/summer 2008 (t_2 , shortly before the confirmation took place).

5.1.2 The Confirmands: Religious Orientations, Expectations and Experiences

The first question arising in this context probably is about the general religious outlook of the confirmands. Is confirmation really a religious ritual for them? Or even more far-reaching, are the confirmands themselves religious? Can they be called believers? Item CE09: »I believe in God« entails a first answer. While German, Austrian and Danish confirmands clearly affirm this statement with affirmation rates of 67 %, 68 % and 62 % (answer 5, 6 and 7 on the 7-step rating scale), the Swedish confirmands agree to only 30 %. In all other countries, the response is in between these values. At the same time, in most countries, the confirmands are not very sure what to believe but they are clearly not atheists. The results for items CE01: »God created the world« and CE02: »There is life after death« are similar and consequently confirm this view. The confirmands are hesitant to identify with certain beliefs of the Church but they also do not reject such beliefs.

Concerning confirmation itself, there can be no doubt that it is a very religious ritual for them. At the beginning of confirmation time, this may not be so clear. CB11 »to receive a blessing on the day of Confirmation« receives a positive response by less than half of the confirmands (45 %). Right before confirmation, this value is much higher (65 %; KB11). Other motives of a more material kind like money and gifts are high in the beginning (55 %; CB10) but the increase towards the end is lower (67 %; KB10). For the confirmands, there seems to be no contradiction between these two motives. The values concerning the expectation of a nice celebration on confirmation day are also very high. They should, however, not be interpreted just in a material sense. With the family and sometimes friends they include a strong social dimension that can imply a religious meaning, not in the sense of particular beliefs but in respect to deep certainties of life. The feeling of really belonging to a group of other people can definitely count among such certainties, especially with adolescents.

What can be said in relationship to other expectations at the beginning of the

confirmation time? The religious motives are not very prominent. For example, the item CB01: »to learn more about God and faith« is approved of by only 40 % of the adolescents; CB03: »to come to my own decision about my faith« receives only slightly more agreement (45 %). The other items in this section show a similar picture. None of the confirmands' expectations, be they intrinsic or extrinsic, are very pronounced. The general attitude at the beginning of confirmation time is not all too clear. Only two topics receive a lot of emphasis from the confirmands – friendship (84%; CL09) and the meaning of life (64%; CL11) – topics that are close to the life-world of adolescents and can also be of religious importance.

Among the reasons for taking part, three items are affirmed by more than half of the confirmands. The first two items have already been mentioned (CB10: »to get money or presents at the end«: 55 %; CB09: »to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of confirmation«: 55 %). The third item is baptism (CA04: »because I was baptised when I was a child«: 55 %).

Given these preconditions it is quite remarkable that, at the end of confirmation time, all the corresponding values have clearly gone up into the positive. Sometimes the results are very prominent now. KB01: »I have learnt more about God and faith«, for example, is up to 72 %, compared to only 40 % expecting this (CB01). However, it also has to be noted that the amount of change, e. g., in religious knowledge, differs greatly between the different countries (cf. chapter 4.5, p. 247). Still, the overall tendency is clearly positive, with the striking exception of KB15: »I have learnt more about other religions« that is affirmed by only 30 % of the confirmands. Since the issue of »other religions« raises important general questions, we will come back to it below.

Altogether it is obvious that the confirmation time has been successful in giving young people an opportunity to experience being part of a group in the context of a parish or church and to come to terms, to some degree, with questions of life and faith. Most of the expectations articulated at the beginning have been met (for a more detailed analysis see chapter 4.4, p. 240). In most cases, the experiences excel the expectations of the confirmands. There clearly is a high degree of general satisfaction with confirmation work. Looking back, 72% of the confirmands are satisfied with their confirmation time in general (KN01), the percentages are even higher for satisfaction with the camps, the feeling of community and the ministers/leaders (which does not exclude critical statements or the need for additional reforms).

5.1.3 The Workers

Taking again the traditional model of Christian instruction that used to be the task – and privilege – of the minister for comparison, the most remarkable observation concerning today's confirmation work certainly is the role of volunteers. Confirmation work has turned into one of the large fields of voluntary work in society, often with young people who, after their own confirmation, have become workers in the programmes. Moreover, deacons and youth workers have become part of the teams that share the responsibility for the programmes. In both respects, however, there are clear differences between the countries. In some cases, there is a strong emphasis on the young volunteers and, especially in Finland, training programmes for them have become available on a routine basis – with the effect that on an average one out of three confirmed adolescents starts a training for becoming a volunteer at next year's confirmation camp. In other cases, most of all in Denmark, volunteers continue to play a very limited role. Yet altogether, confirmation time is an important occasion for coming into contact with voluntary work and with other young people who are actually involved in this kind of work. It is no surprise that many confirmands indicate that they have become motivated to work as volunteers themselves after their confirmation (24 %; KK27). What confirmands perceive during confirmation time, obviously shapes their image of the Church and their willingness to become actively involved themselves. In Denmark, only 8 % became motivated for voluntary work, in Finland this rate is 51 % – more than six times higher than in Denmark!

This observation is even more remarkable when the very high degree of workers' satisfaction is also taken into consideration (international mean: 6.00 for Index iVM1 on a scale from 1 to 7). According to this result, the involvement with, and the commitment to working with, confirmands is very impressive. The satisfaction values are high for the ministers (5.61) but they are even higher for the volunteers (6.32). This indicates that this kind of voluntary work goes along with non-material gratifications, for example, positive feedback from the confirmands and their parents but also acknowledgement from the Church. This in turn is an important presupposition for the future stability of the volunteers' commitment – a remarkable asset that should be carefully maintained.

Another important observation concerns the aims of the voluntary workers. Two results are especially noteworthy. First, the volunteers are clearly committed not only to the social dimension of confirmation work, for example, strengthening the group experience, but also to the theological aims. Second, their aims are closer to the expectations of the confirmands. In this respect, they can take over an important function in bridging the gap between the Christian tradition or the Church as an institution and the young people. Their involve-

ment visibly proves that young people can find a meaningful place in this context and that the Church is open for the younger generation, not only as a service institution but for young people taking over responsibility and claiming some authority and influence of their own.

Finally, it should also be noted that the ministers take confirmation work very seriously. Many of them say that they like being with the confirmands (92 %; WE05). Very few would prefer to be relieved of this task (6 %; WE06). Even if there are no other values that these results can be compared to, it is easy to see that the commitment to confirmation work is very high.

Although confirmation work is appreciated very strongly by the Churches involved, it often is given very little attention in the training of ministers and other church staff. The Danish country chapter (3.4) reports that a minister faces often a »real confirmand« for the first time in his life when he starts his first parish-duty. Teaching and training on the subject of confirmation work has been neglected for too long in the theological faculties as well as in many institutions responsible for the training and further education of staff.

5.1.4 Didactics

Giving confirmation work a new shape implies a kind of didactics that is different from catechetical instruction. In this case, the transition must be from rote learning to creative and activating methods and to ways of teaching and learning that allow for individualised interests. Yet didactics means even more. As educators are eager to point out, it also refers to the contents and to the need of selecting and presenting the contents in ways that are appropriate for young people.

The analysis of the guidelines that are in use in the different countries shows important differences. The analysis can be summarised as follows: »The more these two elements are focused upon«, i. e., relationship to the life-world and relationship to the parish, »the further confirmation work moves away from the school-type to the youth-work-type« (cf. chapter 4.3.3, p. 228). This implies that the tradition towards a more pupil-oriented approach has not been realized to the same degree in all places.

Further analysis allows for comparisons between different orientations in the participating countries. While dogmatics and the catechism remain important for the workers in all of the countries – with the exception of Switzerland with its Reformed tradition that seems to have little place for set theological contents – there are interesting differences with topics related to the life-world and the relationship to the parish as a place for young people. The relevance of confirmation work in terms of the life-world is of least concern in Denmark and

Germany. Finnish workers score highest on the relationship to the life-world but also to the parish. Finland most clearly represents the new shape of confirmation work that takes youth work as its model.

Concerning the relationship to the parish, Denmark scores lowest. Less than two out of five Danish workers consider it important that confirmands get to know their parish better. This makes Danish confirmation work an example of the school-type setting. The other country with a significantly lower emphasis on the relationship to the parish is Sweden. Instead, the main focus there is on the aspect of the life-world – a focus that can be interpreted as further privatisation of confirmation.

Concerning methods or organisational models, the most obvious differences refer to overnight events. In Sweden and Finland, most of the confirmands participate in confirmation camps or outings that last for about one week (in Finland almost all groups work like this, in Sweden 25 %, sometimes in specialised campsites that gather confirmands from different regions for a parish-independent confirmation period). In Austria, Germany and Switzerland, only a minority of the confirmands have this experience. In Norway, camps are even less frequent while they are missing in Denmark altogether.

Traditional methods familiar from school settings are still in use in many places. More modern methods that are pupil-oriented, activating, creative and experiential still are not to be taken for granted in most places. The emphasis on camps and outings in Finland and Sweden go along with a stronger emphasis on the renewal of methods as well.

Creative and activating methods are attractive for the confirmands. The confirmation camp experience is of special importance to them. In groups that have been to camp three nights and more, we find higher scores with almost all indexes on the confirmands' experiences: more growth in faith, higher identification with Christian beliefs, and more adherence to the Church (cf. chapter 4.5). They also show more ethical learning, they are more satisfied with their group experience, they feel that their parish has been more open to them and they have had better liturgical experiences.

The emergence of camps is one of the developments which seem to be very promising for the future of confirmation work. New ideas could emerge in the future – like, for example, an international confirmation camp bringing together confirmands from different countries.

5.1.5 The Meaning of Confirmation Work for the Churches

The meaning of confirmation work for the Churches is of importance in several different ways. First of all, there is the question of how the actual shape of con-

firmation work is related to a theological understanding of this work. In a more far-reaching manner one can, secondly, wonder what kind of church presents itself to the younger generation in confirmation work. And third, given the financial constraints that the Churches in the participating countries have to deal with (although to different degrees), some people raise the question if this field of work still pays off for the Churches or if it should be given up in favour of other programmes and activities. In all three respects, there is suspicion that the confirmands are motivated less by issues of faith than by material motives like money and other gifts or general social functions like a religiously non-descript rite of passage. The present study allows for a number of responses to such questions on an empirical basis.

Concerning the first question and the demands of theology on confirmation work we can clearly state that this work is closely connected to the core of all Protestant theology. Personal faith plays a strong role in the expectations of the confirmands as well as of the workers. According to the young people themselves but also to the observations of the workers, this faith is nurtured and educated during confirmation time in impressive ways. It must be noted in this context, that faith related aspects and other aspects that can be associated with youth culture like, for example, the group experience or having fun, by no means are mutually exclusive in the context of confirmation work. Quite the contrary seems to hold true. Where confirmation work is close to the needs and interests of young people, it is also more effective in terms of strengthening personal faith. The data also show that motives of faith and expectations for gifts and beautiful celebrations can go together quite well. For the confirmands this is not a matter of choice or a question of either/or. In this respect, there can be no doubt that confirmation work in all of the participating countries fulfils important theological tasks and expectations, even if there remain differences between the countries as pointed out above.

The second question refers to the understanding of the Church or, in theological terms, to ecclesiology. What does confirmation work mean for the Church in terms of its self-presentation to young people? It is no surprise that the adolescents interviewed in the present study indicate that, for the most part, their active involvement with the Church prior to confirmation time was rather thin. Many of them have been in touch with some church-related activities in childhood – it is not true that they bring »no prior experiences whatsoever« to their confirmation time – but the contacts with the Church obviously did not lead to a continuous religious practise. It must also be said that, in this respect, confirmation work does not have very strong effects – the changes between t_1 and t_2 are rather small. Probably not too much can or should be expected from a programme that may last for only one year or for an even shorter period of time. Yet most of the changes show a more positive relationship to the Church at the

end of confirmation time. The strongest effect shows up with the question if one would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation (rising from 17 % to 27 %; CG08/KG08). These confirmands would be willing to continue their involvement with the Church after confirmation. This speaks for a need to make sure that the adolescents can actually find opportunities for such involvement which does not seem to be the case in all places.

