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What Happens in a Youth Community of Learning When Mobile Technology Is Implemented? The Case of a Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church Confirmation Training

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**What Happens in a Youth Community of Learning When Mobile Technology Is Implemented? The Case of a Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church Confirmation Training**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to discuss confirmation training from the perspective of mobile technology and social media. Previous research has focused on comparing confirmation training practices implemented in different Lutheran Churches. This article contributes to this research area by providing a new viewpoint to the discussion. Results indicate that (1) workers, in particular, received new ways of working with enthusiasm, (2) but the actual use of mobile devices and social media like Facebook proved to be low and not innovative, and (3) mobile technology cannot be integrated into confirmation training until new content and methods that are meaningful to young people have been developed.

**Keywords:** Confirmation training, Community of learning, Mobile technology, Finland, Facebook

**Zusammenfassung:** Der Beitrag untersucht Einsatzmöglichkeiten für Mobilgeräte und soziale Medien im Konfirmandenunterricht. Er ergänzt frühere Forschungen zu diesem Thema, die sich auf Vergleiche zwischen den Konfirmandenunterrichtsmodellen verschiedener lutherischer Kirchen konzentriert haben. Drei Forschungsergebnisse stehen im Zentrum dieses Aufsatzes: (1) Die Einführung von Mobiltechnologie steigerte die Motivation der Mitarbeiter im Konfirmandenunterricht, (2) während der tatsächliche Gebrauch der Geräte und der sozialen Medien, beispielsweise Facebook, niedrig und wenig innovativ ausfiel. (3) Man wird Mobiltechnologie nicht erfolgreich in den Konfirmandenunterricht einbinden können, ehe neue Methoden und Inhalte entwickelt worden sind, die junge Menschen auf bedeutsame Weise ansprechen.

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1 Introduction

The focus of this article is mobile technologies and social media in use in the confirmation training community. Mobile technologies and social media have rapidly become common among young people. In addition, information and communications technology pedagogy (ICT-pedagogy), as a part of teaching in schools, has attracted a lot of interest in the 2000s. In this study, the application of this technology in confirmation training is viewed in the research frame, where an element that is mostly used during free time and among peer groups is adopted for use in another context, to act as a learning tool in non-formal learning situations and as a tool to create the feeling of community between confirmation group members. However, this study will show that the adoption of technology in this new context was difficult regardless of the enthusiastic attitude with which these new possibilities were applied to the confirmation training.

The latest international confirmation training research\(^1\) has concentrated on studying and comparing confirmation training practices in European countries. This article aims to contribute to this discussion with a fresh study. It presents an empirical case study conducted in a confirmation training camp where mobile technology and social media instruments were implemented for the first time. Here, mobile technology refers to possibilities smart phones and tablets offer as such and the social media means, above all the use of Facebook and Facebook Messenger. In Finland, 84.2 per cent of all 15-year-olds completed confirmation training during the year the research was implemented (2014).\(^2\) Concurrent church membership was 73.7 per cent of the population.\(^3\)

The research data was collected through observations and interviews, which contained the following research questions:

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2 *Church statistic yearbook 2014* (Helsinki: Church Council, 2015), 90.

3 Ibid., p.12.
1. How are social media and mobile technologies interwoven into the confirmation training camp?
2. What were the perceptions of the confirmation group members concerning the confirmation training camp experience from the perspective of mobile technologies and social media?
3. How is the sense of community built up with the help of social media and mobile technologies?

Confirmation training can be understood as a place where adolescents can develop and strengthen their sense of community. Findings from confirmation training research support an assumption that confirmation training improves social integration and community participation. In this article, a sense of community is understood as the perception of belonging that makes people feel good and safe.

This article is part of the Congregational Mobile Technologies project led by Doctor Tapani Innanen. The purpose of the project was to examine mobile technology possibilities in church communities. Two mobile applications were implemented as part of this project. They were used for the first time in this studied confirmation training.

2 Confirmation training in the Finnish Lutheran Church

In Finland, the minimum length for completing confirmation training is a half year. The most typical way confirmation training is started is through several short meetings during the school year. The main part usually takes place in a

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5 Per Petterson and Henrik Simojoki, "Does Confirmation Work Contribute to Civil Society?" In Confirmation Work in Europe, ed. Friedrich Schweitzer et al. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010), 270.
6 Mary Hyde and David Chavis, “Sense of Community and Community Building,” In Handbook of Community Movements and Local Organizations, eds. Ram A. Cnaan and Carl Milofsky (Boston: Springer Verlag), 179.
7 Project was active in University of Eastern Finland during the years 2013–2015.
“camp”9, organised during a summer or winter holiday. Typically, the camp period lasts approximately eight days. The maximum size of a group is usually 25 confirmands. In addition, the confirmation group normally includes three workers and five to seven young confirmed volunteers (YCVs). Multi-professional teamwork is characteristic in Finnish confirmation work and it distinguishes Finland from most studied Lutheran Churches.10 YCVs are mainly one to two years older than the confirmands and they are willing to take part in the confirmation training after having had their own confirmation.11

