CHAPTER 14
MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES AND COMPREHENSIVE AQUATIC METHOD

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The improvement of aquatic competence can be more effective, positive and transformative if autonomy, competence and interpersonal needs are satisfied. On the contrary, underestimating said needs can be detrimental for the acquisition of aquatic competence.

Introduction

Motivation plays a central role in learning, especially that of the aquatic field, where technical and emotional challenges can significantly influence the student's experience. Recent studies (Ahmadi et al., 2022; Huéscar et al., 2022; Moreno-Murcia et al., 2021), based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), have developed a model that classifies teachers' motivational behaviours in different key dimensions. This approach does not only offer practical strategies to intervene in the classroom but also aims to satisfy the students' basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and interpersonal relationships.

Each dimension includes several motivational strategies which, when applied constantly and reflexively, contribute to installing a high-quality motivation in the learner. This motivation, characterised by the intrinsic interest and genuine commitment of the learner, is essential to foster meaningful and sustainable learning in the aquatic environment. On the contrary, if teaching practices do not satisfy these needs or, even worse, frustrate them, the effects can be detrimental, manifesting in ways such as defiant opposition, uninterest, discomfort and, ultimately, demotivation.

This chapter focuses on the analysis and presentation of effective motivational strategies within the understanding aquatic environment framework, aiming to enhance aquatic competence and to ensure a positive and transformative learning process for students.

Comprehensive Aquatic Method, motivation and competence

The Comprehensive Aquatic Method is characterised for tackling the teaching of aquatic competence from an integrative perspective, which combines technical, psychological and social aspects, promoting a significant learning, also adapted to the students' individual needs.

The motivational strategies play an important role in this approach, as they are designed to satisfy the basic psychological needs identified by the Self-Determination Theory: autonomy, competence and interpersonal relationships. These needs are to essential to promote a high-quality motivation which does not only encourage learning, but also

promotes a positive environment in which the students develop confidence, interest and commitment to aquatic activities.

The relationship between these strategies and the improvement of the aquatic competence lies in the fact that the teachers' interventions based on high-quality motivation help students to overcome the inherent challenges of the aquatic environment, such as fear, insecurity or lack of confidence. Moreover, the Comprehensive Aquatic Method, by integrating progressive and adapted tasks, reinforces the perception of success and personal progress, consolidating the benefits of said motivational strategies, which can entail more security in aquatic environments in the long run.

Motivational triggers

Motivation is a determinant element in aquatic education, where students face unique challenges, such as fear of the water, insecurity and the need to dominate technical abilities in an unknown environment. In this context, motivational triggers play a key role when facilitating learning, promoting confidence and generating a genuine commitment to aquatic activities.

