Techno-swim: Integrating tablets as a tool in school swimming

Jeppesen, Lise Sohl; Skovgaard, Thomas; Runge Larsen, Lisbeth; Junggren, Stephan Emil

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Purpose
This study is part of the research project Learning to Swim - aiming to improve school swimming by integrating evidence-informed methods. The purpose of the study is to explore a particular swimming approach, Techno-swim, which integrates smart devices as a learning tool, in order to improve the quality of and student motivation in school swimming.

Methods
Data were collected at three primary schools using a combination of qualitative methods. In total 12 lessons were observed using field observations, four semi-structured teacher interviews and four group interviews with 16 students from grade 4 to 5 were conducted. The interviews underwent thematic analysis.

Results
The observations showed that smart devices, in the form of tablets, offer several possibilities in relation to school swimming. Tablets were used to initiate versatile water games and activities, to develop water competencies and to visualize the students’ body movements in water, in order to optimize swimming skills.

Teachers, who were interviewed, pointed out that they acted more as advisors than actual teachers. The students very much took the lead and worked rather autonomously with learning activities. The younger the students were, the more counselling and teacher support was deemed necessary. Teachers also point out, that because many of the students were super users of smart devices, the barriers for initiating swimming lessons with use of tablets were minor.

The group interviews with students established that the use of tablets is motivating, provides variation and a higher level of concentration in swimming lessons. The students highlighted the immediate possibility to see, explore and improve their own swimming skills in peer-to-peer sessions as a positive feature of Techno-swim.

Conclusion
Techno-swim enhances motivation and commitment of students and promotes digital literacy. Peer-to-peer learning is a powerful component of the Techno-Swim approach. Tablets makes it possible to practise interdisciplinary teaching e.g. a combination of PE, math or arts.

Declaration of interest
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