The latest curriculum for Finnish confirmation training, “The Confirmation Training Plan 2001” (CTP01) enters a connection to the Church as one of its general aims. On the matter of learning during confirmation training, the plan underlines the effectiveness of studying subjects relevant to an adolescent’s life. According to the plan, a good atmosphere and the feeling of belonging to the group are essential parts of the learning process. Teachers’ personal skills and abilities, the learning environment and the whole confirmation group and its members affect the confirmation training experience.12 CTP01 is more of a framework than an exact plan, but local parishes are required to follow it. In Finland, coordinated work on the curriculum has been in effect for the development of confirmation training, since the 1960’s.13

Typical of confirmation training, in general, is the idea of pupil-oriented youth work implemented via creative methods and active participation, instead of teacher to student teaching. The intention is to become acquainted with the faith and the life of the Church over time.14 According to studies15 in Finland, pedagogical methods in confirmation trainings are typically equivalent to traditional school lessons, though they are supported by a mix of other methods. The environment around the camp centres and the numbers of workers and YCVs enable the imple-
mentation of various applications. However, worker-centred learning situations seem to continue to play an important role in confirmation training.16

3 Community learning and change in the learning process

The basis for this research comes from Lave and Wenger17, and Wenger18, whose theories on socio-cultural learning, presented in this chapter, provide insight into the nature of learning as a way of building community. In addition, de Kock19 provides a perspective on church communities in his theory based on catechetical learning environments.

Situated Learning is a theory formulated by Lave and Wenger20, in which learning is realized as situated activity, and characteristic of it is the process of legitimate peripheral participation. In the theory, the meaning of learning is defined as the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. An apprenticeship model is mentioned as a way of participating in a social practice, and in this practice the roles of masters vary. In apprenticeship, opportunities for learning can be given greater structure by work practice rather than by the traditional master–pupil relationship.

Wenger21 has continued to develop the theory of situated learning by forming a social theory of learning that emphasizes informal learning as an integral part of a person’s everyday life. The theory includes the following interconnected components of learning: meaning, practice, community and identity. Social participation is seen as a process of learning and of knowing. Every human being belongs to several changing communities of practice. According to the theory, membership in these communities of practice forms through personally transfor-

16 Ibid., p.146.
18 Etienne Wenger, Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
20 Lave and Wenger, Learning (n. 17), 29, 91, 93.
21 Wenger, Communities (n. 18), 4–6, 8.
mative learning. Wenger, Mc Dermott and Snyder\textsuperscript{22} have defined communities of practice as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis”. This community includes members whose participation varies from peripherals to core members, and these positions change as the community develops.\textsuperscript{23} An important aspect in social learning is a mutual engagement of participants; hence, the community of practice is not synonymous with the concepts of team or group.\textsuperscript{24}

De Kock\textsuperscript{25} has studied catechetical learning environments, and, according to his research results, an apprenticeship model seems to be a promising catechetical model in church communities. In de Kock’s theory, both learner and teacher participate in a shared world with respect to a particular subject. The teacher has considerable expertise, while the learner practices by participating in that world and imitating the activities of the teacher. These “experts” in the church community take the youth culture seriously and pass on the elements of worth from the traditional and the religious outlooks of their community. This research, conducted in the Netherlands, is based on the analysis of present-day youth culture and recent literature on religious learning.

Confirmation training groups can be understood as “communities of practice” where the important aim is to achieve the feeling of belonging among group members. Social learning, in both target-oriented and informal situations, occurs in confirmation training. Referring to the theory of Lave and Wenger noted above, at the beginning of the confirmation time confirmands usually do not know everyone in the group and are therefore “outsiders”. Through meaningful learning experiences and with the help of peer groups, YCVs and workers, it is possible for the confirmand to connect to the group. YCVs and workers can be understood as masters or experts, while adolescents act as apprentices as presented by these theories. YCVs and workers share the same reality with the confirmands and take the world in which young people live seriously.

In the studied confirmation training group, workers and YCVs were in charge of the ways mobile devices and social media were used and, therefore, acted as “experts” while confirmands practised by participating in that reality. For workers and YCVs, this meant commitment to changing from the old customary models to working with new possibilities for implementing confirmation work.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Wenger, \textit{Communities} (n. 18), 74.
\textsuperscript{25} de Kock, \textit{Approaches} (n. 19), 186–187.
with the help of mobile technology and social media. For confirmands, this meant understanding the value of mobile devices as a work tool, rather than only as a device for private use.

4 Social media and youth

The Internet is an arena for public and private social interaction where vast amounts of information can be instantly disseminated to a worldwide audience. One form of this interaction occurs through social media, defined as a virtual collection of user profiles that can be shared with others. Every social networking site offers a slightly different focus and services, but they all facilitate online-based social interaction. In this article, mobile technology is understood as a handheld IT artefact that includes hardware (devices), software (interface and applications), and communication (network services). This definition is a few years old, though still valid.

