

III. Current Issues

1. From Classrooms to Camps? Effects of Different Physical Learning Spaces and Teaching Methods in Confirmation Work

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1.1 Introduction

There is a dynamic interplay between different teaching models and methods, physical learning spaces and learning outcomes. The design of physical learning spaces is a crucial starting point for learning (see, e.g., Brooks 2011; Chism/Bickford 2002). In confirmation settings the physical design varies considerably: from traditional classroom-settings to open-fire camp settings, and anything between these and a mixture of them (see Schweitzer et al. 2010; for different learning environments in »catechetical learning« also see de Kock 2014). These physical spaces most likely also have a linkage to certain teaching models and methods used by confirmation workers. Teachers with certain teaching models are most likely more interested in teaching in camp settings and promoting such spaces. A certain physical space itself may promote different teaching models and teaching methods and restrict the usage of others. On the other hand, the same teaching methods can be applied in different physical learning spaces. Regardless of the physical space, teaching can be of the same style. For example, a teacher may be inclined to use teacher-centered lecturing or various learner-centered methods, independent of the physical space where this takes place.

Previous studies on confirmation work have shown that the physical learning space is an influential factor in explaining the experience of confirmation work: the longer the time spent in a camp setting, the more positive the experience seems to be. The length of a camp also links to positive attitudinal changes in relation to church and faith (Ilg/Schweitzer 2010a; Niemelä 2010; Niemelä 2008). In this chapter this analysis will be expanded by analysing the use of various teaching methods in different physical spaces and their linkage to the experience of confirmation work.

Teaching methods are typically categorised into two approaches: teacher-centered and learner- or student-centered approaches (see, e.g., Brown 2003; McCombs/Whisler 1997; Slavin 2012). Teacher-centered approaches are characterised by teachers' formal authority and an expert role. Learners' primary

task is to passively receive information through lectures and direct instruction and it is the teachers' role to pass knowledge onto their students. In learner- and student-centered approaches teachers and learners play an equally active role in the learning process. The focus is on individual learners and their needs are central. The teacher is seen merely as a coach whose task is to facilitate students' learning. The learner is seen as unique and her/his background, interests, abilities and experiences are respected (McCombs/Whisler 1997; Brown 2003; Slavin 2012).

Different teaching methods have been reported to lead to different learning outcomes. Previous studies show that the effectiveness of different methods varies considerably. Student-centered, participatory teaching methods tend to lead to notably higher learning outcomes than passive teaching methods. The Learning Pyramid produced by The National Training Laboratories has often been used to demonstrate the effectiveness of different methods. Even though the pyramid has been criticised for not taking into account various other influential matters, it offers a good basis for evaluating and discussing the effectiveness of different methods. After teaching others, the retention rate has been found to be as high as 90%. On the other hand, learning outcomes after using passive methods are notably lower. After listening to a lecture, the retention rate has been only around 5%. Reading is slightly more effective. The usage of audiovisual methods raises the retention rate up to about 20% and demonstration up to 30%. Active methods like group discussion and practical experiences are notably more effective (retention rates 50 to 75%; cf. Hall 2012) The main reason for the difference between the learning outcomes is most likely linked to the extent of reflection and deep cognitive processing the method requires.

However, these results and debates as above are usually discussed concerning education in school, but not concerning non-formal education. Therefore there is only little research on such questions in the field of confirmation work where the basic setting may vary considerably.

1.2 Research Questions

In this chapter the effects of different physical learning spaces and teaching methods in confirmation work are analysed with the following questions:

1. What are the different physical learning spaces in confirmation work? What kind of teaching methods are employed in different physical spaces?
2. How can confirmation groups be categorised based on the methods in use? How are these groups linked to physical spaces?
3. How are different physical spaces and teaching methods linked to confirmation experiences (satisfaction and learning outcomes)?

These questions can be applied to all countries involved in the study except for Poland, because the Polish dataset does not provide information from the workers.

1.3 Different Physical Spaces

In most groups at least part of the confirmation time took place in a camp setting. In only 14% of the groups no camp took place at all; most of these groups were in Denmark. One third of the groups (37%) had a very short camp (1 to 2 days) and one fourth had 3 to 4 days in a camp. In one fourth of the groups there was a longer camp (at least five days). Longer camps were most typical in Finland and Sweden.

