# 92 - TEACHING THE SELF-SUSTAINING ABILITY IN SWIMMING LESSONS

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## INTRODUCTION

Swimming is pointed out in literature as an activity intertwined with the origins of humanity, for men had to come into contact with water by adapting to it, whether for pleasure or necessity (CATTEAU AND GAROFF, 1990; LENK, 1966; SANTOS, 1996).

The sporting character of this activity has been highlighted especially after the founding of the International Amateur Swimming Federation (FINA) in the first half of the nineteenth century, and since then swimming, formal and competitive, has never stopped developing, aiming to increase the technical development and hence increasing the speed and the "sports performance", with technical and specialized movements, which are institutionally regulated (swimming techniques) and universalized.

This sporting and competitive character has been widely reported by the media through competitions and is recognized as a sport mainly for swimming techniques that are used in competitions - the freestyle (which generally refers to the front crawl), backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly.

Currently, swimming is commonly recognized as a unique activity because its practice does not have any kind of restriction and is directed to the achievement of different goals (utility, health promotion, aesthetic perspective, performance, leisure, therapeutic, among others).

Within these perspectives and taking into consideration that men, throughout their existence, learned to relate to water in different ways and with different degrees of adaptation, when can we say that a person knows how to swim or that he swims?

Fontes (2004), when investigating the meanings attributed to swimming by the teachers responsible for its practice and the influence of these meanings in teaching this activity, found that: the term "swimming practice" is used by teachers to describe situations where the swimming takes place through techniques of four swimming styles - front crawl, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly - and also in situations of teaching formal swimming; however, "swim" in turn, translates into skills with functional characteristics that can ensure the survival and especially leisure time in water.

Fontes (2004) also points out that despite teachers describe swimming from skills that are capable of providing safety in water, they do not show any concern for developing content that can provide such safety - or they do it in a wrong way - when organizing the swimming teaching contents.

Using the conceptualization of Perez (1986, p. 110), where "swimming practice is the act and/or effect of swimming" and "swim is a succession of movements performed by the individual who will allow him to move or remain on or under the liquid medium, relying exclusively on this", we can analyze the possible meanings of "knowing how to swim" and "not knowing how to swim."For example: a student enrolls in a swimming course at an institution that has only shallow pools[7] and learns the front crawl (alternating strokes and strides prone with lateral breathing), always managing to swim from side to side of the pool, but when taking a boat trip, common in the coastal tours where the boats stop for passengers to dive, he does not dive because he cannot reach the bottom. We ask: Has this student learned how to swim after attending swimming lessons?

It is normal that most people think so, because he can perform technical movements of the swimming sport to move, but according to the concept of Perez presented and used by us, we believe that this student does not know how to swim, because despite moving in water, he cannot keep up in water without auxiliary support, self-sustained[8], a condition that will be vital to the "swimmer" where the bottom cannot be reached.

Palmer (1990, p. 214) states that by analogy, self-sustaining in water can be compared to driving a car.

> The driver often has to achieve a controlled stop while someone passes in front of him. He then has to wait a bit, still in complete control, before returning to a smooth forward movement. Likewise, the swimmer must often stop swimming in deep waters, basically because "someone crosses his path." In order not to sink, he now self-sustains in water quietly for a few moments before returning to move ahead smoothly toward the desired destination.

What we can see from practical experience is that people consider the fact of knowing or not knowing how to swim taking into consideration the sport of swimming, so when asked if they can swim they answer that "they can only defend themselves and not drown" but they state they cannot swim because they do not perform the movements "as they must be", referring to the techniques of the sport of swimming, mainly front crawl.

Some people, as experienced by us in the teaching of swimming, after having spent their childhood swimming in rivers and lakes, when entering a swimming course say they cannot swim because they are not able to perform swimming techniques, or simply the front crawl technique, i.e., the whole experience of swimming in places with different depths and currents, which allows them to enjoy the water for several different reasons is simply disregarded due to a culturally determined specific technical gesture .

In this study, the focus will be the systematic teaching of swimming, i.e. swimming lessons offered at different institutions.

What happens now is that many pools used for the teaching of swimming are not very deep, usually no more than 1.50 m, which means that many students reach the bottom of the pool. This, in theory, could derail the experience of the self-sustaining skill by these students.

Considering self-sustaining (SS) as the action of not moving forward, backward or sideways, remaining in an upright position without touching the bottom, and also that this ability is fundamental in learning how to swim, this study investigated how this teaching occurs in institutions that offers swimming courses in the city of Blumenau which only have shallow pools. We aim to identify how the pedagogical proposals for teaching the self-sustaining ability are structured and the strategies used to teach it.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research project was submitted to the ethics committee of the Regional University of Blumenau, under protocol no. 063/10 and approved on 24/06/2010.