Studies of online and offline peer groups among 12 to 30-year-olds indicate that social media is a significant source of social identity. At the time the research was implemented (2008) in the UK, Spain and Japan, family was still the primary source of social identity for adolescents; however, the respondents rated the studied online community Habbo almost equally as high. Other online groups were almost as high as offline hobby groups when measuring identification with various groups. An exception was Japan, where other online groups were measured as being higher than offline hobby groups. In all, the results confirmed that online activities have significant consequences for young people in the 2000s. In as almost all young people connect to digital networks, individuals learn to experiment with their identities beyond the traditional handful of social contexts such as home, school and the company of close friends. This research was done before smart phones and assorted other social media applications were in such prevalent use, though it has acted as a good base for later studies such as the 2013

29 Ibid.
report from Denmark, Italy, Romania and the UK. According to the report\textsuperscript{30}, smartphones are the Internet access devices that adolescents aged 13–16 mostly own and four out of five 13–16-year-olds reported that social networking is the most common online activity occurring on a daily basis.

A Finnish longitudinal study\textsuperscript{31} of children’s media environment found that the Internet was an important social networking tool among teenagers and a way to express their own identity. What appeared to parents as purposeless communication via the Internet usually represented an important sense of belonging to a group of friends for the adolescent. So far, the latest research in this longitudinal study shows the importance of mobile devices. Young people use the Internet via smartphones and every researched adolescent owned a phone.\textsuperscript{32} Other Finnish youth research\textsuperscript{33} points out that activity in networking was greatest for those between 15 to 19 years of age. At that age, more than three out of four were connected with a friend through the Internet on a daily basis. It was the place where young people most often spent their time, when their daily activity was the unit of measure.\textsuperscript{34} These studies, conducted in Finland, demonstrate the same results as those indicated by the studies presented in the previous chapter. They all show the importance of social networking among adolescents and act as a good base for mobile device usage in non-formal learning situations such as confirmation trainings as well.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p.25f, 33–35.
5 Research design

Research questions. The aim of this case study is to provide answers to the following questions:
1. How are social media and mobile technologies interwoven into the confirmation training camp?
2. What were the perceptions of the confirmation group members concerning the confirmation training camp experience, from the perspective of mobile technologies and social media?
3. How is the sense of community built up with the help of social media and mobile technologies?

Participants. The confirmation training group included 25 young people (14 girls, 11 boys), six YCVs (3 girls, 3 boys, one to three years older than the confirmands) and three workers: the pastor, a youth worker and a cantor (2 women, 1 man). The group occasionally gathered together prior to the confirmation camp, a period extending a little over 7 months. The camp period included five nights and six full days. A typical day at the camp included time to learn, services and devotional moments, Bible study groups together with the YCVs, some organised activities with the whole group and free time.

Research data. Research data was collected by (1) observations and (2) interviews at the confirmation training camp, organised by the parish, of a medium sized city (by Finnish standards) in the summer of 2014. The purpose of the observations was to record every detail concerning social media and mobile technology use. Interviews were implemented from the second day on, with the same structure being used for all confirmand interviews, although there was some variation between questions. Every member of the confirmation group was interviewed once in a group setting of three to six people. The interviews were implemented to chart opinions on mobile technology use and were conducted in Finnish. For this article, the necessary transcriptions were translated into English. Interviews contained three themes: (1) questions about daily mobile device use and the participant’s personal history with mobile devices, (2) questions about mobile technology use at the confirmation training camp and applications, which were implemented for the confirmation training use, and (3) questions about learning, concerning both confirmation training and school.

A research diary was used during the camp and acted as one research source among others. In addition, the confirmation group had their own Facebook group and two Facebook Messenger groups, which were included as a part of research as well. The researcher was a member of both of these chat groups. Facebook was the only social media application. The workers had already founded the Facebook
group when the group started the confirmation time and no YCVs had been
selected yet, while Facebook Messenger for the whole group was founded at the
beginning of the camp period on the basis of a shared conversation with the
whole group. According to the adolescents, they regularly used WhatsApp more
than Facebook, but it was seen as a problematic matter that via WhatsApp it was
possible to see other users’ phone numbers when sharing the same conversation
group. Therefore, Facebook group and Messenger use was regarded as a more
secure platform. However, for workers, it was also possible to send private
messages via WhatsApp. This research focuses on the camp period regarding the
Facebook and Messenger groups. A reason for this outline was that before and
after the camp period Facebook as a whole proved to act as a possibility only for
sharing information concerning events related to confirmation training or some
general events organised by the parish. Mainly, the youth did not respond to these
informational messages. In addition, an important aim of the meetings especially
before the camp period was to get to know other group members face to face and
learn to work together without technology.

Before the camp, there were some preliminary concerns about the devices
that participants had, but in the end, only one girl out all of the confirmands did
not have a smartphone, as it had broken just before the camp, a few youth used a
tablet in addition to a phone as they thought their smart phones were too old, and
one YCV did not own a smart phone for personal reasons. Research material
included data collected from minors. Therefore, written permission to conduct the
research was obtained from every guardian. Before that, the researcher informed
the guardians about the study at the evening meeting. It was organised at the
beginning of the confirmation training time.

Research analysis. The research material was analysed by using inductive
content analysis, which analyses and reduces texts into summary form by using
both pre-existing categories and emergent themes, in order to generate or test a
theory. When studying the research material, observation data was first divided
into three classes based on the situation that was going on. Categorized classes
are (1) mobile devices in learning situations and in Bible study groups organised
by YCVs, (2) mobile devices in services and devotional moments, and (3) mobile
devices in a shared program. After that, the analysed units were categorized into
two classes, whether the case was (1) a group work, or (2) individual work, with
the help of a mobile device.

