

Assessment in the Social Sciences: GIS Training and Assessment for Pre-service Geography Teachers in a Rural University

Rachael Jesika Singh

*Research Development and Administration Department, University of Limpopo Private Bag
X1106, Sovenga Limpopo South Africa 0727
Telephone +27 15 268 3564; Fax +27 15 268 2306; Email: Jesika.Singh@ul.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT Geographical information system/s (GIS) is a relatively new inclusion in the school curriculum in South Africa. The training and assessment of pre-service teachers is crucial for the successful implementation of GIS in schools. This article explores the impact of GIS software in the training and assessment of student teachers in Geography Education at the University of Limpopo. The students are exposed to mainly rural schools where the use of technology in teaching is rare. Therefore this article examines the exposure of student teachers from rural backgrounds to GIS software and assesses their mastery of the software. The research reports on the process involved in training the students to use GIS software; assessment of students' competency in drawing specific maps; and students' self-assessment in the form of reflections. Data were gathered using questionnaires and from a practical assessment using GIS software. The data were quantitatively analysed to determine problems faced by individual students in execution of the assessment task. The findings indicate that students grasped the basic skills required to utilise GIS software, but need more training in complex exercises. Findings from the questionnaires indicated that students benefitted from the training and assessment tasks. Once the technological skills were mastered, students could attempt the assessment task with greater ease. It is recommended that Geography Education students should complete GIS as a module that is fully assessed. In this way assessment tasks can become more complex, and the skills gained can be meaningfully utilised by teachers.