For this study we chose a qualitative research methodology, since our intention is to understand how the reality of teaching swimming strokes is built by the teachers, here considered to be social actors regarding the teaching of the SS ability. We conducted a survey of the institutions offering swimming courses in the city of Blumenau / SC and then we made an initial contact to clarify the objectives of the study and obtain the authorization of the institution for the research with teachers.

By identifying teachers for our sample, all of them involved in the research were aware of the research objectives through the Term of Free and Clarified Consent agreeing and authorizing the use of data.

Since the interview is the most common procedure in field research and a fairly generic term (MINAYO, 1994), it is understood by us as a conversation with two well-defined purposes, since it represents a means of gathering facts reported by the actors, while subjects-objects of research who experience a certain reality being focused. We adopted the semi-structured interview for this study (MINAYO, 1994). This type of interview articulates modalities - structured and unstructured interviews, as for the fact that they are more or less targeted. We start from previously thought questions, but not preventing the informant to approach other relevant issues to the proposed topic. Thus, we sought to develop a dynamic interaction between the researcher and subject in a feedback process of information and knowledge.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

There was a total of thirteen (13) teachers-informants in 09 (nine) swimming teaching institutions in the city of Blumenau / SC[9].

Regarding the teaching ability of SS being included in the pedagogical proposal, only three institutions include this teaching. However, we could notice some confusion between the meaning of SS and floating in the statements of teachers.

Floating is characterized by almost an inertia of movements of the individual because of the ability of floating is basically allowing buoyancy[10] to act, adjusting body positions as well as the respiratory control and thus aiming at a static equilibrium and floating; it soon becomes clear that the ability to float is directly linked to body density.

SS is a more active intervention and according to Palmer (1990) has a few secrets that can help its implementation: keep the head back in order to unclog the airways; keep muscles the most relaxed as possible; keep most of the body immersed, and control of light movements of arms and stroke, in order to avoid unnecessary energy spending.

Two professors who teach at the same institution and have a work plan from a defined by a franchised methodology report that they work on the skills of self-sustaining and floating when teaching toddlers and in the adaptation stage. Two other teachers from two other institutions report they work on this skill in the early learning stage.

However, all teachers emphasized teaching this skill to children.

The concern with teaching this skill to children is referenced by Massaud (2001), as the author emphasizes vertical sustaining as being of paramount importance for the survival in water primarily to children, preparing them for an emergency situation in the aquatic environment.

Even in places where the teaching ability of SS is not included in the pedagogical proposal, teachers reported that they work on this skill, using strategies such as platforms, trampoline[11], the pool bar, buoys, boards and noodles. The use of materials such as buoys, noodles and platform were the ones that appeared most. As one teacher explained:

> The use of buoys, noodles, we start emptying the buoy, creating a difficulty of resistance in him, in the water, he goes, he has to sustain himself, he will have more strength, I go into the pool with him giving a feeling of safety, I leave him alone a little swimming by himself, then I get the child again, he starts not being so afraid and so on.

Another teacher said that he works this ability after the student learns the front crawl and backstroke, mentioning that he teaches sculling[12] as the basis for the SS ability and he also adds that if a student falls into the sea or where they cannot reach the bottom, they do not run the risk of drowning because it is an important skill for survival.

The strategies mentioned also include teaching them only to children who do not reach the bottom.

Among the teachers who said they do not teach the SS, we can highlight a comment:

> Now you got me thinking, because when we work adaptation, we work with sociability, we practice that "frog" movement, then it is also a form of self-sustaining, not exactly vertical, but I, look, I never taught it, to stand there moving without any materials. We normally do that buoyancy lying, supine, prone, star, [...] I never noticed this self-sustaining, for sure, because the very young students, they start not using the buoys anymore and sustain themselves by moving the feet and hands vertically.

In this report it is clear that there is no concern in teaching this skill from the teacher, but he points out that the student's self sustaining happens naturally because of not reaching the bottom.

The lack of support of the feet on the pool bottom favors the SS ability, as students will have to seek different forms of support exclusively in water. The teaching strategy of SS in places where the bottom cannot be reached is cited by Palmer (1990) and Massaud (2001, 2004, 2004b).

