

Children for a better world

Kids' ISO 14000 Programme continues to enlighten



by Koji Suzuki

The Kids' ISO 14000 Programme helps children learn how to use the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle to solve environmental problems. Launched in Japan in 2000, the scheme has proved popular and gained momentum internationally.



Kids' ISO 14000 ceremony in Tokyo, Japan.



With close ties to the internationally recognized standard, ISO 14001:2004, *Environmental management systems – Requirements with guidance for use*, the Kids' ISO 14000 Programme is an educational scheme designed to enhance children's ability to successfully address environmental issues.

The programme aims to help children learn how to use the PDCA cycle to improve environmental performance and to solve environmental problems. This enables them to learn, for example, ISO 14001 management skills and problem solving, and to participate in efforts towards sustainable development.

The programme aims to improve children's problem-solving skills by :

- Stimulating their environmental awareness
- Teaching them the environmental management system (EMS) methodology using the PDCA cycle
- Improving environmental performance through cross-societal cooperation. In the scheme, children work on solutions to the same problems by communicating with children in other areas or countries

Programme levels

The Kids' ISO 14000 programme has four levels.

Introductory and primary levels

Teachers distribute the programme's workbook and explain how students are to work at home with their families. Children check meter readings for household usage of electricity, gas and water, as well as the weight of rubbish produced. They then decide how to reduce their consumption and record these plans in their workbook.

This procedure is based on ISO 14001. By comparing data before and during the two-week experiment, children can see the results of their efforts. On completion, workbooks are evaluated at school.

Primary level

Children carry out a four-week operation and repeat the PDCA cycle three times.

Middle level

Children form a group and deal with the issues in a specific areas covering, for example, schools or towns. They are supported by a project advisor who is familiar with ISO 14001.

Project content depends on the theme, topic, and structure. For example, in Japan, a group of junior high school students in Ehime and Tokyo worked on the theme, "Bring my bag campaign – Let's reduce usage of plastic bags at the supermarket". The proportion of people bringing their own bags increased from 30% to 70%, an impressive result achieved through the repetition of the PDCA cycle.

Highest level

Children work on projects similar to those in the middle level. In addition, however, they are encouraged to communicate and work with children from other countries to solve the same problem.



A group of Canadian students in the Kids' ISO 14000 programme in the province of Ontario.

International certificate

Since 2000, over 250 000 children have participated in the programme in Japan, and 10 000 in Australia, Canada, Kuwait, Republic of Korea and the USA.

The programme aims to help children improve environmental performance.

An international certificate is awarded to a child who has worked at the primary, middle or highest levels and achieved excellent results. The International Committee of ArTech (International Art and Technology Cooperation Organization) issues this certificate, supported by ISO, the United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Children who receive certificates are encouraged to work on further global environmental challenges.



Kids' ISO 14000 workbooks.

Eco-Kids instructors

Playing an important role, Eco-Kids instructors explain the programme (see Box, Programme levels), evaluate workbooks and advise children.

ArTech certifies instructors of Level 1 when they have completed the relevant course. The International Committee of ArTech gives the certification for Levels 2 and 3.

Instructors need to have a good knowledge of the environment and the right personality to teach students at elementary and junior high school levels.

There are currently some 300 Eco-Kids instructors in Japan, and around 80 in other countries.

Vision for the future

The Kids' ISO 14000 Programme has grown dramatically due to the strong support of ministries, municipalities and schools. In Japan, for example, it is used by companies as part of their social responsibility activities.