These triggers are based on the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relationships, as established by the Self-Determination Theory. Offering students opportunities to choose and actively participate in their learning process, recognising their individual progress and creating a supportive interpersonal environment are key strategies for the establishment of high-quality motivation. At the same time, it reinforces the implication of the students, improves their experience in the aquatic environment and promotes a sustained learning.
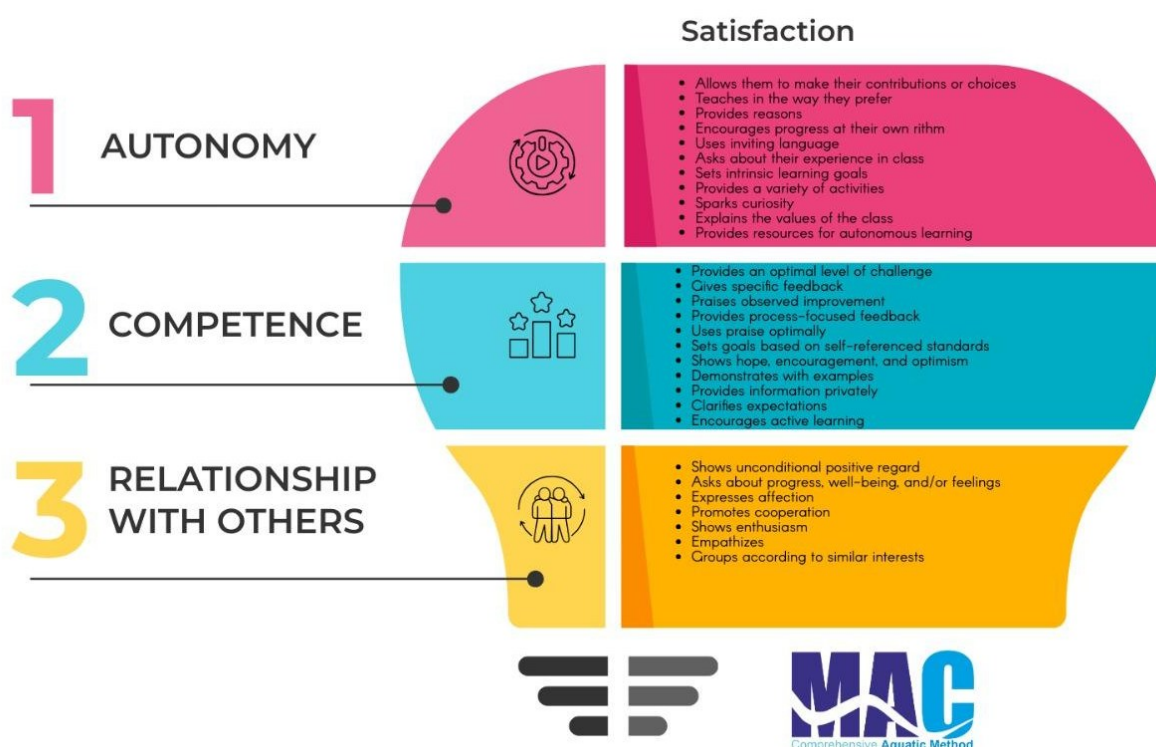
If the needs are frustrated, the consequences can be significant and detrimental for the students' learning process and wellbeing. The frustration of autonomy leads to a lack of initiative and dependence of the teacher, decreasing the enjoyment and the interiorisation of aquatic abilities. The frustration of competence generates feelings of incapability, anxiety and fear of failure, which can entail the avoidance of challenges and abandonment of the practice. The frustration of interpersonal relationships causes isolation, mistrust and lack of social support, negatively impacting motivation and commitment with the group and the learning process. The effects of said frustration can start to be manifested from early ages, approximately between 3 or 4 years old, when children begin to develop a higher conscience of themselves and their social environment.

In the aquatic education framework, the use of an approach such as the Understanding Aquatic Method boosts the impact of these motivational triggers. This method adapts the activities to the level and needs of the students, promoting a gradual process in which their perception of success and competence are reinforced. Moreover, when integrating tasks that stimulate cooperation and reflection, social links and trust in the aquatic environment are strengthened.

Proposal of strategies

In this section, we present several motivational strategies designed to encourage autonomy, competence and interpersonal relationships in the context of the aim for improving the aquatic competence, which are used in the understanding aquatic method (Figure 1). Each strategy will be illustrated with specific examples that show how to satisfy the basic psychological needs, as well as examples of situations that could frustrate them. These strategies are thought so teachers can create a more positive and motivating learning environment, adapted to the individual needs of learners. When implementing these strategies, teachers can help their students to develop more confidence in their abilities, encourage their autonomy in the water and improve their relationships with peers and companions, which leads to a more effective and rewarding learning experience.

Figure 1. Motivational strategies.

Strategies for autonomy

Strategy	Successful example	Frustrated example
Allowing that they contribute or choose	Allowing children to choose between practicing floating or sliding according to their confidence level in the water.	Forcing every child to jump in the water without considering confidence levels.
Teaching in the way they prefer	Allowing them to choose between the different presented ways to move according to their preference.	Requiring the students to practice only one swimming style without asking their preferences.
Offering reasons	Explaining how to learn to float correctly improves the confidence in the water in all ages, as it allows to rest and have time to ask and wait for help, if necessary.	Asking to repeat floating exercises without explaining why it is important to control.
Encouraging the progress at their own path	Adapting floating exercises for beginners, allowing breaks when needed.	Imposing a rigid schedule with swimming exercises without flexibility.
Using inviting language	Proposing more advanced students ideas for a subaquatic game and letting them choose.	Commanding: "do this subaquatic path three times."
Asking about their experience in the classes	Asking which exercises served as help for feeling more confident in the swimming pool at the end of the session.	Underestimating the suggestions of the students about what they would like to practise more.
Establishing intrinsic objectives for learning	Teaching how the kicking technique helps to save energy in real aquatic situations.	Focusing on the distance without considering the quality of movement, motivation or variants.
Offering a variety of activities	Incorporating gaming activities such as the search of submerged objects for beginners.	Establishing the same repetitive exercises in each session, boring the participants.
Provoking curiosity	Organising safe underwater explorations to discover how to move better when immersing.	Avoiding proposing new dynamics in the water, leaving monotonous activities.
Reasoning class values	Encouraging cooperation by working on pairs to learn basic rescuing techniques.	Focusing only in competences, ignoring the importance of learning to cooperate in emergencies.
Offering resources for autonomous learning	Giving access to materials like instructive videos to practise outside of the swimming pool.	Not allowing the use of external materials to further explore their learning process.