The adults can reach the bottom and for this reason would not need to or would not be possible for them to learn this skill. This fact is clear in one of the interviews:

> [...] This standing self-sustaining, this form of inert standing, I still do not consider it essential to learn how to swim, first because it is difficult to find a pool that has a pit in which the person can do this kind of exercise, we usually work the supine position, prone position and other forms and such, so really, this perception, this proprioception of the body in the water and the buoyant force, but this self-sustaining standing I've never done in this pool and it is easier to work it only in the sea or in a pool with a pit where you can actually do this kind of exercise. It is a highly developed skill in water polo that is a basic position for them in water and other kinds of swimming, synchronized swimming, stuff like that, but for swimming I do not consider it necessary.

In this statement we can see characteristics of swimming teaching that favor arms and legs movements to scroll horizontally, and this fact seems not to consider the acquisition of aquatic competence defined as "proficiency in a wide variety of aquatic skills, values and knowledge that comes from various fields of knowledge, from neurophysiology to pedagogy "(LANGERDOFER & BRUYA, 1995 apud FREUNDENHEIM; MADUREIRA, 2006).Corroborating the acquisition of aquatic competence, Freudenheim and Madureira (2006) recommend that the teaching of swimming extrapolate the swimming styles, and suggest that it covers the sports of liquid medium, such as, diving, synchronized swimming, ornamental diving and water-polo, as well as self-rescue skills, among others.

Regarding the fact that there is a difference in teaching swimming in shallow water and deep water, in the view of teachers, teaching in shallow water is easier and safer for students because they have the option of standing on their feet when it is convenient. As the statement below explains:

> Yes, there is a difference, in the shallow pool he will always have the support of the bottom of the pool, he will be safer, will not be so afraid as for in deep water he will have to do the self-sustaining, the degree of difficulty is greater, he will be more afraid and this interferes a lot in a child's learning.

Contrary to the opinion of the teachers who said the shallow pool is safer, a teacher said that maybe the student that learns to swim in shallow water does not acquire enough confidence to swim in places where he does not reach the bottom, where he would really need these skills to swim and keep him safe. In this sense, he has another vision of what deep water learning could be:

> For the experience I had, I figured that the deep water pool forced the child to swim by herself, so he/she stopped less and did not have to touch the floor all the time, then it has a positive side and also the security side, which has to be observed very carefully, but the learning experience is interesting, it is a nice tool, thus requiring more, encouraging the children to swim by themselves.

Another important aspect is the view of some school teachers "in" and "for" shallow pools, because in our view, this comprehension restricts the teaching, excluding and omitting the teaching of swimming beyond shallow pools.

This "false security" that a shallow pool brings is something that needs to be thought over, because at the same time that teachers think about teaching considering the pool where they give their lessons, without bothering to teach swimming for the most diverse places where students can swim such as lakes, seas, rivers and even deeper pools, they fail to prepare and support the skills of SS, which is invaluable for the safety of students in these other places.

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The fact that institutions do not have deep pools contributes to not teaching the ability SS, which is not, or at least should not be a hindrance for teachers to teach this very fundamental skill in a liquid medium.

We emphasize that despite swimming lessons are taught in shallow pools, several reasons could lead these students to come into contact with water in other places, with different purposes, including greater depths, and this may require the ability of SS.

Teaching the SS ability cannot be omitted by educational institutions, regardless of whether they have children or adult learners, and whether or not they can reach the bottom of the pool.

We believe that during the process of teaching the skill of SS, teachers should warn their students about the main objective of this ability, which is already seen as a matter of survival in water where they can or cannot reach the bottom. Learning SS can also facilitate the implementation of other aquatic practices such as water polo, synchronized swimming and ornamental diving.

We highlight that swimming as a sport is a recent phenomenon in human history and cannot be seen as overlaying and surpassing the practice of swimming. Humans have historically used and will still use swimming with an utilitarian character, in natural environments or not, whether for leisure or as a means of survival.

These data contribute to rethinking the teaching of swimming, reformulating it and proposing it in a more complete and comprehensive way, trying to overcome the paradigm that limits the teaching of swimming only to the official swimming styles. It is necessary to broaden the perception of what swimming is and what it can be, because this is a practice that favors the act of swimming in the various meanings that the man may assign to it.

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[7]Pool with a depth below the height of the student.

[8]The concept of swimming presented in the Official Rules of Swimming makes reference to the term self-sustaining. This skill will be regarded by us as an " action of not moving forward, backward or sideways, remaining upright without touching the bottom."

[9]The initial criterion was to select institutions that only had shallow pools, but to our surprise we found that there is only one pool with a depth higher than 1.50 m which offers swimming courses in the city of Blumenau.