Another issue concerns worship services. In all countries included in our study, the confirmands are obliged to take part in a set number of Sunday services. This ranges from only four services during the whole confirmation time (Finland) to a number of about 25 services, for example, in Germany. Contrary to the expected effect of »acclimatisation« to church services for the confirmands, there is an increase of the negative attitudes between t_1 and t_2 . The only exception is Finland but even there the positive effect is very limited. In other words, the view that church services are boring remains a huge challenge in all of the countries. If confirmation work should support a better relationship to the Church, worship services should not be exempted from the need for renewal.

In ecclesiology, one can sometimes encounter an opposition between a church that is based on active participation arising from personal commitment and faith on the one hand, and a church as a service agency that takes care of individual needs as they arise, for example, within the family life cycle. While undoubtedly there are different images and guiding ideals of the Christian Church operative with different theologies or groups, our data speak for a mix of motives that are strongly intertwined in the views of the confirmands. Celebrating with one's family on the day of confirmation is closely related to the family life cycle. Yet this does not mean that more theological motives are excluded. It seems that theological motives become important for young people not in spite of confirmation's deep roots in the personal needs of individuals and families but exactly because of these roots. Empirically, the two different understandings of the Church as active congregation and as service agency are not simply opposites but they often go together. This empirical result should not be overlooked in theology.

In this context, one more observation may be of interest. In most of the countries involved confirmation no longer serves as the date of first admission to Holy Communion because children are allowed to take part in the Holy Communion. This »loss« for confirmation as an initiation rite into this sacrament apparently has not put a damper on the attractiveness of confirmation. It is remarkable though, that even in countries that have already introduced Holy Communion with children many years ago, some parishes stick to the tradition of first admission with confirmation— this can be seen as one of the indicators for the different schedules of parishes in adapting new developments.

Given these observations and arguments, the answer to the third question above follows almost automatically. There can be no doubt that confirmation work is highly important for the Church. If these programmes did not exist, the Churches would have to come up with an equivalent. Today, confirmation work clearly is one of the major points of access to the Church for the younger generation. No other programme reaches as many of the adolescents in the participating countries as confirmation work. »Regarded in a lifelong perspective, the confirmation period is for most church members the most significant period and possibility in life that provides a chance to get to know the teaching of the Church and to establish a positive relationship to the Church« (3.7.1, p. 186). In this respect, confirmation work closely corresponds to what is called the public nature of the Gospel – the theological need to make the Christian message accessible to everyone who wants to listen.

As will be explained in the next section, confirmation work also is a major service for society at large. Its contribution to social and moral orientations and to the structures of civil society and volunteerism deserves special attention. This contribution goes way beyond the Church as a service agency catering to individual needs. It is expressive of the social and diaconal task and function of the Church.

5.1.6 The Meaning of Confirmation Work for Society

The celebration of confirmation had – and still has – an important meaning as a social event in many of the countries involved, especially the Scandinavian countries. The Norwegian country report, for example, describes confirmation as a national event and as a spring festival (cf. 3.6.1) that has found some imitators among non-Christian groups in the meantime because there is the feeling that one can hardly start summertime without the celebrations of confirmation. Certainly, confirmation nowadays is no longer connected to civil rights, but it still has a public meaning. Our study shows that this is not only true for the festivity of confirmation itself but also for confirmation time on the whole.

That confirmation work should contribute to society at large is not a new idea. It is also not just a demand from the outside, for example, from politics or social analysis. In the preface to his Small Catechism, Martin Luther emphasised that catechetical instruction should also have the function to teach the *Stadtrecht* – the »law of the city« or what today we would call rules for living together. In its own self-understanding, the Church wants to serve a social and diaconal task and function.

In the present study, confirmation work is interpreted in relationship to civil society in several ways (cf. chapter 4.7). It could be shown that confirmation

work contributes to social interaction and participation, that it strengthens the ethical commitment of young people, and that it introduces and activates young people for voluntary work. In other words, confirmation work is related to civil society through its content – among others, social values like justice and empathy, solidarity, tolerance and respect – but also through the experiences it allows for. Such experiences concern the group process as a core aspect of confirmation work and they include the encounter with volunteers who often are adolescents themselves.

More specifically, the results of the study suggest that the contribution of confirmation work to society at large depends on how this work is carried out. In other words, there is a need to strengthen the awareness of this task, at least in some of the countries. Yet independently of future improvements, the actual contribution of confirmation work not only for the Church but also for society deserves much more public acknowledgement than it has received so far.

5.2 Challenges for the Future

For centuries, Christian instruction in preparation of confirmation was part of growing up in the countries involved in the present study and of the general culture that could be taken for granted. Confirmation was firmly rooted in civil culture, with even many civil rights directly depending on it. It was itself an institution not only of the Church but of society on the whole. Correspondingly, participation was guaranteed by many social controls, of the family no less than of other parts of society.

Contrary to this traditional situation, confirmation and confirmation work have become a matter of individual choice today. Its meaning has been privatised. No longer does any civil right depend on confirmation. The first challenge for the future must therefore certainly be identified as the fragility that this condition implies (cf. chapter 4.2.2, p. 216). Confirmation and confirmation work are subject to the religious individualisation that sociologists and philosophers from Peter L. Berger (1979) to Charles Taylor (2007) have described repeatedly. The experiences of dramatically dwindling participation rates in Sweden since the 1970s and, to a lesser degree, more recently in Norway must be interpreted in this sense (see Figure 8, p. 216). They indicate that the future of confirmation work is uncertain, just like that of any religious institution in an era of religious individualisation and pluralisation.

The confirmands show themselves convinced that it is up to them if they want to participate in confirmation work. When asked, who influenced their

decision to register most, 59 % answered »my own«, only 33 % answered »my family«, only a few named friends or other people. This implies that they might actually not want to do so. The flipside of this situation in which participation has become a matter of individual preference, is that no one needs to be ashamed of doing so (only 6 % are; CE07). Individual choices are respected by the peers. Yet as easy as it is to decipher the traces of religious individualisation in our data and to interpret the results of the present study within the parameters of contemporary sociology of religion, it should not be overlooked that there also are important indications that speak for a different interpretation. The most important example for this is the surprising persistence of baptism as motive for participation (»because I was baptised when I was a child« receives the affirmation of 55 % of the confirmands – more than any other item in this section; CA04). In this case, a most traditional religious institution remains of decisive importance for the young people. This does not mean that confirmation work could cease to be worried about its future fragility. But it shows, once more, that the binding influences of religious traditions have not disappeared.

The same cannot be said about another traditional institution – the worship services on Sunday in which the confirmands have to participate as part of their confirmation time. In this case, there seems to be no awe-inspiring effect triggered by the ancient rite. Instead, the confirmands tend to find the services simply »boring«, even more so after they had a chance to attend them on a regular basis. In a situation of choice and of following one's own preferences in religious matters no less than in other respects, this experience can be expected to have its detrimental effects on the confirmands' future relationship to the Church. The differences between the participating countries – the effects are not equally negative in all cases – and the result that certain approaches, including active participation of the confirmands and having more youth oriented services, can clearly lead to more positive attitudes towards worship services. Worship services with adolescents are no hopeless case. Moreover, these services play a crucial role for the theological identity of the Church. The renewal of worship services in the context of confirmation work is a main challenge for the future.

In many respects, confirmation work has to struggle with the competition created by the ever increasing time demands of the school. This is especially true for a country like Germany where the traditional limits of school time in the morning are currently expanding into the afternoon. Yet even countries that are used to longer school hours sometimes are experiencing new pressures today, for example, when schools, like in Denmark, no longer want to keep open reliable time slots for confirmation work (cf. chapter 3.4.8, p. 137) The more confirmation and confirmation work appear as a purely private matter, the less the public school can be expected to respect the needs of this work. The oppo-

site, however, is true as well. The more the meaning of confirmation work for society at large becomes visible, the more one can expect that its needs will be respected.

Concerning the school and its influence it should also not be overlooked that Religious Education as a school subject can obviously have a strong supportive influence on confirmation work. This does not mean that Religious Education in school should serve the purposes of the Church or that it should take over the tasks of the parish – a demand on the school that is now widely refused in most European countries (Kuyk et al. 2007). Yet religious individualisation often implies that the whole process of religious education, starting with the family all the way to culture and the media, becomes much more tenuous. One programme alone – and be it very effective in itself – can hardly compensate for the weaknesses of religious socialisation. Even if we cannot prove this with our data, the dwindling participation rates with confirmation work in Sweden and Norway might well be connected, at least among others, to the non-Christian orientation of Religious Education in the schools of those countries. In Sweden, the participation rates started to go down at the same time as the new »objective« religious study approach was introduced at school in the 1960s and 1970s. In Norway, the transition to different kinds of non-Christian instruction at school has paralleled the similar developments with confirmation work in recent years. If this hypothesis holds true, there is a clear need to think about possible support structures for confirmation work in the years long before confirmation. It makes a lot of sense that the Churches in countries like Norway and Switzerland have begun to face up to this task that might be just as inescapable for other countries in the future.

In the participating countries, confirmation work takes place in an increasingly pluralist context. The presence of non-Christian religions, most of all of Islam, has become a general characteristic of religious culture. In this sense it is not surprising that many confirmands expect to learn something about other religions during confirmation time (36 % say so; CL07). At the end of the confirmation time, the value for the corresponding statement »I have learnt more about other religions« is clearly lower (30 %; KB15). Very few confirmands feel that confirmation work has contributed to their knowledge or understanding of other religions. In a society that has become not only multicultural but also multireligious this is a disappointing result. It seems that confirmation work does not prepare the young people for living in an environment in which Christianity can no longer be taken for granted. As long as the Church does not address the plural environment, it also does not offer an answer to the question why one should prefer to become or to remain a member of the Protestant Church.

One of the results that must be most worrisome for the Churches in this

connection is the increase in the confirmands' view that the Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for them (31 % affirm this in t_1 , 34 % in t_2). Even if the increase is stronger in some of the countries than in others, there is no exception in this respect. After the confirmation time the confirmands have become more sceptical vis-à-vis the Church's ability to respond to their questions. Most likely, this view has to do with the perceived distance between the Christian tradition and doctrines on the one hand and today's life-world on the other. Part of this life-world is the religious pluralism that is not addressed in today's confirmation work.

The empirical findings of this study also show a remarkable »gender-gap«: »the classical contents and also the group-oriented methods of confirmation work are approved of and appreciated by the female more than by the male confirmands« (p. 262). It obviously remains a challenge in all participating countries to find didactical forms and settings that are attractive for boys and that correspond to their specific preferences, interests and social-behaviour patterns.

5.3 The Need for Further Research

The present study is the first of its kind. Never before has there been an attempt of conducting a large scale integrated empirical study on confirmation work in several different countries. This is true in all respects treated in this volume – the confirmands and the workers but also the didactics of confirmation work. While its pioneering character makes the study innovative and especially valuable, it also implies a number of limitations. Interpretations of empirical data always require points of reference that allow for comparisons. Calling something »much« or »little« is difficult without a scale that allows for such comparisons. In the absence of earlier studies and results, the present study tried to create some reference points within itself, most of all in the relationship between t_1 and t_2 . Yet it is easy to see that replicating the present study a few years from now would create many more new possibilities. The results of the present study could then serve as points of reference. Most of all it would become possible to observe tendencies over time. Such tendencies could be sought for in the attitudes of the confirmands and of the workers – concerning their attitudes towards the Church and the Christian faith, their commitment to confirmation work, etc. It would also be of interest to see, however, how the didactics of confirmation work are developing. Does the tendency towards a more youth-work-type of programme continue? Are there new tendencies that come into play, for example, in response to a postmodern situation? Maybe it would even

be possible to find out if the results of the present study have some impact on the practice of confirmation work.

