Geoethics education: From theory to practice – a case study

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The planet Earth, and thus humanity, currently face such monumental geo-problems that geoethical behaviour by all citizens is a real imperative. The problems are well known: global warming and climate change, pollution, sea-level rise, deforestation, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss and so on. This situation requires that all citizens learn to behave in a geoethical fashion and in harmony with Earth’s nature. This in turn necessitates deployment on a massive scale of geoethical education, or what we call geo-edu-ethics – ‘edu’ is sandwiched between ‘geo’ and ‘ethics’. This is meant to suggest that in order to bring together ‘geo’ and ‘ethics’, we need ‘edu’. On another level, we also argue that it is manifestly and axiomatically unethical not to provide necessary geoethical knowledge in schools, universities and other training, in addition (and related) to the education already being dispensed. Most ministries of education are thus failing their citizens in this regard.

The principle and necessity of geo-edu-ethics have been successfully translated into hands-on practice by Méditerranée 2000 (M2k), which celebrated its 30th anniversary last year. This is a French association based in Cannes that accomplishes on-going, geo-edu-ethical, or geoethical educational, projects for a wide range of audiences.

Projects range from elementary school up to adult education, and include public awareness campaigns, school visits and trips, ethical tourism, local authority advice and industrial guidance on geoethical matters. Such projects focus on the promotion of geoethical behaviour and decisions that influence the way humans interact with the Earth systems, especially in regard to waste, coastal areas, water, policy making, pollution, and so on. The association has been successful in changing geoethical behaviours and attitudes among local people, for example, in regard to recycling, raw materials, flooding, pollution, reducing one’s carbon footprint and energy use.

The presentation will (a) highlight the absolute necessity of providing geoethical education at all levels of society and in all subject areas of education, (b) outline the geoethical imperative for
ordinary citizens (youth, parents, industry, etc.), (c) show how a dedicated and enthusiastic group of people can help citizens to move towards more ethical behavior as they interact with a range of Earth systems, and thus to participate in that geoethical imperative in everyday life.