COMPARING FITNESS TESTING PRACTICES IN ASIA, EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPE, AND NORTH AMERICA

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the differences in the most often implemented youth fitness test programs across the world. Chinese National Physical Fitness Test, European EuroFit, American FitnessGram®, and Russian GTO were selected to represent the most widely implemented youth fitness tests in Asia, Europe and North America. Document analysis method was used to investigate the four test programs against the health-related fitness testing components and items including body composition, endurance, strength and flexibility. The results from the study are threefold: (a) the dominant testing components are health-related while a power test component is included in all test programs except FitnessGram®, and fitness knowledge test is only used in GTO; (b) only GTO uses individual badges to award high levels of performance in fitness testing and connects testing results to youth sporting programs; and (c) websites are designed to provide detailed information concerning test implementations, report test results, and promote the use of fitness tests. The data from the study suggested that there may be a need to develop a global fitness test and evaluation program if monitoring youth fitness from the international perspective is of concern. There is a need to develop fitness tests and evaluation tools that include all age groups integrating knowledge assessments, optional test/assessment items/movements from healthy Eastern traditional exercises such as yoga, and various fun sports instead of running events only. Also, tests could be made easier to administer and evaluate by participants and could have lower costs, better reward programs, and better instruction and promotion strategies using the latest internet technology for the worldwide population to be able to track their fitness changes over the entire lifespan by lifelong fitness testing on a regular basis. It is hoped that such a change in fitness testing and evaluation practice will lead to the reduction in childhood obesity, aid in guiding future fitness training methodologies, and improve the overall health worldwide.