Strategies for competence

Strategy	Successful example	Frustrated example
Providing an optimal level of challenges	Designing floating exercises with increasing levels, such as assisted floating, then removing the assistance	Demanding everyone to swim long distances without considering their initial ability.
Providing specific feedback	Saying "try to move your feet more so you can float better."	Saying "you're doing it wrong, I already explained it, didn't you listen?"
Compliment observed improvement	Saying "look at the distance you managed to advance without help, good job."	Ignoring individual improvements and focusing only on group results.
Providing feedback centred on the process	Saying "your effort when kicking stronger is helping you to advance."	Criticising only the results, such as "you didn't advance enough."
Use compliments correctly	Complimenting: "good job when using your arms for balance."	Complimenting only the more advanced students, ignoring the efforts of others.
Fix objectives based on auto-referenced standards	Asking each student to improve a specific technical aspect, such as kicking rhythm.	Establishing a unique standard that some cannot achieve.
Show hope, encouragement and optimism	Saying "I know you can do it, you are progressing adequately."	Saying "this is too hard for you, it's better that you try something else."
Show with examples	Demonstrating how to do a proper stroke.	Not showing clear examples and letting the students guess.
Provide information in private	Talking to the student in private: "your kick is getting better, try to stretch your feet further."	Criticising the student in front of their peers: "you're doing everything wrong."
Specify the **expectations**	Explaining in detail the order of exercises in a class.	Not establishing or not having a structured class with clear objectives.
Stimulate active learning	Allowing students to explore different jumping styles.	Leaving out of the game those who refuse to do it.

Strategies for interpersonal relationships

Strategy	Successful example	Frustrated example
Show unconditional positive consideration	Saying "good job, Álvaro. Even if you didn't finish the task, I can appreciate your effort."	Criticising the student publicly for a minor mistake without recognising their effort.
Ask about progress, wellbeing and feelings	Asking "Vanesa, how is your learning process? Do you need help?"	Ignoring students when they show signs of difficulty.
Show affection	Saying "Teresa, what a pleasure to have you in class again."	Not recognising the return of a student after a prolonged absence.
Promote cooperation	Proposing "to design the game schema, work together and distribute the roles."	Forcing individual tasks that exclude collaboration opportunities.
Show enthusiasm	Saying "Irene, what an amazing pass! I love how you're working."	Tackling tasks with disinterest or apathic attitude in front of students.
Empathise	Saying "I understand that you feel saturated, but you can start progressively."	Demanding the fulfilment of tasks without considering the difficulties of the student.
Group with similar interests	Saying "these are the options: choose the topic that you like best to work in groups."	Assigning groups without considering shared likes or interests.

Conclusion

To sum up, this analysis highlights the importance of a holistic and motivational approach in aquatic education, grounded in the Self-Determination Theory and exemplified through the Comprehensive Aquatic Method. When satisfying the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relationships, and when avoiding practices that frustrate these needs, teachers can create a learning environment that promotes an intrinsic and high-quality motivation. The presented motivational strategies, illustrated with practical examples, offer a guide for aquatic teachers so that they can enhance their students' aquatic competence, promote their emotional and social wellbeing and ensure the learning experience is positive, relevant and transformative. The conscious and reflective

implementation of these strategies will not only improve the aquatic competence of the students in the water, but also will contribute to the formation of people who are more confident, autonomous and connected with the enjoyment of the aquatic environment through their lives.

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