

Cross-cultural comparison of motor competence in children from Australia and Belgium

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Abstract

Motor competence in childhood is an important determinant of PA and physical fitness in later life, however childhood competence levels in many countries are lower than desired. Due to the many motor skill instruments in use it is unclear how children's motor competence across countries can be compared. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the motor competence of children from Australia and Belgium using the Körperkoordinationstest für Kinder (KTK). The sample consisted of 244 (43.4% boys) Flemish children and 252 (50.0% boys) Australian children, aged 6 to 8 years (Australian 7.6 ± 0.7 and Flemish 7.3 ± 0.9). ANOVAs revealed that Flemish children performed significantly better than Australian children on jumping sideways ($p = 0.004$; $\eta^2_p = 0.016$), moving sideways ($p < 0.001$; $\eta^2_p = 0.084$) and hopping for height ($p < 0.001$; $\eta^2_p = 0.022$) but not for balancing backwards ($p = 0.221$; $\eta^2_p = 0.003$). Moreover, a Chi squared test revealed significant differences between the Flemish and Australian score distribution with 21.3% Flemish and 39.3% Australian children scoring 'below average' ($p < 0.001$; Cramer's $V = 0.22$). The very low levels reported by Australian children may be the result of cultural differences in physical activity contexts such as physical education, active transport and organized sports.