With the two times of interviewing the confirmands and the workers ($t_1 - t_2$), the present study takes a first step towards investigating the effects of confirmation work. It is obvious, however, that the question of effects cannot be answered on the limited basis of two questionnaires administered during the year before confirmation. Only long-term studies can tell if confirmation work really does have effects beyond the date of confirmation and how these effects can be described. To our knowledge, so far such studies have only been undertaken in Finland (Niemelä 2008). The results indicate that the question should not only be about confirmation work as such but about what kind of confirmation work has what kinds of effects. In any case, according to the Finnish results, positive experiences with confirmation work go along with more positive attitudes towards the Church even five or more years after confirmation.

The present study makes a strong case for the meaning of confirmation work for society at large and especially for civil society. The arguments offered for this point of view should be deepened. Additional empirical research could give us a better understanding of the processes of social and moral learning involved. The question of volunteerism and of the motives that make a young person want to continue as a volunteer after confirmation should be pursued in much more detail. In these respects, the present study offers a first overview that should be supplemented by special studies focusing on these aspects.

Similar demands can be formulated in a number of respects that have not really been addressed in the present study. To just mention a few examples: What are the reasons for not participating in confirmation work? In some countries the number of the non-participants is small, in other countries it is the majority of the adolescents. In any case, their total number is considerable but we know very little about their views and attitudes. Another question refers to confirmation, as a worship service on the one hand and as a family celebration on the other. Our data show that confirmation is very important for the confirmands. It does not make much sense to just focus on confirmation work without addressing confirmation. Young people usually do not register because they want to take part in confirmation time but rather because they want to become confirmed. Yet there are very few studies on how the confirmands and their families actually experience confirmation, how they celebrate it in their families and what could be done to improve the ways in which the day of confirmation is celebrated. Working with parents is another topic that has not received the attention it deserves. Should parents be more involved with confirmation work? Can the relationship of the parents to the Church be improved in the context of confirmation work?

The present study basically operates on the level of comparing whole countries or Churches. It is very likely, however, that there are important regional differences within the countries. Only the German study has a sample large enough to allow for representative results referring to different areas or regions (cf. Ilg/Schweitzer/Elsenbast 2009). While this study indicates that there are a number of basic tendencies that can be considered nationwide, it also brings to light far-reaching differences within the country. The most important difference in Germany refers to eastern and western Germany – as a special situation due to the history of the two Germanies between 1949 and 1990. Yet there are also important differences between the regional Churches in Germany. It would be interesting to see to what degree such differences play a role in other countries as well and how such differences can make the picture of confirmation work in Europe more concrete.

Another innovative aspect of the present study lies in its international comparative scope. International research on education is becoming increasingly important and influential in many European countries, most of all through the international studies on scholastic abilities of students. There also is some international research on the school subject of Religious Education. It is important that other areas of Christian and religious education beyond the school will not be left out of sight. With their manifold programmes for children and youth as well as for families or with their activities in the field of adult education, the Churches in Europe count among the most important sponsors of education in society. It is an important task to make the Churches' educational role more visible, within the Church itself but also for society. The present study should be considered a beginning of a new tradition of international co-operation for empirical research in the field of Christian and religious education.

Throughout the book it has become obvious that international comparative research also has to offer innovative contributions to academic work. Many questions have been addressed – or have at least been raised – that have not played a role in the academic discussion in this field before. This observation again underlines the need for more international comparative research in the area of religious education.

Finally, we want to come back to the question of theology. Some people consider empirical work an alternative to theological analysis. In our own understanding, however, this would not make sense. If there is an alternative at all, it is not between theology and empirical work but between empirical and purely doctrinal approaches on the level of methodologies. What we should be striving for is a constant interplay between theological analysis and empirical research. Most of the questions discussed in this volume have a clear theological background and the results of the study hold many new impulses for theological

thinking, about confirmation work itself but also about the Church and ecclesiology. It is an important task for further research to address this relationship in more detail.

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Appendix

Comparative Tables

In the following all items of the questionnaires are documented:

- indexes of confirmands and workers (i_{-})
- questionnaires of the confirmands (t_1 : C_{-} ; t_2 : K_{-})
- questionnaires of the workers (t_1 : W_{-} ; t_2 : V_{-}).

For all items with a rating scale, the mean values are reported. Most of the items had a seven-point scale; here also the number of respondents agreeing to the statement is given (percentage yes = percentage of answers 5, 6, and 7). The few items without a scaled answering format are documented at the end of each section without the results (due to limitation of space). The layout and order of the items are not equivalent to those of the questionnaires that were given to the interviewees. An exemplary questionnaire is printed on page 333.

The items printed in the appendix were asked in all (or most of) the countries involved. Additional country-specific items are not reported.

In order to facilitate comparisons between the countries, the country mean values with a deviation of ≥ 0.4 above total mean are marked with a light grey background; those with a deviation of ≤ -0.4 are marked with a dark grey background. These indications are only given for items with the seven-point scale as well as for the indexes based on them.

The country results are reported in the following order: Germany (DE), Austria (AT), Switzerland (CH), Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), Norway (NO), Sweden (SE).

Indexes of confirmands and workers

	Indexes (scale from 1 to 7; iCH1 and iKH1 from 1 to 5)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
iCA1	Social orientation and activities	4.05	4.01	4.50	3.94	2.97	4.81	3.73	4.70
iCB1	Religious interest	3.96	4.22	4.07	3.38	3.90	3.55	3.55	3.64
iKB1	Experience of growth in faith	4.92	4.87	4.62	3.89	4.85	5.30	4.62	5.20
iCE1	Christian Beliefs (t ₁)	4.29	4.63	4.66	3.70	4.06	3.89	4.00	3.49
iKE1	Christian Beliefs (t ₂)	4.52	4.72	4.65	3.78	4.11	4.48	4.18	4.21
iCG1	Adherence to the Church (t ₁)	3.00	3.11	3.04	2.48	2.60	3.12	3.05	2.70
iKG1	Adherence to the Church (t ₂)	3.33	3.37	3.19	2.73	2.69	3.73	3.31	3.42
iCH1	Religious practice (t ₁)	2.26	2.47	2.37	2.02	2.04	1.98	2.09	1.98
iKH1	Religious practice (t ₂)	2.36	2.49	2.34	2.02	2.07	2.27	2.13	2.34
iCK1	Orientation for life in faith	3.56	3.52	3.54	3.09	3.44	3.79	3.49	3.70
iKK2	Ethical learning	4.32	4.41	4.30	3.95	3.57	4.58	4.05	4.52
iKK3	Experienced openness of the parish	4.36	4.25	4.28	4.22	3.99	4.83	4.18	4.93
iKN1	Satisfaction with group experiences	5.40	5.29	5.29	5.31	5.14	5.58	5.36	6.12
iKN2	Satisfaction with liturgical experiences	4.62	4.32	4.25	4.13	4.45	5.51	4.65	5.34
iWA1	Importance of Christian dogmatics	6.19	6.10	5.89	5.22	6.58	6.73	6.31	6.18
iWA2	Importance of topics related to the life-world	5.03	4.84	5.15	5.36	4.70	5.48	5.28	5.59
iWC1	Importance of relating to the parish	5.24	5.40	5.53	5.07	4.01	5.70	5.28	4.64
iVM1	Workers' satisfaction	6.00	5.96	6.09	5.78	5.90	5.87	5.78	6.35

Items in the Confirmands' Questionnaire t_1 (C₁)

I registered for confirmation time, ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CA01 because my friends did so as well.	3.33	3.32	3.40	3.44	2.59	4.15	2.94	3.37	29%	29%	33%	31%	14%	45%	21%	31%
CA02 because I was invited personally (e.g., by a letter).	3.40	3.51	4.24	3.97	2.47	4.79	2.67	2.34	33%	36%	50%	45%	15%	58%	19%	15%
CA03 because it is a good old tradition.	3.84	3.40	3.96	3.84	4.21	4.89	4.49	3.66	40%	32%	43%	41%	47%	60%	52%	35%
CA04 because I was baptised when I was a child.	4.61	4.46	4.80	4.13	4.67	6.01	4.84	3.05	55%	53%	58%	48%	55%	81%	60%	24%
CA05 because I felt obliged to take part.	2.17	1.87	2.13	2.36	3.12	2.18	3.07	1.89	13%	10%	13%	16%	26%	14%	24%	9%
CA06 because my parents wanted me to do so.	3.37	3.05	3.43	3.44	3.13	4.89	3.38	3.11	30%	25%	32%	34%	26%	57%	30%	28%
CA07 because my grandparents wanted me to do so.	2.41	2.01	2.29	2.05	2.13	4.19	2.65	2.16	16%	10%	16%	12%	10%	43%	19%	13%
CA08 because I had been told that confirmation training is fun.	3.82	3.78	4.36	3.52	2.20	5.35	2.75	4.68	40%	38%	51%	34%	11%	72%	20%	59%

I registered for confirmation time, ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CB01 to learn more about God and faith.	4.00	4.30	3.81	3.24	4.17	3.27	3.48	3.67	40%	46%	34%	25%	43%	24%	29%	34%
CB02 to experience community in the confirmation group.	4.25	4.27	4.64	4.15	3.76	4.11	4.52	4.72	46%	47%	56%	47%	35%	41%	53%	58%
CB03 to come to my own decision about my faith.	4.20	4.30	4.53	3.91	3.97	4.08	3.84	4.44	45%	48%	54%	42%	39%	39%	37%	52%
CB04 to make an important step in growing up.	3.78	3.76	4.49	3.79	3.70	4.32	3.88	2.99	38%	38%	55%	41%	34%	48%	38%	22%
CB06 to meet and get to know friends.	4.29	4.09	4.85	3.98	3.52	5.39	4.13	4.81	49%	44%	62%	44%	32%	73%	44%	62%
CB07 to think about what is good or bad for me and my life.	3.47	3.53	3.80	3.09	3.12	3.77	3.43	3.21	29%	31%	39%	22%	19%	34%	28%	24%
CB08 to be strengthened in my faith.	3.68	4.04	3.87	2.97	3.57	3.30	3.29	2.75	35%	42%	39%	20%	32%	25%	28%	18%
CB09 to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of my confirmation.	4.62	4.54	4.42	4.76	5.28	4.59	4.74	4.12	55%	54%	51%	60%	69%	54%	58%	45%
CB10 to get money or presents at the end.	4.63	4.52	4.43	5.07	4.60	5.42	4.45	4.14	55%	53%	51%	66%	54%	72%	52%	46%