Table 26: Confirmation groups and the length of a camp in international comparison (%)

	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	HU	DE EmK
No camp (0 days)	14	8	0	8	86	0	0	0	32	17
Camp 1-2 days	37	48	63	25	14	0	41	4	30	28
Camp 3-4 days	26	27	22	36	0	2	44	46	12	30
Camp 5-6 days	9	9	11	21	0	6	12	21	24	12
Camp 7-8 days	10	5	0	8	0	72	0	14	2	5
Camp more than 8 days	5	3	4	4	0	21	3	14	0	9
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

N (total) = 1078; N (countries) = 27-439.

Furthermore confirmation work can take place in various settings, regardless of whether there is a camp or not. It took place most often in the parish house (for 84% of the groups). The church building was used in 17% of the parishes. Other places play a less important role (often used: minister's house 9%, school rooms 2%, nature 1%).

1.4 Teaching Methods in Confirmation Work

The most widely used teaching methods in confirmation work were discussion, group work, lecturing, singing together and prayer which were used »often« in about half of the groups. Methods that were reported to be used typically

»sometimes« include: games and play; stories and storytelling; and painting, drawing and other visual methods. About 20 % of the groups used these methods »often«. Other methods were used more seldom.

Table 27: The usage of different teaching methods, ordered by descending mean values

	Used often % of groups	Mean (1-4)
VH02: discussion	57	3.54
VH15: group work	52	3.44
VH10: working with biblical texts	37	3.29
VH01: lecture of the main responsible person	47	3.28
VH09: prayer	42	3.19
VH13: singing together	47	3.12
VH06: games and play	21	2.95
VH07: stories and storytelling	21	2.91
VH08: painting, drawing and other visual art	19	2.82
VH11: working with other written texts	13	2.58
VH03: drama, role play	10	2.54
VH05: quizzes	9	2.53
VH12: reciting texts learnt by heart	16	2.47
VH16: visits and excursions	6	2.37
VH18: meeting people from the parish	5	2.36
VH27: silent times, meditation	9	2.29
VH28: experiential education; adventure-based learning	8	2.18
VH04: learning paths	7	2.05
VH17: talking with experts	3	1.98
VH37: project work	4	1.97
VH25: making music	7	1.96
VH32: working with the internet	2	1.54
VH34: social media (e. g., facebook group)	5	1.45
VH36: learning diaries	5	1.35
VH33: working with SMS	4	1.32

N (total) = 1085; N (countries) = 26-453; scale: 1 to 4 (1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often).

Factor analysis was used in order to analyse the connections between different methods and to simplify the analysis of the teaching methods for further ana-

lysis. Using factor analysis, teaching methods were classified into five groups. The five groups are:

- 1) Active participatory methods (Cronbach Alpha = 0.69)
 - VH03: drama, role play
 - VH15: group work
 - VH08: painting, drawing and other visual art
 - VH06: games and play
- 2) Visits and meetings with parish people and experts (Cronbach Alpha = 0.65)
 - VH16: visits and excursions
 - VH18: meeting people from the parish
 - VH17: talking with experts
- 3) Music and meditation (Cronbach Alpha = 0.62)
 - VH13: singing together
 - VH25: making music
 - VH09: prayer
 - VH27: silent times, meditation
- 4) Teacher-centered methods (As Cronbach Alpha was below 0.50, no sum variable was formed based on the factor)
 - VH01: lecture by the main responsible person
 - VH11: working with other written texts
 - VH05: quizzes
 - VH10: working with biblical texts
 - VH12: reciting texts learnt by heart
- 5) Computer/mobile-assisted methods (Cronbach Alpha 0.68)
 - VH32: working with the internet
 - VH33: working with SMS
 - VH34: social media (e.g., facebook group)

1.5 Teaching in Different Physical Spaces

The next step in the analysis was to find out what kind of linkage the physical design of the learning space in confirmation work has to certain teaching methods, especially the role of camps for the experience of confirmation time. The results show that camp setting is likely to be linked especially to various student-centered methods. However, some methods are used widely regardless of the setting.

Spearman's rho was used to analyse the linkage between the length of a camp and various teaching methods. The results illustrate that certain methods are more likely used in certain physical spaces. The length of a camp correlated most clearly with various student-centered methods. The linkage was strongest

to active participatory teaching methods ($r = .26^{**}$). The camp setting offered a space where these methods were most likely used. The correlation was strongest with the following methods: drama, role play (.22^{**}); games and play (.21^{**}); group work (.20^{**}); experimental education; adventure-based learning (.19^{**}); learning diaries (.19^{**}); learning paths (.18^{**}) and painting, drawing and other visual art (.14^{**}).

