



Conference on Confirmation Work in Europe

Loegumkloster, Denmark

26th-28th February 2010

Friday

- 1 pm: Lunch
- 2 pm: Welcome by Principal Professor Eberhard Harbsmeier and Lecturer ph.d. Leise Christensen
- 2.30 pm: Introduction to the book and conference by Professor Dr. F. Schweitzer, Tübingen: *Why do we need empirical research on confirmation work? What can we profit from an international study? And how can such a study be of help for the future?*
This lecture examines different theological backgrounds of the study and develops new perspective for the praxis and theory of confirmation work. Special emphasis will be given to the meaning of confirmation work for the confirmands but also for church and society at large.
- 3.15 pm: Coffee break
- 3.45 pm: Confirmation Work in Europe – Empirical Results by Researcher Wolfgang Ilg, Tübingen:
‘Background, Methods, Overview on Results. The paper introduces the research project and provides methodological information necessary for the interpretation of the results. Exemplary results depict chances and limitations of this quantitative research approach’.
- 4.45 pm: Discussion
- 5.15 pm: Break before dinner
- 5.30 pm: Dinner
- 6.30 pm Evensong in the church

7.30 pm: Religious change in adolescence – Does confirmation period make any difference? Meaning of results by Dr. Kati Niemelä: *Confirmation period is one of the major factors influencing young people's attachment to the church and its faith. For many young people church confirmation training is a turning point – at least for a short time. The paper analyses religious and other effects of confirmation period drawing on a large international survey conducted at the beginning and at the end of confirmation training in 2008 and on a longitudinal survey conducted in Finland in 2001-2006. The results show that confirmation training has both positive and negative effects on young people's religious attitudes and on their attachment to their church and its faith. Some of these changes are short-lived, but the longitudinal study reveals them to be partly long-lasting. The research also shows that in the long run it is the quality of training which really matters.*

8.10 pm: Discussion

9.00 pm: Coffee

Saturday

8.15 am: Morning Prayer in the Chapter Room

8.30 am: Breakfast

9.15 am: Challenges by Professor Dr. Thomas Schlag, Zürich: *One of the main aims of confirmation work is to strengthen young people's identification with the Church in all its dimensions, like specific biblical foundations and historic traditions, spiritual practices and public engagement, not to forget bringing them close to the persons representing the Christian idea of community. But how can confirmands be attracted to the Church and how can they be motivated to even participate in this community? Therefore not only methodological, but ecclesiological questions will be raised and perspectives of confirmation work as Church-experience will be opened up.*

9.50 am: Discussion

10.30 am: Coffee break

11.00 am: The collapse of confirmation in the English Church: a warning to the churches? By Dean, Dr. Duncan Dormor, Cambridge: *Confirmation rates amongst young people in the Church of England are very significantly lower than in other northern European, predominantly Protestant, countries, with around 5% of each cohort being confirmed. This paper sets this in a broad historical and sociological context, arguing that: i) it needs to be seen within an understanding of the trajectory of secularization which is characteristic of England (Martin 1978, 2005) in which adolescent confirmation never established itself as a near-universal rite of passage; and, ii) that the rapid decline of confirmation which began during the early 1960s was partly the consequence of an institutional inertia generated by the existence of divergent confirmation practices and conflicting theologies and ecclesiologies held by different 'parties' within the church.*

11.35: Discussion

12 noon: Lunch

2 – 4.30 pm: Parallel sessions/Workshops

1 – 2.15 pm: **A1** Ethik im Konfirmandenunterricht by Professor Eberhard Harbsmeier: *Man spricht von einem „Ethikdefizit“ in der Religionspädagogik und in der Konfirmandenarbeit – auf eine Reaktion auf die starke Position des Dekalogs in der lutherischen Katechismustradition. Eine Entmoralisierung des Konfirmandenunterrichts war notwendig, aber man bezahlt dafür einen Preis: eine Verkirchlichung der Konfirmandenarbeit, wo nun vor allem biblische Erzählung im Mittelpunkt steht – entweder mehr oder wenig historisch-kritisch gesehen oder konservativ. Es fehlt das „weltliche“ Element, eigentlich die starke Seite der lutherischen Tradition mit dem Dekalog als einer Art Lebenserhellung. Wie unterrichtet man in Ethik, ohne zu moralisieren?*