35 Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, Research Methods in Education (London:
Routledge, 2007), 476.
The ways in which mobile devices were used in the above mentioned situations can be divided into four categories: (1) assignments done with the help of a mobile device, (2) mobile device replaced paper, (3) mobile device was used for information searches and (4) mobile device acted as a way to pass time. It was impossible to define the units of this last section exactly, however, as it was impossible to know what the adolescents were doing with their mobile devices at every moment. In these categories, the units were arranged as different options by the purpose of the unit. E.g. if the mobile device was being used to look for some information from the Internet, it was categorised as the option “mobile device was used for information searches” instead of the option “assignments done with the help of a mobile device”.

Data collected by interviews was initially transcribed, one group interview at a time. The second phase was to categorize each interview question into a broader theme. After that, the answers to the interview questions were classified under different headings. The last phase was to include the answers given by the YCVs. Colour-codes and pseudonyms were given to each interviewed person to maintain confidentiality while enabling the identification of the respondents, when necessary. Interviews with the workers were analysed separately.

6 Mobile technology and social media as a part of the confirmation training experience

Workers shared very different experiences about working with social media and mobile technology before this particular confirmation training. One worker had no experience at all, while another worker reported that working with social media had already been a part of her work method for a few years. The third worker expressed his interest in new ways of working, although these tools represented new opportunities for him as well. In the parish where this study was implemented, social media and mobile technologies had never before been used in confirmation trainings in this way. From that perspective, this camp was also a new experience for the YCVs.

The workers’ aim was to use social media and mobile technologies whenever it seemed suitable. Mostly, these occasions arose during the week, though some plans were already established before the camp started. In addition, two mobile games were implemented to help learning. One application helped to learn Christian symbols and the other was based on religious writings the young people were to learn by heart during the confirmation training. The application included the Creed, the Lord’s prayer and the Benediction.
6.1 Mobile devices in learning situations and in Bible study groups organised by YCVs

During the camp, there were four learning situations and five Bible study group sessions. Each learning situation included a music session with the cantor. No other similarly structured time for learning run by an adult worker was organised daily, although, in confirmation training, the learning occurs in both non-formal and informal situations. YCVs were responsible for Bible study groups, where the intent was to become familiar with the Bible.

Assignments done with the help of a mobile device. During the learning situations, mobile devices were in use during assignments three times, once in a music session and twice during the one learning session. During the music session, and once during the learning session, mobile devices were used when working together. During the music session, the young people needed to download two free musical instrument applications: drums and djembe. The intention was to play music together and learn some rhythms, with the help of applications. During the learning session an assignment was given for groups. The intention of the assignment was to find something in the surrounding natural environment that was “beautiful”, “simple”, “complicated” or “unreal”; take a picture of it and post it on the Facebook group wall. The time when a mobile device was used for individual work was when the worker used mobile technology to make a video from the camp location. It was available on the Facebook group wall and it caused the participants to reflect on the subject of the learning session.

Mobile device replaced paper. Four times mobile devices replaced paper in learning situations. Once it was during group work. The idea during the group working was to find what the Holy Spirit is and how it is described in the Bible. The worker had written “the Holy Spirit” to the Facebook group wall and groups had to write answers as a comment to this word. Thereafter, working with mobile devices was an individual job; at the end of one learning situation a worker took a picture of the notes confirmands did not have time to write down. The image was posted on a Facebook group wall and the confirmands had to copy the notes into their own learning diaries later. The other situation was when confirmands had to read texts related to the subject of the learning session and those texts were placed in a Facebook group. Finally, as a part of learning about sacraments, the

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36 Tapani Innanen, “Elämän, uskon ja rukouksen opettamista ja oppimista 2000-luvun alussa,” (Teaching and learning life, faith and religion in the early 2000s) in Rippikouluun todellisuus, ed. Tapani Innanen et al. (Tampere: Church Research Institute, 2009), 356.
confirmands needed to think about a name they could give to their baby in the future. Those proposed names had to be written on the Facebook page.

Table 1: Mobile devices in learning situations. Italics are from the one learning situation where mobile devices were used the most widely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments done with the help of a mobile device</th>
<th>Group work (with the help of mobile device)</th>
<th>Individual work (with the help of mobile device)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) Music session where musical instrument applications were in a use 2.) Assignment where confirmands needed to find something in the surrounding nature that was ‘beautiful’, ‘simple’, ‘complicated’ or ‘unreal’, take pictures of those and post them on the Facebook group wall</td>
<td>1.) Video related to the subject of the learning session, made by worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device replaced paper</td>
<td>1.) The Holy Spirit assignment, where answers needed to be written on the Facebook group wall</td>
<td>1.) The worker took a picture of notes confirmands did not have time to write down. The image was sent to a Facebook group wall 2.) confirmands needed to read the texts, found on the Facebook group wall 3.) Baby naming assignment, where answers needed to be written on the Facebook group wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device was used for information searches</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.) The Internet image search was used to look for images on the subject “the end of the world/universe” 2.) The Internet search was used to clarify what is meant by the concepts of ‘atonement’, ‘redemption’ and ‘grace’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device acted as a way to pass time</td>
<td>During the learning situations, a mobile device usually appeared to be on the table, close to the owner, but, confirmands did not use it. There were only a few glances every now and then, but it did not interrupt the lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mobile device was used for information searches. Twice, mobile devices were used for information searches during learning sessions and both times it was individual work. The situations were similar. The first time was when the confirmands needed to find, through the Internet image searches, the following phrases: “the end of world” and “the end of universe” and discuss the findings. The second time was when confirmands had to find explanations for the concepts “atonement”, “redemption” and “grace” on the Internet.

