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FORMATION OF SELF-REGULATION AND SELF-ESTEEM IN STUDENTS THROUGH TARGETED SWIMMING INSTRUCTION

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Abstract
This article examines the psychological and pedagogical mechanisms of developing self-regulation and self-esteem in students through systematically organized swimming instruction. Swimming is viewed not only as a physical activity, but as a means of fostering personal development, emotional stability, and cognitive flexibility. The structured and emotionally enriched nature of swimming lessons facilitates self-observation, control over physical and emotional states, and the formation of adequate self-evaluation. The article emphasizes the importance of an individualized approach and the integration of feedback mechanisms, including biofeedback, into swimming training programs. Attention is also paid to the potential of swimming in inclusive education for students with special educational needs.
Keywords: Swimming, self-regulation, self-esteem, students, inclusive education, emotional development, physical education, psychological adaptation, self-awareness, pedagogical strategies.

In the context of modern higher education, there is growing interest in developing students' self-regulatory capacities, which directly influence their academic success, social interaction, and emotional well-being. Self-regulation involves conscious control over one's emotional and behavioral responses, while self-esteem reflects the individual's evaluation of their own abilities, significance, and worth. Among the pedagogical tools contributing to the development of these qualities, swimming occupies a special place due to its unique psychophysiological effects and the specific structure of the activity.

Swimming is characterized by rhythmic, controlled movements, immersion in an aquatic environment, and the necessity of focusing on internal sensations and breathing patterns. This environment creates optimal conditions for developing internal control, mindfulness, and physical-emotional balance. In the process of mastering swimming techniques, students are forced to constantly monitor their body position, motor coordination, and breathing rhythm, which enhances interoceptive sensitivity and volitional regulation.

The structured nature of swimming lessons — starting from simple tasks to more complex ones — ensures that students experience gradual mastery, which in turn positively affects their self-esteem. Success in overcoming aquatic challenges and mastering new techniques builds confidence, reduces anxiety, and promotes a sense of personal competence. Feedback from instructors and peers also plays a key role, forming an external frame of reference for assessing progress and behavior.

It is especially important to note that in swimming, mistakes or incorrect techniques are immediately felt by the individual: discomfort, imbalance, or disruption in breathing become natural markers of inefficiency. This encourages immediate correction and development of self-monitoring and self-regulation mechanisms. Additionally, the fluidity of movements and the immersion effect create a meditative state, which reduces external noise and allows students to concentrate on their inner sensations.

In educational settings, swimming can be used as a platform for practicing self-awareness and emotional control. For example, students can be taught to recognize signs of tension or anxiety and apply breathing

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techniques or movement adjustments to restore balance. This process develops not only motor skills, but also emotional intelligence and the ability to reflect on one's behavior.

Special attention should be given to students with special educational needs. For them, swimming becomes a universal medium of expression and self-development. The weightlessness effect, reduction in external stimuli, and tactile comfort provided by water help reduce stress and increase a sense of safety. Swimming allows these students to experience success and build self-worth, often for the first time in an educational context.

Targeted pedagogical support in swimming classes should include elements of psychological training: goal setting, reflection on performance, feedback analysis, and self-assessment. Use of visualization, body maps, movement diaries, and even video recordings of swimming sessions helps students more clearly understand their progress and develop metacognitive abilities.

Furthermore, group swimming sessions can become an effective means of social adaptation and forming a realistic self-concept. Through joint exercises, relay races, and cooperative tasks, students learn to coordinate with others, support teammates, and accept criticism constructively. All these factors contribute to forming stable mechanisms of self-regulation and a balanced self-image.

In conclusion, swimming is not only a valuable physical activity, but also a resource for personal development. Its contribution to the formation of self-regulation and self-esteem is explained by the psychophysiological characteristics of aquatic movement, the reflective nature of swimming lessons, and the opportunity for individualized progress monitoring. Introducing swimming as a tool for psychological and pedagogical influence in the educational process allows for achieving broader developmental goals, especially for students with diverse learning needs.

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