



IJPESS

Indonesian Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science

p-ISSN 2775-765X | e-ISSN 2776-0200

Volume 5, No. 1, March 2025 Page. 57-66

<http://journal.unucirebon.ac.id/index.php/ijpess>

Impact of Physical, Mental, and Creative Abilities Using Competitive Educational Methods: A Study on Theater Students at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul

Jamal Shukri Basim^{1*}, Ahlam Dara Azez², Aqeel Majid Hamid³

¹College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Mosul

²College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Al-Hamdaniya

³College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul

*Corresponding Author: Jamal Shukri Basim, jamal@uomosul.edu.iq

Received: 23 December 2024, Approved: 17 February 2025, Published: 30 March 2025

Abstract

Study purpose. The research aims to identify the impact of the competitive method on developing the physical, mental, and creative abilities of the Theater Department students at the College of Fine Arts at the University of Mosul.

Material and methods. The research population consisted of first-year students in the Theater Department at the College of Fine Arts for the academic year (2021-2022). The research sample was a total of 10 students. The researchers used the experimental method to address the research problem, employing a homogeneous group design with pre-and post-tests.

Results. The most important results of the research were the impact of the competition method on developing the physical, mental, and creative abilities of the Theater Department students at the College of Fine Arts at the University of Mosul.

Conclusions. The researchers concluded that the competitive approach successfully developed students' physical and mental abilities in the Department of Theater at the College of Fine Arts at the University of Mosul. Implementing such competitive approaches in educational programs contributes to a transformative strategy for raising students' abilities and aligning their academic journey toward professional and personal excellence. It also nurtures their critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative expression. The researchers recommended adopting the competitive method in teaching theatrical physical fitness courses in Theater Departments at Colleges of Fine Arts.

Keywords: Competitive Method, Physical Abilities, Mental Abilities, Creative Abilities, Teaching Methods.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52188/ijpess.v5i1.1054>

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Introduction

Recently, the world has undergone numerous changes that have significantly influenced education, driving it to address new challenges and concepts arising from these transformations (Al-Balas, M., Al-Balas, H. I., Jaber, H. M., Obeidat, K., Al-Balas, H., Aborajoo, E. A., ... & Al-Balas, 2020), (Arcaro, 2024). Thus, the effort to enhance the quality of education and improve student performance has become an urgent necessity. This involves incorporating programmed technological tools into the educational process to stimulate learners' motivation and interests (Theobald, 2021), consider elements of engagement and excitement, develop proper skills, and foster training in various types of sound thinking. In our current time, new tools, techniques, educational theories, strategies, and advanced concepts in education have emerged, helping us evaluate effective learning that aligns with students' abilities. A type of thinking has been employed where the student resorts to logical reasoning when addressing a problem in an educational situation (Soran, E. F. A. ., & Garash, 2024). This approach involves deriving detailed facts from premises and generalizations based on logic and inference to solve and overcome the posed questions and problems (Mueid, 2002); (Hasan, B. ., Husein, M. ., & Islam, 2024).

The perspective on the teacher's role and responsibilities has shifted with the changes in contemporary life and its demands. While the teacher's role was once limited to transmitting information and experiences to students, it now requires engaging in research, inquiry, and fostering the development of strong human character (Ly, 2024). It also requires the teacher to possess abilities and skills in guidance, direction, and teaching recommendations (Lai-Yeung, 2014). Scientific material is no longer merely an input for the educational process but has become a crucial element in driving social change. One of the most significant educational outcomes is enhancing students' learning and raising their performance levels. The teaching method employed by the teacher will positively or negatively impact students' learning (Lai-Yeung, 2014). This depends on the method's ability to meet the students' mental, physical, and creative needs and its consideration of individual differences among them. Theatrical physical fitness is one of the academic subjects that focuses on achieving its objectives by developing theatre actors' physical and mental skills and fostering a sense of competition among them (Kosma, M., Erickson, N., & Gremillion, 2024). It has garnered attention from specialists to enhance the level of artistic performance. This level is an inevitable result of the motor learning process. Multiple studies have been conducted on the importance of group competition methods in student education. These studies have shown that competition methods (self-competition among group members and competition between groups) are effective and powerful educational tools that significantly impact group members' learning. In this context, the study by Jasim and Abdulrahman (2018) confirmed that using both the competitive and traditional methods in learning some basic football skills showed that the group taught using the competitive method achieved greater improvement in learning most football skills compared to the group taught using the traditional method (Jasim, H. G., Abdulrahman, 2018). Physical fitness is considered one of the fundamental pillars of theatrical work and acting performance, particularly in the actor's movement within the performance space (Zaghloul, 2020). This is due to the inclusion of various movements, poses, and formations that are not natural or familiar to individuals in their daily lives. These movements are employed to express a state that the actor aims to convey clearly and understandably to the audience. This requires performing a range of movements, whether simple, difficult, or complex. In addition, acting in theatrical performances, which relies on dialogue and movement, may extend for a relatively long period. This demands good respiratory capacity to enable the actor or speaker to clearly express the scene's intended objective or dialogue effortlessly, avoiding strain or difficulty in delivering the words. In this regard, Abdullah's study (2015) found a relationship between