I registered for confirmation time, ... <i>(1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)</i>																
	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CB11 to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation.	4.21	4.39	4.45	3.50	4.30	4.29	3.76	3.41	45%	50%	50%	32%	47%	45%	35%	28%
What do you think about the following statements? <i>(1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)</i>																
	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CE01 God created the world.	4.11	4.46	4.38	3.48	3.75	3.89	3.94	3.03	42%	49%	46%	30%	34%	37%	37%	23%
CE02 There is life after death.	4.52	4.55	4.75	4.65	4.67	4.21	4.56	4.57	50%	51%	55%	53%	53%	41%	52%	54%
CE03 God loves all humans and cares about each one of us	4.89	5.07	5.09	4.26	4.75	4.52	4.85	4.60	59%	64%	66%	45%	56%	50%	58%	54%
CE04 Jesus has risen from the dead.	4.25	4.60	4.82	3.53	3.94	3.95	3.86	3.42	45%	52%	57%	30%	39%	38%	38%	29%
CE05 I am not sure what I should believe.	3.68	3.45	3.56	3.87	3.77	3.97	3.93	4.22	33%	30%	31%	40%	34%	37%	37%	46%
CE06 I often talk about God with other people.	2.36	2.60	2.47	2.43	2.07	2.08	2.09	1.95	11%	14%	12%	12%	7%	8%	8%	7%
CE07 Sometimes I am ashamed to tell my friends that I am taking part in confirmation training.	1.57	1.51	1.72	1.44	1.50	1.79	1.62	1.61	6%	6%	8%	5%	4%	8%	6%	6%
CE08 Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.	3.40	3.74	3.72	3.04	2.86	3.05	3.07	2.92	29%	35%	35%	23%	18%	21%	23%	21%
CE09 I believe in God.	4.80	5.27	5.33	4.21	4.97	4.04	4.26	3.47	57%	67%	68%	45%	62%	40%	45%	30%
CE10 I know what the Christian faith entails.	4.44	4.61	4.62	4.17	4.30	4.34	4.38	3.83	49%	54%	55%	46%	44%	46%	49%	36%
CE11 I try to live according to the Ten Commandments.	3.04	3.00	3.02	2.41	2.92	3.69	3.05	2.51	22%	22%	22%	14%	20%	33%	23%	13%
CE12 By the end of the confirmation time I definitely want to be confirmed.	6.42	6.71	6.54	6.53	6.55	5.59	6.34	5.92	90%	96%	92%	93%	93%	73%	89%	81%
What do you think about the Church? <i>(1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)</i>																
	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CG01 It is important for me to belong to the Church.	3.79	4.08	4.03	3.28	3.26	3.82	3.56	2.97	33%	39%	38%	21%	20%	33%	29%	19%
CG02 The Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me.	3.78	3.88	4.11	4.13	3.50	3.93	3.65	3.47	31%	34%	38%	40%	23%	32%	29%	24%

What do you think about the Church? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CG03	If I will have children, I want to have them baptised.	6.21	6.22	6.46	6.03	6.41	6.06	6.20	6.17	87%	87%	91%	84%	91%	84%	87%	86%
CG04	Church services are usually boring.	4.65	4.47	4.39	4.77	4.83	5.23	4.64	4.62	53%	49%	47%	56%	57%	67%	54%	53%
CG05	The church does a lot of good things for the people.	5.24	5.31	5.12	5.03	5.03	5.00	5.37	5.38	68%	70%	64%	65%	62%	62%	71%	73%
CG06	If I should have personal problems, I would turn to a minister.	2.27	2.14	2.26	1.90	2.11	2.61	2.53	2.50	10%	9%	11%	7%	7%	12%	14%	13%
CG07	Our church building means a lot to me.	3.23	3.44	3.54	2.82	2.90	2.96	3.22	2.84	22%	25%	27%	15%	14%	17%	23%	18%
CG08	I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.	2.70	2.76	2.35	1.92	2.05	3.10	2.81	2.48	17%	18%	12%	6%	6%	21%	17%	14%

Apart from the context of confirmation training: How often do you usually do the following things? (1 = daily; 2 = several times a week; 3 = once a week; 4 = rarely; 5 = never)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CH01	I think about God.	3.31	3.15	3.25	3.49	3.42	3.62	3.34	3.54
CH02	I pray by myself.	3.82	3.61	3.68	3.98	4.14	4.03	4.00	4.14
CH03	I pray together with others.	4.09	3.84	4.00	4.46	4.33	4.43	4.45	4.40

During the time of my confirmation training, it is important for me ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
CK01	to find my own point of view concerning my own life.	4.15	4.01	4.16	3.96	4.27	4.36	3.93	4.73	39%	35%	40%	35%	42%	44%	35%	56%
CK02	to learn central Christian texts by heart (e.g., the Creed).	2.97	2.91	2.50	1.79	3.54	3.37	3.12	2.05	21%	20%	15%	5%	31%	24%	23%	7%
CK03	come into personal contact with the leaders and workers.	3.12	3.18	3.61	3.20	2.36	3.47	3.03	3.22	20%	21%	32%	22%	6%	24%	18%	26%

During the time of my confirmation training, it is important for me ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)																
M TOTAL																
CK04	to be allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands.															
CK05	to have a lot of action.															
CK07	to sing or make music together.															
CK10	to take part without too much stress.															
CK11	that my questions concerning faith will play a role.															
M TOTAL																
CK04	3.78	4.00	4.20	4.38	2.93	4.12	3.52	3.22	35%	40%	45%	51%	18%	40%	28%	24%
CK05	4.75	4.72	5.05	4.89	3.00	5.70	4.19	6.08	58%	57%	63%	61%	22%	79%	45%	86%
CK07	3.64	3.60	3.36	3.27	2.87	3.87	3.68	4.53	34%	34%	30%	29%	17%	38%	34%	53%
CK10	5.39	5.62	5.71	5.70	4.18	5.69	4.90	5.49	72%	77%	77%	79%	44%	77%	61%	75%
CK11	4.01	4.03	3.90	3.43	3.59	3.96	3.86	4.73	39%	39%	34%	26%	30%	35%	37%	57%
M TOTAL																
CL01	Baptism	4.50	4.91	4.98	4.65	4.39	3.91	4.04	3.58	50%	59%	54%	48%	34%	38%	30%
CL02	The Lord's Supper	3.93	4.17	4.09	3.22	3.44	4.04	3.30	3.53	38%	43%	42%	23%	26%	40%	31%
CL03	Course and meaning of Sunday services	3.53	3.79	3.91	3.14	3.14	3.29	3.12	3.27	28%	34%	37%	21%	17%	20%	23%
CL04	Your own parish	3.67	3.97	4.04	3.12	3.11	3.47	3.61	3.03	31%	38%	41%	18%	15%	25%	18%
CL05	Jesus Christ	4.23	4.66	4.57	3.57	3.94	3.58	3.61	3.61	46%	56%	54%	33%	39%	30%	35%
CL06	The Bible	3.88	4.21	3.93	3.16	3.58	3.46	3.31	3.46	38%	45%	38%	24%	32%	27%	31%
CL07	Other religions	3.75	4.06	3.89	4.25	3.35	3.42	3.02	3.56	36%	44%	41%	50%	26%	20%	33%
CL08	Justice and responsibility for others	4.79	5.04	5.11	5.02	4.54	4.21	4.72	4.59	59%	65%	66%	65%	52%	43%	56%
CL09	Friendship	5.95	6.18	6.36	6.15	5.97	5.33	5.95	5.52	84%	88%	90%	87%	85%	70%	76%
CL10	Violence and crime	4.09	4.15	3.97	5.18	3.46	4.11	3.87	4.57	45%	48%	46%	69%	31%	42%	55%
CL11	The meaning of life	5.07	5.27	5.42	5.40	4.99	4.54	4.80	4.94	64%	68%	72%	72%	62%	51%	65%

Further questions with other answer formats	
CC01	Who influenced your decision to register most? ☐ my family ☐ my friends ☐ myself ☐ others, i.e.: _____
CD01	How many of your fellow confirmands did you already know before the confirmation training? (at least by name) ☐ (almost) nobody ☐ less than half ☐ about half of them ☐ the majority ☐ (almost) all of them
CF01	How would you describe your current attitude towards the Christian faith in general? ☐ very negative ☐ rather negative ☐ neither negative nor positive ☐ rather positive ☐ very positive
CJ01	How interested are your parents in religion? ☐ very interested ☐ quite interested ☐ somewhat interested ☐ not interested at all
CM01	sex ☐ male ☐ female
CM02	age ☐ 12 ☐ 13 ☐ 14 ☐ 15 ☐ 16 ☐ other, i.e.: _____
CM03	How many brothers and sisters do you have? ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 and more
CM 04	How many books does your family have at home? Bookshelves of 1 meter contain ca. 40 books. Please don't count the magazines. ☐ none ☐ 1-10 ☐ 11-50 ☐ 51-100 ☐ 101-250 ☐ 251-500 ☐ more than 500 books
CM05	Are you baptised? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ I do not know.
CM06	nationality ☐ [respective country] ☐ other, i.e.: _____
	Your and your parents' place of birth?
CM08	I myself: ☐ [respective country] ☐ other, i.e.: _____ ☐ don't know
CM09	My mother: ☐ [respective country] ☐ other, i.e.: _____ ☐ don't know
CM10	My father: ☐ [respective country] ☐ other, i.e.: _____ ☐ don't know

Further questions with other answer formats	
CM12	Have you previously (more than three times) participated in any group activity offered by the church (Sunday school, children's group, youth group, etc.) ... when you were 5-9 years? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ I don't remember from the age of 10 years until now? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ I don't remember
CM13	Are you attending Protestant Religious Education in this school year? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ (In this school year) there is no Protestant Religious Education.
CM14	Anonymous Code _____ (third letter of your first name, third letter of your mother's first name, month of your birthday as a number)
CM16	What else do you want to tell us? _____

Items in the Confirmands' Questionnaire t_2 (K₂)

	During my time in confirmation training, ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KB01	I have learnt more about God and faith.	5.28	5.20	4.78	4.11	5.32	5.59	4.97	5.74	72%	70%	59%	44%	74%	80%	64%	81%
KB02	I have experienced a good community in the confirmation group.	5.48	5.32	5.34	5.44	5.56	5.48	5.66	6.13	76%	73%	72%	75%	77%	77%	79%	88%
KB03	I have been enabled to come to my own decision about my faith.	4.99	4.83	4.63	4.15	4.93	5.70	4.76	5.38	64%	60%	54%	43%	62%	80%	56%	74%
KB04	I have made an important step in growing up.	4.45	4.28	4.32	3.80	4.21	5.15	4.76	4.61	52%	48%	51%	37%	44%	69%	58%	57%
KB07	I have been thinking about what is good or bad for me and my life.	4.45	4.36	4.32	3.96	4.25	4.76	4.47	4.85	51%	49%	49%	41%	45%	59%	49%	60%
KB08	I have been strengthened in my faith.	4.49	4.59	4.45	3.43	4.29	4.61	4.13	4.42	53%	55%	53%	29%	48%	55%	45%	51%
KB09	It is important for me to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of my confirmation.	5.83	5.67	5.21	5.55	6.65	5.57	6.29	5.86	81%	78%	67%	75%	96%	77%	89%	82%

During my time in confirmation training, ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KB10	It is important for me to get money or presents at the day of my confirmation.	5.19	4.99	4.99	5.23	5.70	5.56	5.60	4.89	67%	62%	60%	71%	78%	77%	75%	60%
KB11	It is important for me to receive a blessing on the day of my confirmation.	5.03	5.10	4.77	4.15	4.63	5.12	4.95	5.12	65%	67%	59%	44%	57%	66%	62%	66%
KB14	I have learnt about life after death.	4.29	4.06	3.82	3.62	4.65	4.58	3.90	5.27	48%	45%	37%	35%	54%	53%	39%	69%
KB15	I have learnt more about other religions.	3.42	3.59	3.43	3.73	3.45	3.29	2.82	3.14	30%	33%	30%	37%	30%	26%	19%	25%