Two major learning periods, which were entirely implemented without mobile technology, are also worth mentioning. Both of these were point-to-point group projects. Topics for these were “taking care of faith” and “Jesus”. The assignments were planned before mobile technology was considered as a part of learning sessions. Because so much effort had been put into these learning units, no plans for updating them had been put into effect before the confirmation camp, regardless of the added value mobile technology could offer.

Bible study groups. At this camp, all instructional papers were replaced by instructions posted on Facebook Messenger shared by the workers and the YCVs. During previous confirmation trainings, when the workers had gone through Bible study group sessions with YCVs, much of the instruction was provided on paper and given to the YCVs. Therefore, in this confirmation training, the YCVs only needed to bring a mobile device to the Bible study group and all notes were found on the devices, though mobile technology was not in actual use when working with the Bible assignments. The Bible study groups also focused on planning the daily service. Each group had their own area of responsibility in the services. It was possible to use mobile devices when planning the service. Information such as prayers was searched with mobile devices and mobile devices also replaced paper when something needed to be written down, such as self-composed confessions.

Summary. In learning sessions, mobile devices were mainly used to replace paper, in four out of nine times. Three times assignments were done with the help of mobile devices while two times mobile devices were used for information searches. In addition, mobile devices were mainly used for individual work, totally six times out of nine. Three out of the four learning sessions contained some use of mobile technology, but, only one of these contained a variety of uses of mobile devices. In table 1, all parts written in italics are collected from this one learning session. This learning session showed the possibilities of developing confirmation training with mobile technology. Without mobile devices, this learning situation could not have been implemented in a similar way. In addition, one music session included working with mobile devices. This session enabled all to participate, as musical instrument application usage made it possible to participate without the need of providing everyone with real instruments. However,
mobile device use was mostly confined to a limited role and it seemed to be difficult to find ways to exploit mobile technology in learning. Therefore, in some cases, mobile device use appeared even slightly artificial. The quite limited ways of working with mobile devices lead to the question of just how difficult it is to actually change customary work habits by exploiting totally new possibilities in confirmation training.

6.2 Mobile devices in services and devotional moments

During the camp, apart from the last day, there were three daily devotional moments and one service. The day started with morning prayer. During the afternoon prayer, “prayer beads”\(^\text{37}\) were used. After dinner, there was a service and the day ended with evening prayer. The YCVs were in charge of the morning and afternoon prayers and for the services, together with their own group of confirmands. Workers took care of the evening prayers. At the beginning of the camp, the workers advised the group that during every service and devotional moment the participants could sing hymns by looking at them from the mobile devices. The words of the Creed and the prayers for the prayer beads could be followed from the mobile devices. For this, the workers had taken a picture of the prayer bead prayers and had posted it to the Facebook group.

Mobile device replaced paper. Four services out of five were carried out in the same manner, and at those services mobile technology replaced paper three times. Group work with the help of mobile devices was implemented twice. The first time was when one YCV and her group read their self-made confession from their mobile devices. Another time was when another YCV and his group read intercession that they had made from a mobile device. Once, the YCV read aloud a prayer from a mobile phone. It was individual work with the help of a mobile device (see Table 2.). The last service was different and no mobile devices were allowed to be used during that service.

Mobile device was used for information searches. During services and devotional moments, mobile devices were used for information searches once, and that was individual work. Two YCVs preached a sermon, where confirmands needed to find the words “Zacchaeus”, “Salvation” and “God’s call” using the Internet search. After that, there was a short discussion about found pictures. A contradictory attitude towards mobile technology use was observed in the way

\(^{37}\) A kind of bracelet, the Finnish equivalent of the rosary. Each bead has its own short prayer.
these YCVs presented their thoughts: “because this is mobile confirmation training, Google...”.

Summary. During the week, there were only a few occasions when mobile devices were in use during services and devotional moments. Three times they replaced paper and once they were used for information searches, but never for doing assignments. Twice mobile devices were used for group work and twice for individual work. There was an opportunity to use mobile devices to read the words of hymns and prayers, but it seemed that this was only used a few times when the change was offered. According to the observation notes, mobile phones were usually close to the confirmands and they checked them at regular intervals during the service or devotional moment, but not during the particular times of singing hymns or praying. Mostly, mobile technology was not used at all. It seemed that when mobile technology was in use, it was a somewhat forced attempt to try to use mobile technology as much as possible. Therefore, mobile technology uses during services and devotional moments during the week implied that there are situations where mobile technology is not appreciated, or that there are the situations where mobile technology use should be carefully considered before implementing it.