[10]Archimedes principle: When a body is completely or partially immersed in a fluid at rest, it undergoes an upward buoyancy equal to the weight of the fluid displaced.

[11]Trampoline: material used to decrease the depth, similar to a platform with elastic fabric in the center.

[12]Sculling: motions with hands and forearms outwards and inwards, changing the slope of the hands.

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**TEACHING THE SELF-SUSTAINING ABILITY IN SWIMMING LESSONS**
**ABSTRACT**

The ability of self-sustaining in the water may Represent the limits between knowing and not knowing how to swim because keeping yourself in the water without any auxiliary support would be vital for the swimmer where the bottom Could not be reached. This study investigated the teaching of self-sustaining in the water at swimming Institutions that offer swimming lessons and have only shallow pools. 13 teachers from 09 educational Institutions were interviewed swimming in the city of Blumenau. Swimming lessons are almost Given Exclusively in shallow pools and the fact That's not the Institutions have deep pools, Contributes to the Lack of self-sustaining skills who Reaches to the bottom, covering only children. We recommend the realization of studies to investigate strategies of teaching self-sustaining in shallow pools providing safety to the students in the bottom situations where they could not be reached.

**KEY-WORDS:** Education, Swimming, self-sustaining.

**ENSEIGNER LA CAPACITÉ AUTONOME À LEÇONS DE NATATION**
**RÉSUMÉ**

La capacité d'auto-entretenue dans l'eau peut représenter les limites entre savoir et ne pas savoir nager parce que rester soi-même dans l'eau sans aucun support auxiliaire serait vital pour le nageur dont le fond pourrait pas être atteint. Cette étude porte sur l'enseignement de l'auto-entretenue dans l'eau dans des établissements de natation qui offrent des cours de natation et des piscines peu profondes seulement. 13 enseignants de 09 établissements d'enseignement ont été interrogés nager dans la ville de Blumenau. Leçons de natation sont presque exclusivement tenu en mares peu profondes et le fait que ne sont pas les institutions ont des piscines profondes, contribue au manque de compétences autonomes qui atteint le fond, couvrant seulement les enfants. Nous recommandons la réalisation d'études visant à étudier les stratégies d'enseignement autonome dans les mares peu profondes assurant la sécurité des élèves dans les situations de fond où ils ne pouvaient être atteints.

**MOTS-CLÉS:** éducation, natation, auto-entretenue.

**LA ENSEÑANZA DE CAPACIDAD PARA CLASES DE NATACION EN AUTOSSUSTENTAÇÃO**
**RESUMEN**

La habilidad self suspensión en el water represent puede el límite between knowing the swim in because mantenerse en el water ningun sin apoyo es condicion vital if haga where the pie.This studio investigate enseñanza la la auto suspensión en el agua en institutes ofrecen swimming courses where sólo hay shallow pools. We interviewed teachers trece of nueve en Instituciones that enseña swimming en la ciudad de Blumenau. La enseñanza of swimming takes place en, casi exclusively Instituciones con shallow pools.El hecho that esos institutes in swimming pools posean Hondas, contribuye that the sea carried her to her adeptness enseñanza self suspensión Aquellos for pupils who Hacen pie en la piscina, siendo considered for this los niños habilidad only. We suggest that it elaboración de estudios el Tengan to investigate strategies for self enseñanza suspensión en wading pools, garantizándole to them alumnos la seguridad en situaciones that Hagan in that pie en condiciones Tengan applying her self suspensión.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Enseñanza.Natación. Auto suspensión.

**ENSINO DA HABILIDADE DE AUTOSSUSTENTAÇÃO EM AULAS DE NATAÇÃO**
**RESUMO**

A habilidade de autossustentação na água pode representar o limite entre saber e não saber nadar, pois manter-se na água sem apoios auxiliares será condição vital para o ser humano onde não alcance o fundo. Este estudo investigou o ensino da autossustentação na água em instituições que oferecem aulas de natação e só possuem piscinas rasas. Entrevistamos 13 professores de 09 instituições de ensino da natação na cidade de Blumenau. O ensino da natação vem acontecendo quase que exclusivamente em piscinas rasas e o fato das instituições não possuírem piscinas fundas, contribui para o não ensino da habilidade de autossustentação para os alunos que alcançam o fundo, contemplando somente as crianças. Sugerimos a realização de estudos que investiguem estratégias de ensino da autossustentação em piscinas rasas garantindo segurança aos alunos em situações em que não alcancem o fundo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ensino, natação, autossustentação.