

## **The ethics of educational methods to teach geoethics.**

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Our planet is in dire need of geoethical behaviour by all its citizens. That can only be achieved through education, on an intergenerational basis. Geoethics education needs to tackle real issues, not with a philosopher's stone, but using ethical practice. Geoethics happens essentially, not in what we say, but in what we do. Here the doing is twofold. First is deciding on educational content; in our case geoethical dilemmas related to pollution, sustainability, climate change, deforestation, acidification, limits to growth (planetary boundaries), and a myriad other life-threatening problems. Second are the educational methods that we select and use to help people learn that content.

Achieving both is an uphill battle. It will continue to be uphill a wide range of concerns related to our ideas of what constitutes learning, of what is appropriate to learn, of the value placed on education, of how to teach, of societal power relations, and so on.

The steepness of the hill depends also on the ethics we use to make content decisions and to facilitate learning episodes (usually called classes). My contention is that geoethics needs to be taught in all courses, at all levels and in all subjects worldwide; that is a long-term content objective. The shorter-term objective is the methods that we use to teach the geoethics.

A variety of methods are used to teach geoethical issues, some appearing more successful than others. Methods that have made some considerable impact in various parts of the globe include simulation/gaming, role-play and other experiential learning approaches. These rely on creating a situation or event that the learner experiences first hand (rather than contemplating, as in a lecture). One might call such events geoethical simulations because their content focuses on some ethical dilemma related to the earth. For example, a conflict among stakeholders over management of water along a river, or competition among fishers for limited fish stocks (tragedy of the commons). This kind of learning method itself raises ethical issues. One set of ethical issues revolves round the content (as exemplified above); a second set concerns the manner in which the simulation is conducted and the effect it has on participants.

Simulations of geoethical problems often generate strong emotions, just like their real-world counterparts. However, asking young people to participate in an emotion-generating event requires it to be done according to ethical principles. In many cases, many such simulations do more harm than good simply because they are not conducted properly. The simple fact of inviting people to participate in an emotionally challenging situation itself raises ethical issues, and this in turn has ethical implications for the way in which we conduct these kinds of geoethical simulations.

In this presentation, we will briefly outline the basic principles of conducting geoethical simulation in an ethical manner. We will then illustrate the ethics involved in the practice; we will give examples of the steps, the materials and the precautions needed. We hope that this will inspire others to use such methods.