Table 2: Mobile devices in services and devotional moments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group work (with the help of mobile device)</th>
<th>Individual work (with the help of mobile device)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments done with the help of a mobile device</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device replaced paper</td>
<td>1.) One group used mobile phone to write down their self-made confession. The group read it through the phones 2.) One group used a tablet to write down self-made intercession. The group read it through the tablet</td>
<td>1.) YCV read prayer from the mobile phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device was used for information searches</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.) One sermon was implemented with the help of a mobile device. Young people needed to use the Internet image search to find the words “Zacchaeus”, “Salvation” and “God’s call”. After that there was a short discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 Mobile devices in a shared program

Every day at the camp shared time together, outside the learning situations and devotional moments, was part of the program, as well. An important aim of this shared time was to promote the feeling of belonging to the confirmation group. After morning prayer and before the learning situation, there was time for various games or interacting with the whole group. In the afternoon, the group participated in a meeting where important issues relating to camp week were discussed and in the evenings the YCVs were in charge of the “evening program”. It took about an hour and the intention of the program was to spend fun time with the group by singing and spending time together. The YCVs also performed short humorous sketches during the evening programs.

Assignments done with the help of a mobile device. At the beginning of the camp week, every YCV and their group had to invent a fictional company, create a short advertisement and video record it. The assignments were completed with the help of mobile devices and by working together. During the week, there were other activities during the shared portions that were designed to promote the feeling of togetherness as well, but, no other activity using mobile devices occurred.

Mobile device replaced paper. In a shared program, mobile devices replaced paper once, when the YCVs watched instructions from the mobile device, which they had made for the game, played in the evening program. This was individual work with mobile devices.
**Table 3: Mobile devices in a shared program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments done with the help of a mobile device</th>
<th>Group work (with the help of mobile device)</th>
<th>Individual work (with the help of mobile device)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) YCVs and their own groups had to create a fictional company and video record an advertisement about it</td>
<td>1.) During the evening program, the YCV watched instructions from the mobile phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device replaced paper</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.) One worker found out compass points because for a game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device was used for information searches</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.) When specifically asked not to use their phones, young people did as they were asked and mobile devices were out of sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile device acted as a way to pass time</td>
<td>During the shared program, or before/after it, a mobile device usually appeared to be close to the owner and when possible, at least some of young people used it, for example during the lunch breaks and just before an official program started. When specifically asked not to use their phones, young people did as they were asked and mobile devices were out of sight.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mobile device was used for information searches.** In a shared program, mobile devices were used for information searches once. Workers used mobile phones to find out compass points for a game. It was individual work with the help of a mobile device.

**Summary.** During a shared program, mobile technology use was very low, although this could have been the place where mobile devices could have had numerous opportunities for use, for example, during different assignments. Mobile technology was in use once during the assignments, by replacing paper and during information searches. It seemed that it was difficult for the workers and the YCVs to realise all of the possibilities mobile technology can offer and, therefore, it was easier to accomplish shared program time by using traditional methods (see Table 3.). It also showed the importance of careful planning, especially when the aim is to work with tools that have never been used by the participants, in this setting, before.
6.4 Mobile technology uses from the perspective of the participants of the confirmation training

Confirmands. Interviewed confirmands reported about their history with mobile phones, and according to their answers, four out of five young people (20 of 25 respondents) had received their first mobile phone before they started school or during the first grade, when they were 5 to 7 years old. It meant that these confirmands had received their first mobile phone at the same time they had learned to read or even sooner and that mobile phones had almost been a part of their whole life. Fourteen confirmands of 18 respondents reported that they use the Internet only or mostly through a mobile phone or tablet, and 24 of the 25 respondents reported that when they pick up a mobile device, social media applications are the first ones they go to, although a few confirmands said that they do not use Facebook anymore despite their having had the application. When asked about what would happen if the confirmands left their mobile phone at home when going to school, not one of the 12 respondents reported that it would not matter at all. Some also said the question was difficult to answer because they have never forgotten their phone. For example, Elisa, said, “I don’t know because it has never happened. I always carry it [mobile phone].” These findings are in line with the previously presented studies in the “social media and youth” section.

Despite past mobile device usage, confirmands gave contradictory answers to the questions concerning mobile device use in confirmation training. Young people did not have any previous experience with confirmation training and, therefore, they had no basis for comparison. This can be one reason for their essentially positive responses to mobile technology use. However, there were a few critical thoughts, such as with Anni, who commented as follows: “I think that mobile phones don’t fit with confirmation training. Initially, when I wanted to go to confirmation training I thought that I would get to the place where I could commune with nature, be like a hunter.”

In addition, even when the responses were positive, there were answers that led one to consider whether or not the confirmand had really understood why the mobile devices were being used, such as with an answer given by Iida: “It has not been so special [to use mobile phone] because it [mobile phone] is with me anyways and you are using it all the time, even if you wouldn’t be able to use it, and that is why it is not too miraculous [to use mobile phones in confirmation trainings].”

Positive comments about mobile technology use included thoughts about using mobile phones as a way to increase interest and provide a more casual
atmosphere, and mobile phones as a possibility for finding information faster than by looking in books, but no one stated how they thought mobile phones actually increased interest or a more casual atmosphere.