What do you think about the following statements? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KE01	God created the world.	4.21	4.44	4.28	3.46	3.71	4.36	3.99	3.57	45%	50%	47%	30%	34%	48%	39%	33%
KE02	There is life after death.	4.82	4.80	4.85	4.57	4.80	4.77	4.72	5.05	58%	58%	58%	50%	58%	57%	54%	63%
KE03	God loves all humans and cares about each one of us.	5.13	5.15	5.12	4.30	4.85	5.26	4.97	5.35	65%	66%	65%	46%	59%	69%	61%	69%
KE04	Jesus has risen from the dead.	4.61	4.84	4.98	3.72	4.16	4.69	4.21	4.18	53%	58%	63%	34%	44%	56%	43%	46%
KE05	I am not sure what I should believe.	3.64	3.50	3.53	3.86	3.52	4.01	3.89	3.92	34%	31%	31%	39%	31%	40%	37%	41%
KE06	I often talk about God with other people.	2.66	2.82	2.72	2.62	2.35	2.44	2.54	2.53	15%	17%	19%	18%	10%	10%	14%	13%
KE07	Sometimes I am ashamed to tell my friends that I am taking part in confirmation training.	1.67	1.63	2.04	1.63	1.63	1.64	1.96	1.76	7%	7%	13%	7%	7%	6%	10%	7%
KE08	Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.	3.69	3.90	3.74	3.21	2.97	3.61	3.34	3.70	34%	38%	35%	25%	20%	32%	27%	36%
KE09	I believe in God.	4.95	5.29	5.20	4.24	4.89	4.51	4.40	4.22	61%	69%	67%	45%	61%	51%	47%	45%
KE10	I know what the Christian faith entails.	5.09	5.11	4.91	4.60	5.18	5.13	4.95	5.08	67%	68%	63%	55%	70%	69%	62%	67%
KE11	I try to live according to the Ten Commandments.	3.39	3.25	2.92	2.59	3.17	4.33	3.30	3.42	29%	26%	21%	17%	26%	48%	28%	31%
KE12	By the end of the confirmation time, I definitely want to be confirmed.	6.56	6.74	6.52	6.54	6.59	6.08	6.28	6.39	93%	96%	92%	93%	93%	85%	86%	90%

What do you think about the Church? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KG01	It is important for me to belong to the Church.	4.14	4.35	4.17	3.64	3.47	4.19	3.93	3.85	42%	47%	44%	30%	27%	43%	36%	38%
KG02	The Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me.	3.94	4.08	4.24	4.37	3.58	3.91	3.90	3.59	34%	37%	43%	43%	25%	31%	34%	25%
KG03	If I will have children, I want to have them baptised.	6.27	6.28	6.35	6.08	6.32	6.26	6.05	6.33	88%	88%	89%	84%	88%	89%	82%	89%
KG04	Church services are usually boring.	4.81	4.70	4.92	4.94	4.88	5.14	4.86	4.90	57%	54%	60%	61%	60%	66%	57%	59%
KG05	The Church does a lot of good things for the people.	5.45	5.45	5.18	5.25	5.24	5.33	5.46	5.81	75%	75%	67%	71%	68%	72%	73%	83%
KG06	If I should have personal problems, I would turn to a minister.	2.53	2.36	2.40	2.18	2.20	3.05	2.76	3.02	14%	12%	14%	10%	7%	20%	17%	22%
KG07	Our church building means a lot to me.	3.47	3.61	3.51	3.06	2.85	3.38	3.53	3.43	27%	29%	26%	19%	15%	25%	29%	30%
KG08	I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.	3.18	3.16	2.69	2.04	2.17	4.29	3.00	3.35	27%	26%	20%	9%	7%	48%	22%	32%

Apart from the context of confirmation training: How often do you usually do the following things? (1 = daily; 2 = several times a week; 3 = once a week; 4 = rarely; 5 = never)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KH01	I think about God.	3.18	3.12	3.33	3.50	3.37	3.24	3.32	3.09
KH02	I pray by myself.	3.72	3.62	3.75	4.01	4.12	3.68	3.90	3.74
KH03	I pray together with others.	4.02	3.81	3.90	4.47	4.33	4.28	4.39	4.17

	During the time of my confirmation training ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KK03	I came into good personal contact with the leaders and workers.	4.67	4.43	4.59	4.65	4.37	5.16	4.83	5.53	55%	49%	54%	56%	47%	68%	57%	77%
KK04	I was allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands.	3.58	3.41	3.62	4.59	3.25	4.22	3.58	3.96	32%	29%	33%	55%	24%	43%	29%	41%
KK05	We had a lot of action.	4.40	4.15	4.42	4.22	3.53	5.62	3.53	5.93	50%	44%	51%	46%	31%	78%	30%	84%
KK08	I attended the group meetings of the confirmation training regularly.	5.80	5.82	5.43	5.60	5.85	5.83	5.55	5.87	79%	80%	70%	76%	78%	78%	72%	82%
KK09	I attended the Sunday services regularly.	5.03	4.77	4.56	3.51	5.26	5.75	5.32	5.20	63%	59%	53%	32%	67%	76%	66%	66%
KK10	Taking part in confirmation training was stressful for me.	2.95	3.03	3.16	3.00	2.03	2.93	3.38	3.05	19%	19%	22%	18%	7%	19%	26%	23%
KK11	My questions concerning faith were addressed.	4.02	3.86	3.67	3.66	3.72	4.48	3.49	5.22	37%	34%	32%	29%	32%	43%	26%	68%
KK22	I sometimes felt like an outsider.	2.25	2.21	2.42	2.13	1.98	2.32	2.55	2.38	14%	14%	16%	12%	9%	13%	17%	16%
KK25	I got to know our parish better.	4.49	4.63	4.33	3.15	3.82	5.05	4.72	3.65	53%	57%	49%	22%	34%	66%	55%	36%
KK26	I temporarily worked in programmes of the church (e.g., in a internship).	2.84	2.87	2.68	2.14	1.98	3.19	2.82	3.29	23%	25%	18%	13%	7%	23%	22%	31%
KK27	I became motivated to help in the church as a voluntary worker.	3.20	3.20	2.89	2.79	2.11	4.45	2.63	3.30	24%	23%	18%	14%	8%	51%	15%	27%
KK30	I experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (e.g., youth church services).	4.20	4.27	4.27	4.36	4.02	4.04	3.82	4.55	44%	46%	46%	47%	41%	36%	35%	53%
KK31	I took part in the preparation of church services.	4.19	4.02	3.83	3.01	4.05	4.78	4.38	4.49	48%	45%	42%	29%	46%	59%	49%	53%
KK32	I got to know people to whom faith is important.	4.83	4.69	4.70	4.38	4.82	4.87	5.34	5.22	58%	55%	53%	50%	58%	58%	68%	65%
KK33	I experienced good examples for respect among people with different convictions.	4.41	4.34	4.17	4.24	4.18	4.34	4.42	5.15	45%	43%	36%	42%	40%	42%	45%	63%
KK35	What I learnt in confirmation training has little to do with my everyday life.	4.30	4.49	4.63	4.73	4.12	4.22	4.18	3.57	43%	47%	51%	53%	38%	40%	38%	29%

During the time of my confirmation training ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)																
	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KK37	5.17	5.05	5.10	4.89	5.24	5.22	5.27	5.63	65%	63%	63%	58%	66%	66%	66%	73%
KK41																
KK44																
KK45																
KK46																
KK49																
KK50																
To what extent are you satisfied with ... (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied; plus: »we didn't have that«)																
	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KN01	5.24	5.04	5.13	4.87	4.94	5.80	5.26	5.98	72%	67%	68%	66%	63%	87%	72%	88%
KN02																
KN03																
KN04																
KN07																
KN08																
KN10																
KN11																
KN13																
KN14																

	How often did you do the following things during the time of your confirmation training? (1 = (nearly) every meeting; 2 = sometimes; 3 = once in the whole confirmation time; 4 = never)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KT01	We listen to stories / to a presentation	1.85	1.89	1.93	2.07	2.06	1.58	2.08	1.50
KT02	We work in small groups	1.91	1.85	1.79	1.96	2.54	1.77	2.16	1.54
KT05	We play games	2.31	2.30	2.01	2.83	3.14	2.32	2.22	1.51
KT12	We pray together	1.84	1.84	2.03	3.07	1.73	1.87	2.03	1.59
KT17	We sing together	1.75	1.86	2.25	2.81	1.43	1.67	1.99	1.30
KT20	We recite the texts learnt by heart	2.33	2.30	3.06	3.73	2.22	2.27	2.60	2.27

	How familiar are you with the following Christian texts? (1 = I don't know this text by heart; 2 = I know it more or less by heart; 3 = I know this by heart quite well)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KU01	The Lord's Prayer (Our Father in heaven ...)	2.67	2.80	2.68	2.43	2.48	2.88	2.16	2.35
KU02	The Creed (I believe in God, the Father almighty ...)	2.36	2.49	2.39	1.22	2.20	2.78	1.79	1.89
KU06	The Ten Commandments (I am the Lord, thy God. Thou shalt have ...)	2.07	2.15	1.93	1.46	1.48	2.78	1.72	1.67

Further questions with other answer formats	
KD01	How many of your fellow confirmands do you know by name now? ☐ (almost) nobody ☐ less than half ☐ about half of them ☐ the majority ☐ (almost) all of them
KE01	How would you describe your current attitude towards the Christian faith in general? ☐ very negative ☐ rather negative ☐ neither negative nor positive ☐ rather positive ☐ very positive
KE02	How would you describe your current attitude towards the Church [respective Church] in general? ☐ very negative ☐ rather negative ☐ neither negative nor positive ☐ rather positive ☐ very positive
KM01	your sex ☐ male ☐ female
KM14	Anonymous Code _____ (third letter of your first name, third letter of your mother's first name, month of your birthday as a number)
KM16	If you were a minister: What would you do with the confirmation time? _____
KV01	How did you feel filling in this questionnaire? ☐ I liked it ☐ it was okay ☐ it annoyed me
KV05	Have you filled in the first questionnaire of this study in autumn 2007 already? ☐ no ☐ yes ☐ don't know
KW01	Do you think the time you spend in confirmation training is too short or too long? ☐ too short ☐ just right ☐ too long

Items in the Workers' Questionnaire t, (W_t)

This topic, I consider to be ... (1 = not important; 7 = very important)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
WA01	The Ten Commandments	5.83	6.01	4.77	4.73	4.73	6.48	5.44	5.26	84%	88%	58%	53%	53%	97%	77%	71%
WA02	Christian holidays and their meaning (Christmas, Easter, Whitsun)	6.02	6.04	5.52	5.29	6.31	5.97	5.94	6.02	89%	89%	75%	71%	93%	90%	94%	90%
WA03	Baptism	6.32	6.27	6.19	5.33	6.67	6.81	6.26	6.27	92%	92%	86%	69%	96%	100%	92%	91%
WA04	The Lord's Supper	6.29	6.23	5.96	5.20	6.64	6.81	6.21	6.28	92%	90%	81%	69%	96%	100%	93%	94%
WA05	Course and meaning of Sunday services	5.52	5.59	5.58	5.31	5.91	5.69	4.77	5.22	79%	79%	85%	77%	87%	86%	62%	76%
WA06	The Creed	5.97	6.01	5.82	4.16	6.48	6.56	5.96	5.44	88%	89%	86%	45%	93%	98%	91%	80%
WA07	Jesus Christ	6.58	6.49	6.12	6.22	6.91	6.87	6.83	6.69	96%	95%	91%	94%	100%	100%	98%	96%
WA08	Holy Spirit	5.78	5.52	5.43	5.17	6.22	6.61	6.32	6.19	83%	78%	78%	73%	87%	99%	94%	93%
WA09	The church as a building	4.46	4.54	4.68	4.53	4.09	4.26	4.25	4.41	52%	54%	55%	50%	39%	46%	45%	51%
WA10	Protestant – Catholic	4.07	4.29	4.70	4.20	2.83	3.61	3.33	3.86	41%	48%	61%	45%	9%	26%	21%	32%
WA11	Other religions	3.67	3.82	3.84	3.67	2.87	3.11	2.73	3.78	33%	37%	38%	36%	20%	22%	12%	33%
WA12	Ecology and preservation of the Creation.	4.56	4.53	4.35	4.98	3.74	4.76	5.11	4.66	53%	52%	47%	64%	33%	62%	69%	55%
WA13	The social mission of the church.	5.12	4.97	5.40	5.24	4.59	5.85	5.70	5.29	71%	67%	73%	70%	54%	91%	88%	77%
WA14	The meaning of life	5.75	5.55	5.67	6.44	6.26	6.11	5.91	6.17	83%	78%	79%	97%	96%	94%	90%	91%
WA15	Justice and responsibility for others	5.92	5.77	6.16	6.22	6.02	6.32	6.02	6.22	88%	84%	91%	95%	89%	97%	93%	94%
WA16	Friendship	5.35	5.11	5.82	5.43	5.09	5.57	5.53	6.16	74%	67%	82%	76%	70%	83%	81%	93%
WA17	Body and sexuality	4.20	3.75	4.68	4.70	3.35	5.40	5.00	5.30	48%	36%	57%	59%	26%	83%	65%	78%
WA18	Violence and crime	4.43	4.33	4.21	4.42	3.62	4.70	4.11	5.00	51%	49%	47%	48%	31%	57%	41%	66%