physical fitness and theatrical performance among Theater Department students at the University of Baghdad. Therefore, actors performing on stage or in acting scenes must have a level of physical fitness that allows them to carry out roles demanding high endurance and physical fitness. The concerned individual has muscular strength, endurance, speed, flexibility, agility, and other elements of physical fitness. Additionally, the individual must possess functional efficiency in internal systems such as the heart, lungs, and other bodily systems (Abdullah, 2015).

The importance of the theatrical physical fitness subject lies in its role as a core subject in professionally preparing Theater Department students at the College of Fine Arts for the field of theatrical acting. It also enables them to transfer this knowledge to school students through art education lessons. Given that the researchers have expertise in this field, each in their area of specialization, they recognized the importance of incorporating modern teaching methods, such as group competition, in teaching the theatrical physical fitness subject.

Educational systems have witnessed many developments regarding objectives, content, and techniques. However, academic preparation and specialization in one of the branches of knowledge have remained the primary focus in teacher preparation. Despite the developments in curriculum content and objectives and the success achieved in formulating educational goals, this has not been accompanied by a corresponding success in teaching methods. Thus, researchers have started to focus on scientific studies that help them present modern methods aimed at creating a democratic atmosphere, offering knowledge and information in an environment closer to reality, in addition to enhancing the realism of the educational process. Therefore, the research problem can be summarized in the following question: What is the effect of using the competitive method on developing physical, mental, and creative abilities among Theater Department students at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul?

Based on the previous, the researchers seek to achieve some objectives: to identify the effect of the competitive method on developing the physical abilities of Theater Department students at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul; to identify the effect of the competitive method on developing the mental abilities of Theater Department students at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul; and to identify the effect of the competitive method on developing the creative abilities of Theater Department students at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul.

In light of the research objectives, the researchers hypothesized that there are no statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test measurements for the research group in some physical abilities; there are no statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test measurements for the research group in mental abilities; there are no statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test measurements for the research group in creative abilities.

The current work was done in the halls and spaces of the Theater Department at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul. For the students of first-year students in the Theater Department at the College of Fine Arts for the first semester of the academic year (2021-2022).

The competitive method is a method of competition between educational groups. It is also the method through which an individual can assess their performance in comparison to a colleague within the same group while also comparing this performance to that of other groups.

Mental Abilities are traits defined by an individual's behavior, meaning they are qualities that are renewed based on what an individual can perform or do. Mental abilities are

considered one of the most important factors and determinants in the process of learning and training motor skills (Al-Zuhairi, 2001).

Creative Thinking is “thinking that involves generating and modifying ideas to reach results characterized by originality, fluency, flexibility, and problem awareness.”(Samara, N. A., and Adeili, 2008).

Physical Abilities: Hassanien defines physical abilities as “the individual’s healthy state in terms of their physical and organic composition, which enables them to skillfully use their body in various activities.” (Hassanien, 2001).

Materials and methods

Study participants

The researchers identified the research population as first-year students in the Theater Department at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul, for the academic year (2021-2022). These students were enrolled in the Theatrical Physical Fitness course, with a total of 14 male and female students. The sample consisted of 10 male students, excluding four female students, to eliminate the gender variable from the experiment.

Study organization

The researchers adopted the experimental method due to its suitability for the nature of the study known as “the homogeneous randomly selected group design with controlled pre- and post-observations” (Allawi, M. H., Rateb, 1999). The researchers employed an experimental design known as “the homogeneous randomly selected group design with controlled pre- and post-observations”(Allawi, M. H., Rateb, 1999). Table 1 illustrates the study variable

Table 1. Research variables

Variables	Pre-tests	Independent variable	Post-tests	Statistical variables
Research Group	Physical abilities Mental abilities Creative abilities	Group competition method	Physical abilities Mental abilities Creative abilities	Calculate the differences between the two tests

To study the homogeneity of the research group, the researchers conducted tests on multiple intelligences, chronological age, height, and mass, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. AM, SD and skewness coefficient for the research group

Variables	Experimental group		Skewness coefficient
	AM	SD	
Multiple intelligences	246	3.81	0.85*
Chronological age	255.69	3.65	0.89*
Height (cm)	167	10.70	0.98*
Mass (Kg)	59.80	3.55	0.93*

* The skewness coefficient value is less than (± 1); this indicates that the group is homogeneous in the variables.