Five confirmands said that they did not want any conversational contact in social media with the whole group when the possibility of creating a Facebook Messenger group where everyone is a member was discussed. Despite this, a Messenger group for the whole class was created. The group that was only for the workers and YCVs had been created earlier, a few weeks before the camp period. However, during the week, only two messages were sent to the Messenger group that were meant for everyone. Young people were in contact with each other and friends outside the camp the entire time through social media, but this was not the case with the whole confirmation group. However, Messenger messages between the workers and the YCVs worked well. Plenty of messages were sent through the chat and it acted as both a channel for sharing information and an opportunity to send funny pictures, videos and other materials to brighten each other’s day. At the end of the week, one worker thought about the matter by stating the following: “They [confirmands] haven’t caught onto the conversational possibilities, so basically this camp doesn’t work in meta reality, or we just haven’t found the right channels for that.”

YCVs. When YCVs were asked for their opinions on mobile device use, their answers were not as positive as those of the confirmands, although they had had similar experiences with mobile phones in the past. A major difference was that the YCVs had had earlier experience with confirmation training. Every YCV had attended at least their own confirmation training and some of YCVs had acted as a YCV prior to this confirmation training, but had never used mobile devices as a part of the confirmation training program, as had been done this time. According to studies by Innanen et.al.38, one reason for willingness to act as a YCV is that it enables young people to relive their own confirmation training. This can be one reason why the YCVs were very critical towards the new methods included in the confirmation training camp. Not one of the YCVs said that mobile device usage would be a clearly welcomed innovation. Kaapo remarked as follows: “I think it is weird to use mobile devices in a daily program. Confirmation training should be a time when one can forget the outside world and concentrate on certain things. I don’t know. It is a little bit contradictory, but you will get used to it, if it is the way it starts to be.”

In the end, the YCVs used mobile technology only occasionally during the confirmation training week. Their main responsibilities included Bible study

38 Innanen et al., Confirmation work (n. 11), 155.
groups, evening program organisation, and some devotional moments and services. These programs were mainly implemented without mobile devices. The major difference for the YCVs, from the perspective of previous confirmation trainings, was that this time all instruction papers were found on the Facebook Messenger that the YCVs and workers shared, and no paper was used. Among the workers, the possibility of sharing information via the Internet was seen as a good ecological choice, but the YCVs saw this in a contradictory manner. Krista thought that, “the only good thing in this [mobile device use] is that you can see the instructions without writing them down yourself, but I haven’t seen any other positive aspects.”

However, Kaisa’s comments included the observation that “I think it would be better to get all instructions on paper. Now you need to carry your mobile phone all the time and you can’t leave it, because if you do so, you are immediately locked out of everything that is happening.”

A few times some of the YCVs referred to their own confirmation training time as preferring things the way they were better back then. Kim summed it up by saying, “perhaps if you apply and develop this idea, how to really use it [mobile technology] because now you are using it a bit here and there and there. At the moment, there are more bad points than good ones [when using mobile devices], but I think it depends on you [how you react to the matter].”

Workers. Workers’ attitudes towards mobile technology before the camp were positive, and it seemed that during the week they acquired many new ideas on how to use mobile devices in the future. One worker mentioned that there are possibilities that you never even thought existed before the camp period: “...all the time you see more possibilities to try and when you make mistakes ... you suddenly understand that alright, you can also do it like this! ... I just think that this should have started prior to the beginning of the confirmation training time and it should have been planned better.”

Despite the generally enthusiastic attitude towards mobile technology use, it seemed difficult, in reality, to change traditional ways of working. This difficulty was seen in the limited occasions mobile devices were used. For example, mobile devices could have been used for learning a few required texts, such as the Creed, by heart. One mobile application to aid in learning these texts had been implemented. Before the camp period started, the group gathered together in the city for two days. During the first day in the city, the confirmands were told about this and another application. They downloaded both applications and used them for a while.

39 In Finland, during confirmation training, the confirmands are required to learn some texts by heart.
The confirmands studied the texts they had to learn by heart very independently, but, when there was some discussion on the matter, not one of the workers reminded the confirmands about the application specifically meant for learning those texts. At the end of the week, some of the confirmands had not learned all the texts. One worker helped in that matter, but the mobile application was not in use at that time, either. The other mobile application helped to learn Christian symbols, but it was not exploited in any way during the week. Workers used mobile devices mainly to replace paper and as a way to look for information. These gave rise to thoughts about the difficulty of seeing mobile technology as a possible method for inventing totally new chances.

7 Concluding remarks

In response to the first research question about social media and mobile technologies as a part of a confirmation training entity: It seemed that mobile device use was not integrated into teaching and its usage remained on a superficial level. Instead of inventing totally new ways of conducting confirmation training by using mobile devices as an aid, it appeared that mobile devices were used in the old models and ways of doing confirmation work. In particular, this was noted when paper was replaced by mobile devices, although a flipchart was found in the room and each confirmand had their own pencils and notebook, as well. Also, some information was searched on the Internet though it could have been found in confirmation training textbooks, Catechism or Bible. The question is, did the mobile devices bring added value to these situations in any way other than just an ecological one? Hardly any totally new inventions, where mobile devices really fit in, and which could not have been implemented without mobile technology, existed. One reason for this may have been that very few plans for the week using mobile technology were made in advance, and that during the camp period there was no time for thorough planning. However, according to the Confirmation training plan, many parts such as the learning environment influence the confirmation training experience. Therefore, this situation, where no specific and carefully thought out plans for mobile device use had been made, may have engendered a contradictory attitude towards the new tools implemented in confirmation training.