During their confirmation training, the confirmands should ... (1 = not important; 7 = very important)																
	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
WB01 be encouraged to think about death and resur- rection.	5.54	5.48	5.05	5.38	5.89	5.25	5.04	6.00	80%	78%	64%	76%	93%	75%	66%	88%
WB02 temporarily work in programmes of the church.	4.83	5.11	5.42	5.30	3.52	4.25	5.49	4.10	62%	69%	78%	77%	33%	49%	83%	42%
WB03 attend the obligatory meetings reliably.	6.31	6.29	6.31	6.33	6.57	6.29	5.13	6.60	94%	94%	92%	95%	96%	97%	72%	98%
WB04 experience forms of worship adequate for young people (e.g., youth church services).	5.82	5.86	5.97	5.45	5.27	5.77	5.98	5.81	86%	87%	90%	81%	71%	86%	89%	86%
WB05 attend the Sunday church services according to the requirements of the confirmation training.	5.74	5.57	5.11	5.56	6.43	6.10	5.53	6.20	84%	80%	68%	81%	96%	93%	84%	93%
WB06 take part in the preparation of church services.	5.35	5.38	5.54	5.11	4.49	5.10	5.46	5.56	77%	78%	81%	75%	58%	71%	80%	82%
WB07 take part in daytrips or camps with the group.	6.19	6.18	6.42	6.05			5.59	6.38	91%	91%	93%	92%			77%	96%
WB08 be encouraged to be confirmed even if they are still unsure about it.	5.31	5.40	5.52	5.03	3.87	5.97	5.29	4.91	73%	76%	78%	65%	36%	91%	72%	61%
WB09 take part in the selection of topics for the con- firmation training.	4.80	4.81	5.09	5.06	3.63	4.04	4.13	5.57	61%	62%	70%	62%	28%	40%	40%	83%
WB10 get to know other people to whom faith is im- portant.	5.64	5.65	5.65	5.41	4.35	5.68	5.98	5.82	82%	82%	83%	81%	46%	86%	91%	86%
WB11 become (more) familiar with the content of the Bible.	5.80	5.71	4.80	5.14	5.83	6.49	6.03	5.84	88%	85%	61%	71%	93%	99%	95%	92%
The confirmands should ... (1 = not important; 7 = very important)																
	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
WC01 develop a personal point of view concerning their own life.	5.92	6.06	6.14	6.44	5.82	5.34	5.32	5.83	88%	91%	91%	100%	87%	77%	76%	86%
WC02 be strengthened in their faith.	6.02	6.07	5.99	6.02	5.85	5.95	6.28	5.79	91%	92%	89%	92%	87%	93%	97%	89%
WC03 learn central Christian texts by heart (e.g., the Creed).	4.63	4.75	3.86	2.94	5.54	5.13	4.53	3.77	58%	61%	42%	13%	78%	74%	54%	33%

The confirmands should ... (1 = not important; 7 = very important)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
WC04	be supported in their personal and social development.	5.84	5.85	6.18	5.92	5.00	5.90	5.41	6.09	88%	88%	92%	94%	64%	94%	80%	94%
WC05	get to know our parish better.	5.45	5.61	5.79	5.39	3.89	6.02	5.57	4.80	81%	86%	90%	80%	38%	96%	81%	65%
WC06	get to know what the youth work of the church offers to them.	5.64	5.69	5.84	5.25	4.59	5.88	5.66	5.52	84%	85%	87%	81%	57%	94%	84%	81%
WC07	be won for continuing as voluntary workers in the church.	4.64	4.88	4.96	4.56	3.56	5.20	4.60	3.60	58%	65%	64%	53%	31%	76%	55%	27%
WC08	be encouraged in their creativity.	4.93	4.82	5.46	5.17	3.38	4.76	5.16	5.76	64%	60%	77%	76%	33%	57%	72%	86%
WC09	learn to enjoy singing or making music.	4.51	4.48	4.67	4.55	4.80	4.71	4.43	4.50	54%	52%	61%	55%	65%	64%	52%	52%
WC10	experience forms of meditation or prayer.	5.20	5.00	5.11	5.14	4.20	5.94	5.21	5.85	73%	67%	72%	72%	57%	92%	72%	88%
WC11	learn to live their everyday life in relationship to God.	5.53	5.41	4.94	5.41	5.30	6.22	5.84	5.64	78%	76%	68%	75%	67%	96%	88%	79%

How important do you consider these aims? (1 = not important; 7 = very important)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
WD01	The confirmation church service should be prepared together with the confirmands.	5.29	5.04	5.76	6.45	5.07	5.69	4.99	6.16	72%	66%	82%	91%	61%	89%	69%	89%
WD02	Confirmation work should be used as a missionary chance for winning people for the Christian faith.	4.50	4.70	3.97	3.83	3.80	3.90	4.86	4.18	53%	58%	43%	47%	39%	37%	66%	45%
WD03	The confirmands should experience community in the confirmation group.	6.27	6.28	6.53	6.06	5.28	6.01	6.00	6.69	94%	95%	93%	91%	70%	95%	89%	99%
WD04	There should be separate programmes for boys and girls during the confirmation work.	3.23	3.18	3.39	3.92	1.98	3.66	3.40	3.39	29%	28%	34%	39%	15%	37%	28%	31%
WD05	I want to have at least one personal conversation with each confirmand.	5.13	5.14	5.39	5.73	3.33	5.35	4.69	5.45	67%	67%	73%	81%	28%	74%	57%	78%
WD06	Our confirmation work should cooperate with the school.	3.64	3.53	3.64	3.36	3.91	4.46	3.54	3.62	35%	33%	37%	30%	38%	56%	34%	35%

How important do you consider these aims? (1 = not important; 7 = very important)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
WD07	There should be a lot of action in our confirmation work.	4.69	4.44	5.22	3.31	3.35	4.96	4.03	6.06	58%	51%	71%	23%	17%	67%	42%	93%
WD08	The confirmation work should contribute to good contact between the church and the parents of the confirmands.	4.80	4.63	4.84	5.05	5.15	5.20	5.58	4.97	63%	57%	65%	70%	70%	78%	88%	67%
WD09	The elders/presbyters should be content with our way of doing confirmation work.	4.34	4.48	3.69	4.48		4.34	5.12	3.59	49%	52%	36%	54%		47%	71%	34%

To what extent do these statements apply? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
WE01	I know the official guidelines for confirmation work.	5.07	4.92	4.75	5.86	6.11	6.05	5.54	4.74	67%	64%	62%	83%	89%	90%	78%	61%
WE02	I comply with these guidelines.	4.83	4.70	4.62	5.19	5.78	5.83	5.46	4.36	64%	61%	60%	77%	87%	90%	80%	52%
WE03	I am sure that all who work with the confirmands in our parish have very similar aims.	5.32	5.41	5.60	5.25		4.51	5.14	5.46	74%	76%	80%	71%		51%	67%	77%
WE04	Being together with the other workers is very important for me.	5.97	6.05	6.35	5.46	5.02	5.45	5.74	6.27	87%	88%	93%	80%	67%	79%	81%	93%
WE05	I like being together with the confirmands.	6.16	6.12	6.30	6.05	6.41	5.89	6.21	6.40	92%	92%	90%	92%	100%	87%	94%	95%
WE06	I would like to be relieved from working in confirmation training.	1.67	1.60	1.63	1.70	1.82	2.09	2.03	1.62	6%	5%	7%	5%	7%	10%	11%	6%
WE07	I want to be a role model for younger people.	5.69	5.66	5.57	5.38	5.00	5.01	5.71	6.39	82%	81%	80%	79%	63%	66%	86%	95%
WE08	Faith in God is important for me.	6.30	6.26	5.80	6.38	6.59	6.66	6.67	6.14	90%	90%	82%	92%	91%	98%	96%	86%
WE09	I consider my pedagogical competence for confirmation work as adequate.	5.36	5.28	5.53	5.53	5.22	5.15	5.52	5.77	77%	74%	78%	86%	65%	75%	79%	88%
WE10	I consider my theological knowledge/competence for confirmation work as adequate.	5.35	5.29	5.12	5.90	6.50	5.20	5.66	5.31	74%	73%	66%	90%	96%	75%	79%	72%

Further questions with other answer formats	
WF01	Sex: ☐ male ☐ female
WF02	Your age: _____
WF03	Religious denomination: ☐ none ☐ Protestant ☐ Catholic ☐ other, i.e.: _____
WF04	Nationality: ☐ [respective country] ☐ other, i.e.: _____
WF05	How many of the confirmands did you already know before the confirmation training? (at least by name) ☐ (almost) nobody ☐ less than half ☐ about half of them ☐ the majority ☐ (almost) all of them
WF06	What is your function in confirmation work? ☐ minister ☐ minister-in-training ☐ deacon/employed youth worker ☐ other full- or part-time worker, i.e.: _____ ☐ volunteer
WF07	Please tick how long you have been working in the following groups. Please make one cross per line. [country-specific groups like Sunday school, Christian youth groups, etc.] ☐ longer than 3 years ☐ 1 to 3 years ☐ less than 1 year ☐ never
WF13	For how many years have you been working with confirmation classes before the actual one? ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 to 5 ☐ 6 to 10 ☐ more than 10
WF16	Anonymous Code _____ (third letter of your first name, third letter of your mother's first name, month of your birthday as a number) Did you ever attend any training for confirmation work? (several crosses possible) ☐ No, I have never attended this kind of training. ☐ Yes, within the framework of my full-time/part-time training. ☐ Yes, in a special course on confirmation work. ☐ I have attended general youth leader seminars.

