

Sub-themes : Professional development for the enhancement of teacher and coach knowledge and practice.

Water familiarization testing battery adapted for young children

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Introduction

According to many authors, the degree of development required to learn a swimming style is not reached before the age of five to six years old (Pedroletti, 2004; Moulin, 2007). However, before that age, it is very interesting to discover the aquatic environment to develop specific skills like entering into the water, immersion, floatation, breathing and propulsion (Parker & Blanksby, 1997; Moulin, 2007). The aim of the present study was to elaborate a testing battery able to assess children level of water familiarisation.

Methods

The testing battery was designed in order to assess the five water familiarization skills (entering into the water, immersion, floatation, breathing and propulsion) in three different depth conditions ($\pm 30\text{cm}$, $\pm 70\text{cm}$, $>150\text{cm}$). Children have to achieve up to 20 testing activities that were presented to them with a “frog story”. It was important to select tests that could be achieved in most swimming pools with common and/or transportable equipment. Another goal was to allow a longitudinal follow-up. We wanted to be able to assess two groups of five children during a 45 minute aquatic lesson. After its elaboration, 250 children aged from three to six years old have been tested with the battery.

Results

The testing battery was successful to assess and compare the water adaptation level of children from 3 to 6 years old. Linear score progression was observed from three to six years old for most items. However, a plateau effect has been observed with very well familiarized children who were already able to swim. For those children it could be interesting to add an assessment of the swimming styles. However it required time-consuming video recording.

Conclusion

The testing battery was very discriminant and offered an excellent overview of children’s level of water familiarization. Improvement should be conducted in order to include swimming style assessment and to avoid video recording.

References

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