During the confirmation training camp, social media was in use through a Facebook group and Facebook Messenger, but in the end, the use proved to be low. Interviewed confirmands reported that they have user accounts on Facebook; however, the actual use of Facebook in their normal life is minor. This may have been one reason for the confirmands’ lack of enthusiasm in using the shared
Facebook group and Messenger during the confirmation training camp. In the camp, the Facebook group acted as a platform where all assignments done with a mobile device were intended to be put. It was also possible to post photos, notes and videos in the Facebook group, but this did not work as planned. The confirmands did not comment on the pictures or any other notes that the workers had posted on the group wall, nor did they post anything. This same situation was seen in Facebook Messenger, which was shared by the whole group. During learning sessions, there were three assignments where the answers were to be posted on the Facebook group, but after the assignments were completed, there were always too few answers in proportion to the number of confirmands. It seemed that the young people did the assignments, but that they did not want to post the answers to the Facebook group and the workers did not intervene.

Hence, in order to achieve greater benefits from mobile technology and social media use, a more innovative approach is needed. In the first place, it requires acquaintance with this new technology with, secondly, an open-minded attitude to renew old ways to work and, third, an understanding that when planning to use mobile technology and social media as a part of working with the youth, the voice of the youth needs to take into consideration. The importance of planning confirmation training well in advance, together with the confirmands and the YCVs, would also be in accordance with CTP01, which points out the importance of including confirmands and YCVs in the planning. In this studied confirmation training, the only social media application that was used was Facebook, regardless of what the confirmands thought about it. An interesting question is: How much did the chosen application affect the enthusiasm of using social media as a part of program during the week? This is an interesting question also when the viewpoint is how well the youth use new technology as a whole. If young people are not familiar with the chosen applications or technology, how does that affect the outcome?

In response to the second question about the perceptions concerning social media and mobile technology use: It seemed that confirmation training camp was perceived very differently depending on the respondent. Confirmands were mainly positive towards mobile device use in confirmation training camp though it was not obvious whether they understand the main reason for mobile device use in the camp. It seemed that they preferred to use mobile devices for their own objects of interest rather than for actions which were a part of the confirmation training program. Mobile devices seemed to act as a way to pass time and whenever possible, mobile devices were used. However, this purpose of use did not pervade the whole confirmation group. Based on the interviews, it rather confirmed everyone’s own social media communities outside the confirmation group. The YCVs regarded mobile device use with suspicion. They did not seem to like the opportu-
nity of implementing new methods in place of traditionally used models and they did not invent their own ways for using mobile devices as a part of the confirmation training program. However, many YCVs reported that it is important for them to use mobile devices for their own purposes during the week, which was in line with what the confirmands said, as well. Workers’ attitudes towards mobile technology were open-minded, though it was difficult to see it in practice. However, they seemed to perceive the camp as a pilot study for the possibilities that mobile devices can offer during confirmation trainings, in the future.

In response to the third question about the viewpoint of the sense of community: During the camp week, mobile devices were most often used individually, each using their own devices and for their own learning purposes. In addition, when something needed to be looked on the Internet or the Facebook group, it was done through each person’s own device as there was no other technology in use, such as a data projector. In addition, the Facebook group and Messenger were not well received. Based on these findings, the mobile devices seemed to act as a work tool for individual learning instead of a tool for creating the feeling of belonging between group members.

The camp week proved that mobile technology, in itself, does not create a feeling of togetherness between confirmation group members or give added value to the confirmation training experience. The use of mobile devices as a natural part of the confirmation program was still looking for its place in this studied confirmation training. However, this research provided important information about the process, where totally new tools are implemented in surroundings where workers and YCVs have been accustomed to act in a certain way. An important detail is the commitment to new possibilities used in a manner to connect participants to the group. In this studied confirmation training, it was difficult to see the participants’ real commitment to the mobile technology used. This may have been one reason that mobile device use occasionally appeared as a forced action as well as that the participants did not have a clear understanding of why the mobile devices were in a use in the camp. These research results are in line with earlier studies done on teaching during confirmation trainings in Finland. According to these studies, no matter what possibilities a confirmation training environment offers, the focus is on the methods, which are typical for traditional school lessons, and working in learning situations is worker-centred.

This research provides a basis for the development of confirmation work concerning mobile technology and social media use since it offers an insight about the beginning of the whole process. Further, these results serve the youth research and youth work more widely than just in a confirmation training context as new technology use among work with adolescents has gained a lot of interest in different settings, while it usually remains for workers to clarify how to begin.
For future studies, it would be interesting to evaluate mobile device use in learning situations when theories concerning ICT-pedagogy are taken into account. New questions could be the following: “What are the effects on confirmation training if mobile devices are applied in a new manner, instead of using them mainly as a part of traditional models?” and “How important is the role of young people, when planning confirmation training, from the perspective of mobile technology?” More empirical research needs to be done to determine the effects of mobile technology use and if it can be of greater value in confirmation trainings settings, where the process is at a more advanced level.