Main Experiment of the Research:

After completing the requirements for the main research experiment, including determining the research group, ensuring homogeneity among its members, and specifying the educational material mentioned earlier, the main research experiment began on (17/10/2021)

and lasted until (29/11/2021) for (6) weeks. During this time, the researchers used the competition-based approach with the experimental group. The subject teacher taught the lessons for the research group.

Pre-tests: The researchers conducted the pre-tests for the research group on physical tests, mental abilities tests, and creative abilities tests on (3/10/2021).

Post-Tests: The researchers conducted the post-tests after completing the main experiment for the physical tests, mental ability tests, and creative ability tests for the research group on (5/12/2021).

Data Collection Methods

The researchers used several research tools to collect information to reach the required data and results, including references and scientific sources, questionnaires and physical tests.

Physical Tests: The researchers relied on several physical tests based on specific physical elements, which were selected by experts in teaching methods and theatrical arts (acting and directing) after being presented by the researchers through special questionnaires for this purpose. The selected tests were as follows: transitional speed (20m Shuttle Run), dynamic balance (Ring Test), flexibility (Trunk Flexion from a long Sitting Position), agility (T-Test), speed-strength (Knee Flexion and Extension Test, 20 seconds), static balance (Toe Stand Test), and kinetic speed (Nelson Test)

Measuring Creative Thinking: The researchers used the [Al-Hilali \(2009\)](#) test to measure creative thinking through its skills of fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, and problem sensitivity ([Al-Hilali, 2009](#)).

Measuring Multiple Intelligences: The researchers used a scale that consists of 90 items distributed across nine types of intelligence, with 10 items for each type. The items are randomly distributed, and all items are positive. Each item has five response options Sallis ([McKenzie, 2005](#)); ([McKenzie, 2017](#)).

Measuring Mental Abilities: This test consists of ninety questions, each followed by five options (A, B, C, D, E), and it measures the mental abilities of students ([Moussa F. A., 2008](#)).

Study Units for the Theatrical Physical Fitness Curriculum:

The curriculum for the Physical Fitness for Theatre course in the Department of Theatrical Arts at the College of Fine Arts includes a series of theatrical exercises aimed at developing the physical, motor, psychological, and mental capabilities of the student/actor. These exercises include: (The actor's movement in space/ Relaxation/ Focus/ Jumping/ Agility/ Endurance/ Deer jump/ Jumping within squares/ Breathing techniques with movement /Flexibility / Motor rhythm /Balance (in various types).

Competition Method

The researchers adopted the competition method due to its dynamic impact and effectiveness in fostering a competitive spirit among the research group members. Then, the researchers organized the students in the research group into pairs, where each pair interacts to achieve specific goals and competes with the other research groups. The research groups were divided into pairs based on the results of the pre-test physical assessments, with each group consisting of one high-level student and one low-level student in order to enhance the influence of one on the other and foster a competitive spirit. Finally, each group is given a physical and skill-based exercise within the theatrical physical fitness course, and the groups compete in performing these exercises, with the instructor determining the winning group.

After completing the research procedures, the researchers prepared the educational units for the theatrical physical fitness course based on the competition method. The

researchers presented a model of the educational units to some experts in theater and teaching methods to get their feedback on the suitability of the plans. The majority of the experts approved the units, with some modifications suggested.

Statistical analysis

The researchers used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data.

Results

To verify the hypothesis of the current study, the researchers compared the pre-test and post-test measurements for physical, mental, and creative abilities of the research group, and the results are shown in [Tables 3 and 4](#)

Table 3. Results of pre-test and post-test measurements for the research group in physical ability

No.	Abilities	Pre- measurement		Post- measurement		T- value
		AM	SD	AM	SD	
1	Transitional Speed (s)	89.3	67.1	11.3	42.1	86.2*
2	Kinetic Speed (s)	96.1	2.34	19.1	66.1	75.2*
3	Agility (s)	46.13	66.2	37.10	16.2	79.2*
4	Speed-Strength (repetitions)	13	66.1	21	87.1	96.2*
5	Flexibility (cm)	8	23.1	11	63.1	56.2*
6	Dynamic Balance (s)	31.10	97.1	21.9	36.1	99.2*
7	Static Balance (s)	50	93.1	64	62.1	79.2*

* Significant at a degree of freedom (n-1=9) and a significance level (0.05), which equals (2.26).