Additional questions for leaders in t₁

Questions with other answer formats	
WG02	How many church services do the confirmands have to attend during the confirmation training? ☐ no fixed number ☐ 1 to 5 ☐ 6 to 15 ☐ 16 to 25 ☐ 26 or more
WG03	The number of attended church services is controlled ... ☐ through »strict« attendance checks (e.g., signature) ☐ through »milder« attendance checks (e.g., a candle used in the service for each confirmand) ☐ not at all
WG06	Explanatory notes: _____
	How do you advertise the confirmation work (several crosses possible)?
WG07	☐ via the parents
WG08	☐ in school (e.g., Religious Education)
WG09	☐ in the newspaper
WG10	☐ in the newsletter of the parish
WG11	☐ in a letter to the adolescents and their parents
WG12	☐ in other ways, i.e.: _____

Items in the Workers' Questionnaire t₂ (V_J)

		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
	Looking back on confirmation time: What did the confirmands experience, learn and do (according to your point of view)? The confirmands have ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)																
VB02	worked in programmes of the church.	4.43	4.60	4.49	4.94	2.64	4.55	5.17	3.82	53%	56%	55%	66%	21%	57%	68%	40%
VB04	had the chance to experience forms of worship attractive for young people (e.g., youth church services).	5.25	5.26	5.58	5.57	5.85	4.11	5.65	5.92	69%	69%	75%	78%	85%	42%	77%	83%
VB06	took part in the preparation of church services.	5.25	5.07	5.38	5.08	4.94	5.60	5.74	5.60	71%	66%	73%	69%	65%	79%	79%	78%
VB09	took part in the choice of topics for the confirmation training.	3.20	3.02	2.06	4.56	2.94	3.13	2.93	4.03	24%	22%	9%	62%	18%	22%	21%	37%
VB16	gained an overall view of the Christian tradition – symbols, festivals, traditions, art, etc.	5.64	5.63	5.03	4.85	5.91	5.43	5.65	5.86	82%	81%	67%	63%	88%	81%	85%	84%
VB18	The confirmands' own questions about faith were addressed.	5.57	5.45	5.84	5.29	5.21	5.80	5.06	5.99	80%	78%	86%	73%	68%	89%	66%	87%

		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
	The confirmands ... (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)																
VC03	learnt central Christian texts by heart (e.g., the Creed).	5.62	5.87	4.34	2.08	6.56	6.61	4.69	4.15	77%	82%	55%	8%	97%	98%	54%	45%
VC04	were supported in their personal and social development.	5.35	5.14	5.39	5.02	4.41	5.80	4.91	6.02	77%	72%	74%	67%	44%	92%	65%	92%
VC05	got to know our parish better.	5.40	5.78	5.84	5.12	4.79	5.68	5.51	3.78	79%	88%	87%	73%	62%	89%	84%	41%
VC06	got to know what programmes of youth work the church offers to them.	5.08	5.14	5.05	4.76	3.84	5.62	5.46	4.55	68%	69%	64%	65%	34%	87%	78%	53%
VC07	were encouraged for voluntary work.	4.48	4.65	4.34	3.73	1.53	6.11	3.59	3.29	54%	57%	51%	39%	3%	94%	29%	28%
VC10	experienced forms of meditation or prayer.	5.23	4.78	4.87	4.37	4.12	5.91	5.38	6.57	70%	60%	57%	48%	41%	91%	73%	97%
VC12	are better able to make their own decision about faith.	5.64	5.63	5.73	5.31	5.21	5.51	5.46	5.92	83%	83%	86%	81%	71%	83%	80%	87%

To what extent do these statements apply? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VD01 The confirmation church service has been (or will be) prepared together with the confirmands.	4.87	4.72	5.15	6.60	4.40	4.80	3.96	5.70	62%	59%	72%	98%	51%	65%	35%	81%
VD05 I had at least one personal conversation with each confirmand during confirmation time.	5.03	5.42	5.63	5.53	3.14	5.31	2.99	4.18	67%	74%	77%	75%	26%	75%	24%	49%
VD06 In this confirmation class there was cooperation between school and confirmation work in our parish (e.g., common projects).	1.91	1.59	1.61	1.70	2.31	2.74	2.27	2.28	8%	5%	6%	9%	11%	13%	14%	14%
VD08 The confirmation work has contributed to good contact between the church and the parents of the confirmands.	4.25	4.16	4.57	4.72	4.50	4.31	4.47	4.40	44%	41%	54%	56%	47%	47%	51%	46%
VE06 I would like to be relieved from working in confirmation training.	1.75	1.70	1.66	1.96	2.09	2.04	1.97	1.57	6%	6%	5%	4%	6%	10%	3%	6%

It depends on different factors which topics and activities play a role during confirmation training. How important would you consider the influence of the following on the course of confirmation training? (1 = no influence; 2 = some influence; 3 = strong influence; 4 = very strong influence)	M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VJ01 minister / mainly responsible person	3.61	3.61	3.60	3.62		3.61	3.66	3.61
VJ02 Other workers / volunteers	2.76	2.61	2.71	2.17		2.30	2.84	3.63
VJ03 confirmands	2.45	2.14	1.89	2.63		2.35	3.07	3.52
VJ04 parents of the confirmands	1.81	1.66	1.57	1.56		1.69	2.16	2.38
VJ05 presbytery / the elders	1.77	1.93	1.69	1.43		1.61	1.89	1.34
VJ06 official guidelines for the course of confirmation work	2.54	2.51	2.12	2.22		3.01	2.61	2.26
VJ09 the way confirmation classes have always been done in this parish	2.28	2.10	2.25	1.96		2.49	2.24	2.79

To what extent do these statements apply? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VL01	In our parish there are youth groups that are suitable for newly confirmed adolescents.	4.97	4.89	5.07	3.65	2.09	6.40	4.54	4.78	66%	64%	66%	38%	17%	97%	56%	60%
VL02	If a confirmand likes to help as a volunteer in our parish after his confirmation, there are opportunities to do so.	5.82	6.14	6.26	5.38	2.57	6.23	4.77	5.18	82%	88%	90%	72%	20%	92%	60%	70%
VL03	If I have problems in confirmation work, there is someone I can talk to.	6.06	6.01	6.16	6.17	6.06	6.14	5.87	6.21	87%	86%	88%	89%	82%	92%	82%	90%
VL04	I often discuss issues concerning confirmation work with confirmation workers / colleagues from other parishes.	4.11	3.93	3.79	3.62	4.31	5.29	4.10	3.82	45%	40%	41%	36%	49%	72%	47%	38%
Further questions (1 = not at all; 7 = totally)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	YES TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VM01	How satisfied are you with the confirmation work in your parish?	5.61	5.48	5.65	5.24	5.65	5.63	5.56	6.06	85%	81%	85%	78%	88%	92%	81%	93%
VM02	How do you like doing the confirmation work?	6.15	6.10	6.32	6.07	6.06	6.00	5.78	6.56	92%	91%	96%	94%	85%	90%	87%	97%
VM04	Do you find your teamwork successful? (only fill in, if working in a team)	6.04	6.03	6.23	6.18		5.60	5.81	6.49	90%	89%	93%	98%		88%	87%	95%
VM05	Do you consider the financial means allotted to confirmation work in the parish adequate?	5.44	5.36	5.34	5.81		5.65		5.55	78%	76%	74%	87%		85%		80%

Please state, how often the following things happen (1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often)		M	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
		TOTAL							
VN01	The time for the preparation of the meetings was too short for me.	2.41	2.29	2.21	2.11	2.97	2.59	2.53	2.62
VN02	After a class-meeting, I was satisfied with the way the confirmands participated.	3.48	3.46	3.48	3.35	3.46	3.39	3.39	3.65
VN03	After a class-meeting, I was satisfied with what the confirmands have learnt or experienced.	3.39	3.36	3.46	3.45	3.26	3.25	3.38	3.63
VN04	After a meeting, I was satisfied with the way I did it.	3.35	3.31	3.39	3.45	3.35	3.21	3.29	3.58
VN05	There were problems with keeping discipline in the group of confirmands.	2.49	2.61	2.40	2.60	2.56	2.02	2.61	2.37
VN06	Some confirmands encountered difficulties concerning the time needed for confirmation training (e.g., because school lessons or leisure activities took place at the same time).	2.48	2.60	2.72	2.81	2.31	2.36	2.80	2.05
VN07	Parents of the confirmands contacted me on their own initiative.	2.07	2.02	1.88	2.13	2.60	2.15	2.56	2.01
VN08	There were conflicts between me/us and some parents of the confirmands.	1.25	1.28	1.22	1.37	1.29	1.20	1.35	1.15
VN09	A team of workers met in order to prepare a lesson or an activity.	2.96	2.79	2.96	2.40				3.61
VN10	There were conflicts within the team of confirmation workers.	1.43	1.44	1.34	1.19	1.11	1.43	1.27	1.49
VN11	When the confirmands met, voluntary workers were present.	2.90	2.91	3.19	1.90				2.88

Further questions with other answer formats	
VF01	Sex ☐ male ☐ female
VF05	How many of the confirmands do you know by name now? ☐ (almost) nobody ☐ less than half ☐ about half of them ☐ the majority ☐ (almost) all of them
VF16	Anonymous Code _____ (third letter of your first name, third letter of your mother's first name, month of your birthday as a number)
VF17	What is your highest educational degree? ☐ I'm still in school ☐ my highest degree is: _____

Additional items for leaders t₂

How often did you use these pedagogical measures in your teaching? (1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VH01	Lectures / narrations	3.06	3.05	2.89	3.34	2.89	3.07	3.38	
VH02	Discussion	3.52	3.48	3.14	3.60	3.61	3.74	3.28	
VH03	Drama, role play	2.46	2.40	1.96	2.31	2.50	2.68	2.62	
VH04	Learning paths (Bible path, Diaconia path, Mission path, etc.)	1.82	1.59	1.89	1.53	1.75	2.79	2.30	
VH06	Games and play	2.80	2.84	2.96	2.44	2.37	2.76	2.98	
VH07	Stories and narratives	3.04	3.00	2.78	2.86	3.36	3.10	3.21	
VH08	Painting, drawing and other visual art	2.83	2.92	2.71	2.46	2.61	2.78	2.23	
VH09	Prayer and meditation	3.15	3.17	3.18	2.20	3.36	2.91	3.53	
VH10	Working with biblical texts	3.39	3.39	3.11	2.83	3.46	3.46	3.30	
VH11	Working with other written texts	2.66	2.80	2.36	2.88	2.37	2.34	2.00	
VH12	Reciting texts learnt by heart	2.47	2.54	1.75	1.23	2.43	2.34	2.36	
VH13	Singing together	3.03	3.03	2.61	2.31	3.43	3.00	2.91	
VH14	working with internet or text messages	1.30	1.24	1.18	1.69	1.75	1.23	1.70	
VH15	Group work	3.33	3.37	3.32	3.46	2.71	3.46	3.17	
VH16	Visits and excursions	2.25	2.32	1.93	2.37	2.57	1.87	1.92	
VH17	talking with experts	1.80	1.76	1.61	2.40	2.21	1.70	2.00	
VH18	meeting people from the parish	2.37	2.42	2.32	2.23	2.04		2.30	
VH25	Making music/musicals/musical games	1.79	1.69	1.56	1.80	1.75	2.38	1.57	
VH27	meditation / exercising silent times	2.09	1.99	2.11	2.09	1.71	2.80	1.96	
VH28	experiential education; adventure-based learning	1.98	2.10	2.39	2.26	1.41	1.56	2.15	
VH29	other, i.e. ...	1.83	2.38	2.50	3.20	1.22	1.65	2.35	

How often did you use the following material for teaching the confirmands? (1 = never; 2 = seldom; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often)		M TOTAL	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VI01	Bible	3.56	3.53	3.21	2.89	3.43	3.84	3.73	3.54
VI02	catechism	1.85	1.74	1.96	1.15	1.74	2.79	1.73	1.27
VI03	Church Hymn Books	2.93	2.92	2.54	1.91	3.57	2.65	2.65	3.50
VI04	Modern Christian songs	2.94	2.96	2.74	2.54	2.23	3.10	2.38	3.73
VI05	workbook for confirmands (i.e.,)	2.47	2.44	2.48	1.53	2.93	2.35	2.78	2.50
VI06	material produced by myself	3.26	3.42	3.32	3.59	3.29	2.50	3.25	3.12
VI07	movies	2.24	2.21	2.00	3.15	2.96	1.64	2.53	2.77
VI08	chalkboard or flip chart	2.59	2.41	2.25	3.09	3.14	2.89	2.71	3.19
VI09	overhead projector	2.13	2.12	1.93	2.54	2.25	2.35		1.54
VI10	Computer & data projector	1.79	1.64	1.56	2.12	2.43	1.67	2.87	2.15
VI12	CD-ROMs or other data storage media	1.67	1.63	1.42	1.97	1.68	1.55	2.22	1.85
VI13	other, i.e. ...	2.17	1.99	2.00	4.00	2.11	1.52		3.31
VI14	work sheets	3.20	3.41	3.07	3.09	3.11	2.57	2.42	3.04
VI15	musical instruments	2.13	2.03	1.78	1.83	1.86	2.28		3.38

