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Place Shapers: Digital Maps as Curriculum Artefacts in Geographical Education

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Abstract

Advances in digital mapping are transforming how geospatial information can be used in geographical education. Smart mapping, geographical information systems, mobile fieldwork applications and web map services (WMS) are all now more freely accessible to schools. This has made some former technological, cost and access challenges for teachers less daunting but are only part of ensuring that geospatial information is used to its full educational potential. Concepts of place lie at the heart of a high-quality geographical education. This paper argues that developing geography teachers' abilities to create digital map artefacts can help them shape place knowledge more meaningfully for students. To demonstrate this assertion, digital map curriculum artefacts focused on a range of physical, human and environmental geographical topics are explored. An analysis using Maude's (2017) typology of powerful geography knowledge is presented with an emphasis on developing place knowledge and understanding. This critical evaluation identifies a range of pedagogical approaches in shaping place knowledge through digital map curriculum artefacts. At the same time, the discussion also raises theoretical and practical challenges for curriculum making associated with framing place knowledge through an inherently spatial medium. The paper concludes with recommendations for the future use of digital map curriculum artefacts in school geographical education and through geography teacher education.

Keywords: Curriculum Making; Digital Mapping; Geospatial Information; Powerful Knowledge; Teacher Education.