The following examples illustrate the differences between groups with a long camp and no camp at all. For example, of the groups with no camp only 10% were such that games and play were used often, while of those groups with more than 8 days in a camp, games and play were used often in 43% of the groups. Group work was used often in one third of the groups with no camp (31%) and almost twice as much (60%) in the groups with a long or fairly long camp (5 days or more).

The length of a camp also correlated with the use of music and meditation (.19^{**}) in confirmation work. The correlation was strongest with making music (.29) and with the use of silent times and meditation (.12^{**}). However, singing together was used regardless of the length of a camp (.02).

Furthermore, computer/mobile-assisted teaching methods were used slightly more often in groups with a long camp. However, the correlation was low (from .10^{**} to .13^{**}).

On the other hand, teacher-centered teaching methods are to some extent negatively linked to the length of a camp. This was true with the use of quizzes (-.10^{**}) and reciting texts learnt by heart (-.19^{**}), which were used more often in groups with no camp. Of the groups with no camp, reciting text learnt by heart was used often in one fourth of the groups (28%) while in groups with more than 6 days in a camp, it was used more seldom («often» in 6% of the groups). However, there was no correlation between the length of a camp and the use of lecturing (.03), the use of stories and storytelling (-.05), discussion (-.02) and the use of prayer (.01) which were typically used fairly often regardless of the learning space. The same – no linkage between the method and the length of a camp – applies to working with biblical texts (.06) and working with other written texts (.03).

1.6 Confirmation Groups with Different Teaching Methods and Their Linkage to the Experience of Confirmation Work

The next step of the analysis was to find out if the confirmation groups could be classified into different groups based on the teaching methods used and to see how these groups link to different physical spaces and to see if these groups would differ in terms of their experience of confirmation work. K-means clus-

tering was used for this purpose. Three of the sum variables formed on the basis of the factor analysis (participatory methods, visits and excursions and music and meditation) and several single items measuring the use of teacher-centered methods were used in the analysis (reciting texts learned by heart, lecture, quizzes and stories and storytelling).

Using cluster analysis the confirmation groups were classified into four clusters based on the use of teaching methods. The four groups were:

1) Groups with a wide range of teaching methods (32 % of the groups)

The biggest cluster consists of confirmation groups with a wide range of different teaching methods. These are groups with a strong use of participatory methods, but also with multiple teacher-centered methods and with an active use of various visits and excursions. Various active student-centered methods are very widely used, but teaching is not restricted to them and lecturing is also actively used. These groups are most likely to be found in Sweden, least likely in Denmark. These are most likely groups with a long or a medium-length camp.

2) Groups with participatory methods and low use of lecturing (23 % of the groups)

The next cluster consists of groups with a strong use of participatory methods. This includes the use of drama, role play, games and play, art, group work, learning paths, making music. Also music and meditation are strongly used. The use of lecturing is notably low. These groups are most often groups with a long camp or no camp at all, and found most likely in Denmark and Finland.

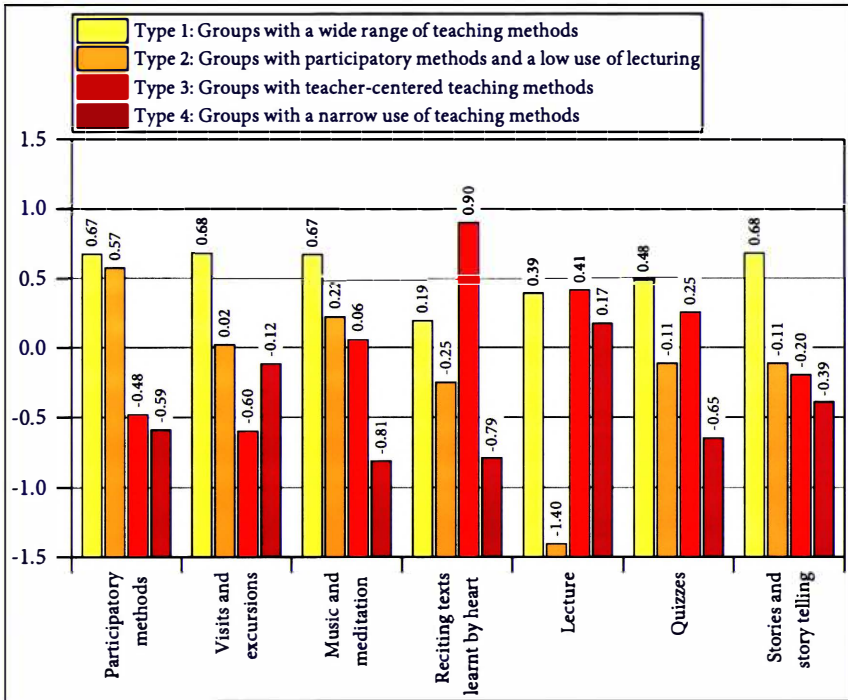
3) Groups with teacher-centered teaching methods (29 % of the groups)