Further questions with other answer formats	
	When a confirmand finishes the confirmation year in your parish: Which activities did she/he attend normally within the last confirmation training period? (referring to the whole confirmation year, even if it is not finished yet):
VQ01	number of meetings over all: ____ meetings
VQ02	hours of »normal instruction«: ____ hours (à 60 minutes)
VQ03	special days with the group (at least 3 hours): ____ special days
VQ04	trips / outings (at least 3 hours): ____ trips / outings
VQ05	overnight events in the context of trips / outings / camps: ____ nights
VQ06	internship in the parish: altogether ____ hours per confirmand
VQ09	joint activities with Christian youth work in our parish: ____ meetings / activities
VQ07	other, i.e. ____
VQ08	other, i.e. ____
VR03	The confirmands of my group are pupils in altogether ____ different schools.
VR05	Are there contracts/agreements between the confirmands and the parish? ☐ Yes, a contract that has to be signed by the confirmand. ☐ We only have written guidelines, but no contract. ☐ There are no written rules or contracts in our parish.
	How many people (employees and volunteers) help in confirmation training?
VR06	Sum altogether ____
VR07	Regularly active ____
VR08	Active only at special events ____
VR09	How important would you consider confirmation work, compared to other fields of work in your parish (e.g., care for the elderly; social work, etc.)? I consider confirmation work to be ☐ one of the most unimportant fields of work ☐ rather unimportant ☐ as important as other fields of work ☐ an important field of work ☐ one of the most important fields of work

Further questions with other answer formats

- VR10 When is the baptism of those confirmands who are not yet baptised?
(please tick only one box)
☐ On the day of confirmation ☐ 1-4 weeks before the day of confirmation ☐ More than 4 weeks before the day of confirmation ☐ They can be confirmed without being baptised.
- VR21 When do confirmands take part in the Eucharist? (please tick only one box)
☐ Right from the start of their confirmation training.
☐ They celebrate their first Eucharist during their confirmation time in a service together with the congregation.
☐ They celebrate their first Eucharist during their confirmation time in the group of the confirmands.
☐ They celebrate their first Eucharist during their confirmation or in the days before or after.
- Those people are active as workers:
- VU01 Ministers _____
- VU02 Deacons _____
- VU03 Parents of the confirmands _____
- VU04 Volunteers older than 18 years (confirmands' parents not included) _____
- VU05 Volunteers under 18 years _____
- VU06 Others, i.e.: _____
- VV01 Where does the group usually meet? (several crosses possible)
☐ church (tick here only, if church is used apart from services)
- VV02 ☐ community house
- VV03 ☐ pastor's house
- VV04 ☐ school
- VV05 ☐ other, i. e. _____
- On which day of the week are your regular meetings? (several crosses possible)
- VW01 ☐ No fixed days (then go on with the next question)
- VW02 ☐ Monday
- VW03 ☐ Tuesday
- VW04 ☐ Wednesday
- VW05 ☐ Thursday
- VW06 ☐ Friday
- VW07 ☐ Saturday
- VW08 ☐ Sunday (Note: Services do not count as »regular group meetings«)
- Do you usually evaluate the confirmation training (apart from this study?) (several crosses possible)
- VX01 ☐ questionnaires for the parents
- VX02 ☐ questionnaires for the confirmands
- VX03 ☐ oral feedback from the confirmands
- VX04 ☐ not in a formal way
- VX05 ☐ other, i. e. _____

Correspondence list of confirmands' and workers' items

The following list shows »pairs of items«, i. e., which items in the workers' questionnaires exactly correspond with respective items in the confirmands' questionnaires (without contry-specific items).

WB02/VB02 with KK26; WB04/VB04 with KK30; WB06/VB06 with KK31; WB09/VB09 with KK04; WC04/VC04 with KB04; WC05/VC05 with KK25; WC06/VC06 with KG08; WC07/VC07 with KK27; WD05/VD05 with KK03; WA03 with CL01; WA04 with CL02; WA05 with CL03; WA07 with CL05; WA11 with CL07; WA14 with CL11; WA15 with CL08; WA16 with CL09; WA18 with CL10; WB01 with KB14; WB03 with KK08; WB05 with KK09; WB08 with KE12; WB10 with KK32; WC02 with KB08; WD03 with KB02; WD07 with KK05.

Exemplary Questionnaire

In the following, a complete exemplary questionnaire is printed (confirmands t_2). The English versions of the questionnaires were not filled in by the confirmands; they were only created as templates for the German, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish versions. The printed versions of the questionnaires did not show the item-names but ascending question numbers. The English questionnaire on the following four pages will be printed with integrated item-names for a better orientation.



Please read the instructions on the coloured information sheet first. Then start ticking:

LOOKING BACK...

Tick where applicable (one cross per line)

To what extent

are you satisfied with

			not satisfied at all						totally satisfied		We didn't have that
KN01	01	the whole confirmation time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN03	02	content/topics of lessons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN04	03	feeling of community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN02	04	having fun	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN15	05	meeting rooms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN07	06	minister / person primarily responsible for confirmation work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN08	07	other teachers/workers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN10	08	church services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN13	09	prayers in the group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN14	10	music, songs and singing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KN11	11	camp(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Tick where applicable (one cross per line)

During my time in confirmation training ...

			not applicable at all							totally applicable
KB01	12	I have learnt more about God and faith.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB02	13	I have experienced a good community in the confirmation group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB03	14	I have been enabled to come to my own decision about my faith.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB04	15	I have made an important step in growing up.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB08	16	I have been strengthened in my faith.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB14	17	I have learnt about life after death.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB15	18	I have learnt more about other religions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB07	19	I have been thinking about what is good or bad for me and my life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

KD01 How many of your fellow confirmands do you **know by name now**?

- ☐ (almost) nobody
 ☐ less than half
 ☐ about half of them
 ☐ the majority
 ☐ (almost) all of them

Tick where applicable (one cross per line)

Thinking about your confirmation day:

What is important for you?

			not applicable at all							totally applicable
KB09	21	It is important for me to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of my confirmation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB11	22	It is important for me to receive a blessing on the day of my confirmation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KB10	23	It is important for me to get money or presents at the day of my confirmation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



WHAT CONFIRMANDS BELIEVE AND THINK ...

Tick where applicable (one cross per line)

What do you think about the following statements?

			not applicable at all							totally applicable
KE01	24	God created the world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE02	25	There is life after death.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE03	26	God loves all humans and cares about each one of us.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE04	27	Jesus has risen from the dead.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE05	28	I am not sure what I should believe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE06	29	I often talk about God with other people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE07	30	Sometimes I am ashamed to tell my friends that I am taking part in confirmation training.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE08	31	Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE09	32	I believe in God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE10	33	I know what the Christian faith entails.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE11	34	I try to live according to the Ten Commandments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KE12	35	By the end of the confirmation time I definitely want to be confirmed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

KF01 How would you describe your current **attitude towards the Christian faith** in general?

- ☐ very negative
 ☐ rather negative
 ☐ neither negative nor positive
 ☐ rather positive
 ☐ very positive

Tick where applicable (one cross per line)

What do you think about the Church?

			not applicable at all							totally applicable
KG01	37	It is important for me to belong to the Church.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KG02	38	The Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KG03	39	If I will have children, I want to have them baptised.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KG04	40	Church services are usually boring.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KG05	41	The Church does a lot of good things for the people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KG06	42	If I should have personal problems, I would turn to a minister.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KG07	43	Our church building means a lot to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KG08	44	I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

KF02 How would you describe your current **attitude towards the Church** [Svenska Kyrkan/the Ev. Luth. Church of Finland; respective Church] in general?

- ☐ very negative
 ☐ rather negative
 ☐ neither negative nor positive
 ☐ rather positive
 ☐ very positive

Apart from the context of confirmation training: **How often** do you usually do the following things?
Please tick the most applicable answer in every line.

			daily	Several times a week	Once a week	rarely	never
KH01	46	I think about God.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KH02	47	I pray by myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KH03	48	I pray together with others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPERIENCES?*Tick where applicable (one cross per line)***During the time of my confirmation training ...****not applicable
at all****totally
applicable**

KK03	49	I came into good personal contact with the leaders and workers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK04	50	I was allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK05	51	we had a lot of >action<.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK10	52	Taking part in confirmation training was stressful for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK11	53	My questions concerning faith were addressed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK22	54	I sometimes felt like an outsider.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK27	55	I became motivated to help in the church as a voluntary worker.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK30	56	I experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (e.g., youth church services).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK31	57	I took part in the preparation of church services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK32	58	I got to know people to whom faith is important.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK33	59	I experienced good examples for respect among people with different convictions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK08	60	I attended the group meetings of the confirmation training regularly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK09	61	I attended the Sunday services regularly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK25	62	I got to know our parish better.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK26	63	I temporarily worked in programs of the church (e.g., in a internship).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

*Tick where applicable (one cross per line)***To what extent do these statements apply?****not applicable
at all****totally
applicable**

KK35	64	What I learnt in confirmation training has little to do with my everyday life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK49	65	It feels good to me when we pray in our group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK50	66	What we do during confirmation time is more interesting than what is usually done in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK44	67	I have experienced that my commitment to other people is important.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK46	68	I have experienced that my commitment to peace is important.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK45	69	I have become (more) conscious of my responsibility for ecological problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK41	70	I would prefer being confirmed without the confirmation time beforehand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
KK37	71	In our parish I feel welcome and accepted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

DURATION OF CONFIRMATION TRAINING**KW01** Do you think the time you spend in confirmation training is too short or too long?

- ☐ too short
☐ just right
☐ too long



How often did you do the following things during the time of your confirmation training?

Tick where applicable (one cross per line)

			(nearly) every meeting	sometimes	once in the whole confirmation time	never
KT01	73	We listen to stories / to a presentation	☐	☐	☐	☐
KT02	74	We work in small groups	☐	☐	☐	☐
KT05	75	We play games	☐	☐	☐	☐
KT12	76	We pray together	☐	☐	☐	☐
KT17	77	We sing together	☐	☐	☐	☐
KT20	78	We recite the texts learnt by heart	☐	☐	☐	☐

How familiar are you with the following Christian texts?

Tick where applicable (one cross per line)

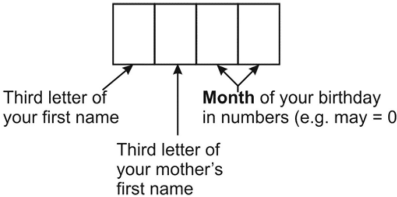
			I don't know this text by heart	I know it more or less by heart	I know this by heart quite well
KU01	79	The Lord's Prayer „Our Father in heaven ...“	☐	☐	☐
KU02	80	The Creed „I believe in God, the Father almighty ...“	☐	☐	☐
KU03	81	Psalm 23 „The Lord is my shepherd ...“	☐	☐	☐
KU06	82	The Ten Commandments „I am the Lord, thy God. Thou shalt have ...“	☐	☐	☐

A COUPLE OF THINGS ABOUT YOU

KM14 Anonymous Code

This code helps us to match the questionnaires from the different surveys without identifying your name.

Example: *John's mother is Sarah. John's birthday is 12 June. His code: **HR 06***



KM01 your sex: ☐ male ☐ female

KV01 How did you feel filling in this questionnaire?

☐ I liked it ☐ it was okay ☐ it annoyed me

KV05 Have you filled in the **first questionnaire of this study in autumn 2007 already?**

☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ don't know

KM16 If you were a minister: What would you do with the confirmation time?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

– Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire! –

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