

EGU24-17346, updated on 11 Oct 2024

<https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu24-17346>

EGU General Assembly 2024

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The importance of making geoethics a central concern of Sri Lankan education strategy

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Like numerous regions worldwide, Sri Lanka faces significant environmental challenges that endanger its biodiversity, natural resources, and the well-being of its population. Predominant issues encompass water and air pollution, land degradation, deforestation, improper waste disposal, consequences of climate change, disaster risks, as well as the loss of biodiversity and geodiversity. The nexus between political, economic, and social factors contributes to these geo-environmental challenges, often exacerbated by the politicization of the environmental issues in Sri Lanka. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that human activities primarily drive these conditions. Gunnar Myrdal's Soft State theory asserts that despite the existence of multiple governing bodies, regulations, and laws, humans strategically transcend the environment leading to the depletion of geo-environmental resources within a context of strong societal inequalities, particularly in developing countries influenced by the historical conditioning of colonial interests by developed nations. A philosophical exploration of this issue emphasizes the pivotal role of human indifference towards the environment and natural resources in causing these challenges. To address this issue effectively, a transformation in people's attitudes is imperative, and education emerges as the most potent tool for this purpose. However, a careful analysis of Sri Lanka's primary and secondary school curricula reveals an absence of a dedicated discipline addressing the philosophical and social dimensions of the geo-environmental matter. In light of this, the incorporation of subjects such as geoethics, which specifically addresses the ethical problems in the human-environment interaction, becomes paramount. Integrating geoethics into the educational framework, particularly at primary and secondary levels, stands as the foundation of a sustainable and responsible strategic approach to many societal and environmental problems. This educational strategy should envision as the most important solution to mitigate the majority of geo-environmental problems in Sri Lanka, fostering environmentally sensitive and responsible citizens.