The third (and second largest) cluster consists of groups with a strong use of various teacher-centered methods. This includes the use of lecturing, reciting texts by heart and quizzes. These groups are most likely found in Germany (both in the EKD and among the Methodists) and in Austria and least likely in Sweden. These are typically groups with a very short camp or no camp at all.

4) Groups with a narrow use of teaching methods (16 % of the groups)

The smallest cluster consists of groups with a more narrow use of methods. The main method in teaching is lecturing and other methods are used more seldom. These groups are equally likely to be groups with no camp, a short camp or a medium length camp. These groups are most often found in Switzerland.

Figure 16: Confirmation groups with different teaching methods: group centroids (standardised means)



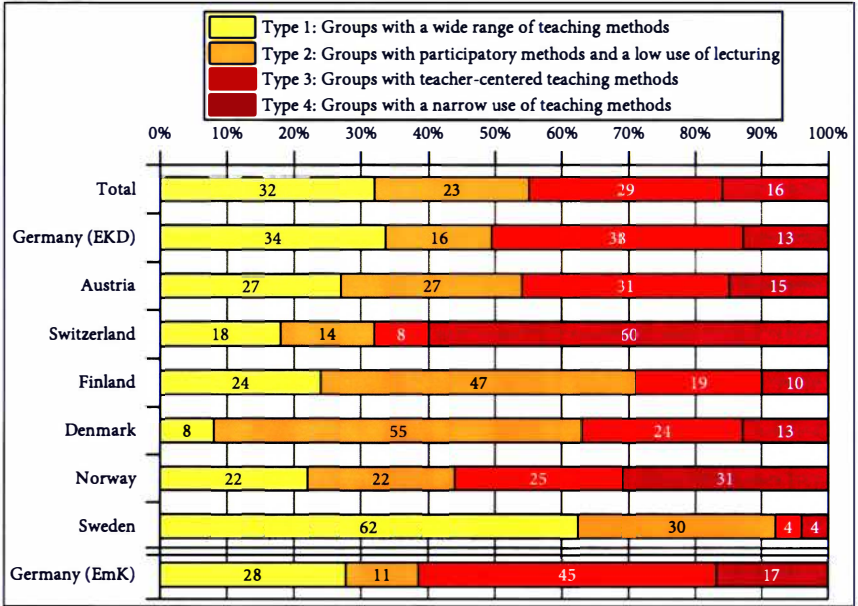
N = 1085; unit-level data.

1.7 Physical Learning Spaces, Teaching Methods and the Experience of Confirmation Work

The next step is to analyse the influence of the physical learning space and the teaching methods used in confirmation satisfaction. Previous studies show that confirmation time with a camp-form of learning space generally leads to more positive outcomes (see Ilg/Schweitzer 2010a; Niemelä 2010), but there is little knowledge about the influence of various teaching methods.

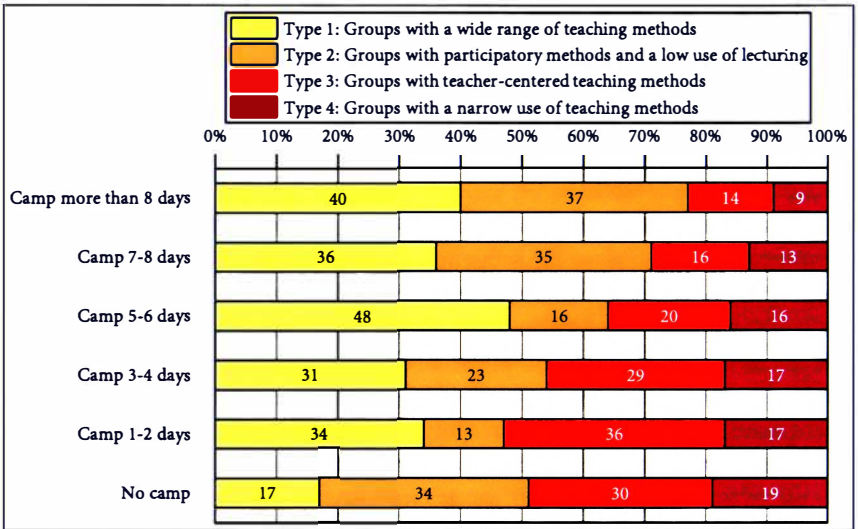
The results from our study show that also groups experiencing certain teaching methods are groups with more positive outcomes. The groups with a narrow use of teaching methods are groups with lowest satisfaction rates and lowest experiences of growth in faith as well as weakest experiences related to church services. Table 28 shows the results; the differences are rather small though.