NB: This session will be held in German

OR:

A2 Miniconfirmands – who are they, what do they do and why? by Leise Christensen, ph.d.: *Church and state school was finally divided in Denmark in 1975. That meant that religious education in school became solely a matter of teaching the children about Christianity and other religions and not a matter of preaching Lutheran Christianity for the children. For quite a number of years the parents had left the religions shaping of their children to the school and now the school left it to the*

completely unprepared parents to take over this shaping. Which didn't happen in most cases! Therefore Church of Denmark decided to offer classes for children in 3rd og 4th grade where the children can get introduced to biblical narratives, church services for children et al. This type of instruction has now taken place within Church of Denmark for about 20 years and is called 'miniconfirmation'. During the session the newest research on miniconfirmants will be presented as well as the contents, the hows and whys of these classes and what it means to the regular confirmation classes in 7th or 8th grade.

2.30-3.45: **B1** *Theologizing With Children* by Gertrud Yde Iversen, ph.d.: 'Why does everyone need to die?', 'Does my hamster have a soul?' Theologians and philosophers have always wrestled with such questions. This workshop will show how theologians can work with important questions of existential nature with confirmants and children and how to support confirmants and children in their efforts to discuss questions of meaning.

OR:

B2 *Confirmation in changing society* by Dr. Ida Marie Høeg, Oslo: *The contemporary Western societies have been conceptualized as weakening collectivist traditions, promoting individual responsibilities and intensifying individualist values. These social processes of individualisation are supposed to have an important impact on young people's social life and personal wellbeing. These general theses must be subjected to evaluation in the light of Christian youth work, and more precisely, confirmation. Why do young people still want to be confirmed when they can opt for other youth activities and other experiences? Is the strong confirmation tradition in the protestant part of Europe still influencing the confirmants approach to confirmation? Does the confirmation give the confirmants an individual quest for meaning and values? Is confirmation an opportunity for young people to develop new relations and to get a sense of community with the peer group? Or is it other motivation factors like growth in maturity, material benefits, ethical learning or religious knowledge which are highly valued? One main interest of the session is the development of the confirmants regarding their motivations and expectations in the beginning of the confirmation and to which extent they feel that their expectations have been met. The motivation and experience factors will be examined in terms of the confirmants' gender, Christian background and belief and religious practise.*

Coffeebreak 3.45-4.30 pm

19.00: Banquet at the manor house

Sunday

8.15: Morning Prayer in the Chapter Room

9.15 am: Does the protestant churches confirmation work contribute to social capital? By ass. professor, Dr. Per Pettersson, Karlstad University: *Every year about 500 000 of the 14/15-year old young people are confirmed in the seven countries included in the study International Research on Confirmation. 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. Does this pedagogic religious activity has any societal impact, and if so, what can this impact consist of? Does the existence of confirmation work make any difference to society? Or to put it the other way around, would it make any difference to society if no one in each age group of teenagers took part in confirmation work? The scope and task of this paper is restricted to an explorative analysis and interpretation of empirical data from two surveys among young people at the beginning and at the end of the confirmation period. The aim is to develop a tentative theoretical understanding of the possible societal impact of confirmation work. About 40 minutes, discussion.*

9.50 am: Discussion

10.20 am: Coffee break

10.40 am: General discussion on the future of our network and on future gatherings

12.00 noon: Lunch

General information:

The conference will be held at Theological Pedagogical Centre, Kirkealle 2, DK-6240 Loegumkloster, Denmark, and it will be chaired by lecturer, ph.d. Leise Christensen, lec@km.dk

The closest international airport is Billund Airport. Closest German airport is Hamburg. Common transport from airport to venue can be arranged. Closest train station is Roede Kro, Denmark, or Niebüll, Germany. The trip from Copenhagen to Roede Kro takes approximately 2½-3 hours by train.

Registration for the conference will be by e-mail to secretary Birthe Jacobsen, bija@km.dk or to Leise Christensen, see above. There will be no conference fee but the participants will pay for own transport as well as hotel (about 110 Euro per night including all meals, coffees and banquet).

When registering, please state which parallel session/workshop you would like to join on Saturday afternoon – A1 or A2 and B1 or B2.

Registration must be concluded by 15th November 2009