Today, one of the programme's aims is worldwide coordination. Efforts are being

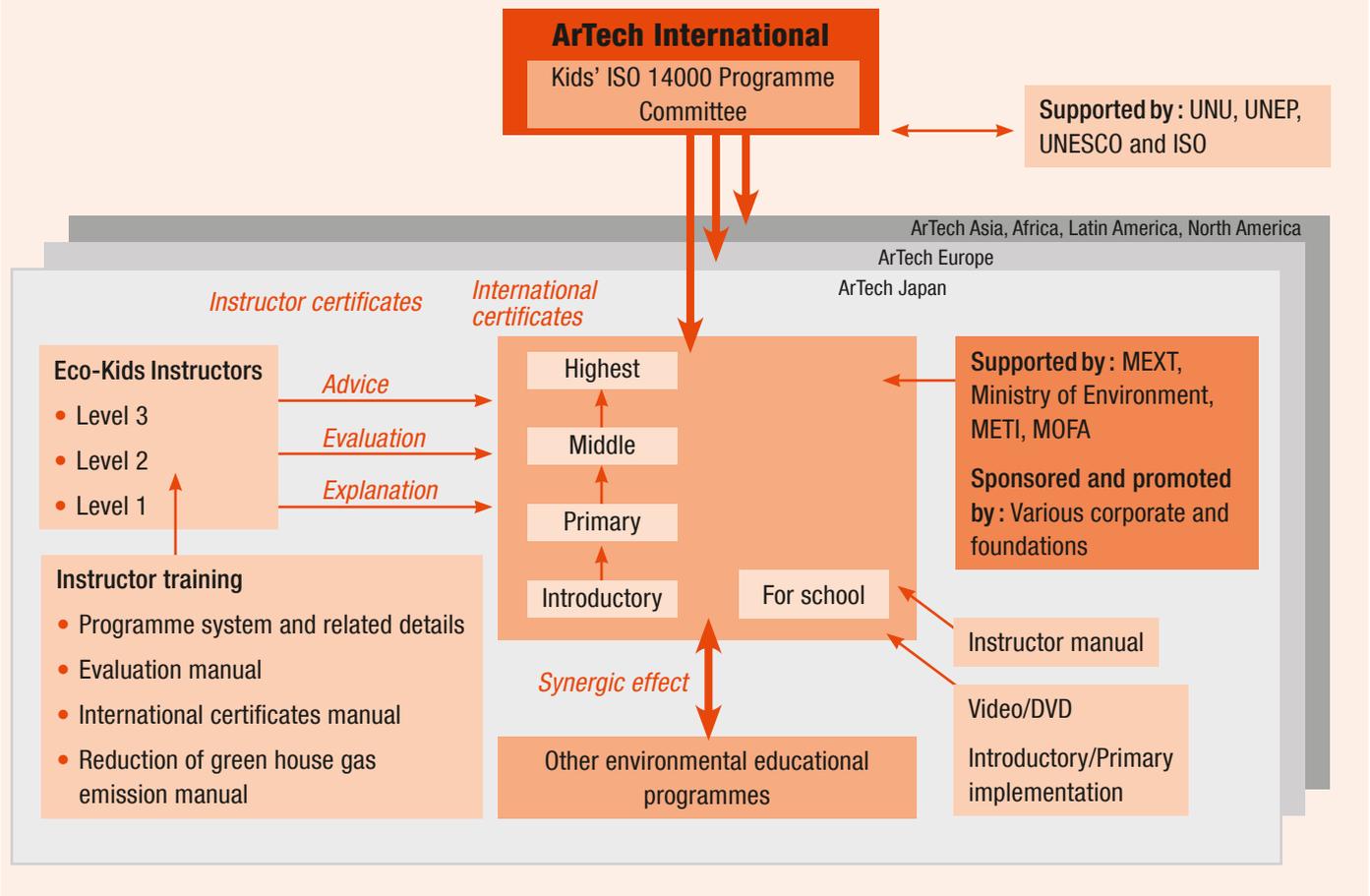


Figure 1 : Kids' ISO 14000 programme system.

made to ensure cooperation with, and assistance from, United Nations institutions and international organizations such as ISO.

UNU and UNEP, for example, have used their respective networks to introduce the Kids' ISO 14000 programme to international educational bodies and overseas governmental offices. What's more, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN-DESD) has included the programme in its series of projects.

Finally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) co-hosts the international training course for Eco-Kids instructors in Paris, France. This year's event will take place in August.

Over 250 000 children have participated in the programme.

How does ISO contribute? ISO supports the Kids' ISO 14000 programme by allowing ArTech to use ISO's name in its logo, statements and lecture materials. In addition, ISO produces programme-related brochures and provides information to its

global network of members located in 164 countries around the world.

The Kids' ISO 14000 Programme gives children valuable problem-solving skills.

The Kids' ISO 14000 Programme gives children valuable problem-solving skills together with many other benefits. ArTech would like to develop the scheme in other countries to expand further the global network of children who communicate, cooperate and solve environmental problems. ■

About the author



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A tribute to Professor Takaya Kawabe

Prof. Kawabe, one of the founders of the Kids' ISO 14000 Programme, passed away on 25 October 2011.

Prof. Kawabe was President and Director General of ArTech, the Japanese non-profit organization which launched the programme in 2000 in Japan. Proving a success, it went global with hundreds of thousands of children around the world participating.

Prof. Kawabe believed that the environmental education of children and young people is one of the keys to solving global environmental problems and to achieving sustainable development.