Figure 17: The confirmation group types in different countries (%)



N (total) = 1085; N (countries) = 26-453; unit-level data.

Figure 18: Confirmation group types and the length of a camp (%)



N = 928; unit-level data.

Table 28: Confirmation experience in confirmation groups with different teaching methods (mean values)

	iKN3: Satisfaction with confirma- tion time	iKB1: Experience of growth in faith	iKK3: Involvement and participation	iKS1: Positive experiences with church services
Type 1: Groups with a wide range of teaching methods	5.20	5.01	4.73	4.28
Type 2: Groups with participatory methods and a low use of lecturing	5.24	4.98	4.79	4.18
Type 3: Groups with teacher-centered teaching methods	5.12	5.09	4.57	4.22
Type 4: Groups with a narrow use of teaching methods	5.03	4.72	4.65	3.96
Total	5.14	4.94	4.68	4.15
ANOVA (F)	6.97	17.91	6.34	12.91
sig	.000	.000	.000	.000

N = 1055; unit-level data. Mean values on a scale 1 to 7 (1 = not applicable at all, 7 = totally applicable/1 = not satisfied, 7 = totally satisfied).

The results of the regression analysis show that the length of camp has a positive relation with confirmation experiences on all four measured levels (indices). These are satisfaction with the confirmation time, experience of growth in faith, involvement and participation and positive experiences of church services. Moreover, the method factor »music and meditation« shows a positive relation with all of the four indices. At the same time, a higher amount of lectures is connected to lower satisfaction and to a smaller degree of involvement and participation. An interesting result is that reciting texts by heart shows a positive relation with the perceived growth in faith while at the same time, it is connected to a lower degree of satisfaction and to a lower degree of participation. This supports the view that although reciting texts by heart is not loved by the confirmands, it seems to have a deeper meaning by providing something that can also strengthen the faith (cf. Härtner 2014).

Table 29: Beta values of regression analysis of the factors explaining confirmation experiences and satisfaction.

	Satisfaction (iKN3)	Experience of growth in faith (iKB1)	Involvement and participa- tion (iKK3)	Positive experiences with church services (iKS1)
Length of a camp	.17**	.09*	.21**	.15**
Active participatory methods	-.01	.03	.02	.01
Visits and meetings with parish people and experts	-.03	-.05	-.03	.02
Music and meditation	.19**	.12**	.20**	.18**
Lecture	-.12**	-.05	-.07*	.01
Reciting texts learnt by heart	-.07	.15**	-.12**	.01
R/R ²	.32/.10	.23/.05	.36/.13	.26/.07

N = 928; unit-level data, The *, **, *** show significances at the .05, .01, and .001 level.

1.8 Conclusion

Physical space and teaching methods are interwoven and can hardly be separated from each other. Looking at the analysis of the confirmands' experiences, it seems, that the number of days in camp is the most powerful tool for a confirmation work that leads to satisfaction, growth in faith, the feeling of participation and allows positive experiences of church services. As the results above show, the »positive camp effect« is not just an issue of being in a special location. It is rather the case that being in a camp influences the teaching methods. The longer the camp period, the more participatory methods are used while the amount of teacher-centered methods declines. Thus, the strong influence of camp on the criteria variables should not be seen as proof that physical learning spaces are more influential than teaching methods. It is rather the case, that good learning spaces entail a shift in teaching methods towards more promising activating methods. While moving confirmation work from classroom to camps, the teaching methods undergo a shift from a teacher-centered towards a confirmand-centered style.

At the same time, teaching methods themselves have an influence: regardless of the physical setting, teacher-centered methods, especially high amounts of lecturing are linked to lower satisfaction and lower levels of involvement and participation, while especially the use of music and meditation has many positive influences on confirmation experience. This is a noteworthy result in relation to any youth ministry.