Table 4. Results of the pre-test and post-test measurements for the research group for mental and creative abilities

Abilities	Pre- measurement		Post- measurement		T value
	AM	SD	AM	SD	
Mental	264	67.3	332	54.2	68.3*
Creative	292	95.2	362	33.2	85.2*

* Significant at a degree of freedom (n-1=9) and a significance level (0.05), which equals (2.26).

It is observed from [Tables 3 and 4](#) that the calculated t-value is greater than the tabulated t-value at the significance level (0.05) for all the variables in the study, which are physical, mental, and creative abilities. This indicates the presence of statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-and post-test for physical tests, mental abilities test, and creative abilities test, in favour of the post-test. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

The results in [Tables 3 and 4](#) show that the differences are statistically significant in the three variables of the study. The researchers attribute this to the fact that the correct adaptation of the method and approach depends on a proper understanding of the factors and principles related to the subject, which is necessary for proving their impact and value in specific educational situations. In addition, many studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between different pedagogical methods and creativity and innovation among students in general ([Mohammad A. N., Al-Thani, 2024](#)).

The results showed significant differences in the performance level of students in most of the selected basic theatrical skills in favor of the experimental group, which trained and learned using the competitive method among the group members. The researchers attribute this to the fact that teaching basic theatrical skills under motivation and stimuli that are aligned with the situations required by these skills during actual competition helps improve the level of physical, mental, and creative abilities, which is part of the educational objective. Students' participation in the theatrical arts helps to promote positive development among students and helps to develop their creative skills (Corbisiero-Drakos, L., Reeder, L. K., Ricciardi, L., Zacharia, J., & Harnett, 2021). This is confirmed by Lotfi Abdul Fattah, who states: "The principle of motor learning emphasizes that practice and training should be carried out as much as possible in the manner in which the skill will be performed, which helps learners acquire skills more quickly." (Lotfi Abdul, 1990). It also agrees with Chan, & Tang who confirmed that the performing arts, such as radio drama, used in their research had an effective role in enhancing confidence and cooperation among students, and the competitive style used by the researchers enhanced students' motivation positively (Chan, K. K., & Tang, 2022).

The researchers' classroom environment with the experimental group, which utilized small workgroups within the competitive approach and the steps involved in this approach, contributed to creating an atmosphere of activity within the classroom. This, in turn, led to the development of creative thinking among the experimental group's students. In this regard, Ayesh (2008) and Irugalbandara (2020) point out that the characteristics of activities that develop thinking should generate new and unfamiliar ideas. These are activities that aid in thinking, not just activities that help with recall. Also, the availability of the appropriate environment and the capabilities that help to establish such activities have a distinct positive role that helps students engage in creativity, thinking, and positive education. In addition, the techniques and methods used for education, including theater or drama, enhance students' creative thinking skills and ability to adapt (Ayesh, 2008); (Irugalbandara, 2020).

The learning through the competitive method, with its activities and educational steps based on competition between individuals within the educational groups of the experimental group, led to the development of their mental abilities.

Nor et al., (2022) have indicated that competition-based learning is one of the new learning methodologies that positively affects the learner and contributes to raising students' educational outcomes, achievement, and motivation (Nor, A. M., Ibrahim, S. N., Hashim, N., & Mohamed, 2022). In this regard, Al-Zayat (2004) points out that "organized education has a positive impact on the development of mental abilities. This impact varies with the variation in the educational content and the level of education" (Al-Zayat, 2004).

Conclusions:

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of competitive educational methods in fostering the holistic development of theater students at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul. By integrating competition-driven strategies into the curriculum, students experienced notable enhancements in their physical, mental, and creative abilities. These techniques also created an engaging learning atmosphere that promoted drive, involvement, and active engagement. According to the study, these methods not only enhance students' educational experiences but also better prepare them for jobs in professional theater by giving them the skills and flexibility they need. Thus, using competitive approaches in theater instruction might be a useful strategy to raise students' academic and practical performance.

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Information about the authors:

Asst. Prof. Dr. Jamal Shukri Basim: jamal@uomosul.edu.iq, <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6011-0634>, College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Mosul. Iraq

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ahlam Dara Azez Ph.D: dr.ahlamdara@uohamdaniya.edu.iq, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9038-1485>, Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Al-Hamdaniya. Iraq

Asst. Prof. Dr. Aqeel Majid Hamid: akeelmagid2008@uomosul.edu.iq, <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5023-1791>, Department of Theater Arts, College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul. Iraq

Cite this article as: Basim, Jamal Shukri., et al. (2025). Impact of Physical, Mental, and Creative Abilities Using Competitive Educational Methods: A Study on Theater Students at the College of Fine Arts, University of Mosul. *Indonesian Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science (IJPESS)*, 5(1), 57-66. <https://doi.org/10.52188/ijpess.v5i1.1061>